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

Participants:

- Bankundiye Albertine **Relation:** Friend
- Nyinawumuntu Violette **Relation:** Friend

Facilitator: Mugabo Richard

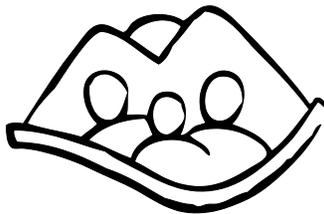
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Bankundiye Albertine & Nyinawumuntu Violette

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Bankundiye Albertine: Nyinawumuntu, something I would like to tell you about my life in general and especially about the family. And I was 23 years old and I lived in a family that had a lot of disagreements. But on the other hand I had parents/elders/ who advised me on these disagreements. When I still had a father, he seems to be a generally good person. He was lucky enough to have an education. This showed in his care for random the children and how would not be errors to assist them and get education. He helped educate a lot of children who are now the leaders in various institutions. Sadly he died in the genocide.

The experience is that some of those who have been helped by my father are the ones who perpetrated against him, disregarded all what he did for them. But also we can not ignore some of them that survived and helped by him may in fact recognize my father's kindness and his goodness by positive welcome me when I meet them along my way for instance they may say Oooh ! Are you the descendant of this and that (name of father or mother) ? Your father was a good person, he did this and that! And as I was too young at that time, then I can know more about my Dad's kindness through the elders' good report about his good work that he did.

Remember that when my father died I was 8 years old so that there are some things that accordingly I could not see or I could not understand because I was too young.

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Then due to his kindness or his goodness; this made him a model person and reputed father even if he was died so that his descendants may be well seen and well respected. The reason why I would like to tell you that when you do good things to others, the rewards are waiting for you in the future and if you do bad things to the people, you will be cursed at the end. If my father would do bad things in the community for instance beating people, fighting with people and other bad things, I should not be well welcomed by the community due to the bad behaviors and bad habits of my father and I should compared to my father according to his bad behaviors. But now when I try to do a little positive thing, the elders and other people who knew my father may say and think that I will do the same as my father! For example my father used to love laughing, I think this is one thing I have in common with my father. Even though I go through hard times I'm always hopeful. I may get hurt, but I know getting hurt is not the end of everything. The fact that my father had a good reputation, means people can trust me in hopes that I will have the same behavior as my father. This was in regards to my father's side.

When my father died, my mother's side had to convene. There was a problem that families were or not in agreement. My mother was the eldest in her family and she had two sisters, and their I watched as they argued back and forth. My mother's two sisters were teaming up against her they were keeping secrets from her and did not trust her at all. I asked my mother, "why don't they love you, why did they agree with each other but not you." I could not see how my mother was being wrong to either one of them. I tried to get a solution without being biased towards my mother. Where my mother said, "we have always had misunderstandings in our family, I wake up and move all around trying to find food for you." My mother was a very hard-working person. In the little that she had she made sure that we were as comfortable as possible. She gave us all she could give. She used to weave baskets and she did this all the time. That kept him busy and she did not have time to gossip like her brother and sister did. She refused to participate in the gossip.

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My mother's mistreatment always made me sad. I was very sad from the fact that my uncle and aunt did not care about us. And I thought if I had relatives on my fathers side maybe they would show me love. This made me grow up with a lot of bitterness but my mother always asked me to never be remorseful. My mother would say, "don't worry at all this will come to an end one day." That'll keep hating us and see that we do not hate them you will keep going to school and doing your chores, if you have food you will eat, if you don't you'll still be grateful. And then they will ask themselves why they are doing everything that they are doing and hopefully change their ways. I always asked my mother why we cannot hate them back, since they started it all. My mother would say, "my daughter you cannot be like them, don't repay hate with hate." if something bad happened to you they can help you, even though it seems like they hate you now. Do not talk back to them just be silent and show them that you love them. Even though my mother told me this, I was almost always bitter. I did not know why they wanted to show us so much hate. So that is the kind of family I lived in. In the end I decided that if someone wrongs you do not have to respond in the same way. We can not repay evil by evil, mother seemed almost unaffected by everything mainly because off her quiet nature.

Nyinawumuntu Violette: I'd like to ask you about your father's role in his family, do you think you can do the same kind of good deeds he did?

Bankundiye Albertine: My father did a lot of good things, most of them were because he was financially able to. I think I tried to follow in his foot steps. For example, whenever my father went to the bar he would start out the door and give people money for the old people who would take them home and make sure they get there safely. I have kindness in my heart, and it hurts me when I feel that I can't help someone. When I see someone in trouble that I can't help, I say, "God why can't I help this person?" to answer your question when I see someone in need especially widows

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and/or orphans and they needed something like body lotion I can say, "take this little money and see what you can do or, share with me what what I have."

Facilitator: If your father did good for so many people, has any of them come back to repay you for the kindness?

Bankundiye Albertine: Not really we have a saying kindness is repaid verbally. We're mostly benefit by knowing that we will be safe because of his good reputation. I may pass somewhere and someone who was about to do something bad will remember my father's good deeds and say, "let me go help her, her father was a good man." if I was to be repaid for everything my father did I would be very lucky. Mostly it's people telling me father did this or your father did that. Whenever I did something wrong people would say your father did not have that character. If you keep up this behavior who will be like your father?

Facilitator: We can see that the father did a lot of good things and left a good reputation and this is helpful to your life.

Bankundiye Albertine: Yes he did a lot of good things and that is why I say, try your best to do good everyday because it's a good investment to your children's life but also your own life.

Nyinawumuntu Violette: I would advise you to keep doing what your father did well, and about your mother's relatives you should keep visiting them. How do they receive you when you go there?

