



# Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

## Official Transcript: Ololade Benson (Part 9 of 9)



<b>Role:</b>	Translator
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Nigeria
<b>Interview Date:</b>	23 October 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Donald J Horowitz Robert Utter
<b>Videographer:</b>	Nell Carden Grey
<b>Interpreter:</b>	None

### Interview Summary

Ololade Benson speaks about her role as a translator and the challenges of communicating sensitive material such as witness statements concerning rapes and killings. She discusses her personal engagement with an international non-profit organization that she founded in 1998 to help single mothers, widows and children in Rwanda. She emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability for charitable organizations operating in post-conflict settings. Benson draws attention to the targeting and suffering of women in Rwanda during and after the genocide.

*The transcript of Part 9 begins on the following page.*

## Part 9

- 00:00** Robert Utter: Do you plan to grow in terms of numbers of people who work with you?
- 00:04 Yes.
- 00:05** RU: How do you anticipate this will be done?
- 00:08 Everything I wanted – I just want to take it one step at a time. Like I said, I, I don't like biting off more than I can chew, because what happens is that I get overwhelmed and discouraged, so I'll just take it one day at a time, one day at a time, one day at a time. Like my, one of my goals for next year is to try to increase the food portions, the ration, especially the protein. I want to try and increase that.
- 00:30 And what is going to happen is that last, the last time we had about three, four people who haven't come consistently like for about four months, so we're just going to remove them from the register. I have a register and I'm not going to replace them, you know, so that people will have more food.
- 00:46** RU: Do you share your food ministry with people who are in that business who can provide food materials for you? Or do you raise the money and then go out and buy the food?
- 00:58 I raise the money, my guard goes out and buys the food and then the volunteers come. They bottle the oil, they bag the food and I load it in my car and I . . .
- 01:07** RU: In the United States we work not just by ourselves in these agencies but we have what we call a board of directors more (\_\_\_\_\_).
- 01:15 Yeah, I'm working on that, yeah.
- 01:16** RU: Well, I find it at least critically important . . .
- 01:20 Yeah . . . no.
- 01:20** RU: . . . because we can't do all these things by ourselves. If you find people with a similar passion . . .
- 01:27 Yeah . . . yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 01:27** RU: . . . who have the ability to do things you can't do, it just magnifies the amount of work you can do, the people you can reach. You'd be surprised. If the cause is good, you can easily find good people (\_\_\_\_\_).
- 01:41 Yeah. I have some people in mind and that's one of, one of the things I'm going to do. My constitution has to be ready before the end of the year. Then I'm going to try and register

and then open a bank account. I have two, three names in mind. That is one of my goals. I will, I try to set myself goals and that's one of the goals for next year.

02:00 The goal for this year was to set the people up, make them start doing businesses and get the website up and running. So one of the things for next year is going to be what we just talked about – the board of directors, I mean, the proper structure, getting the proper structure in place. That's one, my main goal for next year.

**02:16 RU: That sounds encouraging. I was going to ask you priorities, but I think as long as you are going to put the board of directors on your list. It's one of the most important priorities . . .**

02:23 Yeah, it's very important, yeah it is. It is, it is.

**02:26 RU: . . . I find. I've read your newsletter, which I found inspiring.**

02:31 Thank you very much.

**02:32 RU: But it also struck me that if you can tell stories of real people . . .**

02:36 Okay.

**02:37 RU: . . . even if you're just limited to one page, that always gets someone's attention.**

02:42 I do that.

**02:43 RU: Focus on what should be done. There's so many you deal with. I, I was touched by the thought of children raising children.**

02:50 Yeah, yeah. A lot of that.

**02:51 RU: What a heart wrenching situation that must be.**

02:53 Yeah, childhood families in Rwanda, yes.

**02:56 RU: Childhood families as you call it.**

02:56 Yeah, yeah. I do that as well. I mean I've interviewed the, this year the home caregiver. I think that was in April or May. In some of my newsletters I do interviews of and somebody bought him a bicycle when he said in one, the interview that he has to go on foot. He doesn't have money for transport. Somebody read the newsletter and gave me money for a bicycle.

03:19 So I do things like that as well. And then that he mentioned also that some of the orphans sleep on the floor, and somebody gave me mattresses. I got two mattresses. So the newsletter is really very good. I do, I do one-on-one interviews.

- 03:31 I just move from, it depends on – and then I interviewed also the, the nursing mothers because I give them like a kilo of cereal for their children. So all of them came together once to thank me and that got me inspired to interview them. So there was another newsletter on them as well, an interview on how they are coping because they can't breastfeed and stuff like that. That was another. That was, that was, I think that was in May or June, my May or June newsletter, yeah.
- 03:58 Note: Gap in Interview (Approx. 4 seconds in duration) Gaps occurred due to interruptions during the interview, technical issues, or corrupted data files.**
- 04:07 RU: . . . and to watch your discussion with Judge Horowitz and to talk with you personally.**
- 04:12 Thank you very much.
- 04:13 RU: I reiterate my personal concern, which is that you take care of yourself physically.**
- 04:17 Thank, thank you very much.
- 04:19 RU: Because what you are doing is so emotionally draining.**
- 04:21 It is.
- 04:22 RU: And challenging, even someone with your remarkable amount of energy and health must take care of yourself.**
- 04:29 Yeah, I agree.
- 04:30 RU: But the obviously great job you've done with your two boys is I think the most impressive thing you've done; out of all these other things that you're involved in as well.**
- 04:39 Thank you very much.
- 04:40 RU: Do focus on developing a board of directors, not just in name, but people who share your, your vision and have your heart. That way you can multiply your efforts, have your impact greater and expand other areas.**
- 04:57 Yeah, okay.
- 04:58 RU: I have nothing else except to say thank you. It's been a privilege to talk (\_\_\_\_\_) . . .**
- 05:01 Thank you, thank you very much and thank you for the advice as well.