# english black

# Package 90, Script 11

April 2010

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**What fattens pigs is still a mystery**

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### Notes to broadcaster

This script is based on a true story that happened to a widow named Mrs. Martha Matumbo from Chikalogwe village in the area of sub-chief Mpoto in Balaka district, Malawi. In Malawi, the government subsidizes fertilizer for the poor through the Farm Input Subsidy Program. The subsidy is significant – a bag of fertilizer that costs roughly 30 US dollars costs only three dollars if you have a coupon. The coupon is distributed by village leaders and agriculture technical staff and qualifies a person to buy a bag of fertilizer at the cheaper price. Unfortunately, if you have lost the coupon, they do not give you another.

Often, people in Africa are not interested in manure because they do not know how important it is, and how much it can benefit them. It took a dramatic situation for Mrs. Matumbo to realize the value of manure.

The innovation in the script has been dramatized to make it easier to adapt.

This script is a dramatization of a true story, and Mrs. Matumbo and Mr. Nine are the real names of the people involved in the story. But the words are not those of the real people – the story has been *adapted*. You may choose to use the real names of these people. If you do so, please indicate at the end of the script (as per the writer’s instructions) who spoke the part of each of the characters. You might also want to adapt the script for your own situation. In this case, you would use different names, but mention at the end of the programme that the script was based on a drama written by Gladson Makowa for Farm Radio International, and based on a real story from Malawi.

**Characters**

Martha: a widowed mother of two children and head of the family

Mr. Nine: agriculture field adviser in the village employed by government

Takondwa: a fictional name for Martha’s daughter

John: a fictional name for Martha’s son

Reporter: a reporter for a popular farmers’ radio magazine

*Musical link cross fading into below*

**Scene one**

**FX:** *Hoes dropping*

**Martha:** Huuuwii (*showing that she is tired* *and breathing heavily*).

**Takondwa:** (*Off microphone*) Who is there?

**Martha:** It’s your mother, Takondwa.

**Takondwa:** (*On mic*) Mother? Why have you come back so early? And why do you look tired?

**Martha:** I heard that the truck brought more fertilizer yesterday at our market … They are

selling fertilizer right now to those who have coupons. I want to go and buy before many people know this.

**Takondwa:** Can I boil water for you to bathe?

**Martha:** No, do not boil the water. It will take too much time. Just give me cold water. As I am bathing, prepare some food for me to eat. But where is your brother John?

**Takondwa:** He has not yet come back from school. But mother, have you checked to make sure you have the coupon?

**FX:** *Sound of plastic bag and the sound of drawing water and pouring it into a tin basin*

**Martha:** Yes! Look at this. Since the day I received the coupon, I have kept it in this plastic bag. I tied the coupon on a corner of a piece of this cloth which I wore that day.

**FX:** *Sound of water pouring into a tin basin*

**Takondwa:** Mother, follow me to the bathroom.

**Martha:** I am coming, my daughter.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene two**

**FX:** *Metal plates being cleared away*

**Martha:** *(Softly*) My stomach is full now. I am ready to go.

**FX:** *Sound of plastic bag*

**Martha:** Aha! Where is the coupon … where is my coupon now? Takondwa*,* bring the coupon. I want to go.

**Takondwa:** Which coupon are you talking about?

**Martha:** The one I showed you.

**Takondwa:** You just showed it to me and kept it. Look at your piece of cloth.

**Martha:** (*Louder*) Takondwa! This is no time for jokes. Where is the coupon?

**Takondwa:** Ma! What is wrong with you? You kept it. Did you give it to me or just show me?

**Martha:** I just showed you, but didn’t you take it when I was bathing?

**Takondwa:** No mum, no. Did you leave it on the mat?

**Martha:** I left it in this plastic bag with this 500 Kwacha note *(Editor’s note: 500 Kwacha is about 2 ½ US dollars or 3 ½ Euros*). I found the note about to be blown away. Luckily enough, there were some coins on top of it.

**Takondwa:** Why did you leave the plastic bag containing the coupon on the mat, mum?

**Martha:** Hey, I am dead! (*Crying*) Really, why did I leave it on the mat carelessly? Hey!

**Takondwa:** As you can see, the wind is blowing towards the street and many people have passed by. Don’t you think someone has picked it up already?

**Martha:** (*Sobbing*) No! Not my coupon. No, don’t say that, Takondwa … Just help me look for it. Oh God, I am a widow already. What am I going to feed these orphans I have?

**Takondwa:** (*Almost crying too*) You have started crying again. I hate that. Why did you leave it on the mat without telling me?

