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

Participants:

- Mukagatare Laetitia **Relation:** Aunt
- Uwihoreye Seraphine **Relation:** Niece

Facilitator: Mukakinyange Veronique

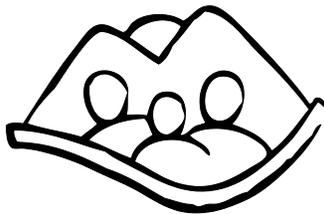
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Story Number: SFH0099

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Mukagatare Laetitia & Uwihoreye Seraphine

Story Number: SFH0099

Facilitator: Please introduce yourself before we begin. I welcome you both to this discussion, my name is Mukakayanza Veronique. This is stories of hope, a discussion between parents and their children so that anyone who hears the discussions learns from the dialogue.

Laetitia: My name is Mukagatare Laetitia.

Seraphine: My name is Uwihoreye Seraphine.

Facilitator: I think we can start by the child asking the parent any question. Please feel free, this is a safe environment for discussion.

Seraphine: My question is since she was in secondary school you know girls have many distractions in school. Sometimes a girl will have many boys approach her and not be able to choose but other times a girl can have no one approaching her and feel like nobody loves her. So I was wondering what it was like for her growing up.

Laetitia: Thank you, when I was growing up going into secondary school my mother took me aside to talk in private and advised me on how to handle things in a ladylike manner. She told me to focus on my goal of getting an education and not be distracted by boys. When I came here in Kigali for my studies, there were a lot of boys pursuing me but I would tell them that my time is not yet right and that I am not ready for that yet. So I kept this mindset until I was done with school then there was a lot of boys who came to me then. Some of them were serious and wanted marriage some wanted to just have relationships. But because I had decided to behave myself and wait for the time when I am ready for marriage and also a young man who is worthy of my time. Waiting gave me a chance to look and see which of the young men was a good match

A conversation between Mukagatare Laetitia and Uwihoreye Seraphine

and who was not. So this helped me make a good choice and the young man I chose was a good person and we are still together to this day.

Seraphine: I have had a relationship with a boy for 3 months now and he wants to have sex, he says that's the only way a girl can show a boy that she loves him. I always tell him that I will never do this and it really hurts him. So I wanted some advise on how I can tell him to stop asking for sex or go looking elsewhere .

Laetitia: A young man like that who wants sex is a hypocrite and a liar. Your virginity is part of what affirms you as a faithful partner. Your husband may think if she had sex with him then she may have had sex with many other people causing your relationship to have trouble. So I would advice you to stay away from that young man and wait. I am sure you will find a better partner.

Seraphine: Another question is, these days girls who reach the age of 25 or 26 without having a boyfriend get depressed and thinks they will never get married and have a family. So if you meet a young man and he is in another religion and he ask you to change religions. If you change religions then he could say you love him more because you are the one who changes religions. What do you say as a Christian or is it okay if he is a good man?

Laetitia: What I can say is that, it is easy to see someone who truly loves you. If he can stand firm in his faith and ask you to change yours but is not a good person. You have to take your time and look to see if this person really loves you. If you think he truly loves you then you love together. About changing religions, it all depends on your faith. There are some religions which can inter-marry but it all depends on your personal faith.

Facilitator: Have you understood her answer, would you like her to explain better what she means by "seeing if the person really love you"? So you can know what to look for.

Seraphine: Yes, I would like to know if a man truly loves you who you can get married with.

Laetitia: I think there are many ways to test if a man truly loves you, the first is sex. We have seen that his interest is just to have sex. Another thing is that if he has a different religion you can ask him to change religions if he really loves you.

Seraphine: Another question is, I loved a young man who asked me to have sex but I refused and there is another young man who just asked me to go visit him at his place.

