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

Participants:

- Gahongaire Emelda
- Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

Relation: Elder

Relation: Youth

Facilitator: Kalisa Benon

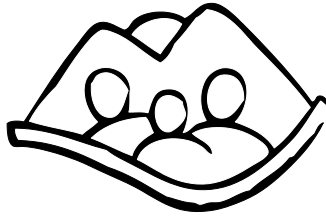
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Story Number: SFH30052

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Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

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Short Description:

"I'm Manirakiza's guardian, he is a double orphan, I was living in Rwanda and after knowing the conditions in which Rwandan orphans were living, I became sympathetic to their sufferings and decided to do the work of God by helping orphans. In fact, I got to know God here in Rwanda and it was because of my paternal grandfather, he was a Christian and he was God's servant here in Bicumbi in rural Kigali. I became saved from that area, I will not say a lot about that but that's where I came to know God. My grandfather had trained us to love God and I became inspired and there after I was called and became God's servant until when I became a pastor..."

Emelda: I'm Manirakiza's guardian, he is a double orphan, I was living in Rwanda and after knowing the conditions in which Rwandan orphans were living, I became sympathetic to their sufferings and decided to do the work of God by helping orphans. In fact, I got to know God here in Rwanda and it was because of my paternal grandfather, he was a Christian and he was God's servant here in Bicumbi in rural Kigali. I became saved from that area, I will not say a lot about that but that's where I came to know God. My grandfather had trained us to love God and I became inspired and there after I was called and became God's servant until when I became a pastor. Before the genocide I used to see different people who were saved, the church where we used to go for prayers, I was not mature enough but I saw a lot of things that taught me a lesson because the people we prayed with and who used to preach to us are the ones who came to kill our families including my grandfather and others, my paternal uncles and aunts and they were killed in that church where we used to go for prayers, but there is something I learnt from my grandfather because he was a person who loved people and one would find a lot of people in his home, he used to help many

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

people. In fact, that old man, even though he died, he had done many things because he used to preach God's message but mostly through actions.

After the end of the genocide and after being called to serve God, I thought about something I would do, anything that I would be able to do by God's will, and started adopting orphans. After God put me in touch with Manirakiza, I got much love in my heart, then I decided to help orphans, he is not the only one that I help, there are others that I also help but the main thing I liked about my Child Manirakiza in all the children that I adopted is that I found that he is Intelligent, creative and he knows how to take care of himself, he likes studying and he always gets the first position in class and tries to do everything that helps him in his studies.

He impresses and motivates me and this makes me love him more and help him in his ideas. The message I usually pass on him, is about Hutu and Tutsi, this message pertains to what happened in Rwanda because I witnessed what happened in Rwanda with my very eyes. I was even telling him not to be hurt in his heart when talking about it. the message I can give him is to fight against any thing that can make genocide happen again, I think that it is even the message that should be delivered by the Ministry of youth, culture and sports, that Ministry should try to teach youth how to live with each other and fight against genocide because It was perpetrated by the youth, in fact I think that's what I can try to tell him and I ask him to encourage other young people to fight against any thing that can cause genocide and we have to talk about what happened so that it may not occur again.

Another thing I can try to tell him is to know God very much and become saved because in that church the people we knew that were Christians are the ones who killed their fellow Christians. Now what I wish to tell him is to know God. I learnt many things from my grandfather because he loved God and loved sacrificing himself and I am used to say that I wish I could attain his age being able to serve God as he was used to. What I can encourage is to love God very much and like studying and become a good boy. God bless him, in brief, I think that I have tried to say many things in very few words, I love him, I consider him as my own children, I would like to tell him that I do not depend on ethnic groups, I am a saved person, I know God, so ethnic groups should not dominate my life. We have hope that what happened in Rwanda will not happen again because we pray and love God very much, God bless you and thank him and hope that we plan to see in him many things in the future. Thank you.

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

Facilitator: Thank you so much pastor for this message you have told us even if it is short but it is a valuable message, a message with a lot of explanations. As you have just said, even me, I didn't know where you lived but I know him, I normally call him and we converse. Shortly after passing the exams, he called me and told me that he got the first position and I promised him a reward. In fact he is active and endeavors to develop himself. Jado, I would like to ask you if it is for you the first time to listen to this message from pastor or you have heard about it before.

