

STORIES FOR HOPE

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

Participants:

- Uwamwezi Philomene
- Masengesho Rosine

Relation: Grandmother

Relation: Granddaughter

Facilitator:

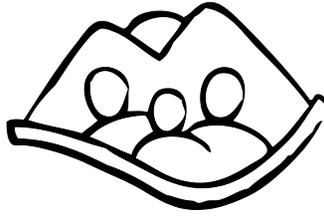
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(Participants' Names)

Story Number:

Facilitator: You are welcome here, where we conduct stories of hope. It's in this hall where we talk about stories of hope. We have been waiting for you, thank you for coming. I think you can introduce yourself to one another.

I am called **Masengesho Rosine**.

I am called **Uwamwezi Philomene**.

Veronica: Me too, I will be helping you in this conversation, I am called Veronica. I facilitate these stories of hope.

Facilitator: You are welcome, you can ask you grandmother so that she can tell you all you are hoping for.

Rosine: Thank you. Today I hear women saying that they were given dignity and they [are] now ok. So I want to ask you how the situation was for women and girls before genocides; they are happy today that they have got prosperity.

Uwamwezi: Thank you, it's a good question as you have asked that before girls and women had no welfare. It's true they used to be just house keepers, could not study as it was supposed to be, they couldn't be given opportunity to talk in meetings, but today they have got higher positions in government; their welfare is generally ok just like the gents were.

Facilitator: I think that to answer Rosine's question very well you can first tell her what exactly showed the unfairness of a lady during that time.

Uwamwezi: So many evidences showed that there was imbalance. Whenever there could be a problem at home, it would be the girls to stop going to school and keep home cooking or taking care of the sisters and brothers. For social events men would tell women to keep home, which is different today. In brief they thought are that nothing they can afford.

A conversation between Uwamwezi Philomene & Busabe Nicole

Rosine: I usually hear that before women use to be beaten by their husbands, were there no laws covering them?

Uwamwezi: No, they were not there as we have had that, they were just house wives, whenever a wrangle could come up they would just keep quiet. But today in case of a problem with the husband she calls authorities to solve it anywhere.

Rosine: After genocide, I found myself alone, even some people whom I got, they also came from abroad. What had caused them to desert?

Uwamwezi: First of all, the killings that happened in Rwanda did not start in 1994, instead it had started before, only that that of 1994 was very different from the former. In 1959, our parent faced murder, but which was not massive like that of 1994. The Hutus had planned to kill the Tutsis, but a large number of the Hutus did not participate 1959, that's why so many people managed to escape.

Rosine: Which means even before there were orphans?

Uwamwezi: Yes they were there.

Rosine: What would happen say if a youth met a problem like pregnancy to an orphan who would just being helped by someone. Could she be sent a way?

Uwamwezi: No, she could be just forgiven as whoever could be taking care could have just decided to help in all situations. They would just become patient and life continues though people are different.

Rosine: So what advice do you give such parents who still harass their children in case of unaware pregnancy?

Uwamwezi: We who are still alive, we are going to look for more time to advise one another because some times when we meet with a child with such problems we become traumatized. Some people receive these children targeting certain profits and when such problem happen, they feel they are no long going to achieve those profits, hence harassing and sending them away. So we are going to look for more time so that in case one of us gets a problem we give her the best advice. Thank you.

Rosine: This is a situation where people killed all our parents during genocide. Such people we meet but no one has ever thought of even to ask forgiveness. That pain even makes someone traumatized. What advices do you give such a person who has that kind of problem?

Uwamwezi: Just as a parent, I told you that we are not meeting as it should have been. So we are going to look for time, meet, discus those problems and later call you to give us your questions too. We who survived, we should comfort you. If someone killed your parents and relatives and he is not jailed or he finished a sentence, try to talk to that person because we believe what happened will not happen again and by talking to that person patiently, he or she is likely to ask themselves and change. I think that's the best solution.

A conversation between Uwamwezi Philomene & Busabe Nicole

Rosine: There are some who got released, but still continue doing such habit of killing. What advice do you give the government officials as they continue to traumatize us when we hear that today “he has killed so and so, the other day he killed so and so.”

Uwamwezi We believe that what happened will not happen again, but in case of such a person, you sue him or her to face judicially and I assure you that they will get punished because when they neglect [threats/things like this], it creates a way for what happened. Yet the government assures us that it will never happen again. So for such people use the authorities concerned and present evidence.

Rosine: There is a case today whereby a girl completes school, delays to get a job, for the mean time when she is still unemployed, you find that the parent is mistreating her, he does not give her some money to buy for herself some other things she needs and yet when she tries herself and gets means to solve such needs, [it] still becomes [questionable] by the parent to explain how she got the money. What advice do you give such parents?

