

STORIES FOR HOPE

<http://www.storiesforhope.org> • ph: 734.678.5512 (US) / 0788260317 (RW) • email: ppasick@gmail.com

Transcript of an Audio-Recorded Conversation in Post-Conflict Rwanda

Participants:

- Mukansanze Imfura Chantal
- Turatsinze Jimmy

Relation: Mother

Relation: Son

Facilitator:

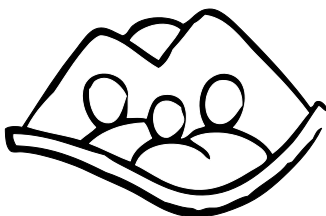
Date: August 2009

Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH0074

NOTICE:

- This transcript contains personal reflections and remembrances of Rwanda's culture and history and is exclusively provided with the participants' permission.
- Alteration or manipulation of content (which includes the creation of derivative works) is expressly forbidden.
- Individuals may copy this transcript solely for personal, noncommercial use and must provide full attribution to Stories For Hope and include Stories For Hope's contact information with any reproduction.
- Parties interested in other uses of this material please contact Stories For Hope.



STORIES FOR HOPE

<http://www.storiesforhope.org> • ph: 734.678.5512 (US) / 0788260317 (RW) • email: ppasick@gmail.com

(Mukansanze Imfura Chantal & Turatsinze Jimmy)

Story Number: SFH0074

Facilitator: Thank you for responding to our email. As I told you, my name is Rudasingwa. I work for this Stories For Hope Project. Will you please tell me your names and your relationship?

Elder: My name is Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Jimmy is my child.

Youth: My name is Turatsinze Jimmy and that is my mother.

Facilitator: Thank you. Jimmy do you have any question you want to ask your mother or Mum do you have any story you wish to share with Jimmy?

Elder: The story I want to share with my child is the story of war we went through that caused him to be an orphan when he didn't deserve to be. Jimmy the reason you are an orphan without a father, grandfather, grandmother and aunts is the genocide that happened in Rwanda. The genocide in Rwanda left many people dead. People killed each other, women and girls were raped and today parents are infected with incurable diseases and it is the reason we are sitting here today with me telling you that you should be concerned for your future. You need to sit in school and study. You need to prepare for your own future because you don't have any other family. You need to look to only God because he is the one who has brought you this far. Now that you have come this far it is not because you are an expert but because we were close to God. For you and us to come this far it was not because we had any special strength but because we had relatives and siblings who were there for us, who came from and tried to be parents to us. We had become like animals but they gave us hope. So during the war many were hacked, many died, we fled to churches and the churches were burnt, pregnant women were killed, property was looted, the number of orphans increased. So we fled, we went to refugee camps, after living in camps for a while, the RPF told us that we must leave the camps but we asked them where would go if we left? Who was there to find in our communities if we had all moved to the camps? They pushed us to move back to our homes

A conversation between Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Turatsinze Jimmy

and told us to that life had to go on. One would wonder how life would go on when there was no home where it used to be, no family, no siblings, no mother, no father, no husband. One would wonder where they were going and see no answers. However, life went on. We went back to our graveyards, lived and prayed until a time came when those who had committed crimes had to face justice, a time came when they said we needed to forgive those who had committed atrocities. And forgiveness is the current agenda. And so now I tell you, don't sit here and look at someone's child and say that his parents killed your parents so you should not love them. You have to love them, you have to talk to them and be happy with them. Don't hide anything from them and don't be suspicious with them or fear them, that is what reconciliation tells us. What happened is not their fault; it was bad ideology and bad leadership that is what caused genocide in Rwanda.

Facilitator: Thank you. Do you have any questions for your mother?

Youth: You say that the RPF came and took out (of the camps) Weren't they the RPF the same as those who were killing people?

Elder: I don't know of any part they may have played. What I know is that they are the ones who saved the country. I saw them fighting and saving us. You were a young boy of about 4 years. I remember leaving you behind at the church and fleeing with my younger child. I remember I was holding your hand and we were running. After jumping one fence, I had to abandon you and run. I just prayed that God would keep you alive. I ran and went hiding in the soghum and banana plantations while being hunted all day but God spared me and your sister. After a while I was blessed to find you.

Youth: You said that after the plane crashed the war continued. Before that weren't people dying? Is it the plane that caused people to be killed?

Elder: Before this people were not being killed. When Habyarimana became president, people were not being killed, however after a while things that I don't understand started happening. We heard that Habyarimana had been killed just like that. The very night his plane was shot down, those people start burning down homes, killing people, killing Tutsis. A time came when we started fleeing to churches, fleeing to schools but they followed us to the churches, schools and everywhere else –picking out the Tutsis from the Hutu's and then hacking them after identifying them. Those who were spared (Hutus) were then allowed to go back to their homes. That is the life we went through.

Youth: But these people killing the Tutsi...Were the Tutsi being killed for any particular reason? Had they done anything?

A conversation between Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Turatsinze Jimmy

Elder: Well it was that poor ideology of the government on power – and even they were not in power – it was the bad leadership of those in charge that caused the genocide. If there had been good leadership people would not have killed each other.

Youth: So is it the leadership that told people to kill one another?

Elder: Yes, that is what I am saying. There were discussions were ideas came up and they were planned, then a time came for them to hack people.

Youth: I have always thought that there was a cause to the rift...

Elder: No, there was really no cause because back then we used to give them our daughters for marriage, and our men used to marry their daughters. For instance my sister, who I follow, had married one of them. Your aunt! We had no problem with these people, we gave them our daughters and we used to be godparents to each other's children. We shared meals with them – but after that there was a bad ideology, they would sit in meetings and plan how people would die and as they did that the plane crashed and sparked everything.

