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

Participants:

- Mudenge Leopard
- Manzi Erick

Relation: Brother

Relation: Brother

Facilitator: Kalisa Benon

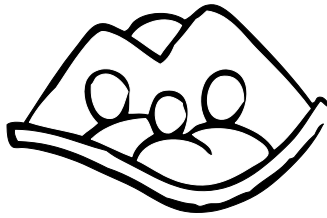
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Story Number: SFH30055

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Mudenge Leopard & Manzi Erick

Story Number: SFH30055

Leopard: I am older than you, but I am not many years older than you. There are so many things you don't know about my life background. In life, one has to behave in a specific way. One has to plan for his or her future. In order to have a good future, one needs to have experience or they need to learn from others. One has to talk to other people and listen attentively to their pieces of advice.

Manzi, I think you know where we were living in the countryside. I don't have much formal education. When I was 22-23 years old, I left my parents and came to live in the town in order to earn a living. Something that helped me survive in this town is that I tried to live in good terms with the people I got to know. I used to avoid anything that could bring conflict between myself and those who were staying together with me in the same house or my neighbors or friends. I used to socialize with all of the people at work. Living in good terms with other people has helped me greatly, so I would like to tell you that you should endeavor to live in good terms with your colleagues. You should try to be a peacemaker wherever you are, and you should live at peace with all people irrespective of who they are. You should also strive to earn a good living, which you can achieve by being hard-working. You should enjoy whatever job you may get; you should never be arrogant, saying: "I can do only this, I cannot do that thing." You should also do the right things only. Do not do bad things like telling lies, stealing, manipulating, and so forth. You should never do anything bad that may expose you to public disgrace or something that may make people hate you. You should not do something that may make you feel ashamed. You should do things that cannot separate you from either God or human beings. Now you are a student and I would advise you to like studying and keep on studying until the time when you get a result from what you are doing. You should try to get knowledge that will help you get a good future. In your life, the foundation of all things should be unity, love, and the knowledge that each person was created by God and in His image. Knowledge paired with knowing how to live in good terms with others will help you become a great person in this society. If you put into practice what I am telling you, it will help you become a person who fits

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into the society well. Manzi, I would like to request you to bear in your mind these things I have told you because they will be of great help in your life.

Facilitator: Manzi, is there anything you want to ask him?

Erick: Thank you for allowing me to ask a question in order to clarify matters. I have two or three questions. You have just told us that when you were around 22 years old, that is when you started working hard in order to earn your living. You said that something that helped you a lot is that you were living in good terms with people. I agree with you, but I think that some 22 years ago there was a year in which we lost our relatives and friends. We lost our parents when we were still young. Other people were jailed but we did not know the reason because we were children, so we couldn't know the reason. As you said it, at the start of your speech, you are my elder brother. We have the same father and mother. As you know, in war there are people who killed because of different reasons. So I would like to ask you: Why were you not killed? Is it because you were living in good terms with other people? This is the first question, and then the second question is this. You gave me pieces of advice that can help me become a man who is able to sustain my life. To me, I do not think that it is easy to socialize with people because there are some people who want to socialize with others and there are others who don't want to. I think it would be better to socialize with those who want to socialize with others. If somebody does not want to socialize with you, you cannot force him or her. You can never say: "Forgive me, I want to socialize with you." To me, it is not easy to socialize with all people. I want to ask you what strategies you use in order to be able to socialize with all people. I also want the kinds of techniques that can be used so that all people say that this is a kind person, he helps all people, he provides people with food when they are in hospitals, and he helps people as much as he can. What you have said is good but it is also difficult, so I want to get a piece of advice from you that can help me live in good terms with all people, with people who want it or not. Thank you, those are my questions.

Leopard: Thank you for asking those questions from our talk. For the first questions you have asked me about how I managed to survive genocide, you said: "Why were you not killed in genocide? Is it because you were living in good terms with people?" I would like to tell you that this is not what made me survive, because there are people who used to live in good terms with other but they died. I think that there are many people who died and who were living in good terms with others. It is only God who helped me survive genocide. Maybe he wanted me to keep living in order to help other people in the society, or maybe he wanted me to teach others, to show them how to do the right thing and live in good terms with others. I am still alive because of the grace of God; I was only protected by God. I was going to die, but God protected me time and again. I am not still alive thanks to my efforts or my good actions, it is only God who spared my life. This is why I want to do only good things that can help people get peace and development. Would you like to remind me the second question?

