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

Participants:

- Urayeneza Sauda
- Mugwaneza Noella

Relation: Aunt

Relation: Youth

Facilitator:

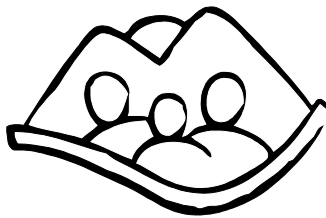
Date: May June 2010

Recording Location: Byumba

Story Number: SFH0128

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Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Story Number: SFH0128

Noella: I am called Mugwaneza Noella; I live in village called Nyiragasuma, in cell of Nyamabuye, in sector of Byumba, in district of Gicumbi.

Sauda: I am called Urayeneza Sauda, from the village Gacurabwenge, district of Gicumbi.

Facilitator: Noella, you are welcome, you can ask your aunt any question you want.

Noella: As my aunt I would like to ask you what culture is. I used to hear people say it, but I don't understand what it means.

Sauda: In our time, there were different things in culture like: norms, rite, dressing code, belief. People were different, because of their beliefs, norms, rite and way of dressing. Some people live in different villages, they had different education and they dress differently.

Noella: For example dressing how was it to girls?

Sauda: Children were naked, and at a certain age they could put on dressed skin leather.

Noella: At what age?

Sauda: For what my grandmother told me: from the birth to ten years children would be naked, and from ten they would dress up skin leather for rich families and for poor people they could dress up at twelve years. I didn't wear like that because I wasn't there as on my time we dressed clothes and they were totally different from these days.

Noella: What about education? Was education of boys like the education of girls?

A conversation between Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Sauda: Before my time, girls didn't go to school, they had to work home with their mothers but on my time, we used to go to school but for any problem home, it was the girls who would stop to study. For example say, the mother died, girls would stay home so that they raise other children or when any of their young sisters or brothers got sick, the girls were the ones to stay home, and it was my case although I had brothers. I was one girl and my elder sisters were all married, so at any occasion I would be the one to stay home. I didn't see my brothers stay home and not go to school. In my family I used to do all house works.

Noella: Did your mother never help you or tell your brother to help you? Could your brothers plead for you so that you may go to school say when your mother could be was sick or do some works home?

Sauda: As I told you, it was the culture and for my mother she would like to help me so that I may rest but that's how the culture was they thought that she was a girls who would do all house works, not boys. Boys had to play but girls had to work and I did it gladly because it was the culture.

Noella: What about your father, I used to hear that girls were liked by their fathers. Couldn't your father tell your brothers to help you?

Sauda: No, it was the culture from their parents, even if he could see that there was tiredness. They were works for girls and others works for boys, for example caring for young sisters, cooking, clean the house all those works were for girls , I did them with my mother but to draw, splitting firewood were for boys. It is different from these days.

Noella: Where is the difference between these days and your time?

Sauda: The difference is that on my time when they told me not to go to school, because of a certain task, it made me happy, but these days all children are the same, if there is a problem home, even boys or girls can do those works, it is the culture of today all children go to school either boys or girls but the culture of the past boys went to school only.

Noella: I saw some children in streets and you told me that all children go to school in these days, why that?

Sauda: The way of thinking is different, there are some parents who still have those thoughts, but because the government insist on the education of all children, they let them going to school but for them to have something to eat is enough.

Noella: You told me that you were the only girl in your family, weren't your brothers told one of them to stay home with you and helped you when your young brother was sick?

A conversation between Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Sauda: I used to think that my brothers had to go to school all time but after a certain time I began to understand that I have to go to school as my brothers went to school. But it wasn't easy for my parents to let me go to school but it was violence.

Noella: At that time, your parents understand easily what you said?

Sauda: Because of the culture they couldn't understand me easily, they took me as disobedient but with time they understood me. Because they listened to the radio that there were presidents who were women, ministers.

Noella: Did they let you finish your studies as your brothers?

Sauda: Yes, I studied well, how can you compare how we lived and how you live these days?

Noella: It wasn't easy for you to study but nowadays we are developed every child go to school either boys or girls, I study easily likewise my brothers.

Facilitator: It is good as an aunt to ask that question but you have already answered that question, I think as she invited you, you can let her ask you questions? Can I ask you other things? You told us that when you were still young you did all works home, where did you get that audacity?

Sauda: When I was so young, I saw it good because my mother could it also, but when I got in period of adolescence, when started to listen to the radio some ministers who were women and president, I began to tell my parents what I listen to the radio and they realized that to become a president you must have studied. And they began to teach other people who prevented their girls from going to school.

Noella: Other question is about belief; I used to hear that there weren't many religions, people pray small gods. What can you say about it?

Sauda: From what I heard before there were divinations and people had "Ryangombe" as their god, but during our time. There were different religions?

Noella: In which religions were you? Did you change?

Sauda: You know it as my niece.

Noella: I think divination still exist, because I used to hear people saying that some old women pray small gods. do you have a religion?

