

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE



Story and illustrations by Dr. Thomas MUYOMBO



H.E. Mrs. FATOUMATTA BAH-BARROW Message

As the First Lady of the Republic of The Gambia, I am very excited to share with you this inspiring storybook called “**Make The Right Choice**”. This story aims to raise awareness about Coronavirus and give you important information on what you need to know about the virus to protect you and your family.

Whilst informing you about good hygiene practices to ensure that you stay safe and keep healthy both physically and mentally during this period, the story also promotes honesty, loyalty and hard work even during the most challenging times.

I have partnered with Merck Foundation to bring you this storybook, to teach us to keep our heads up high at all times and not to give in to peer pressure, because life gets better when we stay honest, keep working hard and make the right choices. This story shows us that any bad situation is not permanent in life, and that you can come out as a winner at the end if you make the right choice.

During this time when the world is facing one of the biggest challenges, it is important for all of us to understand, respect and follow the health prevention rules of physical distancing, washing our hands very often as part of our efforts to stay safe and healthy. Together let's follow the health rules, keep your physical distancing, wear your mask and wash your hands regularly.

This pandemic will soon be over, and life will go back to normal again, as there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Make the right choice today, one that will make you smile when you look back!

H.E. Mrs. FATOUMATTA BAH-BARROW

The First Lady of the Republic of The Gambia

Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother



Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej MESSAGE

As Merck Foundation CEO and as an African woman, I am excited to invite you to read our new inspiring storybook, **“MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE”**.

I wanted this storybook to be part of our Africa Community Awareness Campaign about Coronavirus. I strongly believe that this unsettling period due to the coronavirus scare is difficult for everyone, full of challenges. While most countries are under complete lockdown or restricted movement, people do not know how to handle this situation. Physical distancing is our Social Responsibility and the only way to stop the spread of Coronavirus.

However, it will take a lot of courage and discipline to practice it. And as we all know it is going to hit mostly the casual and daily workers. Therefore, we decided to release this story of an honest and hardworking porter and the way he overcomes these challenges. The story also aims to give you some facts about COVID-19 and how to stay safe and healthy.

Most importantly to emphasize our community, strong values of honesty, loyalty, hard work and the ability to make the right choices even during the most challenging times. I'd like to highlight that we have also supported thousands of women and families of casual & daily workers across the continent during Coronavirus lockdown.

Through this storybook I'd like to ask all of you to believe in yourself, do not ignore health advices because good health is your most important asset. Let's all remain responsible, honest and loyal and make the right choice even during the toughest times. Enjoy reading our storybook.

Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej

CEO of Merck Foundation

Member of the Egyptian Senate (2020-2025)

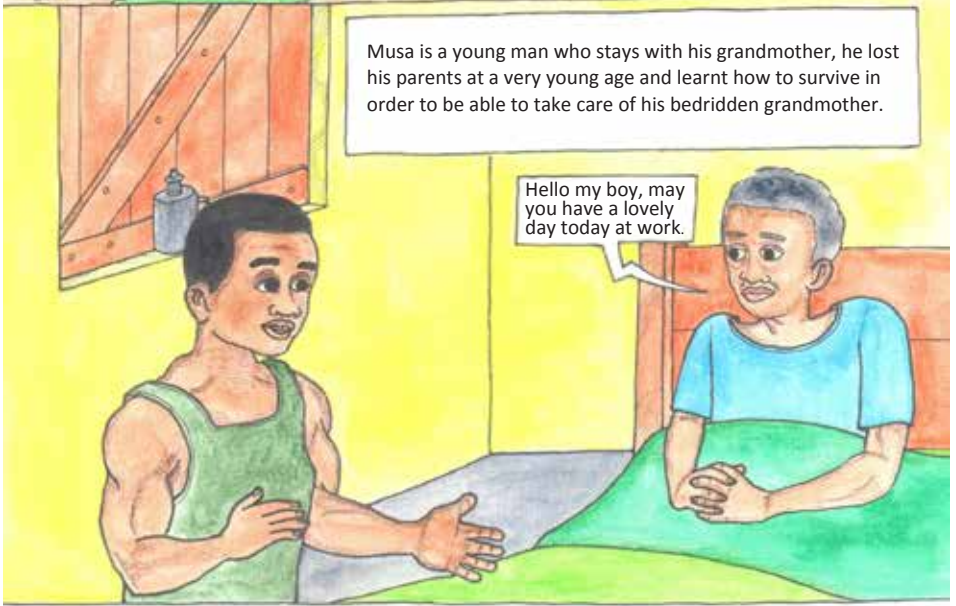
Most Influential African (2019, 2020)