**Martha:** (*Weeping*) I was absent-minded. I was thinking a lot about buying the fertilizer.

**John:** (*As if he wants to join his mother crying*) Takondwa! Takondwa! Why is mother crying now?

*No answer*

*Martha weeps as if her husband has just passed away. She goes out to the street to look for the coupon.*

**John:** What are you looking for while crying along the street?

*No one answers. Mother continues weeping.*

**John:** Takondwa, answer me now. Have you lost money?

**Takondwa:** (*Without energy*) My brother John, we have lost the coupon.

**John:** Oh my God. Lost the coupon?

**Takondwa:** Yes.

**John:** It’s okay, it’s okay, mother. Leave it … I hate seeing you cry … When will we forget the death of our father?

**Martha:** (*Weeps*) I am crying about the coupon for the second application of fertilizer. Where will I get money to buy top dressing fertilizer? What I am going to use when the maize needs more nitrogen to make big cobs?

**John:** Leave that, mother.

**Martha:** (*Weeping*) I can foresee hunger in our house. Using basal dressing manure only without a second application of fertilizer brings nothing but hunger.

**FX:** *Door opening*

**John:** Let’s go into the house … You should sleep and forget this coupon issue, mum … It happens … Takondwa and I will search for it.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene three**

**Insert: FX:** *Signature tune introducing the popular agriculture radio program in your country. In Malawi, it is* Mwana Alirenji*.*

**Narrator on radio:** Today we are in Ntcheu district, where we are going to learn how to make liquid manure. Liquid manure is used as the second application of fertilizer for maize, which we call top dressing fertilizer.

*The radio programme continues and holds under below*

**John:** Takondwa … Our mother was crying because she desperately needs a second application of fertilizer. Go into her room and wake her up to listen to how to make this liquid manure.

**Takondwa:** I do not want her to cry any more. Leave her alone; manure cannot work as fertilizer … I thought we had already applied that composted manure?

**John:** Takondwa! They are talking about liquid manure as a top dressing. Mother said that she is worried because of the top dressing fertilizer coupon, not the basal dressing one.

**FX:** *Door opens while John is talking*

**Martha:** John! ... John! ... John!

**John:** (*Louder*) Takondwa, just go and work … Yes, mother?

**Martha:** What is wrong?

**John:** Oh, welcome mum. Sit on my chair. I wanted you to listen to this program … They are talking about how to make liquid manure for a second application or as a top dressing fertilizer for maize … they are saying it’s easy to make.

**Martha:** Okay, my son! Let’s listen then.

**Radio**: As I have already said, take animal droppings and place them in a bucket which is half full of water. Make this manure on the day when your maize germinates. Stir once daily for 21 days. On the 22nd day, you can apply in your field. Dilute the mixture before applying.

*The radio continues under below*

**John:** It is good and easy to make like I told you, mother.

**Martha:** Shhhhh, John! Silence please. We are going to miss important information.

**Radio**: When making the liquid manure, do not fill the bucket to the brim because the droppings will expand from the gas they produce. When diluted, the manure will be in liquid form. So after applying it in a planting hole, wait for it to soak into the soil before covering the hole with soil. Thank you.

**Martha:** Look! We have missed a lot. How much water do we need when diluting? We don’t know. How much diluted manure should we apply? We do not know that either!

**Takondwa:** It can’t help you, mother, so don’t bother yourself. (*Insisting*) Why waste your energy?

**John:** You missed a lot because Takondwa delayed waking you up. Takondwa, it is good to try some of these things we hear on the radio. Remember, “What fattens pigs is still a mystery.” We have to try things ourselves to see if they work.

**Takondwa:** So what will you do about the information you missed?

**John:** We will ask the agriculture adviser, Mr. James Nine. He will help us.

**Martha:** Thank you, John. Yes, we should ask Mr. Nine.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene four**

**FX:** *Sound of a hoe collecting goats’ manure*

**Takondwa:** (*Approaching*) John and Mother! So you still insist on trying to make the liquid manure you do not know very much about? … Oh sorry … How are you, Mr. Nine? Sorry, I did not notice you there under the kitchen shed.

**Mr. Nine:** It is okay. I am fine. How are you, girl? Mrs. Martha Matumbo, what is the name of your daughter again?

**John:** She is the adamant Takondwa.

**Takondwa:** (*Loudly*) John, he is not asking you, he is asking mum.

**Martha:** John! No, she is your good sister who encourages you oftentimes … Mr. Nine, she is

Takondwa, my second-borne child.

**Mr. Nine:** (*Laughs*) Children! Children sometimes argue even on small issues.

**Martha:** You see, children!

**Takondwa:** So, Mr. Nine, do you already know how to make liquid manure?

**Mr. Nine:** No, I do not know either. I also missed some information on the radio.

**Takondwa:** Look mum! It’s only you and John who are mad about this liquid manure. People do not make it. Even the adviser does not know how.

**Mr. Nine:** Don’t worry, we will experiment together. We will try our own innovations here and there. We can modify the technology.

