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

Participants:

- Nsabimana Jean Pierre
- Zaninka Scola

Relation: Brother

Relation: Sister

Facilitator: Kabanyana Laurette

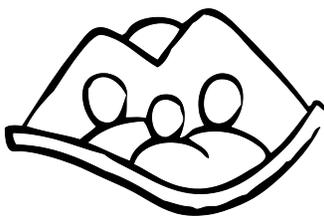
Date: 24/08/2009

Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH0072

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Nsabimana Jean Pierre & Zaninka Scola

Story Number: SFH0072

Short Description:

'Ntamuntu usama icyo atatereye hejuru.'

Scola was born shortly after her father's death and only got to know her mother for a short time before she died. In this story, her elder brother Jean Pierre shares with her all that she wants to know about their parents.: their marriage, their values, their care for them as children. His message to her is partly summed up in a Rwandese proverb that means, 'no one shall receive what they have not earned.' He also passes to her the legacy given to him by their father, that they must always share what they have, with others.

Tags: Orphans, Parenting, Education, Marriage

Jean Pierre: My names are Nsabimana Jean Pierre. That is my second young sister.

Scola: My names are Zaninka Scola and that is my elder brother. One of the things I would like to ask is; since my father died when I was still very young, I would like to know about his life and his achievements. Even though I lived with mum, she never really told me much about him. As my brother, I would like you to tell me something about him.

Jean Pierre: Before father died, he liked telling us to learn from our parents. For instance, if your parent was generous or loving, he urged us to emulate this example. He also liked to tell us that our future depended on our education and that we would not achieve much without it.

Scola: What was our father's profession?

A conversation between Nsabimana Jean Pierre and Zaninka Scola

... (long silence)

Jean Pierre: He worked with UNDP (The United Nations Development Program)

Scola: What was job at UNDP and why did he chose to work there?

Jean Pierre: He was a chauffeur.

Scola: Did he drive members of the organization?

Jean Pierre: Yeah, he drove employees.

Scola: What can we learn from any of his actions or good deeds?

Jean Pierre: There are many positive things (we could learn). He taught us love and now we love each other. But there are things that he taught us that I never followed. You know that I stopped going to school for 3 years. I later regretted after I realized that one could never achieve much without an education and now you are ahead of me.

Scola: At the time (you stopped going to school) did father not have enough money to finance your education or was there another reason?

Jean Pierre: No, father never lacked money even for one day. It is me that never heeded his advice and later regretted it. I never listened to my parents and later I had no one to listen to.

Scola: From what I have heard, there are many men with other wives and concubines outside of their marriage. Was father a polygamous man or did he have one wife?

Jean Pierre: No father was not that kind of person, even, during the many years you spent outside of the country he never did that.

Scola: What was his relationship with mother like? Was she happy or did they ever have arguments?

Jean Pierre: There were no arguments except of course when one made a mistake, the other used to give them a wake-up call or reminder. This is all very normal in families. They lived very comfortably together.

Scola: Since father never used to cheat on our mother, as is the case in many marriages today, what is it that mother gave him to make sure that he never sought the company of other women?

A conversation between Nsabimana Jean Pierre and Zaninka Scola

Jean Pierre: I really don't know (but) they had a really good understanding. It was uncommon to hear that they had fought as we sometimes hear from other marriages.

Scola: I hope that we can learn from this and never do such things since our father never did.

Jean Pierre: Yes it should be our principle

Facilitator: Is there anything else that your father or mother did that can be a lesson for you today? In detail please...

Jean Pierre: Father used to take us out. When we performed well were in primary school, he bought us toys and took us on tours. He had even bought me a bicycle because I used to be the best in my class. We went to many nice places that would make any child happy.

Facilitator: I was not lucky enough to be treated in this way, do you think I will be able to emulate his example (even though I never received this treatment)?

Jean Pierre: Well, you have many blessings because you're young and gaining an education. You need to think positive and live well with your neighbor and avoid negative thoughts especially in your home.

Scola: Now that we don't have parents and our education is being supported by other people, shouldn't we also consider following the example of our new benefactors or should we only learn from our parents? What advice can you give me on this?

Jean Pierre: I can only give you the affection that you are not alone. In the same way you don't have your mother, neither do I. We need to work together to prepare for our future. You need to study hard and listen to our benefactors.

Scola: What lessons do you draw from our father's actions and deeds? Or what lessons should I take from his actions and deeds?

Jean Pierre: One my part, my father was a chauffeur. I want to finish high school and get my diploma at the same time I get my chauffeur license and then follow in his footsteps as a chauffeur.

Facilitator: You mentioned that you want to follow in your father's footsteps and become a chauffeur. Are you satisfied with being only a chauffeur? Once you get your diploma, wouldn't you consider going further in your education in order to be able to support your younger siblings?

A conversation between Nsabimana Jean Pierre and Zaninka Scola

Jean Pierre: I am only looking at getting my chauffeur license in order for it to help me (get a job) during the period when I will be waiting for the results of my national exam.

Scola: Will you be able to finance our education when you get your chauffeur license or will it still be our benefactors?

Jean Pierre: If I am able to, I will support you but if am not able to, I cannot stop our benefactors from supporting you. It will be unwise to take on this responsibility before my work is stable. I could take it on then get an accident or fail to afford it and we would find ourselves going back to our benefactors.

Scola: From what I remember about mother, she liked gardening and she loved me a lot. On your part, what do you remember about mother? What good things did she do for you?

Jean Pierre: Well among the good things she did was offer me advice, some of which I took and some that I did not. However, the most important thing that I remember about her is that she liked to say to me, *'Young man, you will experience many things (challenges) since you are in Rwanda'*. She was right about this because I have experienced many challenges. During the 3 years I never went to school, I never listened and now I am behind you in school yet I should have graduated sometime back. Such a situation brings back memories of her wise advice.

Scola: Since you were lucky enough to listen to both our parents, which one of the two did you love the most? Which one of the two gave you the best advice?

Scola: I would like to know who of the two gave you the most advice and what you have managed to achieve by following this advice.

Jean Pierre: I loved them both. Mother used to protect me from father when I made mistakes.

Scola: Of what use has their advice been for you today?

Jean Pierre: After dropping out of school, this advice (from our parents) helped me to gain the initiative to get back in and I was lucky that our benefactors accepted to support me.

...

A conversation between Nsabimana Jean Pierre and Zaninka Scola

Facilitator: What inspiration did you get from your parents that you wish to share with your sister?

Jean Pierre: They (our parents) used to tell us a proverb that said, '*Ntamuntu usama icyo atatereye hejuru.*' (No one shall receive what they have not earned). If you have good ideas and a good heart which you don't share, (this is not good). In school, I sometimes took extra soap so when a friend runs out of soap, I would share with them. These are some of the friends I have today.

Scola: So were our parents generous?

Jean Pierre: Yes, they were generous and they liked to socialize. During Easter, they invited neighbors and we would have a party. Everyone was welcome and no one was ever sent away because of how they dressed or appeared.

