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

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#### **Participants:**

- Ntibanyendera Elsa **Relation:** Uncle
- Muhawenimana Genevieve **Relation:** Youth

#### **Facilitator:**

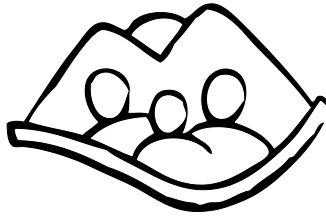
#### **Date:**

**Recording Location:** Byumba

**Story Number:** SFH0124

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### **Ntibanyendera Elsa and Muhawenimana Genevieve**

**Story Number: SFH0124**

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**Genevieve:** I am called **Genevieve MUHAWENIMANA**, I have invited my uncle, and I thank him because he accepted my invitation.

**Elsa:** Thank you, I am **NTIBANYENDERA Elsa**, I have responded to the invitation of my niece, that's why I am here.

**Genevieve:** I have invited you because you raised me; there is something that I wanted to ask you so that you can explain it to me. I hear people saying that families in the past were united, they shared everything, how was it, how did you live?

**Elsa:** Thank you for asking me a good question, I am not so old but I know many things in the past, there are some that I have seen with my own eyes, there are others that I was told by the parents who raised me, in fact, people of that time were united, families had relationship because, long ago people were not many and families lived in the same area, a family lived in one region, and everyone who belonged to that family contributed to its growth, in order to have that relationship, it is evident that members of the family were united so that they fight against the enemy because, at that time, one family fought against another, so, they were united in order to be strong, members of the family were very close. Sometimes also, one area were lived by different families and they united themselves in order to fight against the enemy who might come from another area to steal their domestic animals, their properties and so on, they got together to save one another, for this reason, they shared everything, if they have something in one family, for example if they have traditional beer "Inturire", they would invite another family, families invited one another and they shared, that's where they shared news and had social gatherings, they danced, there was such unity and love in those gatherings, it was evident that they were together mindfully and when there was someone who wanted to attack them, they got together to fight against him and they won. This relationship affected also the education of children, if you are from some family, and a neighbor found you doing a fault, he did not say; this child is not mine, I don't care, he took the child as his own, because

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sometimes he could ask to the child to go to fetch for him and the child obeyed, at that time, children obeyed every mature person because they all gave education to the children, they had mutual trust, because if he sees someone's child in fault, he could punish the kid as he was punishing his own, and this caused them to have a close relationship because they were informed about what's happening around, they were eager to save someone from trouble. This kept them together.

**Genevieve:** As a young person, why am I not seeing these things today?

**Elsa:** It's true, the way people lived long ago is not the same as today, if I begin with development, people, in the past were not developed, they were survived by their domestic animals, their harvest, there were no markets at that time, the person who was rich was the one who had huge lands, who had farms, and had a huge harvest, and he saw that he kept many harvest in tanks, I will not have other tanks because I have many, and if he harvested like sorghum, wheat, he made traditional beer through this harvest and he shared it with his neighbors because there was no money at that time, that was one way of consuming harvest which dated long to replace them with fresh ones, but today, people are selfish because everyone is looking at money, everyone looks at his own life, today, life depends on money, but in the past, life depended on natural resources, like cows, goats and other properties, but today, resources depend on the money you have, so, if someone has something, he sells it to get money, people do no longer invite others, sharing beer does no longer happen, people meet in bar, and you go there if you have money to buy a drink for yourself, the one who goes there to consume from others is not welcomed, but in the past, to consume from the drink of others was a habit, if anyone didn't do so, he was punished, they said that you are selfish, if we did not invite him, why didn't he come, they went to ask him why he didn't come to join others, they ask him where he was while he knew that at someone's place they shared beer, but today, if you want to have a drink, you have to go in bar, if you are short of money, you are ashamed of going there, that's why the life of today is different from life in the past, people are selfish, if you do something, you have to be paid, if you ask a child to fetch for, he tells you "You will give me 50frw", even water is sold today but long ago, water belonged to every body, people fetched wherever they find water, but today, when you go to fetch, you have to pay 20frw per jerician, the life of long ago is very different from the life of nowadays, as we are developing, many things are changing, I can not say that today life is worse, no, development brings other new things, if the life of today depend on money, we have also to look for money, there are many ways of getting money, either good way or bad one, but bad way has consequences, let's look for money in a good way so that we can be developed also, in development they said that in every generation there are developed people, people will always say, in our time it was not like this, today also, there are other good things but which are different from those of the past, long ago, there were also good things which we still see in these days, and today there are its own good things, there are also bad ones, and in the past there were also bad things, we have

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to assess, to adopt good things of today and reject bad ones because these bad ones hinder us from moving forward.

