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

Participants:

- Rwamucyo Denys
- Hadasa Esther

Relation: Uncle

Relation: Niece

Facilitator: Kalisa Benon

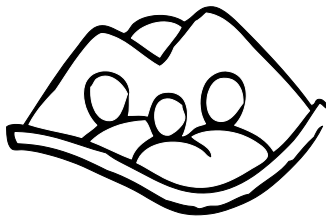
Date: 7 May 2009

Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH30056

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Rwamucyo Denys and Hadasa Esther

Story Number: SFH30056

Denys: My name is Rwamucyo Denys and I was born in Gikongoro in Rwanda. There were killings that started in 1963; houses were burnt and we fled to bushes. Soon after, it was announced that peace was restored and then we came back to our homes. My father was killed but we said, "Let's remain here even though they may kill us." I did not die because God spared me. My mother was also there at that time; she did not die, and we are still together. I was young and I could see whatever was happening. My mother brought us up and now you can see who I am. In 1973 we fled to Burundi. We came back to Rwanda in 1995, and we could see bones in different places but now you can see that our country is peaceful. If one who fled at sometime comes back to Rwanda, he can't remember anything about where he was staying. He cannot even remember where he left his house. What you are doing is helpful to the child because as you know, now we have no properties. It's up to the child to grow and change our life conditions. I would advise my child to study in order to prepare his good future. Even though I stopped studying when I was in primary 5, it helped me a lot. If I had not studied I think I would have died because I couldn't get a job. For example, in 1998 I got a job and I was working in a security company called Intersec. The job helped me earn a living together with my wife and parents. I am needy, but God helps me to let my child study.

Esther: There is something I want to know from you. Why were they tracking you in

order to kill you? Aren't there other people who were being tracked like you?

Denys: I remember that when we were in primary school they would say: "Tutsi people stand up, Hutu people stand up." But we couldn't know what they were aiming at. We used to associate with all people; we could share each and everything. Batwa people were not many.

Esther: You did not know what they were aiming at?

Denys: We did not know what they were aiming at. We used to go to school and play with other children, and in the classroom they would come and say: "Tutsi people stand up, Hutu people stand up." Batwa were not many.

Esther: How could they know that you were Tutsi?

Denys: One could be identified by looking at his or her nose. Even white people played a role in that act. Children used to give answers to questions raised without knowing the objective of those who were asking them questions.

Esther: Why did you choose to go to Burundi? Were your relatives there?

Denys: We had a family there.

Esther: But I thought that you fled to Burundi because of the war, not because you wanted to go and settle there.

Denys: We fled because of the war in 1973. I have my elder brother who is called Nkurunziza Damien who fled to Switzerland, and he had a job in the government before fleeing to Switzerland.

Esther: Why did he go to Switzerland?

Denys: He went to Switzerland as a refugee. He had a job in the government and then after he fled to Switzerland, but he has come back to Rwanda.

Esther: Would you like to compare the political regime from before the war with the current political regime? Could you please tell me the difference?

Denys: In the political regime before the war there were identity cards that showed the ethnic background of a person; each and every person was holding an ID showing a person's ethnicity. The ID was holding different ethnicities, namely Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi. If you were a Tutsi they would put a tick where the word Tutsi was written.

Esther: What can we do in order to fight against anything that may make genocide happen again?

Denys: Don't you know of the school where students were told by Interahamwe to separate themselves according to their ethnic background?

Esther: I know, it is a school called Inyange.

Denys: Those students did not want to separate themselves but instead they said: "All of us are Rwandese." Those students were killed and they died as heroes. God created human beings in His image. He did not create a Hutu or a Tutsi but some people came and said: "This is a Hutu, this is a Tutsi, and this is a Mutwa." The one who did that wanted to cause conflicts among people in order to annihilate them. God says: "Love each other as I have loved you."

Esther: Which ethnicity wanted to kill another?

Denys: It's Hutu. There came a time when Hutu started hating Tutsi; there came a time when your Hutu friend could not talk to you.

Esther: Didn't you have some Hutu friends?

Denys: We had them, but when those conflicts were about to occur, a Hutu person couldn't tell you the truth.

Esther: You mean, he would hide something that was about to happen?

Denys: Yes, he would hide it.

Esther: You mean, he would come and talk to you and smile at you without telling you the truth?

Denys: Yes, they would come and chat with you, and they knew what was about to happen without informing you.

Facilitator: Thank you very much, thank you very much. What you are telling us is of great importance. As you can see, this is a young person who is raising many questions because she wants to learn many things from you. This proves that she has never had a time to talk with you in order to get such stories from you. I would like to ask a question of curiosity: You have been going through different hardships?

Denys: Yes.

Facilitator: Your father died and you remained here in this world. Now you are even without your wife. Where do you get courage from? How do you manage to sustain the life of your family?

Denys: In Kinyarwanda there is a proverb that goes: “Uburere buruta ubuvuke,” which means that it is better to be well brought up than to be born. A child should get a good education in his or her early childhood. God said that a husband and a wife are one flesh, that you become one flesh when you love each other. If you don’t take care of your husband, you cannot have a happy family and even your children will seriously suffer because of that. I am saying this because when I reached Rwanda I got married in 1995 and I had my first born in 1996.

Facilitator: Is this the one you are talking about?

Denys: No, this is my niece. I am her uncle.

Facilitator: Yes.

Denys: The second was born in 1997 and the third in 1999. The third was born on the day that is celebrated in favor of women. My wife is now staying alone because she is a drunkard and despises me. I don’t want my children to live a sad life even though I have been living a sad life.

Facilitator: Yes. You have told us a good story and this girl of yours has learned many things from you. I would like to know which name you can give to this story.

Denys: I used to drink beer and it would cause me to fight. But I went off beer in order to live at peace with my wife. There came a time when I wanted to commit

suicide because of beer but now I am okay. And even though I am needy I don't beg. No one can easily know that I am poor.

Facilitator: Please which name can give to this story? I know this girl and I want her to live a good life. I cannot wish her to live in poor conditions. The one who will listen to this story, who will hear it or read it, will do it because it has a name. So which name can you give to this story?

Denys: The name I can give to this story is: "The one who does not die will survive."

Facilitator: Is this its name?

Denys: Yes.

Facilitator: Is there anything you can add on before we put an end to this story?

Denys: What I can add on is: "All Rwandese are from one parent." We should not repay evil for evil; we should concentrate on doing what is right. It is also said that when you do something good you will get a reward in your future life.

Facilitator: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to ask your uncle? If there is not, I think we can conclude.

Esther: I can think of nothing else, but I am happy because you are interested in knowing what is in our hearts.

Facilitator: Thank you very much.