**John:** Yes, we can innovate. Remember that the *Mwana Alirenji* program advises us to be clever and try to adapt technologies to suit our needs and environment.

**Takondwa:** Oh, I will join you just for the sake of company. Let us see what ideas you have for this experiment.

**Martha:** You are welcome, my daughter.

**Mr. Nine:** How many pots do you want to make?

**Martha:** I have five big pots and plenty of goat manure. So I will fill all of them.

**John:** What proportions are we going to use when soaking the goats’ droppings?

**Martha:** Let’s use that two litre bucket as a measuring container … I think that we should mix three buckets full of water with two buckets full with goats’ droppings, and continue like that until the pot is filled up.

**Mr. Nine:** That sounds good to me. What do you think, Takondwa?

**Takondwa:** Don’t ask me. I am just helping you to prove you wrong. Do you want to blame me if you fail? You can ask John.

**John:** This is now our modification. So let us indeed use that two litre-sized bucket as our measurement. The formula should be as mother said. For every three buckets of water, we should add two buckets full of goats’ droppings.

**Mr. Nine:** Do we have enough water?

**Martha:** We have enough for one pot. We will fill the other pots later today.

**Mr. Nine:** That is fine.

**FX:** *Drawing water from a bigger bucket and pouring into a big pot*

**Martha and Takondwa:** (*Counting louder*) One, two, three. Put two buckets of goats’ droppings now …

**FX:** *Goats’ droppings falling in the water*

**Martha and Takondwa and John:** One a ... a ... and … two …

*They all laugh together because, without planning to, they all began to count aloud together.*

**Martha:** Let me stir first.

**John:** We can stir after filling the pot …

**Mr. Nine:** I am leaving you now. I will pass by later to see what happens to the manure.

**Martha:** Thank you, Mr. Nine, our good agriculture adviser. You are always available for us.

**Mr. Nine:** Do not forget to cover the pots after you finish. And remember to stir at least once per day.

**All:** Thanks.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene five**

**FX:** *Sound of birds*

**Takondwa:** Mother, John and Mr. Nine, twenty one days have now gone by after making the manure. The manure has fully matured. How much water are you going to use to dilute the concoction? What was the radio’s advice?

**Mr. Nine:** I didn’t get that part either. Did they say we should dilute?

**Takondwa:** Look, mother, to climb up a tree is easier than to climb down. If we don’t know how much water to use, this means we wasted our time making the concoction.

**Martha:** It’s okay, my daughter. They said we should dilute the manure. I didn’t get the ratio for diluting right, so we will not further dilute our liquid concoction. Anyway, I wasn’t interested in it, because I do not like the idea of waiting for the liquid to soak into the soil before burying the concoction with soil.

**John:** I too didn’t like that idea. It would waste time. It would take us the whole day or even two days to apply all the five pots if we use that method. If the rains find us, they will make us busy with other work. Then the diluted manure would be diluted again in the rains.

**Martha:** If we do not dilute the concoction, the process will be faster indeed

**John:** If we do not dilute, all we have to do is carry the concoction to the garden. That’s all. No drawing of more water for diluting.

**Takondwa:** But the question is: how much of the undiluted concoction are you going to apply per plant?

**Martha:** That is a good question, my daughter.

**John:** Sir, why do you think they encourage diluting this manure with water?

**Mr. Nine:** I guess to reduce the power, so that it does not burn our crops.

**John:** Then we can use smaller amounts – one full cup of the concoction, using the small cup in children’s powdered milk containers. One full cup for each planting station where there is one maize plant, and two cups where there are two maize plants.

**Mr. Nine:** Good boy. You shall indeed become an agriculture adviser in the future, my son. Just

make sure that you apply the concoction at least five to 10 centimetres away from the plant to avoid burning the crop. Let’s make holes in the same way we do for the inorganic fertilizer.

**Martha:** Thank you, Mr. Nine. We will do that. So we are going to apply one cup for each planting station where there is one maize plant, and two cups where there are two maize plants. Right?

**John and Mr. Nine together:** Yes.

**Martha:** Okay, understood. Let’s start transporting the concoction now … How many trips do you think we will need?

**John:** If Takondwa, you, mother, and myself each carry 20 kilos at one go, it should be five trips each person.

**Takondwa:** Let’s go. We should finish applying what we carry before we carry more. That way, we can make sure that the concoction doesn’t get diluted if the rain comes.

**Mr. Nine:** Think of the rains indeed. Otherwise, you will dilute the manure, the one thing we didn’t want to do! Good luck.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene six**

*Sound of goats at Martha’s home*

**John:** Mother, I have finished feeding the goats. But I do not feel like going to school today. I want to meet this *Mwana Alirenji* reporter who is coming to interview you and see the success of the liquid manure.