Jean de Dieu: It's not the first time to hear about it, I tried to discuss with her for a short time, in fact she is a person who usually gives me advice about my life, how I should behave in the future and shows me some examples of the youth that are my age as she said before that long ago are the youth who were taught bad things and committed atrocities. That's why she tells me: "You are grown up and you are allowed to do everything but you should avoid bad things. In fact, she is used to give me pieces of advice, it's not the first time to tell me something to do with my life.

Facilitator: You have said that she usually tells you about it, has it helped?

Jean de Dieu: Yes, it has helped because Genocide happened in this country when I was still young and even if I saw it I didn't understand what was going on, even if I could see dead bodies, I didn't know what death meant till I grew up after the genocide, even as a genocide survivor I could see that death is not a good thing one would wish but a bad thing that is unexplainable. It is in that sense that I strive to fight against any thing that is wrong in our society. Now I am among people who strive to fight against evils, I don't wish something bad to happen on my colleagues as I wish not to be hurt by someone else. Hence it encourages me to continue to strive to fight for peace because I do as much as I can in order to eradicate evils.

Facilitator: Is there any question you want to ask her about what she has just said?

Jean de Dieu: The question I want to ask her is about something I usually hear without understanding it, I hear it from radio stations, I heard about it but I don't know how it was because I didn't see it, I would like to know how divisionism of ethnic groups happened, how it begun and continued to grow until when Rwandese split up?

Another thing I want to ask her is how Rwandese killed each other while they were neighbors and lived with each other, did they know before that they would kill each other or it was a secret, maybe they used to talk about ethnic groups but without mentioning that one ethnic group would kill another. I am asking this because for

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

example if one had known that one would kill him, he would not have prayed together with him or became neighbors. I do not know the reason why it, why did people kill their neighbors whom they prayed together, whom they married and so forth....

Emelda: Genocide was planned since 1959, even though I was not yet born at that time because I'm 42, but I have some information from our fathers and grandfathers, they used to give that information before their death, The genocide was planned long ago because they would tell how they went to exile in 1959, how Inyenzi (Cockroaches) would launch attacks from outside the country and would come to kill Hutus and Tutsi, you find that it was planned long ago like when they offered national identity cards that would identify Hutus and Tutsi and most often it is the national IDs that showed that there was discrimination between people, there was also bad leadership. Our ancestors would also tell us about the death of King Rudahirwa who died because he was a Tutsi and was killed by Hutus, In history they didn't know the time they would die but you would discuss with old people and you would find that hatred started long ago. They would tell us that hatred was brought by white people, that they brought discrimination among Rwandese. They used to say that this one is a Tutsi and that one is a Hutu, and they used to say that when Hutus came they were cultivators whereas Tutsi were cattle rearers. You find that from long ago, it was brought by the colonizers. You find that from long ago, it was brought and prepared by whites. In 1959 many Tutsi died. For me I found that It was planned before, because after 1959 till 1994 while Habyarimana's administration was on power, you could find people scared and worried even though they were neighbors and shared things, you could ask an old person and he could say that the genocide would happen but God-fearing people would say that It won't happen, there are even others who went to exile in order to flee from violence. By answering your question you had asked me, people did not know when genocide would happen but it was evident.

Jean de Dieu: for me I don't understand, may be if the genocide happened, there were some signs of it before. I think that if it was evident that the genocide would happen and a Tutsi would say that he/she would be killed by a Hutu or Hutu would kill a Tutsi, there would be a separation, one ethnic group would say that we are going to stay in our place and tell the other to stay in their own places.

Another thing I tried to hear is that, in Rwanda before, those ethnic groups were present i.e Hutu, Tutsi and Twa but they lived in harmony without killing each other but helping each other. And they said that the white colonizers are the ones who came then taught about discrimination based on ethnic groups, I don't know what the white intended to do, did they want one ethnic group to kill the other maybe in order to lead

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

or rule the others left? what were benefits the colonizers would gain in order to split up ethnic groups so that one group would see others as enemies while they used to help each other? I don't understand what they intended to do, did they see that they were many that it would be difficult to coordinate them or it was of profits like getting precious stones? I don't know what their intentions were.

Emelda: When you see it clearly you find that they had their own profits. They had their own benefits and if everything happened as they desired, the country would still be in their hands. In fact, they needed to profit from it.