A conversation between Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Sauda: I am moslem, it is a religion from my parents, but if my parents were not having it, I would go there, because they do pray God. so I grew up loving God, and I wish you to love God too.

Noella: How could they call their children "RUGIRA" (God is all), yet they didn't know God?

Sauda: They prayed "Ryangombe" (small god), and they took it as God.

Noella: "Ryangombe" as god?

Sauda: They took it like a god because of their culture. When white men or Europeans came in Rwanda, that's when other religion and schools came in.

Noella: On your time how were weddings? What were girls and boys characters in regard to get married?

Sauda: Before I was born, it was the parents who chose for their children the right husband or right wife but either boy or girl couldn't be aware who will become her husband or his wife.

Noella: If you could not appreciate the wife they could give you, could you refused?

Sauda: No, they had to obey to what parents could do, they couldn't unlike today where nowadays a boy loves a girl and girl loves the boy and they get married.

Facilitator: It is good to hear what your aunt tells you, it's better to tell Noella if you got married that way.

Sauda: I told you how it happened, but in my time there was development, we loved each other and we got married.

Noella: What If your parents refused that boy, what would you have done? Because I used to hear that parents could curse.

Sauda: On my time, parents could not curse. Even if they could do it, it could do nothing.

Noella: Sometimes, there are some people who don't get married, and people say that it is because their parents cursed them, is true?

A conversation between Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Sauda: In culture a child can become rebellious. There were some parents who told their children to adore "Ryangombe" and the children refuse, those parents could curse those children. But it didn't mean anything.

Noella: After getting married, was there any inconvenience?

Sauda: Because I got married to a husband whom I loved, I got no problem. I got married when I had not finished my studies but later I finished.

Noella: What pleased you, when you got married?

Sauda: Because my mother loved children, loved us, something that pleased me was to give birth to my firstborn and to get married with a husband who loved me. I got married when I was still young and the parents used to motivate children to get married before they could become adult.

Noella: Sometimes people say that you can get married but fail to give birth. What would you do if it had happened to you?

Sauda: It depends on your husband, but because we got married when we loved each other, and we believed that all things (good or bad) come from God. I think we would become patient.

Facilitator: It is good that you have had conversation but the better thing is to say what happened in marriage. There are many things. You said that your marriage is wonderful so I would like to ask you what is your secret to have that good marriage? I think it can help her me a young girl.

Sauda: As someone who advise you, what I can say about my good marriage is, something that helped me was the culture from my parents, to obey my husband, and his family, to work for my house, to welcome every visitors, to raise my children as my parents raised me. An advice that I can give you is to obey your husband, all visitors, and to work for your family.

Noella: In many marriages, some wives don't agree with their mother in law, haven't you ever got that problem?

Sauda: No, because my husband lost his mother and his father but when you have a mother in law as a girl who has the culture you have to be humble to her.

Noella: When you see such kind of wives who have problems with their mothers in law, and sometimes mothers in law behave badly, yet the husband understands his mother more than his wife what advice do you have for such wives?

A conversation between Urayeneza Sauda and Mugwaneza Noella

Sauda: As you have been educated, the way you obey your parents should be the same way you have to obey your parents in law!

Facilitator: You still talk about the culture, what helped you from your childhood until you got married? What was your secret as a young girl, it can help her.

Sauda: In culture, parents prevent us from being with boys, it is not like these days, because we study in same classes, we work together but you have to know how to behave with them. In my culture I used to live with boys but I knew how to behave with them because there is some bad behaviour that boys can spread, like taking drugs, or having boyfriends or girlfriends...

Facilitator: What are the main pillars that you stand on today? Are they from your mother or your aunts?

Sauda: The main pillars were from my family because a child was for all family, today we have to care for all children. This is how some culture goes on fading because some parents don't want to look for all children.

Noella: I can see that you are cool and humble. Where do you get that?

Sauda: My character that you can have too comes from my parents mainly my mother.

Noella: Today, many girls give birth to children before getting married, at your time what punishment was there for such girls.

Sauda: Before, every girl who would have unaware child, they would be thrown into water, or they would be put in forest so that animals could eat them. The reason why these days more girls give birth before they get married is that there is no longer punishment for them even though it wasn't good. But you are the one to pay attention so that you may not have those unaware children.

Noella: What can you advise a girl who has unaware child?

Sauda: You can't do anything, because she had already done it, as a parent you have to be closer to her and help her but advising her so that she may not repeat again.

Noella: What made you happy in all your life?

Sauda: Something that made me happy was to know God, secondly was to study. I can advise you and your generation to love God, to obey God because when you obey God you will obey all human being and to study as in studying you know more about God.

Facilitator: Noella, do you have another question?

Noella: No, I have no other question.

Sauda: Are you satisfied?

Noella: Yes and thank you for your advices, I will follow them.

Sauda: You have to advise your friends too about what I have told you.

