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# Package 78, Script 9

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**Our People \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Notes to Broadcaster**

One of the major concerns in developing countries is the way in which successive governments have, through their actions and their inactions, intensified poverty. No wonder that, in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty eradication has gained a place of honour as a key indicator in the measurement of people’s growth and well-being, especially the marginalized.

Poverty reduction has been a key goal in all international aid to low-income countries since the 1990s. In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Development Goals, the first of which was eradicating extreme poverty. Poverty extends beyond a lack of income and touches on issues of social inclusion, opportunities, capacities, security, and empowerment.

**Host:** Welcome to today’s radio drama, entitled “Our People.” In our story, Mr. Boni is a farmer in a poor community called Bonikope in the Dangme East District of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. His life is difficult and unpredictable. The people of his village have no good drinking water – they share their only dam with animals. The soil is poor, with many salt deposits; the climate is erratic and the road network is poor.

This year, Mr Boni and his family harvest nothing at the end of the season and Boni must wait for the dry season before he can earn money. Boniyo, Boni’s wife, steps in as the main breadwinner for the family. She is expected to support the family through petty trading, but events don’t go as planned.

The drama opens with Boni’s lamentation about the struggles of life in Bonikope. Boni then persuades his wife to go to the District Assembly for a poverty alleviation loan. But unfortunately his wife is involved in an accident. Boni uses the plight of his wife to insist that the chief of the village summon a meeting to ensure that the village has more control over development projects in the District. The drama begins in a dilapidated house. The walls of the house are not painted and the house has no window.

**Characters**

Boni – Head of family

Boniyo – Wife of Boni

Bonibi – Son of Boni

Gossip – A female member of the community

Nene – Chief of Bonikope

#### Scene One

**Boni and Boniyo’s house**

**FX:** **S*ignature tune fades in, then out slowly.***

***Noise of animals in background.***

***Sound of dishes being cleared from the table. Nomo Boni (“Nomo” means “elder”) has taken the evening meal and Bonibi comes to remove the bowls for washing.***

**BONI:** *(Sighs)* Today is almost gone. Though the meal wasn’t the best, at least it is keeping me alive. What is a man to do when the harvest fails and his wife must take over as breadwinner? I want to ask my son if he has eaten his fill - a man should be able to provide for his children … but what do I do if he says no?

**FX:** ***Sound of earthen plates breaking.***

**BONI:** My boy has broken the plates. (*Pause*) Times are hard. You work hard on the farm only to encounter problems that are beyond your control – the erratic climate, poor prices for farm produce ... How can our tomatoes fetch a good price when cheap imported tinned tomatoes are on the market? In Bonikope, everybody is poor. At times I am tempted to say that we have offended the ninety-nine gods of the land. *(Pause, sighs and takes a new tack)* If one does not like the rabbit for its ugly ears, one must praise it for its stylish way of running. We have had some development projects set up here and though such support is laudable, we the people of Bonikope are perceived to be beggars who have no choice. Some projects are imposed on us. We have no say in them, from planning to execution. And if one dares to challenge, the project ends there. *(Sighs)* Oh I am getting tired.

**BONIYO:** (*Off mic, coming on*) My lord, what’s wrong? Aren’t you coming to bed? *(Pause)*

**BONI:** When did you begin giving orders? I will come to bed when I want. Are you aware that I am the head of this house? Do you think just because you provided the evening meal that you can take over the affairs of this house? *(More softly)* I do not blame you … times are hard. I remember what my grandfather always told me: “If you want peace, listen to your wife.”

**BONIYO:** You satisfy me first. You get in here. Are you not a man? Now you can sit there or come to bed and sleep.

**FX:** ***Sound of footsteps receding slowly into bedroom, then snoring as they fall into a deep sleep.***

##### Scene Two

**Boni and Boniyo’s house**

**FX:**  ***The cock crows.***

**BONI:** Boniyo, it’s almost morning, wake up. Let me tell you I wish to thank you for taking good care of the house. But for you we would have perished yesterday. Get closer…I say get closer…

**BONIYO:** No! No! *(He attempts to force her for sex.)* Not again! Boni, we must sit up and plan. How many times do you want me to be the breadwinner of this house? I thought you were going to take over this week. We need to sit up and plan what you will do until you can again be the family breadwinner. The only medicine for poverty is hard work.

**FX:** ***The cock crows for the second time.***

**BONI:** (*Sarcastic*) Thank you for your wonderful speech. Is that the second cock crow I hear? *(Sounding authoritative)* Let’s get up. But my request…….. *(brief silence, then in a reconciliatory tone)* Is Bonibi not going to school today? He should be up by now.

**FX:** ***Cock crows.***

**BONIYO:** There goes the cock again. Bonibi… Bonibi… Bo … o …ni…biii. Ah … are you still in bed? Get up. The birds are singing. Wake up and get ready for school. You know the distance from here to the dam is far and we need water.

