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

Participants:

- Uwamahoro Ernestine Relation: Elder
- Uwimana Deogratias Relation: Youth

Facilitator:

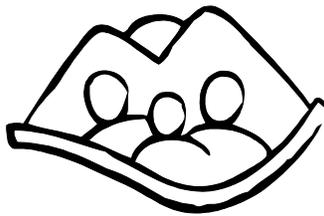
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Uwamahoro Ernestine and UwimanaDeogratias

Story Number: SFH0127

Facilitator: We are glad to receive you here in this conversation, may I request you to introduce yourselves starting with child and then the parent.

Deogratias: Thank you. I am called UwimanaDeogratias.

Ernestine: Thank you. I am called Uwamahoro Ernestine.

Deogratias: In brief, I would like to talk to this parent as a young person as she seem to be a head of me in thoughts and even older than me, I would like to ask her the way they could afford their education in the past days as some could study and others not such that I also understand reasons she could be aware of.

Ernestine: Some of the reasons that I managed to hear or ask were; -for some parents it was difficult to get school fees and the level of understanding was still lower, therefore they would give value work at home than education they thought studying would be having nothing else to do. They would therefore keep their children home assisting them in cattle keeping, cultivation more especially girls compared to boys. For boys whoever would study up senior six the parents could at least do all that is possible to help him but for girls, whoever would go up to that level and even pass, they would tell her to stop from there and come back home to assist in the upbringing of her young sisters at home. Also the parents were so much interested in giving away hence giving a way young girl before they complete their studies. That's the little I had for you.

Deogratias: Thank you, I have managed to understand, but for the issue of giving away young girls, I heard that the girl would be given to a boy she had not seen before, could that be true?

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Ernestine: that's true as in the past days it would be the parents who would sit together (Say when meet in weddings or other social places) and agree to let their children marry one another as we even hear it today on the Urunana-theater on radio Rwanda. Therefore as the parents would agree from even in the bars, it would be difficult for the girl to know the boy even the family she is going to be married in as they would just tell her to prepare herself. In addition to that girls would be even taken at night hence spending like two days without knowing the boy as she would be sometimes not happy and even have no love for him. The same applies to boys as they also had no choice on the girl to marry. They would just hear that the parents are going to bring for him a girl he didn't see before whether disabled or not .hence disadvantageous both sides.

Deogratias: I used to hear of a word "kunywana" which I thought that it was sharing like something drinkable. What was it really?

Ernestine: It was a Rwandan cultural practice, where people who would be interested in having close friendship would cut one another on stomach and the drink one another's blood while making avow so that whoever goes beyond that vow would die. It was really a big sign if a man simply marries a woman and they become one without any other thing, what about those who would share blood. This on one side could bring discipline and real love or friendship in people as they would even fear to beyond the vows they would have made. but on the other side this was not good as it could spread some diseases easily and even dirty compared to today where blood transmission has to be done only after laboratory test of equipment and then blood itself in order to prevent disease transmission which was not the case for those days.

Deogratias: Thank you. Among the explanations you have given me I wanted to ask you whether that cultural practice would not spread some diseases like AIDS, but I have got it.

Another question that I have is that few years ago I used to hear that very many people who would study could not go beyond primary and that it would be even rare to pass hence finding like that in the whole district there is no one who passed what was the cause?

Ernestine: As earlier said it was not easy to study, you would find that in the whole district there is no one who passed as the issue was handled by government politically. You would hear that all student in Kibali have passed, it's just an example due to say there is someone from Kibali working in ministry of education. Therefore people from the area would pass as there was even no this system of using index numbers but just naming there was even these things of saying so and so's son cannot fail and the other ones pass. For example I remember they used to that a peasants son cannot pass and a teacher's son fail hence no equal opportunities as poor men more especially, could not study because their parents were poor thus not able to study and uplift their families. The government was behind this and they would do it basing on area you are born from or family therefore for those who were not coming from popular families or had no bribes they would just wait for God point them a rod and then pass.

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Deogratias: Thank you for that explanation because before I thought that people were dull but I have got it. Again before people used to create their poems and proverbs yet they did not know how to write and read. How did they manage those?

Ernestine: They were clever though they were not educated they could create their poems in parts, share parts among themselves as a group and then give those parts to one person to present it they were focused as all that they foretell is what we are seeing today. For sure to their level they did a lot as when you look in the Kinyarwanda primary text books, all those poems and proverbs that are there are the ones that were created by them and that was their target to set foundation or at least leave something for their grand sons and daughters.

Deogratias: Thank you, you have talked of proverbs, and I have remembered one which says "a fool praise himself." What does it mean?

Ernestine: Naturally most people believe in themselves and think what they know is the best hence not contacting other for advice that's why when someone come and tell that your neighbor hates you and instead of calling him or a friend to help you for reconciliation, you also opt to hate him or her. One head cannot help itself than running mad.

Deogratias: Thank you for good explanations. Following on what you have seen before and where we are heading, what is the difference basing on education and social issues say on the children you produced then.

Ernestine: Comparing the past situation with present situation, I realize a very big difference by the you could find someone who completed primary only employed but these days even those who have degrees are unemployed indicating that so many people are educated. Even when you go to schools you find that the number of girls is greater than the number of boys indicating that people study simply basing on their own capability this implies that there is emplacement be in education and socially as I hope these days no one can simply give away his daughter over a night to a boy she has not seen before. Things have to follow the order – introduction, giving dowry, civil marriage and lastly religious marriage. Showing another big step culturally and socially its big step really as these day women are members of parliament, and so on which even gives more courage to the young coming generation of a girl.