**Genevieve:** I see that children and teenagers of nowadays have freedom, if they go somewhere they don't tell the parents, it's like they live in their own world, they are not disciplined, was it the case long ago?

**Elsa:** Not at all, that's not the way we were raised, there is a big difference in the way our parents raised us and the way we are raising our children. In the past, Parents had time to discuss with their children, as I told you that they had their daily activities, they did activities not far from home, even those who were cultivating far from home, they could go home early and conversed with their children, when they were cooking, they told them some stories, and told them on different issues, children asked them funny questions of their age and the parents benefited from that time to give advice to their kids because they were together, the way it was, let me begin by this: for example you are a girl, I saw you growing up, and while we lived together, I raised you depending on the era we are in, but that's not the way we were raised, a girl has her own activities and mainly it was about cleaning, these activities were given to girls and women, when a woman gave birth to girls, when they were teenagers, she no longer had to do the cleaning, it was up to her daughters to do these activities, that was the attribute of the home which had girls, it was clean, having gardens, long ago they were flowers also, may be there were not like those of today but they existed, homes were clean because there had cultured girls and when a young man passed by that house, he saw that there is a cultured girl in that home, even though he didn't see her cleaning, but he said; no wonder there is a girl in this home because he saw that the house was clean, a girl had her daily activities that the boy could not do, if it comes to cooking, it was strange to see a boy who is in the kitchen because it was girls' duty, and the boy had to know to cut woods, it was his duty, sometimes when you went to the stream where they fetched was far, he had to go there and accompany girls because there were animals in the forests at that time, and when he came back home, he could go to play, games were different from those of today, like jumping rectangle, traditional dances was for boys, and for girls could not go out without the permission of her parents, if there is a wedding of a friend or a neighbor, that family had to ask permission for you, saying "we need your daughter to come and help us in some activities because we have a wedding or in a party", and the families understood each other and agreed to send their daughter to help their friend, if that girl had her brother, he accompanied her till when she gets to the place where she was going, and he went home, and he was assured that, in that family, they will keep an eye on you as they watch their own daughters. At that time, there was no teen groups where you might see girl with boys, girls were doing their activities, parents disciplined them, when the party finished, they gave to that girl somebody to accompany her, when she finished activities during the night, she could not go home, she had to spend the night there, and she came back home in the morning, so that nothing bad can happen to you and it would be that family's fault. They gave her somebody to go with her and they explained why she spent the

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night there while they didn't give her the permission, after explain why she spent the night there, saying that the girl finished her activities late in the night and she could not go home because of many difficulties she might find in the way home, like when she met shepherds who could abuse her, because the families were friends, they understood them. Also, for the guys, there are some things they could not do, they had to be focused on what they were doing, these things of jumping to the father, we had to keep quiet when dad entered home, and we waited till he greeted us, and he shake our hands, we were joyful that our dad greeted us especially when he brought something like bread, because at that time bread were recent, when he brought a small bread, he cut it in pieces and gave us, it was a party home, we loved him and we gathered around him, so it was hot at home, and at that time, he told us about where he had gone and what happened, he joked with us, and when we have done some faults, mom could accuse us telling dad that we refused to go to fetch, we refused to cut woods and dad punished us, he told us that the beauty of a young man is his strength, and courage. Parents were close to us and we were also close to them but nowadays, the difference is that, parents go to work, that's how life is, if you have the chance to get a job, you have to do it, and now, parents leave home at 6am because work began at 7am, many children are still in bed at 7am, and others are just awake, and a parent had already leave home, he comes from work at 5pm, and from work, he goes to study at school, a week has five working days, the parent leave home early before 7am, and from work to school, they come back home around 11pm when children have slept, and they can't know what happened to their kids, what problem did they have, they left them with the house girl, they don't know if she gave them food or if she wash them, a kid spends the one week, a month or two months without seeing his parents, he sees them two days in a week, and in those days, they are doing homework, they are reading books, and when a child come closer to his dad, and dad tell him, wait I am still busy, I will talk to you in a moment, when you tell your child like that, there is an image that a child sees in you as the parent, normally a child sees the parent means the world to him, when your dad and mom are close to the child, he feels secured. when you tell him harshly, he becomes miserable, in that case, he takes you for granted and sometimes he loves the house girl more than his parent when this girl is gentle to them, because, she is the one who cares for them, who gives them whatever they ask, they consider her as their mom, the answer to their need and many times they don't even care to greet their mom because they see that you don't care for them as you are not available, these children will get education from the house girl, and most of the time these house girls are not educated, a child get also education from other children who are older than him and these also grew up in this situation, so this education which comes from nowhere is no longer instruction, it's not family discipline, and when you want to see the home's education you see it through the child, when you see a child who is disciplined, the discipline comes from his parents but nowadays, it's as if a child lives on his own, the only thing that parents do, is to assure that there is something to eat, when they have bought sugar, rice, it's enough but that's not the true meaning of raising children, to raise a child is not only giving him food and wearing, it is that parents love, tender, a child must have that love and care, in order to be comfortable with you, to be free when he is with you, even to