African Woman of the Year 2020

President of 'Merck More Than a Mother'



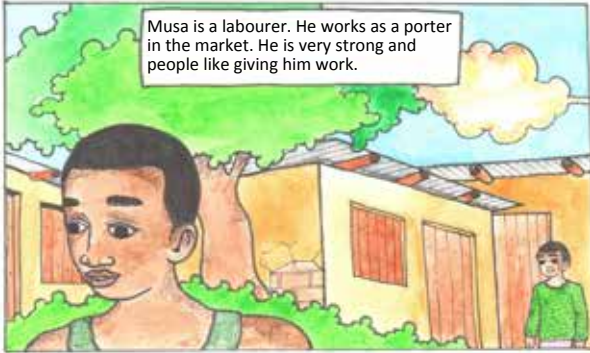
In a small town, where things move slowly, some people are supposed to work harder to make ends meet. Musa is one such people.



Musa is a young man who stays with his grandmother, he lost his parents at a very young age and learnt how to survive in order to be able to take care of his bedridden grandmother.

Hello my boy, may you have a lovely day today at work.





Musa is a labourer. He works as a porter in the market. He is very strong and people like giving him work.



Let me hurry, I don't want to be late.



Hello Musa, can you carry this for me?

Yes!



Musa is a good porter, he does his job well.

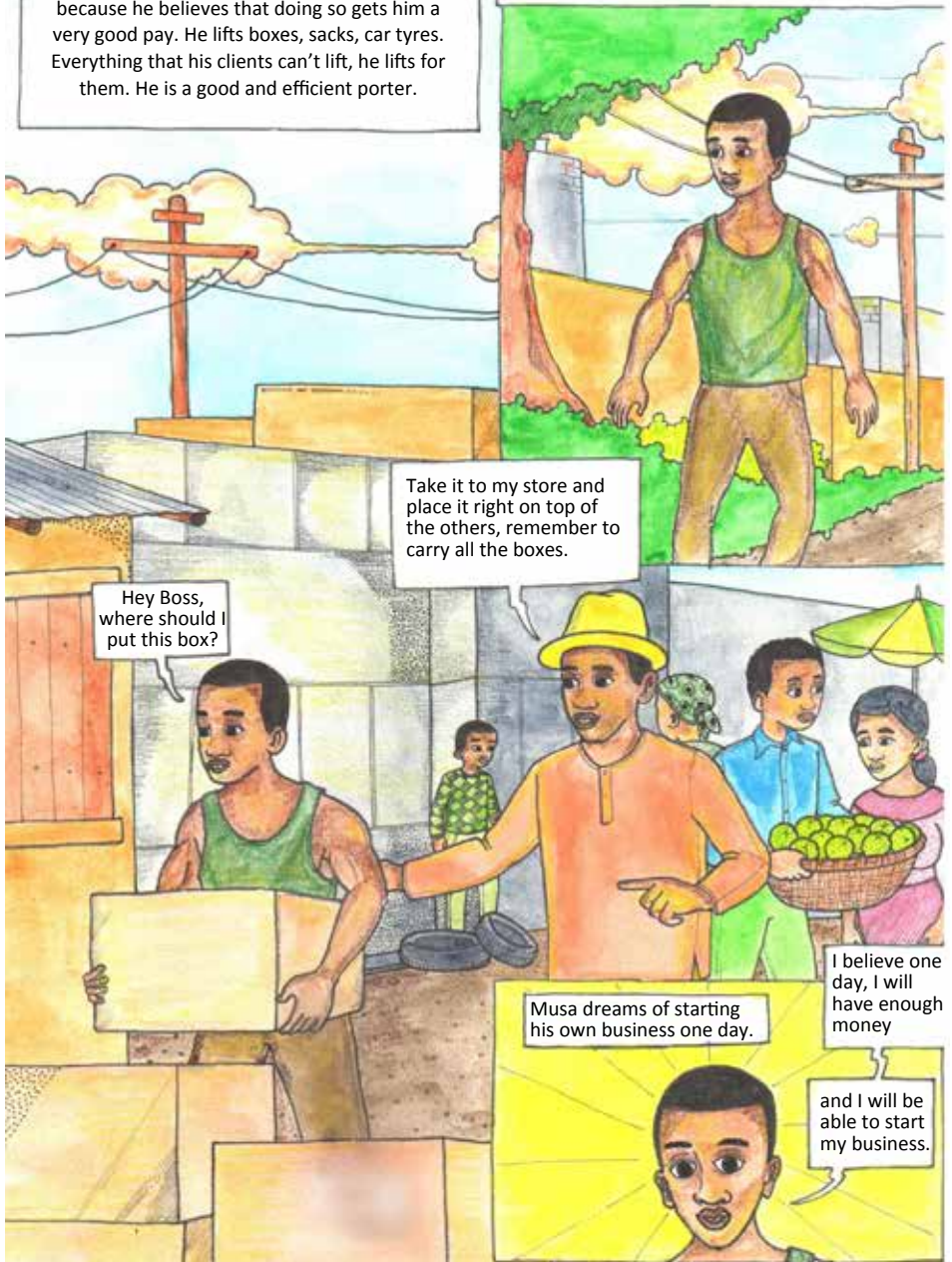
Don't worry Boss! I will be happy with any amount. You know, you always pay me well.