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The way I knew him was through a mutual friend. This mutual friend came to me and said that there was a young man who was interested in having a relationship with me if I did not have a boyfriend. I said yes and then he came to visit me with his friend another day. When he left he said that it was my turn to go visit him at his place where he lives alone. I wondered if it was okay to go to his place alone even though he lives alone, or if I should also maybe bring a friend so I can be safe. I refused his offer to visit him at his place and this hurt me. So I was wondering if it is all right to go visit this young man where he lives or maybe if I should get a friend of mine to go with me so we are not alone.

Laetitia: I would also put that in the signs that someone loves you because someone who loves you will always bear with you whenever you don't do what they want. When people are engaged, the man is the one who visits the girl more. When I was engaged, he was the one who would travel and come to see me. I never traveled much to go see him and he did not have a problem with this. He came to visit me and my parents saw him and my family came to know him. You may go alone and fall into the trap and find yourself getting a disease. So since you are both new to the relationship, you should only visit him when you are finalizing wedding plans. You can only go with your friend if you are sure of these plans.

Facilitator: Yes, that was very good/useful advise. If I may add a few things to emphasize your point. You said you had good behavior, where would say you drew your strength to do the right thing?

Laetitia: The first thing is always keeping in mind what my parents told me that I have to be well behaved and not bring shame to our family. The second thing was that I loved praying and God's power gave me strength.

Facilitator: Do you have any more questions you would like to ask? Are you satisfied with all the answers you have received?

Seraphine: I understand what you explained to me, but sometimes we sit as girls and talk about our lives and relationships. They say they have boyfriends and they go out together, they stay at their boyfriend's places for long periods of time and do what they want to make them happy. And there is also a group of friends who are born again Christians and they would think I am a prostitute if they saw me at my boyfriend's place so we live with many people all with different ideas so I was wondering if my generation is going the wrong way and I should pray to be different or if I should pray to God to be different?

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Laetitia: Thank you, that is a good question. A good girl stays at home and respects her virginity, everywhere she goes they know who she is, everywhere she goes they know her family. That is how a good girl is. All this happened to me, I had a good reputation as a girl and made my parents proud. You could not find me in friends such as these, you do not share your life with anyone else. When you start a family, no one else can do it for you. You are the only one to build your family. If you had a bad reputation in your youth, when you go to start a family that past haunts you based on your previous behavior. That is why I was talking about my parent's advice. There is a saying that you do not tie a bad goat next to a good one. You do not go out with a boy and stay at his place. That is not what our culture says, even though people talk about being modern. Stay away from people like that before they start teaching you their ways. If you go out with a boy and sleep at his place, that boy will tell his friends and before you know it everyone knows about it. Another thing is that if you stay at your boyfriend's place you may have sex which leads to HIV and AIDS. This is then creating a big problem. So I would advise you not to have friends who tell you things like this, or do not listen to what they say.

Facilitator: So would you advise her not to visit young men and not to talk to them at all or is there a better way you could explain it so she understands it a bit better?

Laetitia: Because I think being with young men has many bad outcomes I would advise her to not be involved with them. It is the kind of problems you realize you have only when you are already in the trap and everything you feared has happened. So since I told you that I don't want you to involve yourself with young men, it doesn't mean that you can not have fun with your friends. What I was emphasizing was going out to hotels, night clubs, I can not support you in things like these. You can go to other places to have fun, celebrations because that is where you make friends so I can not stop you from going there.

Facilitator: Do you understand? Alright I think we can give you the last word and close the session we had.

Seraphine: I appreciate all the advice you gave me, I thank you for allowing me to have fun with my friends. This was the first time sitting down with my aunt and getting her advice. I encourage my age mates to sit down with elders and listen to what they have to say. I feel like I could sit with my uncle and get more advice.

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Facilitator: Thank you both for sharing with us, were you at all nervous about sharing your experience with us?

Laetitia: No, I was totally fine.

Facilitator: Alright, lets move over there and take a picture in memory of this occasion and if we need to talk more we can also do so. Thank you.

Laetitia: Thank you.

Seraphine: Thank you.

