

## STORIES FOR HOPE

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

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#### **Participants:**

- Nyirasabimana Verena
- Muhoza Desire

**Relation:** Mother

**Relation:** Youth

**Facilitator:** Mukakayange Veronica

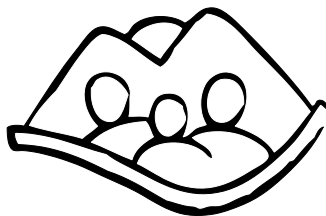
**Date:** May June 2010

**Recording Location:** Byumba

**Story Number:** SFH0126

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### Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire

Story Number: SFH0126

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**Facilitator:** I am called **Veronica Mukakayange**, we are where we record voices for stories of hope, we welcome you but before we start, I would like to ask to introduce yourselves.

**Desire:** I am called **Muhoza Desire**; I live in village of Rwasama, cell of Gacurabwenge, sector of Byumba in district of Gicumbi in north province.

**Verene:** I am called **Nyiransabimana Verene**; I live in the village of Rwasama, cell of Gacurabwenge, Byumba sector, of Gicumbi district.

**Facilitator:** Thank you for coming, Desire you can ask your mother your questions.

**Desire:** I would like to ask my mother, when she got married? And how was she lived before she got married.

**Verene:** I got married in 1978.

**Desire:** How old were you?

**Verene:** I was seventeenth.

**Desire:** The constitution said that for getting married you have to be twenty one years old, why do you have married on seventeenth years.

**Verene:** That time we didn't have that limited years. When you get a husband that you loved each other, you got married.

**Desire:** They couldn't cause you problems.

**Verene:** It couldn't cause problems when you lived well with your husband.

A conversation between Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire

**Desire:** According to the constitution of Rwanda, that time there were laws about marriage if you had a problem with your husband would you be justified although you hadn't eighteen years old?

**Verene:** During our time, it was forbidden for a husband to do coerced divorce, for any reason but if it was great reason, that time they could go to ask for divorce.

**Desire:** How did you live with my father?

**Verene:** We lived well.

**Facilitator:** I think Desire asked one question but in many questions, but to help him you can tell him your childhood, and your life until you got married and the life that you lived with his father.

**Verene:** I was well raised, I was the lastborn, and I was loved by my father and my old brothers and sisters. I studied primary school but I didn't have chance to go to secondary school. After I got married, unfortunately my husband died when we were young, but I couldn't return home, I stayed with my children.

**Desire:** When someone becomes widow, all family asked for sharing the fortune that he has, did you have that problem?

**Verene:** I didn't have that problem because I had children the fortune was for my children, till now we lived well.

**Desire:** There are some widows; they thought to be remarried so that they may have more children. Have you ever think to be remarried.

**Verene:** I didn't think to be remarried, because I would like to raise my children.

**Desire:** I would like to ask you when my father died, were my grandmother, your mother in law advising you how to behave?

**Verene:** They advised me to raise my children. They told me that children are for both parents and they helped to raise my children.

**Desire:** When our father died, we were only two, didn't you think about having another child so that we become three?

**Verene:** It is a difficult thought, other parents knew that, I have been patient for five years but I gave birth after. In family there wasn't any problem and the child lived well with others.

**Desire:** My father died when I was so young, like five or six, I would like to know how he died.

**Verene:** Your father was sick, he didn't spend even a week, when he died you were very young. Before he died, there was another child who died, because I had three children with him. But I tried to advise you how to behave and I promised to raise you well.

A conversation between Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire

**Desire:** When my father was sick, did you bring him to the hospital?

**Verene:** Yes, we took him to the hospital and he was suffering from malaria.

**Desire:** Did he die of malaria?

**Verene:** Exactly.

**Desire:** He died, and you thought to get another child, didn't you see any inconvenience with that child?

**Verene:** That child is like others.

**Desire:** What can you advise us because when we go in neighbours they told us that the child is not ours?

**Verene:** When a child comes in a family, that child is yours, so, you have to ignore what people said.

**Desire:** Didn't you think about my father when you had no school fees for me, or other materials? When it happened what did you do?

**Verene:** In the beginning, it wasn't easy but I was prayerful, by chance the family helped you,...

**Facilitator:** Which family?

**Verene:** The family of his father helped me, in familiar level a project helped me and now he finished first level of university. So, God is great.

**Desire:** Among the children we have, there is one who has psychological problem; doesn't it cause you frustration when you compare him to those who were born at the same time?

**Verene:** I think it was because of the death of your father, because, when your father died, I got sick, I returned home and the child ask where the father and the mother were, when I got well, I came back to raise you ,I saw my child sick ,I took the child to the hospital he couldn't speak.

**Desire:** When he was born, he was normal, was it caused by the death of my father?

**Verene:** Yes he was normal but he delayed to speak, and after the death of my husband, he suffered from kwashiorkor, when I took him to the hospital, he began to walk, to speak even if he stammered.

