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

Participants:

- Gasani Gerarid
- Rukiriza Antoine

Relation: Father

Relation: Son

Facilitator: Kalisa Benon

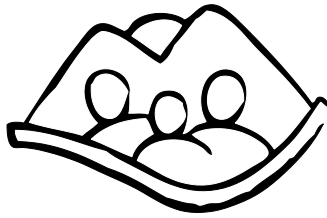
Date: 7 May 2009

Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH30044

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Gasani Gerarid & Rukiriza Antoine

Story Number: SFH30044

Gerarid: I was once working in the army and I know the way that soldiers live. If you don't keep on working you can't manage to live in this world. Nowadays, human beings depend on their skills in order to survive. I can't advise him to steal but instead I would advise him to keep working hard in order to earn his living.

Antoine: Father you have just said that you were a soldier; I also want to become a soldier and serve my country. How is the army, how was the battle when you go to fight? Will you allow me to become a soldier?

Gerarid: It is possible you can be a soldier. I was also a soldier, and as you know, if you don't help your child get some skills or help him get your skills you can't claim to be the father of that child.

Antoine: Thank you.

Facilitator: Tell us how did you join the army? Why did you leave the army? We would like to know that kind of situation.

Gerarid: Yes.

Facilitator: We want to know the time at which you joined the army and when you left it.

Gerarid: The main reason that I left the army was because of incurable disease. I was suffering from stomach ulcers.

Facilitator: When did you join the army?

Gerarid: I left the army long ago, so I can't remember very well the exact time. Soon after I came to live in this area during the time of Michobero, I think it was almost 15

A conversation between Gasani Gerarid and Rukiriza Antoine

years ago. I am now living with my children and I advise this child to keep working like others so that he is able to earn his living.

Antoine: How did you join the army? Did you go for training before joining the army?

Gerarid: Before joining the army my father had given me some skills. I was a carpenter and I also used to cultivate banana plantations, for example. We had also cows. I would graze them, my father would milk them, and we would feed on it. So I wish you to live the way I was living.

Antoine: Father I can see that we don't have cows, where are they?

Gerarid: As you know many things were destroyed by war, so our cows also got lost like that. We are getting old, so you have to work in order to earn your living.

Antoine: I understand, we have to stand firm and work and own cows like any other person. I like cows, I feel like I could enjoy grazing cows, milking them and fetching grass to feed them. There is a question that has been crossing my mind. Isn't there any cow that is still alive? For example, a cow that was given to another person so that he could graze for you?

Gerarid: You could go to a person who was grazing a cow for you but he would tell you: they stole it from me. They stole it, and then what can you do to that person because you can see that he is not owning any cow.

Antoine: After growing up I will join the army, so I want to know how the situation was in the army at that time

Gerarid: The army life was good. They would tell you to go there and you would go, or they would say go over there to that hill and you would go there and come back peacefully, or they would say go to that forest and we would go and come back peacefully. If you feel like joining the army you can join it because you can't deny your child a permission to join the army. I can't deny my child the permission to join the army because I was also a soldier.

Facilitator: Life in the army was okay, so you can encourage your child to join it as you did.

Gerarid: Yes.

Antoine: You have said that currently the army life is not easy, so if you advise your child to join would it be fair to him?

A conversation between Gasani Gerarid and Rukiriza Antoine

Gerarid: If you think about the situation of the current army in Burundi you end up noticing that its army is still facing a difficult life because they are always facing many challenges. I can say that if he gets informed that there the country is secure, he can join the army.

Facilitator: When did you go to Burundi? Why did you take refuge?

Gerarid: I decided to come here because my native country is Rwanda.

Facilitator: When did you go to exile?

Gerarid: We went to exile in the 1970's.

Facilitator: Why did you flee from Rwanda? What were you fleeing from?

Gerarid: We were fleeing from the brutal political regime.

Facilitator: I think that in the 1970s it was president Gregoire Kayibanda who was president of the country.

Gerarid: At that time I was still a child.

Facilitator: Were there some conflicts or no, because it is common knowledge that Kayibanda was deposed in 1973.

Antoine: Why did you flee from the country? Did you go to Burundi for the purpose of earning a good life?

Gerarid: Yes, we went there in order to earn a good living.

Facilitator: You have just told us a story. How do you think it is important to your child? Do you think that it will help him? As you know are trying to get development, we have vision 2020.

Gerarid: It is very important to him.

Facilitator: In what way?

Gerarid: Even if he fails to join the army he will be able to live a good life because he is copying the way I deal with my everyday activities in order to sustain my family. He can, for example, try to get some skills that can sustain his life.

Antoine: As a person with Rwandese nationality, was it easy for you to join the Burundian army?

Gerarid: Yes.

Antoine: What were the requirements in order to join the army?

Gerarid: There were no requirements.

Facilitator: What kind of skills and knowledge did you get from the army?

Gerarid: We could make money at that time and as you know the money at that time had more value than today. You would get 2000 francs and would think that maybe you have American dollars. I could wisely use the money and get plots of land and I also managed to get married to the mother of this child. I paid a dowry (bride price) and got married to her using the money that was from the army. I think that my child will do the same because he is still young whereas I am old.

Facilitator: I have other two more questions of curiosity. It is known that people who are old are used to speaking using proverbs, so which proverb can be applied to this story? What is the name that can be given to this story?

Gerarid: You mean a proverb, I am not good at using proverbs but what I can only say is that this is my child and I want him to live a good life. He should work and earn money, he should not steal because you learn nothing from stealing. In case he does not become able to keep being in the army I would advise him to take a hoe and cultivate in order to sustain his life or I would advise him to study. For me this is a proverb I can give to him, I advise my child to be a well-behaved person who does not steal or loot things that belong to others. This is the piece of advice I can give my child.

Facilitator: What kind of name can you give to this story?

Gerarid: You mean the name?

Facilitator: For example there is someone who told us that he can name a story: The misery of being a refugee. You have told him this story knowing that it will have a positive impact on his life.

Gerarid: I can name it: Today we have peace.

Antoine: Briefly my father is encouraging me to be a person who likes working.

Facilitator: Are you satisfied with this story? He has told you that in the army of long ago they would get a lot of money, and he even got married to your mother thanks to the money he got from them. And he has also told you that in case you fail to join the

A conversation between Gasani Gerarid and Rukiriza Antoine

army, take a hoe and cultivate. Do you think that the story he has just told you will be helpful to your future life?

Antoine: It is best to implement the piece of advice from people who older than you. For example, he has pointed out things that made him live until now, so different pieces of advice given to me are of paramount importance.

Facilitator: Are you ready to join the army?

Antoine: I must join the army and serve it as long as the country needs me.

Facilitator: Thank you very much.

Gerarid: Thank you also.

Antoine: Thank you also.