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make you soiled, he wants to see how you rejoice and how you get angry, kids no longer have this, that's why, in responding to your question, that's why children grew up being rebellious, and when you say something against him, he may slap you, and when you give advice to a young girl, she sees you as a villager because she was raised by TV, those who went to school are raised by internet, they adopt everything from TV and internet, that's the education teenager of today but there are some parents who knew that it is important to get close to their children, and they do their best to be with their children, there are some teenagers who are cultured and they get this from their parents. Did I answer you question?

**Genevieve:** Can I say that, parents don't have time to educate their children or it is the problem that teenagers have of not obeying.

**Elsa:** Thank you for asking that question. Let me say that, it's all possible, parents don't have enough time, and there are even those who die due to overwork, they went to work where they have to do reports and studies come also, they get home very tired in a way that they are not able to do anything else, there are those who can not even eat because they are tired, they can't even eat the food prepared to them, they go to bed very tired and they woke up early when they are calling him that he is late at work, so they don't have time. When children don't see you at home, let me tell you a joke, there is a parent who was a businesswoman and her husband was a public servant, he worked far from home, the wife lived at home but she used to go in Dubai to bring some goods in western countries, it takes not less than four days to go there, when she came back, she had to sell those goods so that she could return to bring others, she did this for a long time, children saw her rarely, and they knew that if they don't see a person for a long time, it means that the person is dead, when a visitor came, the husband was not also at home, he was at work because he stays there, the wife went in her business, and the visitor asked the kid, "where is dad", and the kid said: " we don't know where he is", "and mom", asked the visitor, "mom is dead", said the kid, they said so because they no longer see their mom, kids think that if they no more see someone, it means that he is dead. That visitor was a friend to that family, he was ashamed that the woman died and he didn't even know it, "when did she die", he asked, the kid said "she died long ago", and he called the husband on phone and told him "when did your wife die, why didn't you tell me that I may comfort you", that man was at work, he became like a crazy, and he wondered, "did my wife died where she went in business or what", and when he asked, he found out that the wife is still alive but when he thought about it, he discovered that it was because he and his wife don't live no more at home, children thought that, their mom went and never returned because she is dead and at that time they knew that it is a big problem to be far away from their children, let me say, may be I am with these kids, you are doing bad things to your children. So, if we see that today teenager have no respect at all, it is caused by this situation of raising themselves, they don't have someone to tell them, if you do bad you will see its consequences, it's all about them, what they do is a result of the life they lived.



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**Facilitator:** As an addition to what this lady said, I can see that she is still young, if I go back to the questions you asked your uncle, when you asked him, that there is no longer relationship among relatives, as I can see you are young, you said also that teenagers are no more educated, on your point of view, what is the evidence of what you said, because you are so young, and things like that should be seen by aged people, are there some examples you see which shows that teenagers of today are not educated? What have you seen that caused you to ask such a question?

**Genevieve:** The purpose of asking that question is because, sometimes a young girl goes to visit a guy, she doesn't even tell her mom or dad where she is going, she doesn't even tell it his brother or sister, she goes there and she may have trouble there, she passes the whole night without informing her parents and when a parent asks her where she spent the night, she tells him, "you are not my guard, sometimes when I saw this, I see it as an evil thing. Sometimes, a guy goes wherever he wants, and there are some activities at home, he doesn't help' when parents have children, they have the right to send them wherever he wants because they belong to them, the teenager could not help the parent in fetching water, in cutting woods, so, a guy goes on the street and he comes home in the night knocking at the door and tell them: "open the door, I want to sleep", "give me the food", you can see that he is commanding at home, he is the one who is take control, and parents seem like fighting with him. I've seen this often, that's why I've asked him this because I wanted to know if it was the case in the past.

**Elsa:** Thank you, I saw you growing. I raised you. I also have a curious question. As we were discussing, you asked me wise questions, I didn't know that you can ask such questions. How did I raise you? As a matter of fact, you can say that, you did not raise me well on one side, or, did I give you the education you expected from me?