**BONIBI:** Isn’t it too early to wake up? (*Pause*, *noise of Bonibi getting out of bed)*

**BONIYO:** Hurry to the dam now. Some of your friends are already on their way to school. Go while I clean the palm nut soup stains from your desk, before you carry it to school.

**FX:***(Noise of Bonibi picking up a bucket and going out)*

**BONIYO:** Bye and don’t be long – you must get to school on time!

**BONI:** *(coming on mic)* Is the boy gone? Good! As I was saying, you have almost taken my role as a man and head of the house. Money is power!

**BONIYO**: What do you mean “money is power”? I have already told you that I do not have money on me. Are you mocking me?

**BONI:** You think I don’t know what is going on in your women’s group? Aren’t you going for your poverty alleviation loan today? You think I don’t know? I am fully aware. You better wash and go and bring home some money. Money brings peace. *(Emphatic)* I am sure I will receive my share as the head of the house.

**BONIYO:** I know that when a goat is sick you don’t call it a carcass, but this is the seventh time I have traveled for the loan, all in vain. Both the bank and the District Assembly have endless excuses not to give me the money. Today it is a passport photograph, tomorrow it is group formation and the next they want to know if you have opened a bank account! This all costs money! I have applied for their flat rate of two hundred thousand cedis (approximately $22 US - *use local currency*), as if such a small amount will solve anything! And the worst part of it is, already I have used fifty thousand to open the compulsory bank account, and at least another fifty thousand on transportation.

**BONI:** Calm down, calm down, we must try to get all the money we can to survive this season. Complaints will not help us. Go and get ready for your meeting.

**FX:** ***Noise of bulls off mic. A wail and the sound of a crowd.***

**BONIYO:** What is happening? (*Pause and sounds of Boniyo running outside*) Oh no! The bulls are chasing Bonibi from the dam. Hurry! Hurry! We should not have to share our only source of water with animals….

**BONIBI:** *(Panting and sobbing, coming on mic)* I will never go near that dam again. The whole place is besieged. The animals are holding everybody for ransom.

**BONIYO:** My great partner, do you hear what your own son is saying? He is saying that the animals are insisting on their rights. They are claiming ownership of the dam for their needs. Indeed this is a parable for Bonikope.

**BONI:** The chief will herd the bulls away; this is our only drinking water. In fact, the water tanker which brings water for sale hasn’t come for some time, it is too bad.

**BONIYO:** Are you sure that the chief can clear the animals away? And even if the tanker came, could you afford a bucket of water at one thousand cedis?

**BONIBI:** With due respect, it is almost eight o’clock and the school drum will sound soon. I will manage to go to school without bathing but…but …

**BONIYO:** But what? Gone are the days when children’s voices were not heard. Speak my son.

**BONIBI:** For the past week, we have been asked to bring our school fees and, to tell you the truth, I have exhausted all my excuses. I promised the headmaster that the fees would come today. Besides, you know the condition of my school uniform. The moment I get up to answer questions, I become a laughing stock.

**BONI:** This is no serious issue but you blew the alarm as if heaven is coming down. (*Pause*) You all know that I am counted among the wise in Bonikope. Listen!

**BOTH:** We are listening.

**BONI:** I have discovered two remedies for the problem. Well, maybe three. Firstly, you need not go to school today. I am told you have an English language test. Well, if you know, you know! Who taught the white man how to speak English? Secondly, though my he-goat is young, I think the time has come to take it to market. Anyway, the last point is that Mama is going for her poverty alleviation loan today. Because the loan is small, it goes into the pot the very moment it arrives so we can use some of it towards your fees. Ah Bonibi, did you hear me? Go and catch the goat, hurry so we can get to the lucky market early.

**FX:** ***Running of Bonibi and bleating of a goat.***

**BONIBI:** (*After a time and panting*) I can’t catch it.

**BONIYO:** If I may ask, is the goat mature enough to fetch us the money we need? And, are you sure that I am going to receive the loan?

**BONI:** Stop asking questions. You should always stand behind me in difficult times. Instead, you ask questions to demoralize me. Our elders say that a poor man’s goats do not develop horns. We catch and sell them young. Now we are relying on you, Boniyo. Hurry and go to the District Assembly.

**BONIYO:** I will go inside and get ready. *(She enters the bedroom to dress, she sings)*Okay, that is that. I’m gone.

**BONI:** Bye-bye. (*Pause*) Bonibi, come here! You can go out and play with the other boys who aren’t at school. Around two o’clock, go to the station to meet your mother. When she gets the money she may go to the market to buy a little food for the house.

##### FX: *Musical break for 10 seconds then fade out.*

**FX:** ***Sound of truck engine and car screeching, then sound of crash, fading to silence for 5 seconds.***

**GOSSIP:** Is anyone home? *(She calls out a greeting at the entrance of the gate)* A g o o o o o! A g o o o o! (*To herself)* Didn’t they hear the noise at the new bridge?