**Martha:** No, John! Go to school. If you are lucky, you will see him after finishing school. Maybe he will come in the afternoon.

**Takondwa:** If he comes when we are at school, don’t forget to take him to the garden … John, why didn’t we invite the reporter during the holidays?

**John:** Remember, Takondwa, we didn’t know how long it would take before he came to see our success.

**Takondwa:** Mother, don’t forget to invite those people who were calling us mad for making the liquid manure. They should also grace the interview; they can be our witnesses.

**John:** I am happy, sister, that you joined us in this so-called madness. If not, you wouldn’t have found it easy today to talk like that.

**Takondwa:** I knew that if it worked and I didn’t help, I would not have been able to enjoy it. That’s why I participated.

**Martha:** You are smart, my girl.

**John and Takondwa:** *(Laugh) (Off mic)*See you, mother.

*Scene transition music*

**Scene seven**

**FX:** *Sound of birds; sounds of people discussing the beauty of some maize cobs*

**Reporter:** Hey, this is amazing. Do you mean these big long cobs, with two on most stalks, were grown from manure only? Explain how you did it.

**Martha:** Yes, this maize is a result of manure only. We modified the liquid manure-making

method which we heard on your radio program. Our agriculture adviser, Mr. Nine, and many of the people who are with us today are our witnesses.

**Reporter:** Let’s hear your story. This looks wonderful. We are live on radio now. Can you tell us how you made the liquid manure which gave this wonderful yield?

**Martha:** We mixed three measures of water with two measures of goats’ droppings. We stirred the mixture daily and covered it for twenty one days.

**Mr. Nine:** But she did not dilute it when applying it, as was the recommendation.

**Martha:** Because we did not dilute it, we applied the concoction with a small cup that we found in some children’s powdered milk tins. We used one cup where there is one maize plant. We used two of the same cups where there are two maize plants.

**Mr. Nine:** The concoction was applied 22 days after the maize had germinated. We made the concoction on the day of germination.

**Reporter:** This is amazing. I think that if many farmers were to adopt this technology, we could stop depending so much on inorganic fertilizer. The maize cobs are unbelievably big. Did you apply any fertilizer on this field before using that liquid manure?

**Martha:** No, not at all. The coupon was lost, so we had no fertilizer. But I always make composted manure in pits. We had just applied that manure as our first fertilizer application – the basal dressing fertilizer – when we lost the coupon.

**Reporter:** Where did you get this idea of making liquid manure?

**Martha:** From you. From your programme, *Mwana Alirenji*.

**Reporter:** Tell me more please!

**Mr. Nine:** I too learned the basics from the same radio program, *Mwana Alirenji*. We modified the method by not diluting it, and by applying smaller measures. But we learned from the people of Ntcheu on the radio program.

**Reporter:** You have heard it, dear listeners. Make composted manure for your first application, and then use undiluted liquid manure and …

**Martha:** (*Happily chipping in*) It’s true what you always say that we farmers need to be clever and proactive. This advice has helped me. We should learn and experiment with what we have heard, and modify where possible. Today, I am a very happy person. But on the day I lost the coupon, it was like a second funeral for my husband.

**Reporter:** The cries of Mrs. Martha Matumbo have turned into joy because of trying and modifying what she heard on the radio.

**Mr. Nine:** (*Off mic*) Yes, they have.

**Reporter:** What did you say?

**Mr. Nine:** Indeed, my friends, let us try things we learn from the radio. What fattens pigs is still a mystery.

**Reporter:** Your names, please?

**Mr. Nine:** I am James Nine, the area agriculture adviser.

**Martha:** I am Martha, the wife of the late Mr. Matumbo. The innovation was made possible with the encouragement of my children John and Takondwa, who have gone to school today.

**Reporter:** Thank you for inviting me to this village to see your innovations. Listeners, you can write us at this address: The Story Workshop, Private Bag 266. Blantyre, Malawi. Next time, we will be in your village to see your innovations. You have been with me, Gladson Makowa. Good day.

*Signature tune*

**Presenter:** In this play, the reporter Gladson Makowa was played by (name of voice actor),

Mrs. Martha Matumbo was \_\_\_,

John was \_\_\_,

Takondwa was \_\_\_, and

Mr. Nine was \_\_\_.

Dear listeners: try liquid manure! It works. In the 2008 to 2009 growing season in Malawi, Mrs. Martha Matumbo grew more than enough maize for her family with that liquid manure. I encourage you listeners to be clever and proactive. Remember that what fattens pigs is still a mystery.

## Acknowledgements

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Reviewed by: John FitzSimons, Associate Professor, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph, Canada.

## Information sources

## The interviews were done in March 2009 and October 2009 with Mrs Martha Matumbo and Mr. James. The source of the liquid manure technology is Lipangwe Organic manure farm at Ntonda in Ntcheu district, Malawi.

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