

## STORIES FOR HOPE

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

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#### **Participants:**

- Mukankubana Rose
- Kwizera Jean Pierre

**Relation:** Son

**Relation:** Mother

#### **Facilitator:**

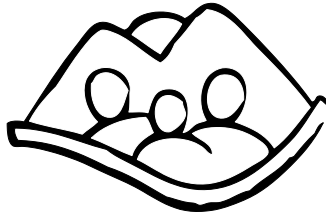
**Date:** May 2010

**Recording Location:** Byumba

**Story Number:** SFH0117

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### Mukankubana Rose & Kwizera Jean Pierre

SFH0117

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Thank you for coming, you are welcome, this is a place where they get stories for hope, Kwizera Jean Pierre we welcome you, and you may tell us you're other names, and you may also introduce yourself to us.

Thank you, my names are **Kwizera Jean Pierre**, I live in the village of Rubyniro, in the cell of Gacurabwenge, in Byumba town.

Thank you, my names are **Mukankubana Rose**, I live in the village of Rubyniro, in the cell of Gacurabwenge, in the in Byumba town.

**Facilitator:** So Jean Pierre, you can ask a question you have to your mother, so that she explains it to you. You may feel at home to use your time, feel as if you are at your own home.

**Kwizera:** Thank you, the question I can ask my mother; is the question concerning our lives, the secret she used to raise us during difficult time up to today and all the children are still ok without any problem.

**Rose:** Thank you for asking me that question, for me the secret I used, I inherited it from my parent who raised me. I grew up an orphan, I stayed with my father after my mother's death, and our Father raised us. I recalled on how our father raised us, and above all a man. So when I became a widow, when I lost my husband and remained with children, I took an example of my father who raised us and he was a man. I also decided to take a decision of raising my children, when I recalled on how our father raised us well until we grew up, we were left four children and I took the task of raising my children until they grow up and depend on themselves. I did it happily with love, because it was an inheritance which I was given by the parent who raised me.

**Kwizere:** It shows that it was an inheritance from your parent but there are some difficult things like schooling, taking all the children to school and in actual sense when there is no tangible capacity, how do you do it and where do you get it?

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**Rose:** When I recalled on how I didn't go to school, although I remained with my father, my father had been a teacher, but he wished his children could develop. So I didn't get that chance of going to school, so when I remained with you, I felt there is no any other inheritance that I can give you, so I took that plan of trying and take you to school so that you don't become like me, because I didn't manage to go to school. So I was helped by revolving fund, we could give each other money and when I could get that money, I used to keep it on the account so that I could pay when the time of paying school fees reaches. I knew I had no any other inheritance I can give them; I had no land to give them, so I took that objective of taking every child to school.

**Kwizera:** It is clear that it is difficult, not only education but also in daily life, when we are walking on our ways with my young brothers, there are no many life problems they have, how do you do it?

**Rose:** Because of my father's inheritance, I decided to love my children and try to do anything possible so that my child may look good because my father also had that aim, for us to live well and give him pride.

**Kwizera:** Thank you, it is clear that some children are in Secondary School, and there are some who are in University, how do feel, when you see your children are in the stage which you didn't reach? How do you feel?

**Rose:** For me, It pleases me because if I didn't manage to go to school and when I see my child is following well at school, I feel it is a pride because it will be an inheritance which I will leave with my children. As I had that objective of taking my children to school, they will also take theirs, so that they may reach on something which will be a pride to our family.

**Kwizera:** It is good that what you do for us, you inherited it from somewhere, and didn't our grand father tell you where he inherited it from?

**Rose:** He also inherited it from his father who didn't get a chance of going to school, when time came, very few people in past used to take their children to school, but when he had that schools started, he got that objective of taking him to school. It was difficult for the child to study because his father didn't understand about it because he was not learned but he managed to take him to school. That is where I got that inheritance also, as my grandfather took my father to school. That is the inheritance I followed.

**Kwizera:** It is clear that it is a generation inheritance from our elder grandfather which he gave to my grandfather and you later picked it and it shows that it is important from where we were and where we have reached. Is there any other inherence apart from education which you got from him that is helping us during these days, of which we don't know its origin?

**Rose:** That old man loved people and when I have the ability, I also try to show people love and know how to live with people because he knew how to live with people too. It helps me also and I feel it an inheritance I can leave for you as my children, to live peacefully with people and love them.

