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

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**Participants:**

- Mujawinyera Josephine
- Habineza Fidei

**Relation:** Mother

**Relation:** Son

**Facilitator:**

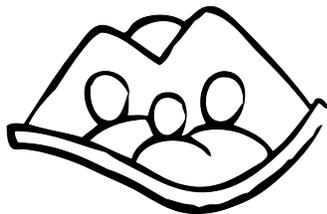
**Date:**

**Recording Location:**

**Story Number:** SFH0114

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### Mujawiyera Josephine & Habineza Fidei

Story Number: SFH0114

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**Josephine:** My names are **Josephine Mujawiyera** I am a mother of 57 years old, I have five children, two girls and three boys but as you know in Rwandan society we adopt other children. This boy here, we have been together for five years, and I've chosen him so that we may have conversation. Before giving the topic that we will be discussing about, I would like to ask him to introduce himself.

**Fidei:** I am called **Fidei Habineza** and I am 29 years old!

**Josephine:** I would like to discuss with Fidei about the number of children a Rwandan family may have, because in Rwanda there is the problem of a big number of population. And in our family we were 13 children, my father got married to my mother, they gave birth to 7 children and my mother died when she was delivering the eighth child, then my father remarried with another wife, they gave birth to more six children; and I was the first born to my father. When we became ten, we told our parents to stop reproduction, and they refused, but one of reason of their refusal was that my step mother had one boy so she needed another boy, yet she doesn't have the chance to get other boy definitely. She had five girls and one boy, and they stopped when we were 13 children.

**Fidei:** All of them are alive?

**Josephine:** No, three of them died but they died when they were married, it doesn't have any relation with our being many. When I think as an oldest child in my family, my parents cared for me, they had time to listen to my stories, but when we became many, my father had no longer time to care about those children. As I saw, my parents didn't give my young brothers and sister a lot of love as they could. Something else, my father worked, he was able to pay school fees to

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all of my sisters and brothers, but I think because of a big number of children he didn't care. There are some of my brothers who did elementary school, although my father was able to pay their secondary schools, but because my father didn't care about it he did not. And in big family there isn't a fellow between children, and parents became unable to manage it.

**Fidei:** It means that you knew the care of your parents because you were first born?

**Josephine:** Because I was old in my family. I knew the care from my parents. Maybe if we were few like three or four I think our parents will care for us easily. I would like to talk about it because in Rwanda there is big number of population. When I grew up in our village they shared traditional beer between neighbors, but because of the big number of population, there is no longer fellowship between neighbors.

**Fidei:** In our family there was always fellowship and a lot of sorghum and old men shared that traditional beer. But now there isn't, is the matter of the big number children?

**Josephine:** Yes, it can't happen again because big number of population causes poverty. I would like to let you know that because you are still young, you are now married and your wife is pregnant, have you ever thought about how many children you will have?

**Fidei:** We have planned it, we need four kids.

**Josephine:** Yes it is good to plan before so that you may see if you will be able to raise those children. You know that parents used to give their children a heritage and you know that they used to give boys more than girls, but nowadays all children girls and boys are the same. When you plan to give birth to four children you have to plan also how to raise them and think about their school fees until the university! For example, on my season when I finished studying secondary school, I started to teach in secondary school because it wasn't a lot of people who had that skill, but now you can't teach in secondary school with that level, and there are some who have that level but are jobless nowadays. So as a parent you have to think more about the study of your children. And this why I would like to discuss with you about that, not only saying that you will give birth to four children because when I was married, I wanted to give birth to four children and I was agree with my husband, but we gave birth to five children, because we didn't think and discuss more about it. I was thinking to give birth to two boys and two girls. Are the same like you?

**Fidei:** No, because I know some people who said that they will give birth to a certain number of girls and boys, but for me all children are the equal and same; be it boys or girls.

**Josephine:** Even four girls or four boys?

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**Fidei:** Yes

**Josephine:** It is good, you have been married at a young age, and how old is your wife?

**Fidei:** She is twenty-one!

**Josephine:** What do you think how long you will take to have those children?

**Fidei:** I think we can give birth after two years,

**Josephine:** It means that you will give one child and after two years you get another one, which means that in 8 years you may have your four children, your wife will have 31 years I think, how do you think or what will be your favorite way to stop give birth?