Uwamwezi: It’s true. There are some parents who feel that what money a child gets, they should be the one to control it and yet the child herself has very many problems of which the parent cannot manage; so what I can advise such parents is to free their children though it’s not 100% for children. So you should still also try to explain the source and what you are planning to use it for so that he or she does not think that you’re getting it in a wrong way. So for such cases when they continue, you look for one person and tell her so that he or she can talk to your parent about how it should have been. So you need to be patient, people are different and think differently some consider so many things, there are some who consider food they feed you, medical care. So try to be patient on another side.

Facilitator: For sure, most of the questions Rosine has continued to ask are about imbalance. Can you explain to her what used to compose it in your day in comparison to today? When you were still youth there were children who were orphans, maybe due to genocide that happened in 1959 as you had told us. So was there injustice by then for women?

Uwamwezi: It’s true, even in those days of 1959 there were orphans, but orphans of those days, they were different because the 1994 genocide left us with nothing.

Facilitator: What was that of 1959 or what best describes it? Or was there injustice for those children?

Uwamwezi: That of 1959 children were not like these of today because there were few people who died compared to that of 1994, but today for you when you have a question you ask me if I don’t solve it you go to another one. There are some children who don’t have whom to tell their problems. So this time the situation is tough, that’s why the way of living is different from that of long time ago.

Facilitator: Rosine has asked many questions and she still has time to ask more but could you tell her what describes the women’s prosperity today by giving clear evidence that best describes it in comparison to the past days?

A conversation between Uwamwezi Philomene & Busabe Nicole

Uwamwezi: The main cause for women's prosperity is a good system of governance which allowed girls to study go for social places like others. Today they study, pass and go to higher institutions of learning unlike before where they could not. But today we have good governance; ladies take part in leadership, drive, build house and [more]. There is nothing that is reserved for men only, instead they all do the same work. Be a wife to drive her husband, it's normal today unlike those past days.

Rosine: Could you please tell the origin of these tribes that lead to the death of many people here in our country.

Uwamwezi: These tribes of Batutsi, Bahutu, were brought by poor leadership which would say, "the other one is a Tutsi, let us remove him from this position and put in the other who is a Hutu." So such discrimination flowed down to the grass root, hence causing bloodshed.

Facilitator: Rosine, continue to ask more questions, you still have time so that you get satisfied.

Rosine: I grew up seeing police keeping peace and order, but I was told that before genocide there were no police. So how was peace and order kept?

Uwamwezi: Thank you. There was another body responsible for keeping peace. There was army force and security organs.

Rosine: Compared to today, how was the security and education of a girl child in the past days?

Uwamwezi: Thank you. Concerning education of a girl child, she was limited. Whenever there would happen a problem at home it would be the girl to stay school and keep home cooking and all other sorts of work at home. Sometimes she would be even having an older brother but stay home. However, today there is equal opportunity, boys and girls sit together in school. But still, where parents see their child not doing the right thing, they try to correct her; be [it] in the [way] of dressing, going out for social hours and coming at a very late hour. The parent still owns right to control the child today because there are many problems that a girl child may meet, like sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy they are not controlled.

Rosine: I would like to know whether you got a chance of studying in your days.

Uwamwezi: I was born in 1966, studied and even completed my studies, but I could seek for permission from my mother to go for wherever I could be in need of going, so that if it's possible I went or stopped, but because of the other freedom I told you I met a problem of pregnancy as in secondary level we were boarding and failed to follow parents advice. So I produced, but at home they didn't accept that negatively they helped me in up bringing the kid and I went back school. I remained their daughter and I am now a married woman.

Rosine: So in which did you stop?

A conversation between Uwamwezi Philomene & Busabe Nicole

Uwamwezi: I stopped in senior three.

Rosine: When I look at teachers who taught me, they are those who studied before genocide but are very bright, yet today someone completes school when she or he doesn't know French. What secret did they use to achieve this?

Uwamwezi: In those days those who wanted to study would study and they [took] enough time for studying compared to today where they study in phases that is morning or afternoon phase. These changes that we are experiencing also contribute. In the past days it was Kinya-rwanda and French throughout, but today those who started with French are ending up in English, Kinya-rwanda is no longer concentrated on at school, yet it's the language we use most at home. That why most people don't know these languages.

Rosine: Still, there are some who completed before English was introduced in, but you find that they are not fluent in French speaking. So what method did you use so that we who still want to study can adopt?

Uwamwezi: The numbers of hours that we used at school were many compared to today and we could study in French thought. But today there are very many schools that abandoned French. For example, where my children study, they study math in English and when they get home I fail to coach them. So during our days parents who would be knowing something would contribute to their children when they get home, but today their language use is a barrier to most parents. Like me when I started school, my parent was the one who taught me how to write. But today I don't know English or French. So for those parents who can afford they hire teachers who know both languages to coach their children home. Those who can't afford end up like the way you have talked about.

Rosine: For a person like me, sometimes I might be in class and suddenly think about the way I'm surviving and end up getting frustrated. What advice do you give me?