How much should I pay you Musa?

Musa knows how to keep his clients happy because he believes that doing so gets him a very good pay. He lifts boxes, sacks, car tyres. Everything that his clients can't lift, he lifts for them. He is a good and efficient porter.

Musa likes his job because it provides him with enough money to take care of his ill grandmother.



Take it to my store and place it right on top of the others, remember to carry all the boxes.

Hey Boss, where should I put this box?

Musa dreams of starting his own business one day.

I believe one day, I will have enough money

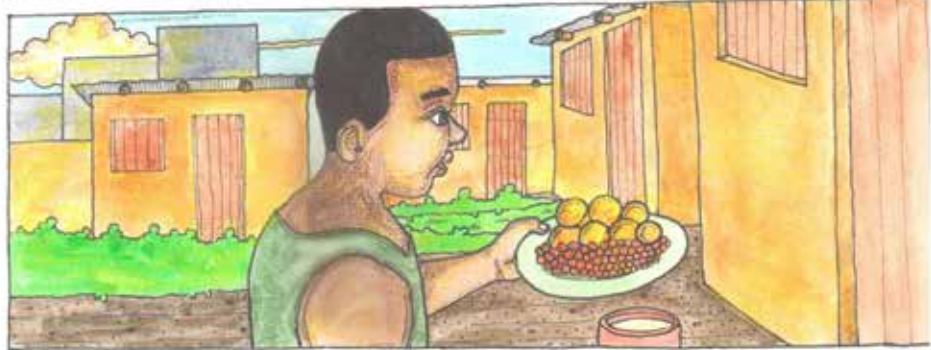
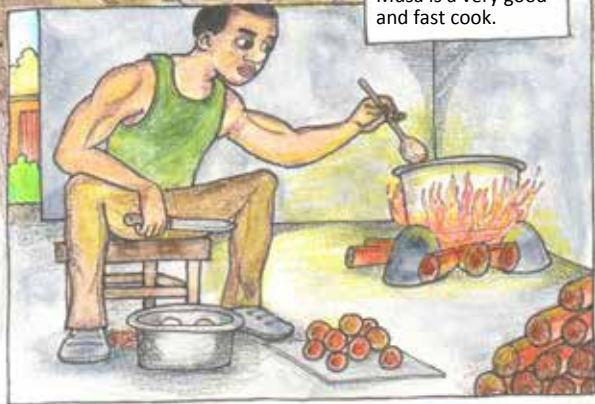
and I will be able to start my business.

At lunch time, Musa rushes home to cook for his grandmother.

Let me hurry before it's time for my grandmother's lunch. I have to cook for her.



Musa is a very good and fast cook.



Today, Musa prepared lunch on time and his Granny is very happy for him. She even wonders whether Musa went to work because she can't understand how everything is ready on time.