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**Kwizera:** I have known that because it is many times that I see different people at home, some whom we know and some whom we don't know but we are pleased with all of them. I didn't know that it is a habit from our grand grandfather. So I have known it also. What are the other manners that he used to have apart from loving people and encouraging people to go to school that can be good examples for us and help us?

**Rose:** He was generous, when he had something, he wished to share it with others and he also liked to advise people in families. He would unite families which had mis-understandings and they come together again. It can also be a good example which one can take to be useful in future.

**Kwizera:** I hear it is good, there are some things I was asking myself, why I see many people at home, why you join different revolving fund groups, so I have known that it is the one which is supporting us in studies and in our daily living. Are you happy with the way we are living?

**Rose:** It pleases me because when I see all of you are educated and still continuing with studies and has grown, I had fear that you will not grow and be like other children or reach on the stage of which you are now, I feel happy when I see it.

**Kwizera:** Again, you didn't manage to study because you had lost one parent, how did you feel about it?

**Rose:** When I lost one of my parents, I was the eldest at home, my father had a problem so I had to stay with my siblings, so I received it well because it was not that my father had no capacity of paying for me school fees, but he told me to raise my siblings and he will reward me if he is still alive, and when he was still alive, he used to give me everything I wanted and I would feel happy. So I also had that objective of taking all my children to school.

**Kwizera:** Yes, it is good and it is a good example, what about your siblings, when you stayed with them and for them they manage to go to school, how did they handle you, how was it?

**Rose:** They took me as their elder but respected me as their mother. Although they managed to go to schools, but I stayed at home, I helped them, I showed them love and when they grew up they also loved me as their parent up to now because I accepted to stay with them.

**Kwizera:** Do you think it was useful for having stayed with them and didn't go to school, and for them, they continued with studies, do you think it assisted you as a family or personally?

**Rose:** It was useful for us as a family, because our family was educated, although they didn't go to secondary schools, but they managed to live well like educated people, they depend on themselves, they have no problem and they are happy with their standards of living.

**Kwizera:** How were you patient with the idea of dropping from school and stay at home, how did you receive it?

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**Rose:** At first it was difficult for me, it was painful, but finally I accepted it happily because I saw that my father loved me and he was giving me everything, then I finally became used with it. I felt there was no problem of raising my siblings.

**Kwizera:** Then afterwards, was it alright with your siblings, were they happy with it or they had guilt of their elder staying at home and for them they go to school, how was it?

**Rose:** They were happy with it because if I could not leave school and raise them, they could not grow. They were happy with it. They had no problem with it.

**Kwizera:** when they left you at home and come back from school, couldn't they feel concerned in thinking about you?

**Rose:** As children, they didn't think about it but the parent who did it and had that decision of stopping me from school, was the one who had a big role in solving my problems. Children were still young, they could not think of my going back to school because it was not possible but the parent solved all the problems I had.

**Kwizera:** It shows that you inherit many things from your parent, many, actually all of them are good and it is a good habit that people should follow, some of them we were seeing them but could not know its cause. If our grandfather could be still alive and see how you care for your children, how do you think it could be?

**Rose:** It could please him because he was also happy the time I raised my siblings and they grew up, if he could see how my children have grown, it could also please him.

**Kwizera:** It is a good thing which one should be pleased of, but on the other hand it needs a lot of courage, one to stand for her siblings, and stand for your children, isn't there any other strength you have to manage that?

**Rose:** No any other strength apart from God who gave me ability to love you too and raise you, because I know, there are some parents who left their children and went to re-marry but I got a decision and got that habit of how our father loved his children, I felt I should love you too, and it pleased me with the help of God.

**Facilitator:** Truly, in order to discuss with him from roots, and to enlarge it, he still has many questions, if I assist him, there is somewhere you said God helps people, there are some widows who have bad heart, she fails to receive it, she is always jealous, the way you said you raised your children in peace and love, and tried to get them education and put in more effort, if there is any other person in your family, apart from your father, if there your aunts and your uncles, you can tell him, if they are there, may be it can help him. If the widows can have no jealous, no fornication and no bad heart that you raise children with secure environment up to that good stage you told him, from there he can understand. What are the other secrets you used apart from your father, what about your mother or other people,

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what did they help you, and what advice did they give you? What inheritance did they leave for you that you can tell your son to take it as an inheritance?