Youth: I heard them say though that some were being killed because they were owned cattle or because they were taking this what might have caused them to kill?

Elder: Well maybe that was part of it but all we didn't have so much more wealth or cattle than them.

Youth: Why do they say that there should be reconciliation when someone who has killed deserves to be treated in the same way they treat others.

Elder: No. If we did that our Rwanda would revert back to where it was. We should not do that. This is why we need to forgive these friends of ours, live with them and live with them.

Youth: (Do you expect me to) Reconcile with someone who killed my family and never even showed me where they are so I can give them a decent burial?

Elder: We need to forgive them because it is also not their fault. That's why they were imprisoned. After a while they admit to their crimes, beg for forgiveness, then we forgive them.

Youth: I think that Rwanda did a good thing because the way I feel is that if I met one of them, all I would see in him is what he did. But after what you have told me, that we need to live with them and live in harmony without any problem with them...

Elder: You shouldn't have any problem with them. You need to talk to them, take the time to visit with them, don't suspect them or fear them, treat them like people who are just like you.

A conversation between Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Turatsinze Jimmy

Youth: Why do they say that it is the plane crash that caused it and yet his (Habyarimana's) children don't come back and live here in Rwanda?

Elder: The children of the president? For that I don't have an answer for you. It is their right to choose and maybe one day they will come back. No child is punished for the crimes of their father.

Youth: I would think they should come back so we can live together - I think they feel guilty for the crime they committed.

Elder: No, the children did not commit any crime, they need to come so we can live together just the same way others are being released from prison and we live with them.

Facilitator: It is indeed true that you went through so much. It happened to all of us Rwandese. Where do you get the strength and inspiration to carry on raising Jimmy and his sister? What makes you strong enough to keep on going?

Elder: What kept me stronger is that after coming out of the camps, we met people who had returned from all over and our country was restored. We met people who we could talk to, people who we could tell what we went through and they comforted us. They told us that life would go on. One who did not have a mother got one, one who did not have an aunt got one, children got homes to visit and we got homes where we could be able to leave them. The other thing we were able to do is go to God and pray. It did not prevent us from remembering what we went through. There were times when we were traumatized but we believed that we were no longer alone and even though our country had been through the worst, it has happened in other places as well. We took to God and prayed and relied on those who were there to comfort us. We had lost our parents and families but we now have them. People who talk to us, comfort us, visit us when we are sick in hospital and when we give birth so we felt that life had to go on. As for our friends in prison, we had to forgive them and allow them to come back and continue living.

Facilitator: Thank you. Without relying on those who are coming, on your own as a mother of Jimmy, what personal strengths did you use to reach this day and to rebuilt yourself?

Elder: Rebuilding myself? I went through so much. I am one of the mothers who were raped during the war. When the war ended, I moved on, I got married and went on to work in the market. I looked for work, a time came and I looked for a man, we lived together and had four children. Eventually he died and I remained with my six children. To this day am still taking care of them. But the way I raise them, it is only God who finds a way. I lived a bad life and after the war, I didn't live like a mother who goes home and finds house or to her husband who he left a

A conversation between Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Turatsinze Jimmy

home for her after he died. I have lived my life renting. I lived by getting close to friends and sharing my situation with them. Those who had more than me helped me out. After finding a husband, my life got a bit better. He went to work and brought home food, while I went to the market and sold food. After he died, God made a miracle and I got a “Mudugudu” (government house). To this day, I live with my children, I take care of them without anyone’s help.

Facilitator: Thank you so much, I can see that you have not had an easy life. Even today, you are still toiling to take care of your six children. I would like to know, within you, and not from elsewhere, where do you get the strength and what heroic traits do you have that help you to be able to raise your children. I would like you to share these qualities with Jimmy so that he can apply them to his life.

Elder: The heroic traits I have in me that I would tell him about – I accepted myself and after accepting myself I felt that the challenges would not defeat me. I decided to get up and work for my children and teach them love and to love everyone. To teach them to love doing good and to understand their lives. They need to sit down and study, to meet with everyone and believe that everyone can do good for their future. I did not make it on this day by myself but because of those who were there for me.

Facilitator: Thank you. Jimmy do you have any other question for mother or any advice you would like to get?

Youth: The question I have for you is – you say that we should reconcile with our colleagues. If for instance you go seeking employment and they talk to you rudely because of you are not of the same ethnicity and they don’t have that kind of heart. As my mother what advice do you have for me? Should I get mad and react with a bad attitude or should I be calm and walk away?

Elder: You are bringing back ideologies and we no longer go by ideologies. I would not advise you to do that.

Facilitator: Well, what advice would you give him? What advice do you have for the youth?

Elder: The advice I have for the youth is to love each other. Love one another and to about their future, to plan what for will develop them. For instance you can plan to go somewhere and learn something like driving or play a sport like soccer, or sit with your friends and talk about things that uplift you. That is the advice I have.

Facilitator: In all the questions you have asked your mother, do you feel satisfied, have you benefited from the conversation?

A conversation between Mukansanze Imfura Chantal and Turatsinze Jimmy

Youth: I am satisfied. Everything she has told me I have learned and listened. She has taught me love and to live in harmony my friends and treat everyone like a brother or sister. In the same way I should advise my friends who have that way of thinking to abandon it since it does not benefit them.

Facilitator: Thank you for the time you have spent here. The advice you have given Jimmy will be beneficial to him and to the youth in general.

Elder: Yes.