Grandmother, I have brought you lunch, please have something to eat and drink, I think you are now hungry.

Thank you my boy. How did you prepare all this in a very short time? I can't believe you even went to work today.

Yes I went to work, I cook fast.

Yes I know, you are young and strong, keep in mind that making it in life will be easy for you when you love what you do.

Let me go back to work, I will see you later.

Thank you my boy, go well and be safe.

Thanks a lot, I believe what you say.

Musa was very happy.

I have to make it in life, I am young and smart.

Have a good afternoon Grandmother.



When Musa arrived at the market, people were listening to someone's speech.

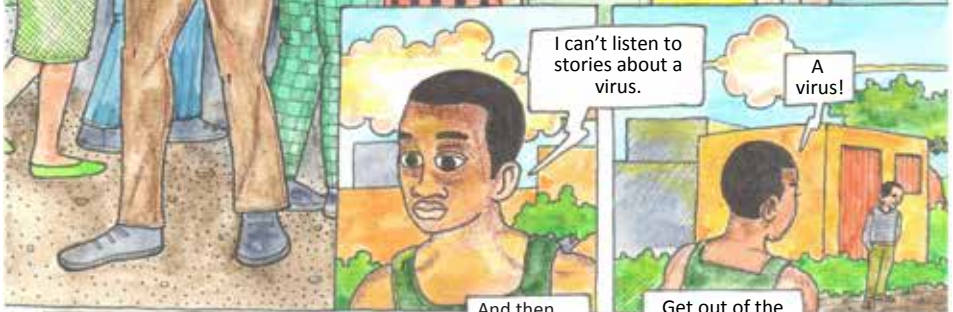
The COVID-19 is a serious disease, you have to be cautious all the time.

What does COVID 19 have to do with us? Let me go and work.

What is this?

Do I have it?

What is this?



I can't listen to stories about a virus.

A virus!



Musa didn't want to waste time to listen.

I'm not a Doctor, why should I know about a virus?



And then...

Get out of the way and go back home.

WIW!
WIW!

Musa went back home as requested by the police.

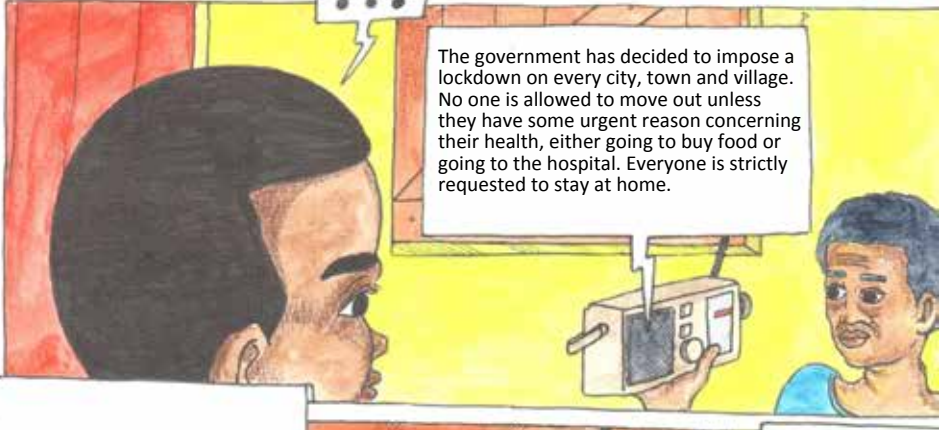
Grandmother, something is happening, the police is asking everyone to go back home.

It is serious! They are talking about it on the radio, listen.