Facilitator: There one thing which you have told this young boy that it used happen like a whole district people study but no one pass. So how would students feel after failing bearing in mind that they were not dull but instead other issues like failure to get bribes, influential people in government, or girls who would be forced to drop out for marriage?

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Ernestine: It would depend on the family he or she would be coming from. Some would get happy and other would feel unhappy as even today there are kids whom you might stop from going to school and feel happy. But the was that as time went girls continued to realize that they were oppressed ,as in case of a problem at home say sickness automatically a girl would stay home and a boy goes to school yet they were born together. definitely girls would have nothing to do as they could first look around and that's what happened to so and so when she and her brother all passed but chance for continuing given to her brother only, hence consoling themselves as they had no one to talk for them.

DeoGratias: Thank you just as someone who has seen the last error ,I believe ,there were limited schools compared to today where we have many schools starting from nurseries and even day care centers, how do you accept this?

Ernestine: That pleases me so much because for me I started school when I was seven years old and yet I was among the youngest. For our days there was no dare care centers and nurseries. We could begin from primary, registration would be done at sub county offices when you are seven year or above to start which was different from the interesting system of today where kids begin when they are very young in day care centers and even learn how to talk from there. There is really a very big deference as for us we could begin French lesson in primary four but these days in nurseries kids speak English and French.

DeoGratias: Just as someone who survived, I am not sure whether there used to be banks and children savings accounts. Could you be planning for your kids' future?

Ernestine: Based on the rate the world is running, we definitely can't sit without planning for our kids because first of all life span is short, you think of what will happen when you will not be there. For past days whenever you would pass they would sell coffee or even land but today we open school fees savings account or insurance for our kids as in case of something abrupt its either to pick from pocket or bank we therefore have to save. Therefore the only heritage that we give our kinds is education for it's where they will get everything be dowry it's no longer the case to get a cow and give it to him but instead it's cash. That's why we must plan for their education.

DeoGratias:Wonderful, today young generation be both girls and boys they enjoying bad behaviors like taking marijuana and sex immorality. What advise do you give me as a teenager?

Ernestine: That is really painig because even though in the past people were ignorant, they could just stay for long in the herds but not drinking marijuana, and practicing sexual immorality in young people. In our days no could even tell us things about sex as they thought that when they do so it would stimulate us,but today, kids get to understand so many things when they are still young and care is not enough as these day parents you find that they are

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also schooling. So when these kids learn about so many things at school and when they get home they find no one there definitely they try to practice them. That's why you find today twelve age boy or some below taking marijuana as he is misled that when he takes it that's when he becomes strong or young girl misled that when she doesn't pray sex she will not have a smooth skin and look beautiful. Therefore if parents could spare time for their children and try to teach them how to stay and keep themselves from such habits. It would help. Otherwise it's scary. We need to pray.

Deogratias: Thank you for your good explanation. Nowadays, people are illustrating they know computer, go for internet and what is taking place all over the world. So you as old people could you also be supporting them.

Ernestine: Any way these kids today they know so many things than we know. In the past a kid could only know what he has been taught at home but today a kid comes from school telling apparently that they have been taught computer when the parent is not even aware of it. There is generally prosperity in ICT because you find a kid using a computer only that sometimes you find that the parent has nothing to contribute to the kid as she doesn't know it as in our days those who knew how to write could use banana leaves or do it on sisal leaves. There for if the parents could enjoy this with their children it could be better.

Facilitator: As a parent when you look around, is there capacity for parents to support this above mentioned prosperity.

Ernestine: For sure we are also interested as it's good for both of us but the challenge is that sometimes they study those things at school on computers and find that there is no one at home, thus no means of parents to help the kid. So there is interest from parents. They are giving equal opportunities to both girl and boys be material or services and they are doing all that they can afford to assist their children.

Deogratias: Thank you for your good explanations. I have another issue about some parents who stop their kids from schooling and instead use them for work at home when they are even still young. What advice do you have for such parents?

Ernestine: It's a big mistake to get a young kid and employ him for house work. If even if you are there, suppose you find someone using your kid for house work how would you feel? Any way the only challenge today is that so many kids are orphans due to what happened in these countries, incurable diseases like AIDS hence no one to follow up those kids and even because they are orphans sometimes you find that they opt for such job in order to get sustainability. So we as parents we shouldn't be employing such young kids instead we should be receiving them as ours, help them, educate them, and where need be let those kids do work at home so long as it is not beyond their level as it's good to let children do some work but also study and get

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their rights as children rather than employing them as even in most cases those who employ them, assign them do what is beyond their age. So such people who use young children as house maids should be condemned

Deogratias: Thank you. Surely we know that in the past days people used to produce so many children like ten or more compared to today where people produce like two or three as they used to say that the strength of a parents were hands hence the reason to produce many children what is your view or advice about this?

Ernestine: It's true, in those days whoever would be having many children would be considered as a rich person however those people would be having big land to where they could cultivate and get enough food. But today things are different because when you produce so many children you can't even get what to feed them. So my advice is that parents should observe family planning methods and use them because controlling many children is difficult compared to few children hence insufficient care be materially and morally.

Deogratias: Thank you very much for your explanations. Next time when I need you, will talk to you.

Ernestine: Thank you too.

Facilitator: Any other thing to add on since we have come to an end.

Deogratias: Nothing.