**Fidei:** We will check the doctor!

**Josephine:** OK! But even doctors have different ways of doing it, and you have to choose, and plan your favorite way before. And nowadays men can also use the way of family planning it is not only for women. As I told you we have planned to give birth four children but after the fourth child, we have been confused and we get another one.

**Fidei:** But it was your decision!

**Josephine:** No, being confused means that you don't take decision and execute what you decide to do. It was our wish to give birth to four children, but after those four we didn't go the doctor so that he may help us, that this why we give birth to the fifth child. So the fifth child has been a gift. I want to tell you that for married people they always delay to check the doctor, and with delay you found your wife pregnant. Last time I saw a mother who has nine children but she doesn't see any problem of that number she told me that if you can raise one child you can raise ten.

**Fidei:** Or God will raise them!

**Josephine:** As goes the Rwandan HABYARIMANA (God reproduces), HARERIMANA (God cares) but you will find that those children will not eat well, not wear well, are not clean, or at times get sick. In Rwanda there's a principle of "no more than three children in one family" have you heard of that?

**Fidei:** Yes

**Josephine:** A family can have three children at least, for even if parents raise children the government also raises children. You know that in our country we need that every child to go to school. In primary school if the class has big number of pupils it will affect all the class, so if we

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give birth at least maximally three children for a family, in their classes it will not have that problem, not only in education but also in vaccination of children and pregnant women, it is free, not exactly free but the government pay those vaccinations. That expenditure becomes lot when the number of children increases. Something else I thought that before you can give your child a heritage of farms and cows but now there is not enough to give as heritage. Let me ask something you plan to have four children, have you a farm that you can share it with all your four kids?

**Fidei:** I don't focus on my heritage from my father, and I don't have it now. I think I will work hard so that in my efforts I may live my family.

**Josephine:** Will you be able to plan for long for your children?

**Fidei:** Yes

**Josephine:** You have to think about it, it is not what I am capable only for today but also what your kids will be able. If we send children to school it is for make them able to work in future. If I say that I have heritage, it's to help us to raise well our kids and I will share my heritage to my kids but will that heritage help them? This why you have to think about all of those tasks, when you give birth! And it is why man created with intelligent and different from other animals that give birth any time without caring, but for human being has to carry to his or her children for long!

**Fidei:** Why do people like to have (reproduce) many kids?

**Josephine:** There were big farms, our country was not developed, and there weren't enough hospitals so there were those who died. Not only that, in their culture to have many children were to have strong forces because of insecurity. And they lived in cluster to keep that insecurity. But nowadays it is not the same, for example I have five children but none of them I live with, some are at school, and others are working away from me.

**Fidei:** It means that in that time children stayed with their parents for all their life?

**Josephine:** Not all, there were some of them who went far from their home to work but many of them stayed in their village, lived there and died there. So you can talk again with your wife because you are still young, and think again if it is really four children or decrease to three so that you give them everything they will be in need of!

**Fidei:** Just what I can ask her, it will be in my mind which means that I need your advice so that I can have an idea. If she accept it, it will be better but if she refuses I can advise her according to your advices.

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**Josephine:** You will discuss again about it, just the main purpose is to promote your family and you have to know that you are not in your only country but you live in Rwanda who has a problem of a big number of population. Have you another question to ask me; if not we can end but you know that any time you can ask me any question.

**Fidei:** I have another question. When I was single, we used to take time with my brothers, and neighbors, and tell them that when I was so young I used to go to my grandmother, freely I ate anything I would like to eat but nowadays when you arrived somewhere that there are eating, they can't give you anything!

**Josephine:** It is true. It shows that even food is no longer enough, it is not because of selfishness.

**Fidei:** But I can't leave the culture of sharing with others when I am able?

**Josephine:** You can't leave it; you can just give as you can. And if someone comes to you when you are eating you can welcome him or her. But you have to know that there is time when there isn't enough to share, that time you can't blame that person because when an adult eats twice per day the child will need something else.

**Fidei:** Another question so that we may end, you may have a wife whose you don't have common understanding, that time what to do for living that life?

**Josephine:** In all means communication is very important. Even women like to share with their husbands. The problem is when husbands ordering their wives, that time some women can refuse. In communication you share ideas. For example, you can tell her that you need few children but the wife says no, that time you can show her what you possess so that you may help her to understand. You can tell her that having children, it doesn't mean to give them what to eat and to wear only, but there will be school fees. I can say that in primary school it is a little bit easy, and cheap, but in secondary schools and university school fees increase, and it is not only school fees but also pocket money, and transport. You can say that the difference of age between my children will be two years but, I just want to tell you that you can have two or three children in secondary school at the same period. It will cost you more, so it is not only to think about a number of children but also the difference of age.