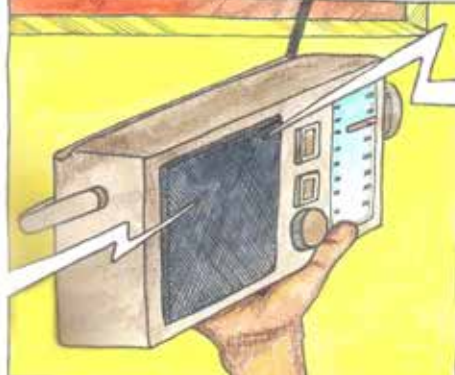
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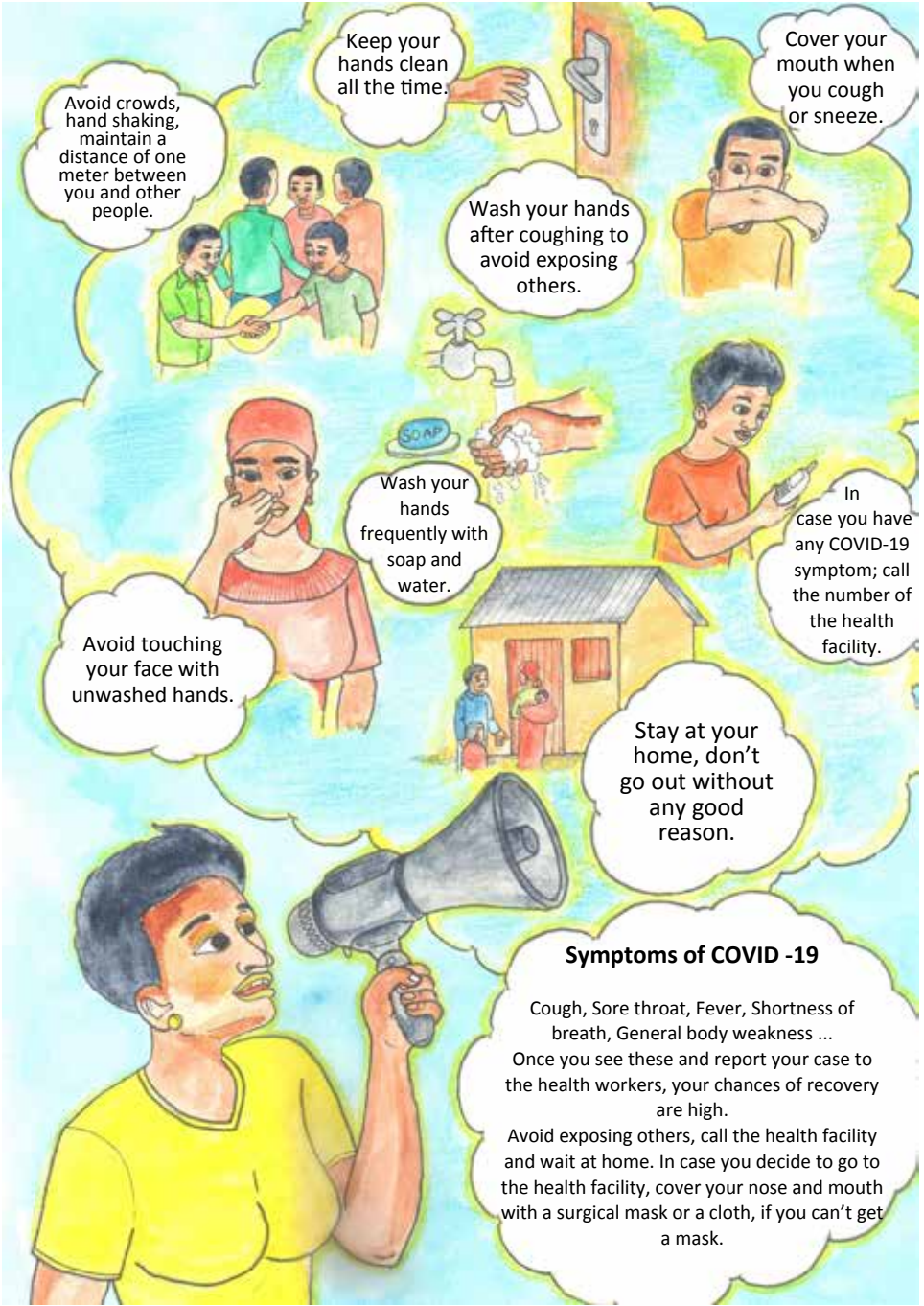
The government has decided to impose a lockdown on every city, town and village. No one is allowed to move out unless they have some urgent reason concerning their health, either going to buy food or going to the hospital. Everyone is strictly requested to stay at home.



The country has recorded its first case of a patient diagnosed with COVID 19. For those wondering what this disease is, it's a new disease that is caused by a virus that attacks the respiratory system of the patient and can even lead to death. People get infected when they touch a surface containing the virus.