**Rose:** As I mentioned that my parent gave me foundation of raising my own children, his family,

**Facilitator:** Mother?

**Rose:** No ,my Father, I lived with my mother for a short time because she died when I was ten years old, I was still young, I was not able to have discussion with her because she was always sick. So I reached on all of those goals due to my father, but also in my family, I had my paternal and maternal uncles, they used to advise me; telling me; you stayed with your siblings, and now you have become a widow, how will you handle it? They were always near me, advising me how I will raise my children and love them, although the family could advise me, but I also knew God. If I could meet problems, I could kneel down and pray to God, and then God gives me happiness. If we could meet a problem of not having good meal, I could thank God who wished it that way, it also helped me. Together with the advises they were giving me, I loved my children as God gave them to me and even their father loved them, only that time reached and he went. I remember in 1990, these children went astray to Kavumu, then he followed them there, he slept there and brought them back. So, I saw how he loved them, and before his death, he got sickness and was hospitalized, then he told me that whatever happens, raise my children, so that is also my secret with him, nobody else knows about it but he told me to raise his children. So I took it in mind that where he is not around, I will raise them. It was my aim, there was no way, it had to be like that.

**Facilitator:** Keep on telling him, why you are different, you walk as if you have no burdens, you don't show that you have that problem.

**Rose:** I don't carry burdens because I told you I am helped by prayers, God gave me peace of mind, he gave me love for everyone, that's what helps me, and when I consider the covenant I made with people who are no longer alive, my father also liked children and he liked his grandchildren. When I produced a child, he could feel happy and know that I was going to have a family. If he was still alive, he could be helping me. He showed me that love so that where he is not around; both him and my husband, I was left with it, to love my children because their father and their grand father loved them, it helped me like that, and that is the inheritance I have which I should leave for my children. I ask them to love each other, what ever happens, if we have hunger or not, but we will not because we have God who provides us with everything.

**Kwizera:** It looks like it is an inheritance from a wide family, you talked about your cousin and the brother of your mother, your maternal uncle, they also gave you the same advices, you even mentioned that my father asked you about it, didn't his death change you in any way, as you had all those advices before, didn't you feel any change?

**Rose:** There was some change because it surprised me, the life we led, I never thought one of us will go and the other one remains. So we lived like that and one day it surprised me and the other parent who

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used to advise me and showed me love also went, so I had a problem, I felt I will not live. I remember after war, I was telling people that I don't have five years ahead, because I had lost a parent who loved me, a husband who loved me, I am left with children who I will not help, so I told people that I don't have five years ahead. But when I knew how to pray, after losing all of them, I put God in their place. I said God; it is you who will help me because I am unable. I started to pray like that, God helped me and gave me ability up to today, that's why you see it like that, you don't have any problem, it is because of God's prayers, but otherwise it had disturbed me and felt to die but it was not possible, but nobody dies before his time, although I asked for death, it didn't come because God had a plan which he had prepared for me, to make it possible for me to raise you, so I lived like that up to today.

**Kwizera:** It shows what helped you lately was being close to God, and it seems prayers and being close to God kept helping in many things, who raised you in that way of obeying and following God?

**Rose:** After war, we were praying before, but I was a child who was born in church, I found my father and my mother were Christians, I used to attend church services but I could take it just as a ceremony, sometimes, one could go to church just because she bought a new dress. But after war, we had a Pastor called Mbabazi who was leading prayers here, she realized that we were many widows who remained, she advised us to have prayers, to select a day of having room prayers, she told us to pray to God because for us we were not able for anything, she is the one who made us start room prayers. We started prayers, we joined choir, we joined Mother's Union, in all of those areas we were gaining, they were advising us how to handle ourselves because we had been left alone by surprise, we didn't know how it happened.

**Kwizera:** So it means even the Church had a big role in assisting you to raise us and even adding on advises and the inheritance you were left with by parents.

**Rose:** It is true the Church played a big role, even in education, it helped two children to study, it helped me.

**Kwizera:** I feel it is good to go in the parent's inheritance and to follow God's way, is it so simple to follow God's way immediately and feel that your problems are somehow released or they are going to be answered?

**Rose:** It is difficult, it takes time. It took me time to accept it because I was not used to that life, but when I reorganized that I wasn't alone, it helped me and I was discussing with people we share the same problems, so it drew us close to God.

