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

Participants:

- Kwizera Samuel **Relation:** Uncle
- Igihozo Cindy Providence **Relation:** Niece

Facilitator: Kalisa Benon

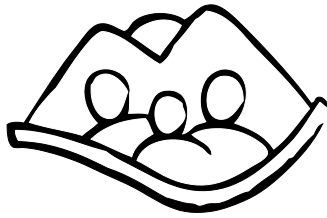
Date: 7 May 2009

Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH0047B (second story in recording)

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Kwizera Samuel & Igihozo Cindy Providence

Story Number: SFH0047B

Samuel: Thanks let me start by mentioning my name. I am called Kwizera Samuel, in my daily life I work for myself... things to do with transport. I am married; I have a wife and a child. I am 35 years old, and I am an uncle to this child. Igihozo is her name.

Facilitator: Tell her the story you prepared for her.

Samuel: In all of these years I have... I have seen a lot, mostly in Rwanda. For the story I want to tell her, I want to pick out two of the stories that characterized the history of Rwanda and characterized Rwandese people. These stories are leading to love. I am talking about the period before the genocide of Tutsis. A long time ago, Rwandese loved each other. A long time ago, before these emergency vehicles that take sick people had been brought, there were ways in which Rwandese used to help each other. If there was a sick person, there was something we called igobyi (no translation but it's a bed that four people would carry on their shoulders and a sick person would be carried on). This would be used to carry the sick person. They never used to check which ethnic group one came from, and they themselves would be from different ethnicities. They would go help each other and that was something good; that kind of help to each other, by relieving each other without even checking your ethnic background, was good. Another story I can give you is a story about ubudehe (community based support, where people who are willing decide to help fellow men on specific duties like cultivation, construction, etc.). A long time ago, that thing of ubudehe existed. One would have prepared local beer and invited people over, and people would come help him in the form of digging for him, building for him a fence, all of this showed love. If you looked at the other gift of local beer, it was not a gift but rather a way to appreciate each other and all this was good. People were united. But when the war started, it was clear that it was sensitized that Hutus were supposed to kill Tutsis. But for sure Rwandese were united, they had love based on the examples I gave. What we can wish our children today is love first of all, the love of existing with each other without asking the ethnic origin, being together without asking what your dad's or mother's ethnicity was. But the main thing we need to do is tell them the truth

A conversation between Kwizera Samuel and Igihozo Cindy Providence

about what happened without being biased. We need to tell them how their parents died. This helps a child to know the truth when he or she grows up and to know how to reject evil. By knowing the truth, they understand that there is no interest in killing your colleague and that the main thing is to live together. If you tell someone the truth, when they grow up they will develop plans of how to tell the story knowing very well that the crime of killing is a bad sin. They will know well that co-existence is the important thing. In general, misunderstandings delay the development of the country because the energies of the population are misused when people misunderstand each other. So when there is truth, truth helps. I think this is the story I can tell her.

Facilitator: Thank you so much. I don't know, but you stressed a lot about the history, and for sure a country that has no history... I don't know what they add there. I have a personal question about that history. Were you told, or did you live that history?

Samuel: The history I gave, I have 35 years, so all that I said are things I saw with my own eyes. I lived in that history, and I know very well. I saw everything...

Facilitator: Now Igihozo, we know each other very well even though we have just met in this program. You are an old person in senior 6 and you are mature. The story you just heard, is it the first time he has told you or he does tell you that story often? And if he does tell you often, how does it help you? Do you have any questions for him or anything to ask him?

Cindy Providence: Thank you, my name is Igihozo. We stay together in our daily lives but we have not had a chance to sit and talk about this. He asks me how my studies are and that is all. I am happy because we have had time to talk about history, something he lived through. Me, I knew nothing. A question I have is, what is Ubudehe? What was that word? I thank him for that and promise that I can also love based on what you have told me. Thanks.

Samuel: Thanks Igihozo. She has asked me about that thing of Ubudehe, how was it, as she knew nothing about it. Ubudehe was an activity done like a ceremony. People would join each other to help one person, for example by digging, constructing, or when he or she had lost someone, although it was not always. Most times it was basically umusazu (help) they would give her or him so that he could grow and develop. It was an activity that showed love, not based on ethnicity or anything else. It would be a form of support to that person in order for him or her to get to other people's levels in terms of economic or social growth.