I repeat, You're requested to remain at home to not spread the virus. There is no approved medicine for this disease, doctors only manage the symptoms.





Musa went back to the market, to buy food...



Let me buy enough food so that I don't have to go out soon.

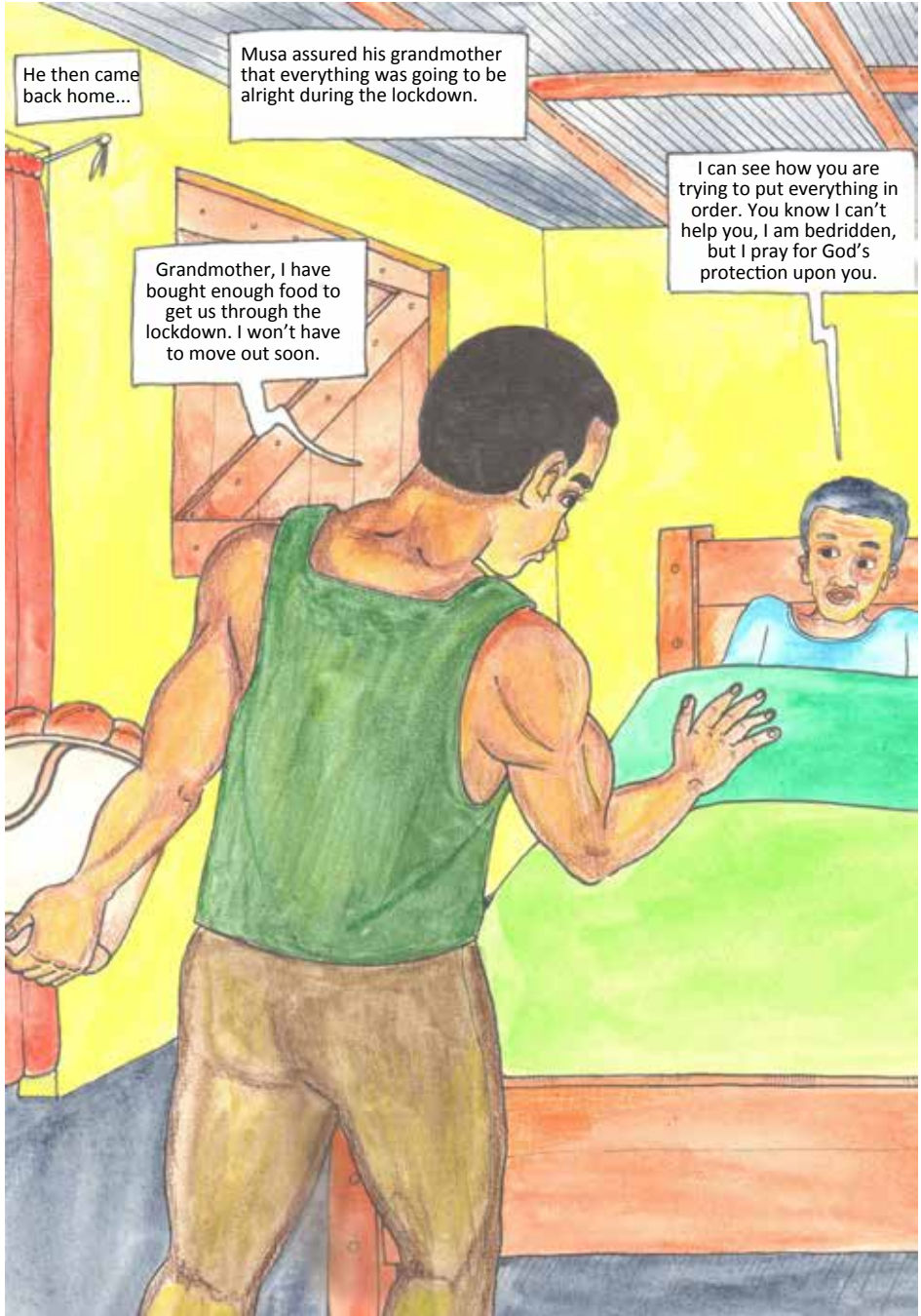


He used the little money he had made as a porter.



May God protect me, I moved out without a mask but have at least kept a distance of one meter between me and other people.