Uwamwezi: It's a good question, but paining. So whenever you begin feel that way, don't always hesitate to [say] sometimes, "I might be sick," as the life that we went through somehow left us lame to the extent that sometimes I can even spend like a month when I don't want to hear anything. But you can tell any other parent your problem, or you tell me and then I also tell someone that, "please my child has a problem, comfort her." Always say it as quick as possible.

Facilitator: Rosine is asking a question about trauma and it's what most of the questions are based on mostly to a girl child and other children who could be having similar problems. So what secret did you use so as to go through that situation such that she can also use it even to assist her fellow youth.

Uwamwezi: The first thing she should know is who is the right person to ask and even when I'm still alive I can show her such people that even later wherever she meets that person she says "ooh I have got a chance to meet this person my mother told me about, let me tell her what is paining me." So am going to encourage other mother parents always to meet and where need be even invite these children too so that we explain to them whatever we feel is necessary and even answer their questions. I will

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stimulate parents such that we meet a lot so that tomorrow a child may not meet a problem and fail to study [when] today life is about education.

Rosine: Sometimes one might try her level best at school but things fail and when you bring report home, the parent begins to put pressure on you and even abusing you, thinking that most probably you wasted most of your time in wrong things. What advice do you give such parents?

Uwamwezi: It's true some parents behave like that. Well, sometimes a child may perform poorly due to careless reasons but can also happen due to the kind of life that she or he is going through; that's why I'm going to be meeting a lot as parents so that we solve your problems. Even those who have been failing because of such trauma reasons, we comfort them so that they don't happen again, as we shall be near them in all situations be school fees issues, and other social issues.

Facilitator: Rosine is asking questions that most orphans meet today as an orphan too. She wants to [know] whether you grew up as an orphan too and how did you go about that as it can also...

Uwamwezi: For I became an orphan before I even started primary, the only advantage that I remained with [was that] my mother was still there and my brother had completed his education by then so I didn't really become traumatized as I had those people whom I had remained with. Only that I could look around and miss my father, but otherwise life continued. So people go through different situations, you can't say you want to live like so and so as we guardians have an equal capacities. Just become patient and as we talk, that we as mother parents we are going to sit and look for means of getting closer to you and even explain to you as when I explain to you, you will also become patient and accept what we can only afford.

Facilitator: Are those whom you had remained with still alive or some died?

Uwamwezi: My mother later got sick and died though she died when I was old. I had finished studying, the other child whom I produced as it was even in time of war, the father was a driver in Burundi, so when we came back from refuge as he would follow up all about the pregnancy, he looked for me. I said that there is no need to care for a child alone when the father is also interested, moreover he was even able as he worked as a district driver, so I became lucky like that and got married to a man who was educated. So that relieved me of the entire trauma that I had as we started staying together, but not all who produced unwarily were taken by their husbands. There are some girls who produced in the same days, but fathers of their children failed to accept them. So they give those children to their families and continue with studies and they are important people today. But even me, I didn't have any problem, we married officially in government, he is still working and generally we are ok. But still even when you don't get a chance to marry the father of your child life continues. So what I tell you always pray to God. I met severe challenges in that marriage from the families to the extent that it was the district authorities that were handling our issues. But I prayed for him and myself so that we manage to be what we are today because I feared to divorce and meet the same problems which I could be later asked by my children. Even the last night he had come, I have been going for early morning prayer and leaving him with the padlock, but he has become patient today and what if I also go and thieves block into the

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house as I left home at 5am today. So life continues, there is no need of being worried. Today we are lucky, some produce even four times and continue with education get married; if marriage fails you become patient and continue with life. If it goes on well, you gather efforts and prosper. People are not equal as many lost their people who died in genocide. So pray hard, I witness prayers. I tell you recently 2006 I got a problem with my husband because of the little money that he was earning as he had got a loan to the extent that I sued him so that my children do not suffer tomorrow. He could not let me know that he is not coming or even when he comes he could sometimes greet me before a certain visitor; my children were growing while seeing that situation. But all those were solved by prayers, one morning he woke up calling neighbors asking them how we are. It's because of prayers, since 2006! Neighbors could have a look at me and think I'm ok when deep inside I was burning but patience and praying pays all if you feel free and patient; give out your testimony and feel that there are some people that have more problems than yours, you will succeed.

Facilitator: Could you be having any other question?

Rosine: No, I feel satisfied.

Facilitator: So how have you accepted this, I mean your grandmother to have agreed to come and converse with you?

Rosine: Sincerely I'm glad as it is my first time. I feel it's like a dream.

Facilitator: How have you accepted this, Grandmother to see you daughter inviting you for a conversation?

Uwamwezi: This child is mine, but tell her that the way we are living today is different from that in the past days. So what I can tell her is to comfort her; you are lucky because you are still in twenties. For me I can no longer go for studies and yet today life is about education. We no longer have big land that we cultivate, or do business or have families that we go there for assistance. What I can help you is to tell you to be patient in those problems, praying to God and aiming at studying, otherwise those problems of poverty and so on will end and even us who are still alive, we shall support you.

