

## STORIES FOR HOPE

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

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#### **Participants:**

- Niyonteze Olive
- Uwamurera Yvonne

**Relation:** Step-sister

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**Facilitator:** Mukakayange Veronique

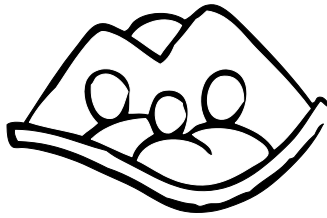
**Date:** 31/08/2009

**Recording Location:** Byumba

**Story Number:** SFH0097

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### Niyonteze Olive & Uwamurera Yvone

Story Number: SFH0097

**Olive:** I'm called Niyonteze Olive, Yvone is my step-sister.

**Yvone:** I'm also called Yvone and Olive is my eldest step-sister.

**Facilitator:** We have now begun the program, Stories For Hope. Feel free, and you can start asking her anything that you have always wanted to know.

**Yvone:** I would like Olive to explain to me how I came about on this planet and how our family was.

**Olive:** My dad\* was a polygamist. When I was born I found out my mother was the fourth woman in the queue. Other women had plots of land that they were using to earn their livelihood. But for your mother, they were living together in Rwesero, where your father used to work. Then war broke out when he had come to visit his other women in Kagyeyo-Muhondo. Your dad died when your mother was living at Rwesero. I used to stay with your mother in Rwesero, but when your father died we came to live with the other women in Muhondo.

**Facilitator:** Are you satisfied or do you still have more questions?

**Yvone:** After dad's death how did you people carry on, even though you were very young?

**Olive:** Before his death, all was okay. His wives used to live together. They shared everything, but then after his death everything changed. Every child went to start living with his mother and when my mother died I started looking after my little brothers and sisters. When they grew up, I also got married. All you need to know is that even if your parents die, life moves on.

**Yvone:** What do you think of your family?

**Olive:** Even if your family abandons you, you will have to stay with your brother as you have no inheritance. He is the one to take care of you.

**Facilitator:** She asked you about her dad and I feel you never answered that question.

**Olive:** Even me, the time dad died, I was young. All I know is that he died in the war. I was living with your mother, but I later shifted to go and stay with my mum. Your mother then went to stay somewhere else since your people never inherited anything. When war started people got dispersed, some died and others went as refugees in Zaire and the neighboring areas. They had been told that they should go bring maize for their families as people were starving. Those who brought the news of your dad's death were some of the survivors.

**Yvone:** You told me that people came and told you that dad died. Aren't there any relatives who were with my father and managed to survive?

**Olive:** Those that went with him all died except one uncle. After your dad's death, we were raised by our step-mothers and they took away all our inheritance. We later claimed it back. You have to be patient. Life is not easy but with a little effort all will be fine.

**Yvone:** When mum heard that dad had died, what did she do?

**Olive:** She was sad. She managed to pick herself up and decided that you should go and stay at your brother's place.

**Yvone:** I can see, you said that we managed to make it. So you as the children, what role did you play?

**Olive:** As I told you, problems never cease to end. Even as you stay with your brother you will continue to experience issues, but you have to be patient. I also went looking for work, and wherever I worked they would counsel me and give me some piece of advice. I should resist all temptations. They raised me to be the kind of woman I am today.

When I look at the way your grandmother cares for you after your mother got remarried to another man, she cares for you like your real mother. So respect her and listen to her advice all the time.

A conversation between Niyonteze Olive and Uwamurera Yvone

**Facilitator:** Can I help you to make some follow-up questions? If I heard you well, you told her about your dad and the family. By the way, how many women did your father have?

**Olive:** My father had five women.

**Facilitator:** Yvone, did you know about it?

**Yvone:** No, I didn't know.

**Facilitator:** Now that you have known today, I would like to ask your sister a question. It was difficult to stay in such a situation, so you went to look for work as a domestic worker. All I know is that being a domestic worker is not easy. It has a lot of challenges. It requires lots of courage, energy, and patience. How did you manage to stay focused until you got married, without getting an unwanted pregnancy? How did you manage to resist all the temptations?

**Olive:** I managed to avoid unwanted pregnancies, and when I would sense that I was in danger I would leave and go to work where I felt safe. It went on like that until finally I met the man of my dreams. Perseverance is the key to the whole thing.

**Yvone:** Now I also want to avoid those temptations. Men... how did you manage to keep away the men?

**Olive:** Of course men would come and tell me that they love me. They would come and demand to make love with me. I would tell them no and they would go away. After dad's death, the family rejected you, saying that you don't belong to us and that they don't know you. This should be an incentive for you to be careful and make something worthwhile out of yourself. You're still young and you should avoid all temptations. Take their advice seriously. I'm your elder sister and I managed to achieve this because I was patient.

**Yvone:** Going back a little. You as a family, what do you think about me? If brother dies, where would we go?

**Olive:** Our family is big. If your brother dies then you can go to your aunties, uncles, or any other place that will be determined by the family.

**Facilitator:** This child has a big problem, she doesn't have anybody to look after her. All the plots were given away and they have nothing. So you as her big sister, how do you plan to assist her so that she can also have something to depend on? We understand that there are lots of organizations that assist vulnerable children, so how

A conversation between Niyonteze Olive and Uwamurera Yvone

do you plan to assist her to access such organizations or the authorities? Do the local leaders know about your problem?

**Yvone:** They don't know about it because it happened long time ago!

**Olive:** They know about the inheritance problem because we started from the grassroots, but they said they don't know her mother. As her sister, what I can do to assist her is give her useful advice and connect her to organizations that assist vulnerable people.

**Facilitator:** If there are no further questions I would like to thank you for sharing your story about your family, how her father died, and how you carried on. You will take a picture in the next room so that it will be a sign of remembrance. This will help you to stay together and reflect about what happened and stay united. You should assist her to look for her mother if she is still alive. Thank you.

\*Olive and Yvone share the same father. "My dad" and "your dad" are interchangeable.