**Genevieve:** You have instructed me well because you raised me since I was a baby till now. I am thankful and I can say that if I continue like this, you will be proud of me.

**Facilitator:** You can continue with your discussion, you can ask whatever question because you had an opportunity to talk with a parent.

**Genevieve:** Why do girls and boys when they become mature leave their parents to go elsewhere? And live alone?

**Elsa:** I can see that you are asking burning questions, but it's good to ask such questions, you are also not very young, it's not recent, it's from the Rwandan culture and beliefs of some society as it is said in other languages, normally, the Rwandan society, there is some age you reached and you had to build your own home, when they saw that you are careless, they began to wonder if you are a normal guy, sometimes also they began to go to the witch to ask if you don't have any problem, at that time, there were witches, so your family went there to ask

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because, they can see that you are grown up, but you don't have any idea to make your own family, because when you reach that age, you begin to have thoughts of being free, you want to manage your life and many times the your plans are an obstacle to your parents, as you said it, guys come late in the night because you were in your own business and which have benefits for you, and you come home when others have already slept, you come home and begin to tell your parent to open the door for you, may be he was asleep at 11pm and you are disturbing him, you do it the first time, the second, the third and when it comes to the fourth time, they tell you to go to build your own house, and you built a house which they called "I am free" when you were still single, your friends gave you the hand to build that "I am free" house, when you had sisters, they knew that they had to bring food to you on a traditional plate, not these modern ones, it was made out of wood, they brought this food and take it in your house so that whenever you come, you will eat and sleep without disturbing anyone, when you lived in that house called "I am free", they saw that you are mature enough, and your sisters began to ask why you don't get married because they also want to have marriage in their family, after a long time living in that house, your sisters began not to give you food so that you can get angry of that situation, and when you ask them. Why didn't you give me some food, they tell you that they forgot to bring food, it happened the 1<sup>st</sup> time, the second, and the third time you got angry, and wanted to have someone to care for you, you tell your dad to give you some land to cultivate and he thought, "my child has grown up" and he gave you a piece of land, and you cultivated in that ranch, and a time came when you feel that you are mature, you want to make your own family, they were pushing you wisely, they disturbed you wisely so that you can be fed up of that situation and make your own home, and some time. You go and tell your dad "I have seen a girl in some family", in my time, it's the guy who proposed the lady, but in the time before, it was the parents who went to ask for a husband for their daughters, till now it's the parents who go to propose to the family of the lady, but it's the man who took the first step to tell his parents that he loved a lady, he loved her character, sometimes, they met before and planned everything but the parents had to go to ask for the hand of the lady to her family, at that time, cows were abundant, there was no problem of dowry, it means that, there comes a time, as a guy, you are pushed but wisely and when they see that still you don't care, they begin to harm you, they insult you and you feel like you are have no value in your family, when you are with other guys they mock you, saying that you are not a man and you get mad because everyone is laughing at you, you begin to think about it. It's also the case for ladies, when she became mature and her family saw that no guy is coming at home to see her, they said, this lady is a fool or there is something wrong with her, her mom could not tell her about it, she sent her to visit her aunt, but she had already told your aunt to talk with you on that issue, and when you come to your aunt, she began to ask you if you have a boyfriend, aunts, in Rwandan culture were valuable people, they said that when she cursed you, you were cursed, you could not hide anything from her, so, from there she could tell you some secrets so that you can feel free to her and you were also free to tell her whatever, and if she heard that you don't care about it, she gave you advice on how you will do so that you can get married also, and when you were a wise lady, you began to take care of yourself, you began to show the



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guys that you are there, and guys loved you, they began to visit you, one after another, and you chose among them, and when parents saw that you reject every guy who came yet you were mature, they said, this lady will not get married, they insulted you, even kids mocked at you and you got angry, you were fed up of that situation and wanted to make your own family so that they will not continue to insult you, and you chose from guys who visited you, when you continued like that, like a lady who has some illness, they went to ask the witch and tells them that their daughter was sick, the witch gave her some medicine, sometimes it worked and other times it didn't work, sometimes they said that she has an illness of fear, which is, having fear for guys, they gave her the medicine for this sickness and when it didn't work, they said that, in every family there is fool, that's why, when someone becomes mature they get married, they are pushed to think about it when they see that they don't care, and you did it also if you were a normal person, you thought about it, and you take a decision to make your own family so that you may be free, but you are not gone for good, it is because you are mature, you want to have your own home. Are you satisfied?