Facilitator: Thank you, thank you pastor for the explanations you have offered us, but I might ask like two questions while leading to a conclusion, why have you chosen to tell the story about history of the genocide and history of the problems Rwanda encountered?

Emelda: After hearing that you need parents and guardians of children and you need that parents tell them the truth in order to help them build their lives, for us we decided to know God so that we find ways how we can help them live their lives and develop our country. As a person who is mature enough and who knows I should tell him the truth, I even told him that I need to tell you the truth from my heart so that you can know about it and regard yourself as my own child, that I love you and consider you like my own children. He also knows it that he is not the only orphan I have, if you happen to ask them how a Tutsi and a Hutu looks like, they can't be able to answer because they find all children having the same appearance. My eldest son told me that we should not talk about Hutus and Tutsis, he told me that he sees that all children are the same and that's true, they are tall and beautiful. For us old people we can't stop talking about Hutu and Tutsi. In the commemoration period of genocide you find that my children, I have three children, one is as the same age as this one and other two daughters, in the commemoration period we tell them that they should know what happened so that they teach it their children and we tell them that knowing what happened should not prevent them from loving each other. I told him that you should consider yourself as my son because you don't have a father and a mother, so I'm like your mother and like your everything, though I have a few things, they know that. I try to pray for him. He is an intelligent child and works hard and I think you know him if you stayed together. He knows how to work so that he can be able to study i.e. to get school fees because he was telling me that life is not easy but because I know God, I think he will find school fees and continue to study to the end. This is why I chose to tell him about it because I thought it would help him, I am the one to pass on this

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

message to him as his parent. That's why I have to tell him that and anything else he needs to ask.

Facilitator: Thank you so much. I have been here since 8:00 AM and I feel a headache. I have heard a lot even though I am not an old person, I have learnt a lot today and would like to ask you an interesting question. In most cases when when a child has a conversation with a father or a guardian or any other person, there is a remembrance message, the remembrance I mean is like a word that he hears and reminds him what he was told before. Most of the time a parent tells you a proverb that encompasses the whole information. And when I hear about the proverb I remember what I was told. Could you please tell us a proverb that is related to what you have told us today. (Silence for a short time) there is no problem if a proverb is not available may be you didn't expect it. But there is no problem if you usually tell him about this and I would encourage you continue to discuss with him about this, I think it would also be better to tell him other life related stories and how you became a pastor. An old man of 72 years told me that he did not taste alcohol since he was born and he is too old but I thank God that he has never used a walking stick. A few days ago he received an invitation from a Ugandan boy to go to the US to attend a graduation ceremony, after we came here in Rwanda in 1994 December after the genocide because he had to go back to complete primary level studies. He told me that in Rwanda a child, father and mother share the same bottle of alcohol and said: "In case you drink alcohol I will curse or excommunicate you from our family" He had a dispute with my mother about that word he told and my mother told him that he should not tell such a word to children. A child can grow thinking of that word and would ask you in the future but he really told me, now I'm 26 years old and have not taken alcohol and I don't even know how it tastes and have not smoked. I do not do it because I remember what he told me, this is why I am saying that it is of paramount importance to talk with children about different things everyday.

Emelda: In the beginning, I don't know if you heard me correctly, I told you that I got to know God from my grandfather, the father of my father, he died in the genocide when he was like 98 years, approximately 100 years but I learnt a lot from him, I learnt to know God from him, he was a good old man, strong, could walk and was still working for God. When you ask about his history in Bicumbi they can tell you, he was naturally a good person without even saying that he knew God but before knowing God, in his history you find that he was a good-hearted person because he was even a leader in 1959, I tried to imitate what he did because he died when he was a servant of God, he was a pastor serving God, even his daughters who were my aunts though they died but they worked for God because of their father, and when I got saved in 1981

A conversation between Gahongaire Emelda and Sharangabo Jean de Dieu

since seeing how he lived, how he helped people, how he loved the work of God, how he built church here in Rwanda, that's when I tried to say: "I wish I could have the spirit like the one of my grandfather", even now I say that I wish to do what he used to do because I haven't yet attained his level, God bless him. If wish my children, those I produced including Manirakiza could say: "I learnt from my mother". I normally wish them to be the servants of God and love the work of God, using their energy, their properties.

Facilitator : Thanks a lot.