**Fidei:** But you can make a difference of five years, but with the intellectual capacity of children, they went in secondary school at the same time.

**Josephine:** Yes it is possible but when there are five years of difference it is not applicable to be at the same level of study. I mean all children to be in secondary school at the same period. And you are still young you can put a difference of five years so the first child will start primary

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school when you give birth to the second one and the second will start school when the first goes in secondary school and so on...And with that difference it will help you to reach your goal of giving birth to four children. Thank you.

**Facilitator:** If you're finished, let me ask Josephine some questions. You started with history, how parents care for their children, and told Fidei how he can give birth to few children so that he may raise them well and easily, so I would like to know which qualities good parents can have to raise well their children? That one, you told us how your step mother continued to give birth in search of a boy, what is the difference between a boy and a girl?

**Josephine:** Thank you. As a parent who has children, the important thing is to love and it is shown by the time he or she spends with his or her kids. Having time with your children is very important in their life and lets them tell you what they have in their hearts, and it helps them to have hope in different people. With time you handle their problems easily without hurting the children's hearts, and if possible the parent plays with their children. Before some parents used to scare their children, and it is not good at all, and in the family, parents must live peacefully between them without quarrels because it causes frustration to their children. Other things our children need to live well with neighbors but it begin by parents when they live well with neighbors, so it is very important to live with others peacefully. What is the second question?

**Facilitator:** You said that people used to give birth many times in search of baby boy, is there any importance for these days? What are the value of a boy and the value of a girl for these days and for the past?

**Josephine:** In the past, as I told you that a big number of children was forced because of insecurity, so parents liked boys because they were those who went to war, and in time of getting married, boys stayed near their families although girls went to other families where they were getting married, just the way boys stayed home in their village. They were those who were supposed to expand their families, as I told you that they lived in cluster, but for these days, things changed. All children, I mean boys and girls, are the same. I tell Fidei that even in time of giving heritage to their children, you have to give the same portions to all children, because they are their rights!

**Fidei:** It means in the past that when girls got married, they hadn't any portion in her family?

**Josephine:** Yes they had nothing but there was a small farm that was reserved to those girls who were unlucky in their marriage. But nowadays if we put all children in schools, it means that all children can help their children but all parents must raise their children without counting to be helped by them because when you raise your children is to help them to be

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developed. In the past, parents were thinking more about themselves only, but these days we have to think more about our children.

**Facilitator:** You told us a good thing that parents thought more about themselves than these days, but I think that it is you only. So where do you get that reliability, integrity, love that your father, your grandfather and your aunt didn't have to develop your children without being aimed to their incomes?

**Josephine:** I am not different from them but you see in culture and in people's lifestyle, things change, that means in the past if a parent thought about forces coming from his or her children, about the security from his or her children. But those forces, and security weren't only for their family but the whole village or society, but with time parents stopped to think about themselves, and change mind and start to think if the child that they gave birth to will be able to live well, politely so that he or she might be useful to himself or herself or to the society? The more people thought about the society, the country, not only their family, all of them changed their minds and began to help children to become useful in the society. And time comes when children went in boarding schools, where they don't live home again, where they passed a long time at school, and others worked far from their house. At that time the parent has to ask himself or herself if the way he or she raises their children is effective, if they will be useful wherever they will be. So nothing else special that I have but it is just how things changed, mindset changed, other cultures from different countries, sometimes there are some good things that we get from other countries.

**Facilitator:** I would like to ask Fidel other question, he told us that he will be able to buy what his four children will need, isn't it? To buy clothes, food for your children is the only important thing?

**Fidel:** No, they need intelligence, to study and to help others to have those skills,

**Facilitator:** How can you help them, when you give them what to eat and what wear only, as parent? How can those things make them intelligent?

**Fidel:** I will be the one to motivate them to go to school,

**Facilitator:** And you will be the one to pay for their school fees?

**Fidel:** It is me who will pay it.

**Josephine:** Fidel, why I told you about giving birth, the number of children that is worthy, and the difference of age, I would like you to have an idea about them so that you don't do it like our elders, so I wish you to have few children that you will be able to raise well. Thank you.

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**Fidei:** Thank you for good advice.

**Facilitator:** Thank you.