Facilitator: Thanks so much. Why is that you chose this to be the story to tell Igihozo?

Samuel: The reason I chose this as the story to tell Igihozo is because it's the story that has love in it. She is a young person in school, and love has to be prepared earlier

A conversation between Kwizera Samuel and Igihozo Cindy Providence

so that one grows with it. It's a foundation for all this; if you have love, everything branches from it. So the stories I gave her are about things that characterized love in the Rwandese, which was not based on anything but ways to help each other. And my advice is that she puts that love onto the colleagues at school and tells them that the first thing is love, and that if love existed, there would not have been the genocide of killing Tutsis. And that's why I gave her that responsibility of love, so that she can plant it in the students she studies with.

Facilitator: Thanks. Igihozo, that love he is telling you, do you understand it? That love that he is encouraging you to have, which actually without it caused the genocide in Rwanda, do you understand what he is telling you? Do you have something you want to ask him?

Cindy Providence: Thank you. Me, I have understood what ubudehe aimed for, and encouraging me to have love is good and I promise him that I will plant it in my friends and do it without interest or profit to others.

Facilitator: It is clear that this story is short. I may have to ask you, in this program we are in, we are in the program for children to be told stories of things that happened and they also get to be free and ask questions. Do you think up to now, does your niece get the courage to ask you and become satisfied with things she did not learn in the family? It shows that you are brave. I have my father who was born in 1930, and he is still alive. They went into exile during the times of beating, in 1936, into Uganda, up until recently, in 1994 in the month of December. But he knows nothing about the history of the country. Right now when he is trying to search, imagine all those years. Now I am asking myself, even if you are old, if you are too old, where do you find that braveness? Do you find that this young lady is encouraged to come and ask you questions as an old person apart from knowing about her studies? Are there other things she is trying to know?

Samuel: It's true, there are people who may not have the thirst of knowing other things. It's because of that that I try to encourage her to know the history, to know what happened in Rwanda, so that she also knows the truth tomorrow, the whole truth of what happened here. Otherwise in general, she also needs to know all other things, the way genocide was prepared, the way people killed each other, and why they killed them. That is why we explain how genocide took place, so that tomorrow she knows the truth of what happened. That is necessary to know.

Facilitator: What name can you give to this?

Samuel: The name? The name I can call it "love." We have to base our life on that, even us who are old, even us who participated in those killings. Love is what I can call it so that she can base her life on love, and it's the only thing that can develop other things.

A conversation between Kwizera Samuel and Igihozo Cindy Providence

Facilitator: There is a Rwandese word called urwibutso (remembrance). Most things you said, I actually noted also and it can help me in my daily life. I am old, but I am not really too old, and I also gained a lot from this talk, I learned a lot. A long time ago, when we were still out of this country, my mum used to tell us stories, sometimes poems, tales, and others. This story you have told us with Igihozo, Igihozo will go in her affairs and you will also go in your affairs and what will remain is communication on the phone. In the story you told, what would be a word of remembrance, it may be in the form of a proverb, so that whenever she hears that proverb, it should remind her of the story you told her, in a way that she does not forget what you told her.

Samuel: Thanks, it is good that Igihozo takes a remembrance in the form of a proverb. I can tell her this proverb even though she is still young. The proverb I can give her is this: "Charity begins at home." If she knows the truth when she is young then she will live harmoniously with others knowing the truth. I feel that this is the proverb I can leave her with and if she understands the value of this proverb, it will help her in her daily life.

Facilitator: Thanks so much. Igihozo, do you have anything to add on? I might have denied you the chance to say something. I don't know if you have anything to ask. We know each other in our usual life but I believe this is something that can help everyone, everyone.

Cindy Providence: Thanks. I continue to thank him and to let him know that I will keep that message of the proverb as a remembrance, I will keep it as my remembrance message in this journey as I grow and I will use it to help others. Thanks.

Samuel: What I can also add on is to thank you for giving me the chance to talk to Igihozo. In telling her the history of this country, I hope that it will help her as she grows older. Thanks.

Facilitator: Thanks.