**BONI:** Ah you always have the gossip! What is happening? Come! Tell me more!

**GOSSIP:** An accident, I say it again, an accident. Your wife Boniyo is involved.

**BONIBI:** *(Wailing)* We are in trouble!

**BONI:** I am coming right away! Oh I hope she will be ok. Oh my wife! That bridge was not built properly - it is unsafe! I tried to tell the contractor when they were building it and look what has happened now. My own wife is hurt! *(suddenly realizing)* Oh no… what am I going to do? How am I going to pay the medical fees? I cannot even pay for my wife’s medicine. Oh, what has become of us! Bonibi! You must go to the clinic and look after your mother … I will be there very soon, I want to talk to the chief. *(sound of Boni and Bonibi rushing out of the house).*

##### Scene three

##### At the chief’s palace

**BONI:** *(in an anxious voice)*Agoo agoo …Nene, are you in?

**NENE:** Come in, I have heard about the accident, it is very bad news; I hope your wife will be well.

**BONI:** Thank you Nene. I need to go and see her straight away but… but…

**NENE:** Calm down and speak. I will do all I can to help.

**BONI:** Thank you Nene, you are my only hope. I know I came here last week asking for a loan for my son’s school fees, but now the situation is serious. I have no money to pay for my wife’s medical fees. I cannot go there and face the shame of not being able to pay for my wife’s life.

**NENE:** *(shocked)* You mean you have not been to see her yet? What will your in-laws think of you?!

**BONI:** Nene, this is exactly why I came.

**NENE**: *(brief pause)* Boni, I understand. We will work to help you in this time of trouble *(sound of Nene counting money).* Take this fifty thousand cedis. That should be enough to pay for the emergency treatment at the clinic. Elder Boni, I am sorry to say this, I think you must start to plan your life against times like this.

**BONI:** Thank you Nene, my wife may not have been able to survive without your help.

**NENE:** You must go to her now, hurry. Come back later and tell me how she is.

**BONI:** Thank you Nene, I will. Thank you very much. *(sound of Boni leaving)*

**FX:** ***out in street, sound of cars and people milling about***

**BONIBI**: (off mic) Father! Father

**BONI:** There you are my son

**BONIBI:** (breathless, coming on mic) They have taken the casualties to the Battor Hospital and Mama is among them.

**BONI:** Ok, I will go there immediately.

**Scene four**

##### At the chief’s palace

**BONI:** Agoo agoo …Nene, I’m back.

**NENE:** Enter, Boni. How is your wife?

**BONI:** I was able to pay for some medicine for her, thank you. She is very sick but we hope she will recover. I will now start planning how to pay for her treatment in the long-term. Thank you once again for your help Nene.

**NENE:** A community must come together in times of tragedy.

**BONI:** But what about the bridge Nene? Something must be done about that bridge before more people are hurt - the contractors did a bad job!

**NENE:** I know, and I have been hearing more about the terrible accident. When calamity befalls us, it is up to me to muster courage and be resolute.

**BONI:** We have relaxed for far too long, calamity has already befallen us. The time to act is now or never.

**NENE:** I agree, I agree, we must take this into our own hands. Go and organize the people to gather at the market square at 3 o’clock and I will speak to everybody.

**FX:** ***Musical break for 10 seconds then fade out.***

**FX:**  ***Sound of a talking drum and voices of a large crowd. Crowd quietens as chief speaks.***

**NENE:** My dear subjects, sons and daughters of brave ancestors. Bonikope is our life and our future. After such sad events today, I have decided to hold an open forum so that we may take action to prevent such tragedies in our community. The project to build the bridge was done badly and left unfinished. We are told that the Government is eradicating poverty through projects like this. Should projects that are supposed to help us be the source of our misery?

**VOICES IN CROWD:** No! No! No!

**NENE:** It is not how much money you have in your pocket that tells whether poverty has been eradicated. We will only develop as a community when we have the power to make decisions on matters that affect us. This bridge was built incorrectly and does not serve our needs. My people, don’t we have shares in these projects? Are these projects not for our future, our lives, our livelihoods?

**VOICES IN CROWD:** *(Cheers of agreement)* Yes! Yes!

**NENE:** Then we must all together take control and speak out with one voice! I charge you to form a project monitoring team at Bonikope.

Let us wake from our slumber and ask questions when projects are brought to us. Let us consider the cost of the project, what long-term benefits it will bring, and let us use our local knowledge nurtured over generations. To alleviate our suffering we need honest and transparent relations with government, quality services and reliable social amenities. These are the indicators that Bonikope is a strong and successful community. Things like safe and clean water, employment opportunities, electricity, and a good road network. It is time for us to take responsibility for our own future and voice our concerns and our opinions. This is the only way that poverty in our community can be eliminated.

**FX:** ***Crowd* *cheers. Over the din are heard cries of:***

**VOICES IN CROWD:**May you live long… Yes… We have suffered for too long! This is the only way to survive! We support you! We support you all the way!

**FX:*****Cheers of crowd and drums, then fade out.***

**HOST:** That concludes our drama for today. Thank you for listening. Please tune in (next week, tomorrow, etc.) when we will present (name of program or theme). Good-bye.

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