He then came back home...

Musa assured his grandmother that everything was going to be alright during the lockdown.

Grandmother, I have bought enough food to get us through the lockdown. I won't have to move out soon.

I can see how you are trying to put everything in order. You know I can't help you, I am bedridden, but I pray for God's protection upon you.

A few days later, some people came to see Musa.

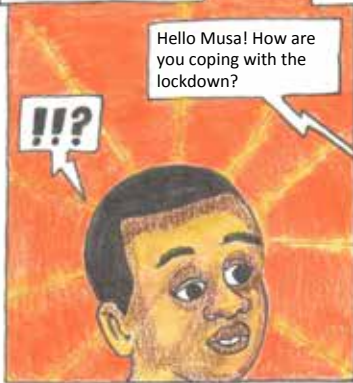
Musa feared that they were getting closer.

Don't worry Musa, we don't have COVID -19. We just brought you a proposal.

Hello Musa! How are you coping with the lockdown?

Please keep your distance, I don't want you to get near me. keep one meter.

!!?



I want to give you this money so that you can use it during this lockdown. It is a lot and I believe you need it especially during this period when we are not working.

I know there must be strings attached to it. Like I said, I refuse your money because I only take money that I've worked for.

This is an advance payment for the job our Boss gave us. We are supposed to rob a bank tonight and you must come with us.



No! There is no way I can accept money that I didn't earn. Just take it and go away! please!

Guys, get out of my compound!

The next morning.

Oh my God! Some people are becoming bad because of the lockdown. It's bad!

So, you are now threatening us?? Mind your words.

The news this morning is that, the police managed to intercept a robbery at a local bank. All the robbers were gunned down.

Next time, I will report you to the police.

OK.

They are making a bad choice.



The police calls upon the general public to always report suspicious people on the given police number whenever they see them to prevent crime.

In other news, the government and its stakeholders are giving out food to all poor families especially those who live by doing casual work. People are advised to move cautiously and cover their mouth and nose every time.



They rejoiced at the good news.

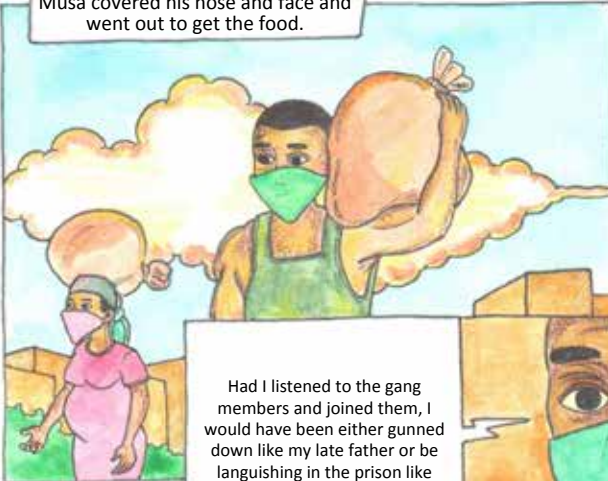


Wow! This is good news!

Good news indeed. I knew something good was going to happen.



Musa covered his nose and face and went out to get the food.



A few weeks later, things started returning to normal, all COVID-19 patients were being healed. The lockdown was lifted.



Had I listened to the gang members and joined them, I would have been either gunned down like my late father or be languishing in the prison like other criminals. I thank God I made a good choice.



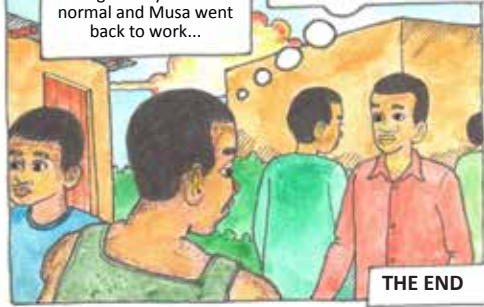
Musa kept the good habit of washing his hands.



Washing hands with soap is a good practice. I will continue doing it.

I can't believe life is going on like it used to. Corona Virus was really a serious pandemic.

Things finally become normal and Musa went back to work...



THE END



MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

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@Merckfoundation



Merck Foundation



www.merck-foundation.com



info@merck-foundation.com



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