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Facilitator: He has asked you: "Which techniques did you use in order to earn your living?" Which pieces of advice can you give him, so that he is able to make friends? He knows that there are people who want to socialize with others and there are those who don't want to.

Leopard: Actually, you have said that there are those who want to socialize with others and there are others who don't want to. Your question is to know which techniques you can use in order to live with others. When a person tries to socialize with people, it does not mean that all people want that. There are people who want to live at peace with others whereas there are others who only become a hindrance to others. There are people who are there to bring conflicts, disagreements, and problems and so forth in order to cause trouble in the society. Be careful in whatever you do. If a person does something bad to you, you should not repay him with evil. Do not repay evil for evil. You should think and analyze what caused a person to behave like that. You should not be quick to show a person that you can retaliate; you should be wise while dealing with people. In case you see that there are people who want to socialize with you, you should know how to deal with them and even how to deal with those who don't want to socialize with you. In case you see people who don't want to socialize with you, people who want to do bad things to you, you should not retaliate. Don't always think that people will do to you what you want them to do or the equivalent of what you hope to do to them.

Erick: Thank you for answering me, I think I have gotten a lesson from what you have said. But I have another question: As you know, there are many parents who prevent their children from socializing with other children because they think that their children may be negatively affected by other children who don't have good behavior. I also have friends; some are well behaved whereas others are badly behaved. So I would like to know how I can socialize with all of them. I also want to know how I should socialize with different people. What is the difference between socializing with young people and socializing with adults? I want to know how I should socialize with adults who are older than me.

Leopard: Thank you. Among youth, there are those who have a positive thinking whereas others have a negative thinking that may lead them towards bad acts in society. You should know how to socialize with young people of all kinds. But while socializing with young people who are badly behaved, you should not imitate them. They should not badly affect you but instead you should advise them so that they may shun evil. You should not hate them, but you should advise them. For example, those who take drugs, those who steal, and so forth. You should know the people with whom you live. You should talk to young people in order to know their side, and after knowing their side you can advise them so that they take the right side.

Facilitator: Thank you for that piece of advice. I think it has helped me and Manzi, but there is a question I want to ask you: From where did you get your bravery when

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you were going through many hardships such as genocide? How can Manzi and I learn from you as a person who had bravery when you were going through many hardships?

Leopard: Thank you. I was born in the countryside and I was born to a poor family. When we were children, our parents used to punish us. They would punish us in case of misconduct. Our parents would teach that it is not good to fight because fighting may bring about perpetual misunderstanding among people. I remember we had an uncle who used to bear a grudge against other people. He could have a problem with other people and he would spend like a whole year without having fellowship with them. Sometimes we could have a problem with that uncle and then he could stop coming to our home. He would even prevent his children from coming to us, but our parents would not prevent us from going there. They would say: "Go there and if they tell you to go away, go away." Our parents could not teach us to hate them.

Facilitator: You are saying that you got that braveness from your parents' advice.

Leopard: Yes, I got it from parents' advice.

Facilitator: Which name can you give to this story? I am sure that Manzi has learned many things from you and I have also learned a lot from you, and even Stories for Hope. Please tell us the name that can be given to this story.

Leopard: This story can be called "Inangiriro yokubaha ubumwe n'ubandi ihera mu buto," which means in its direct translation: "The beginning of establishing unity starts in childhood."

Facilitator: It is common knowledge that Rwandese often uses proverbs in their conversations, so could you please give us a proverb related to this story so that it helps us remember this story all the time.

Leopard: There is a proverb that goes: "Utaganiriye na se ntabwo icyo sekuru yasize avuze," which means in its direct translation that one who does not talk with his or her father will never know what was said by his or her grandfather. This proverb means that a parent gives his or her children a lesson received from his or her parents. Those children will also pass on that lesson to their children. This is to say that knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. This is why you will find out that some families have some specific types of behavior. Teaching children how to socialize with other people in the society and also teaching them how to prepare their good future should be received from their families.

Facilitator: Thank you very much.

Leopard: Thank you.

Facilitator: Thank you Manzi.