Bankundiye Albertine: I have no confidence in going to them. In 1996 after the war we lived together for a while. Luckily we got separated, my mother and I went a different way. So we were happy for a while. My mother would still go to visit them

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even after all the bad things they had done. She would say, "even though they do these things I still love them." This made us sad all the time. Wanted to know why she kept following them even though they did not love her. Where was she going? Her going to visit them truly made us sad.

Nyinawumuntu Violette: It should not make you sad. You should go do the same and visit them show them that's you are all one because they cannot chase you away when you go to visit them. Show them that you have a heart of loving them. If they are thoughtful people, they will start to love you back. And always try to be like your father, as you know your father did well and you are reaping its benefits. The same may happen to your mother's family their hearts may warm up after seeing your diligence. Not being far from them can also help.

Bankundiye Albertine: Thank you. Now that I have talked to you about my family I would like to tell you my roles in society. The different aspects of my day to day life. I was lucky enough to study up to senior six secondary school. I live in a society of very diverse thinking and behavior. I want to tell you my past because I grew up that very sad child. Luckily I'm not as sad as I was before, even when I was depressed I was always grateful to be alive. I have always been a person of very high morale all times. Sometimes I get sad but it does not last long, in most cases it happens and I think about my past. When I go to sleep is when all of these thoughts come to my head. I completed my education in 2006, through all these things in life. Everywhere I studied I had good relationships with my class mates. Even today where I live I do not have any quarrels with the people we are living with. On my side I would like to say that I do not like talking about things that do not concern me because that causes conflicts in people. Taking what I hear from one person and going to tell it to another person and adding a few of my own details. If the next person does the same thing, the truth is distorted. So I tried to avoid all this to this day. So I finished secondary education, but I did not continue because I got pregnant and had a baby! When I told my friends that I was

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pregnant she said, "you have to abort the baby! Because if you don't you won't be popular anymore and you will be an object of ridicule." I thought about the health risk, What if I died trying to abort this baby while I could survive child birth? Is abortion the most important thing right now? I told my friends I was thinking about it, since it was not showing yet. I felt what they were saying was right, because of my past and present life. I would think, "my mother does not have a job, I have not finished my education. It's all gone to waste. What should I do?" I spent whole days crying, dusk to dawn but in the end I decided to have the baby. I decided this had happened and I would face it as it is and try to be strong. This is where I would like to give some advice to the youth not to choose abortion because it is adding a second sin of murder to the one of adultery. And you do not know who your child might be. He/she might be the one to change your life. I want to ask the youth to be calm and diligent in your actions. If you don't get what you want today you will get it in the future.

Facilitator: What I can say to you is, saying that you had a baby should not make you not have peace in your heart. Even mothers finish their education if the opportunity is availed and I know you will finish your education. God answers at the right time and you will get a job and you will be able to take care of your child. I would advise you not to have any more children before you are married but you should know that the problems you are facing are not just unique to you alone but there are other people who have experienced the same thing. You should have a hope of having a good future just like everybody else.

Bankundiye Albertine: If I can ask you a question. I may be responsible for a house without a job, without any other form of income. Where can I get hope to survive if I am not doing anything which I know can change my life at some point?

Facilitator: What I can tell you is God makes many ways. You can not be sad and ask yourself how you will survive. Have you not seen other people with problems bigger

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than yours?

Bankundiye Albertine: Unless we talk, people have different problems. Like If I talked to a friend of mine and they had problems bigger than mine. People have different problems but we give them weight according to how people are affected.

Facilitator: I know a person who had a child and she did not have anyone to leave her baby with and even without a job. If you saw her she is just like every other uneducated person you know. I don't know how to tell you this. She is a very poor person even though she is educated. You have someone to leave your baby with, you can do those part time jobs and survive without begging. As you know there are people with problems bigger than yours. You should have faith in having a bright future.

Bankundiye Albertine: Thank you, I would like to give some advice to girls who have children out of wedlock. It hurts people a lot but I want to talk to/about parents. It can happen that your daughter may get pregnant and some parents can dis own her. Some parents say things like, "everything I invested in you is worthless now. It's all been reduced to zero. You are worthless to me." I was lucky enough to have someone to take care of my child even though she is also disabled and can not take good care of her. What I want to show is that my mother accepted me and the only reason I am hopeful is because of my mother. She did not verbally torture me, She cared for me. I would like to tell parents, because this is a common problem. A parent can say, "don't come back, I don't ever want to see you again. Go away with your bastard child" And chase away their children with a lot of anger. Parents should try to get closer to their children because they also have been hurt. Talk to them kindly because this may be in God's plans, just ask them not to continue this behavior and wait to see what God has install for them.

Facilitator: I have a question, you told us about your experience and you gave some

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advice as well. What kind of behavior should they have? A culture of giving and showing acts of kindness?

Bankundiye Albertine: Thank you, my advice to the youth is that you should see other people as yourself. This makes it easy to be kind to people. For example people used to wait for my father so that they can ask him for things and he would give them, you too can give with a good heart and your society will always remember you. For example I am always remembered for making people laugh or you can be remembered for having a good heart even without giving people any money. This builds society and makes other people want to emulate your actions. There is a girl we went to school with and whenever we went to visit her we would be amazed at how respectful she was and she loved praying. She did everything in the light. We all thought it she was very disciplined. Avoiding being the cause of conflict is also a good thing because this can tarnish one's image or being selective in your acts of kindness. We should always be kind irrespective of current emotions.

Facilitator: Do you have any further questions?

Nyinawumuntu Violette: No