**Desire:** We passed through many problems in genocide, how did you carry that child? Did my father still alive?

A conversation between Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire

**Verene:** At that time he was normal.

**Desire:** Did my father live at home that time?

**Verene:** No he had a job at Kigali. But he came home in the middle of the Genocide

**Desire:** Since I was young, where did we live during the genocide?

**Verene:** We hide at home and we spent few days.

**Desire:** Even if I was young, everyone ran; did you have something to give us so that we may eat? Weren't you worried? Did you have some reserve?

**Verene:** It was a difficult moment, but we had beans.

**Desire:** Another question; that house that we lived in, was it constructed by my father?

**Verene:** No, your father died when our house was destroyed, but I built a small house and it was destroyed again but after good people gave us roof and we built another house. Problems decreased because when you have something to eat and somewhere to live, it is enough.

**Desire:** Where did we live before?

**Verene:** When your father died we lived with my mother in law, until I build the small house that I told you.

**Desire:** Did you live well with my grandmother because we lived in her house or if something else happened you can tell me.

**Verene:** My mother in law was very humble; we didn't have any problem until I built my own house.

**Desire:** In our culture, we have something called *gukazanura*, didn't you face that? Maybe my grandfather wasn't alive, what about my uncles?

**Verene:** No, it didn't happen because they were all married.

**Desire:** Did you live well with their wives?

**Verene:** No, because they saw that there wasn't anything else between us. But we lived well and they helped me.

**Desire:** Sometimes they could help you and cause conflicts with their wives, did it happen?

**Verene:** It didn't happen to us.

**Desire:** You told me that you gave birth to another child and we became three but three children are not many, so didn't you think about giving birth to the fourth child?

A conversation between Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire

**Verene:** No, because, even if we would live with my husband, we wouldn't give birth to many children.

**Desire:** We are all boys in our family; didn't you think about giving birth to a girl?

**Verene:** I didn't because I know that gender comes from God.

**Desire:** But people tried to search everywhere they could, and sometimes it causes problems home, didn't you have that problem with my father?

**Verene:** No because both girls and boys are children.

**Desire:** Maybe when you grow up, you passed through many problems, what were those problems so that when I face them I may know how to behave?

**Verene:** When I got married I was very young and my husband died a short time after, we didn't have problems.

**Desire:** And how about before you get married.

**Verene:** When we were still young girls, there were many boys who tried to woo me, but I loved your father.

**Desire:** I used to hear people saying that before they got married they make love; did you do that with my father?

**Verene:** No, even if he could ask me that I would refuse. It is good to do it when you are married.

**Facilitator:** I think that what she is saying is helping you. Your mother faced many problems but she is very patient, brave more than other widows. Where did you get that bravery? Is it from your mother or your sisters?

**Verene:** It is from God, my sisters still live with their husbands and my mother lost her husband in her last days, she was very old, the same with my mother in law. I took a decision of raising my children and God helped me in my problems.

**Facilitator:** I want that your son return home satisfied. So, what advice can you give him so that he will have a good marriage?

**Verene:** He said about doing sex before getting married; please don't do that, love only one girl, not many girls. And I pray God to help him.

**Facilitator:** What else can you advise him apart from girls?

**Verene:** I can advise him to study, and to make his family but he has to tell our family and friends before getting married, and then he will have a good wedding; not just getting married,

**A conversation between Nyirasabimana Verena and Muhoza Desire**

but also knowing how to live well with his wife. You have to help each other, and when you get children, you have to raise them, but not to love many girls at the same time, don't do that my son, I don't like it!

**Facilitator:** You didn't work during that time, how did you do so that you might be able to buy food and clothes for your children?

**Verene:** I cultivated and sold those things so that I may be able to raise them, this one finished his studies, the other one who was sick is getting well...

**Facilitator:** Did you have any other resource apart from agriculture?

**Verene:** My only resource agriculture, but if I did not get the harvest, I did some activities and they paid me. And the money I got from selling I used it to buy them clothes, this one we are together finished secondary school, another one didn't study, the last one is in fourth year primary. I hope that he will finish, it is all about God.

**Facilitator:** What heritage can you give your son? What can you tell him to imitate from you or from your husband? I think it can help him.

**Verene:** Even though he finished his studies, he has to work so that he can gain. He can do business, agriculture and so on... he has to work so that he may survive his family.

**Facilitator:** Can you give him a reference of people in your family that he can imitate.

**Verene:** He has an aunt called Mukangiruwonsanga Agnes, he used to live well with her husband.

**Facilitator:** Do you have you another question?

**Desire:** I am satisfied and I thank her for all advices, I promise her to obey and follow her advices.

**Facilitator:** How do feel after the invitation of your son?

**Verene:** I am so glad; I hope that you will ask me any question you may have.

**Facilitator:** Your conversation is not limited here; you may ask those questions to your aunts and uncles, and you can ask for advice to your brothers. I don't know if you have anything else to say?

**Desire:** I thank my mother again for telling me all that.

**Verene:** I am so glad too and I promise to advise him every time he wants. Thank you.