**Facilitator:** Truly, your son has grown, he inquisitively ask you, more especially, he is the one who remained with you, in order to help him more, you can tell him all the things that helped you, if you still remember them. Although you met war and it became a weapon for you, afterwards, if he reaches in the same situation, how will he handle himself, as he plans to step ahead from youth? How will he handle himself, if he reaches the time of marrying, use this chance, although you will have more



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discussions, but let this chance be an open ground for you, advise him, and then he gets many answers in the questions he has and it fulfills with what you told him.

**Rose:** Thank you, as I had told you, in order to reach on these it was because of love, the first thing is love, to love people around you, to love your family and to love all people without discrimination because among your friends, you get people who can advise you, they tell you do this or go this way in order to solve your problems. So, the first thing is love and then you learn how to live with people.

**Facilitator:** You can continue from there and tell him the problems faced by young boys, from there, if he knows those problems it will help him, they will not affect him, he will not regret to say if I had my father, he could have told me but he will say, even my mother can. So, if you tell him the problems faced by young boys, he will protect himself from them and he grows well. Then in that time of marrying, because you can see he is grown up, he completed University, I think it is good if you tell him something.

**Rose:** Thank you, the first thing is not to have a bad friend, although I told you to live well with all people, but when you live with people, you choose among them, the one who is profitable for you. Sometimes you live with a bad friend and he takes you in bad things without knowing it because you took him as a friend. You should select among your friends and know who you will live with because there are some bad friends who can influence you in bad things, without knowledge because you took him as a friend. You should select and know that this person will be a good friend or a bad friend because bad friends are there, who can influence you in bad things. You learn how to select, you can say I have lived with this person for two or three months, according to your conversations and advices, at your age you can select whether he is a good friend you can keep, and if he is a bad friend, you can minimize your relationship without accusing him of disappointing you and later on the relationship ends and you keep trusted people.

**Kwizera:** I think those are good advices which will help us in our daily life, what shall we tell our children if we have chance of producing them and if we are still alive so that they may know it; either as an inheritance or stories of the family that we can tell them, so that they don't wish to ask them to any other person while they don't have any.

**Rose:** It is true, thank you, I remember phone ringing

**Kwizera:** As for us we have heard those advices, what shall we tell our children if we produce them and we are still alive, which can be an inheritance or supportive so that they know those things earlier without wishing to ask questions to the elders while they don't have them.

**Rose:** Thank you, that is a good question you have asked me, because I remember long time ago, although you were not lucky to have and live your father, there was an old man, your uncle who remained, he tried to write a historical book which will help you to remember how the family was, I think that's where you will be getting information because he tried to explain and put a lot of information. You will be getting that book and read it, he tried as an old man and included all the history, it will also help you to tell your children how it was long time ago, about the elders whom I



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didn't manage to tell you, he also helped me, I thank him, when your father died he was there for us, it is a good job, I thank him. You will be picking helpful information to tell to your children, but the most things is the love you will have for your children, showing them your love, it will help you, I think it is also a good inheritance. An inheritance of love, loving them, an inheritance of loving their people and loving all the people, I think it will help you.

**Facilitator:** I think what you have told him is good, an inheritance of love; it is something many parents tell to their children, if the one told gets chance of understanding it, are there any acts of love attached from there, as you told them how you paid for them school fees and told them how education is important and the way you taught them other jobs, there are many activities, among those activities, what tangible examples can you tell me, apart from loving them and showing them love, how can he love them?, what actions can he do that can indicate that he is inheriting them with good conduct?

**Rose:** In loving them, he can show them love, but he can also train them to work, as I had told you, I was trying to get money from revolving funds and I could buy a garden, and I could plan that we shall dig in that garden and survive, I could also buy a livestock and rare it, either a goat or a sheep, up to the time we reached at a cow. Loving children does not mean feeding them, taking them to school, you should also work to give them example, they can ask themselves why our mother did was doing this at an old age, trying to cultivate, to rare, then they ask themselves what they can do to their children. I think it can also be good example, which they can copy to help their children.

**Kwizera :** Yeah, I think they are good things which one will follow, not only talking about them but better to have visible actions showing how one is helping his own people or children and also having love and selecting good friends who will not led you astray, I realized that they are good advices that one can follow and also teach others, most especially to work, to try and work so that he may support himself and his dependents, either siblings, friends or family, I think it is good and they are visible activities, more especially, work speaks louder than words.