**Genevieve:** Yeah, I see that nowadays, people who want to get married go in the public health center to check if they are not HIV positive and they are encouraged about family planning, was it the case long ago or HIV Aids did not exist.

**Elsa:** HIV Aids did not exist in our time, there were other diseases, the sexually transmitted diseases, but these diseases could be cured, so, there was not even those places to go to have a check up, especially that, at that time, adultery was not frequent, yes it existed but it was rare because, if a person who had bad behavior was known, she could not find any man to propose her, so, most of them were virgin and they lived in trust, concerning family planning, this did not exist, long ago there were huge lands, so it was a benefit to have many children, if a parent had many children, he was proud of it, and when they were drunk they began to say it, they said to others that if someone dare to touch them, their children will fight against them, but that's not the case nowadays, there is Aids, that's why, as you said earlier, teenagers are no more educated, it is even difficult to watch over them, sometimes there are at school and you can't know what they are doing at school, they come from school in holidays, you can't know where they passed or who they have been with, as it is difficult to watch over them, you say, it's ok if he is good physically, he will have a healthy kid, that's why they are sensitized to go to check if they are physically fit to know if they will have healthy kids. Normally, you are advised to have a test after every three months, but, not only you, should we also do it, and we do it so that we can keep that trust, to know if we are not HIV positive, to know that there has not been adultery, so for you, to go there, it is good because you get married knowing that both of you are HIV negative, if you don't do so and may be one of you is HIV positive, he will contaminate the other, and they will give birth to a child who is HIV positive. If they find that you are HIV positive, they do not prevent you to get married, but they give you advice on how you can live together, how you will conduct yourself, if you want to have a child, now, it has become easy, if a mother is HIV positive, there are some medicine that she takes when she is

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pregnant and before giving birth in order to prevent the child from being contaminated, even if both of you may be HIV positive, the child will be HIV negative, he will be healthier, but when you don't know your status, you might contaminate the child while you are pregnant or when you are giving birth, that's why it must be done so. You can see that there is a big difference between the life of today and the life in the past, if you have many children, when can you put them? There is not enough land, nowadays, life is difficult, and the problem is not feeding the children, its education. If you have seven children, where can you find school fees for all of them? Even when you are well paid, how can you assure their future, if you die, where can they go? so, family planning is necessary, to have two or three children, today that's the number that a Rwandans are able to take care of, in the future, may be they will have one child or not have one at all as it is the case in western countries, that's the way it is, today they tell us to have two or three children, but time will come where they will say, if it's possible for you, don't have any child because life is becoming harder, so, you will raise the child knowing that you will pay school fees for him because, in the future or even today, life will be difficult for a person who did not go to school, so there is no other heritage, the only heritage of today is studies, to bring the child to school and get certificate, continue with his university studies, a parent who did this is satisfied and he is assured that his child can live for himself, by getting a job or by being creative, that's why, today they tell us about family planning. Have you understood? Ok.

**Facilitator:** Are you benefiting from responses that you are being given?

**Genevieve:** For sure I am instructed through these answers in a way that I am also able to teach others.

**Facilitator:** Thank you, we are grateful

**Elsa:** Thank you, let me thank this lady for inviting me, I was surprised but I was also glad because she is wise, but I didn't know that she could ask me such questions which made me to reflect on it in order to explain her, I do appreciate you, and let it not be the last time, be free to ask me any questions, I am there for you, as I am still alive, I will explain you. Thank you.

**Genevieve:** I also thank you because we had a good conversation, I have understood many things that I didn't know, but above all, I want you to give me some advice.

**Elsa:** The advice I can give you, we are in difficult times, and there are many disturbances, the first advice is to be content, to be content of the way you are, of what you are given, we can't refuse to give you what we have, we would love to offer you more, but sometimes we don't have enough means, what I ask you, as a lady of today is to be content with what we give you and be grateful, another advice is, to have love, to love everyone, starting from those who come at home, you must know how to live with every body because you might not know what comes after, show them love and be friendly to them, let your home be a home which have

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visitors, I know that you have this character, continue like that. Another thing is, to sacrifice yourself for others in your whole life, if someone have problems, help him the way you can, do your possible to solve his problem, that's the heritage I was given by my parents. You can see that, at home, people who live there are different, they are even those who do not belong to our family, but I take all of you the same way because I know the value of a person, you may be helped by a relative, a friend or even someone you don't know. And when you do well, the goodness will surely follow you. Briefly, that's my advice, you will ask me other things and we will discuss whenever I am available, if you do this, it will be a package for your future. Thank you.