Isn't tiresome to think about those things and put them in action?

**Rose:** It is tiresome but because it is responsibility as a parent to work, you accept to be tired so that in future, your children can recall that our mother was trying to do this and that, so that it becomes an example for them, although it could be tiresome for them, but they also reach on that target.

**Kwizera:** You told us about the book which my Uncle wrote, did you try to ask him how he wrote the family history, what he used and the people he asked to achieve that?

**Rose:** I asked him and he told me that he was helped by the elders who were left in the family, there are some things he didn't know also, which he asked them, so that he may write that book, I asked him why he wrote it, then he told me that he wants the remaining generation to know about family history when he is gone, so that they may be able to help their children.

**Kwizera:** Yeah, I think it is good.

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**Facilitator:** Where can he ask about that book?

**Rose:** We have the book, they gave it to us, I gave it to the elder child to keep it and show it to his young siblings and tell them how it is because for me I am growing old, he is the one who is supposed to take care of them and give it to them to read, on those who know how to read or explain to them, and they will manage that if they make a step and say; let us go to the family and know what is taking place there. Like I annually go home, although I know that I will not find anybody there apart from relatives, but I go there every year to know how they are doing because of love I have for them, I converse with them and I do it out of love, and when I reach there, they receive me happily with no problem. That's why I said, they should also make a step to be near the ones who will be remaining to maintain love and know about their family history.

**Facilitator:** That is something very good, it shows strength and thoughts that one has, I think it has pleased you, how did you receive it, to know that there is somewhere else you will get more family history, apart from this one which your mother has told you, and to your mother; how did your heart feel when you knew that that there was that family history?

**Rose:** To me after seeing, even when he was writing that book, he told me he was writing a book, I could ask myself what he was writing but I could not understand, then after sending it and when children read about the people they know and others who they didn't know, I felt happiness and said "A person who is educated is really educated", it also contributed to encourage me to educate my children because if I was not lucky to study but I will take my child to school because it will be useful to him, as you can see, if he was not educated, he could not manage to write that book, he could not manage it. It pleased me.

**Kwizera:** I feel it is good and it has pleased me, if there is some where else one can get more news about the family, more especially in writing because written document can stay long rather than story telling which sometimes can forget. What other advices can you give me, which can help me and my other fellow youths?

**Rose:** The advice I can give you, you can see in these days it is difficult a young boy to be in these days at your age but what I can wish for you , what I can ask you is to be patient with what you see, to be clever and definate from bad and good. To know that what I am going to do is good or bad, you know it, to know how to choose because I know at your age, you can choose by yourself, to know that thing is good, I am going to do it or that thing is bad, I have left it, that's what I can wish for you, as you have reached at that age, it also pleases me to see that at your age, I don't hear any complaints about you, to hear that your son is like this and that, I also feel happy and thank God. I also wish you to be happy in future, to live with people well, to have a family, to have children; it will also please me when they say that child is for so and so. It will be my pride also. That is the advice I can give you and you may also advise your fellow youths, who are younger than you because you have seen a lot of things, you will manage it all by being patient.

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**Facilitator:** Don't you have the last question before we end, may be the way you received this discussion which your mother told you or how you were happy for it, and how did you receive how she accepted your invitation?

**Kwizera:** Yeah, I think I can thank her so much, to have accepted my invitation and to have answered some of the questions I was asking myself and I am so happy because I have gained a lot of things which I have known which I didn't know and I have listened to her advices they are good, they will help me and they will also help my fellows age mates and my young brothers, it pleased me very much.

**Facilitator:** For you, how did you receive it, when you received the invitation of the child to discuss with him?

**Rose:** It pleased me and i thanked him, that is something good, because we normally don't get enough time to sit together, at least like one or two hours, it is never possible because of what he does mostly schooling, he doesn't have time but it has pleased me to see we have sat for all these minutes discussing, asking me questions and I answer him as I could, it pleased me. Thank you

**Facilitator:** So it means that the discussion room is open, even if it is not only today even any other time in any problems he meets in life, you will be there for him; you bring back the discussion room.

**Rose:** No problem, I accept it because there is no problem in discussing with him, it has pleased me, any time he has a question, and he can ask me.

**Kwizera:** Thank you very much.

