



Empowering approaches for understanding empowerment

*Never doubt that a small group
of determined people can
change the world. In truth,
it could never change otherwise'*
Margaret Mead

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For CARE International in Burundi
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Acknowledgments

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1. Introduction

This aim of this document is to introduce the reader to a pilot practice within CARE Burundi that focuses on valuing people and their stories of positive change as a means to approach sensitive issues within the communities where CARE works. 'Dialogue Valorisant (DV),' as it is called by CARE in Burundi, is a translation of the method called Appreciative Inquiry which was developed by D. Cooperrider from Case Western University of Cleveland, Ohio (refer to Annex 1 Appreciative Inquiry for details). The approach focuses on the positive – both existing and possible, as opposed to the common problem focused analysis that CARE as an organisation has been using over the past years. It also emphasises the fact that change is always happening, and recognising that positive change is not only the result of project activities, but of a combination of factors influencing people's lives.

CARE Burundi has committed to incorporating this approach across its projects/programmes and to providing and supporting the space needed for such change processes to occur. After testing the Oral Testimony approach within one of its projects - Progressing in Peace (PIP) in April 2005, the mission began a process of internal inquiry and reflection in regards to how it values its *voisin*¹, and the relationship between CARE Burundi and the communities it serves². The DV approach was designed in September 2005 and has continued from there. An outcome of this journey was CARE Burundi's recent Strategic Plan which emphasises the valuing of stories of positive change and the people committed to supporting change processes.

This practice has further been developed by community members from a few collines (communities) in Gitega province and key staff of CARE Burundi between 2006 - 2007. It is important to note that the methodology is not finalised, and will continue to evolve through further exploration and dialogue. If this practice tempts you it is absolutely necessary to contact the actors engaged in its evolution (see point 8).

2. Objective of the practice

Certain issues are difficult to address with local communities, such as gender relations, woman's empowerment, sexual violence and conflict. Often such topics are qualified as 'delicate' or 'taboo', because they touch on the intimate life of people, and throw into question power relations. It is often easier to hide behind tradition and cultural values, than to question harmful practices. However, such negative behaviours seriously compromise the expected results of project interventions. It is therefore crucial that behaviour change occurs in order to sustain positive results of our projects and programs (see example).

Example: A project can provide credit to a woman, then her husband uses this credit to his will without repaying it. The woman will then sell her goods to repay the credit. For the project the repayment is made so the intervention is considered a success. Yet a human drama hides behind this reality....

Behaviour change doesn't take place in

one day and is a long-term process, a process which realistically most development projects can not engage with over the long term.

¹ *Voisin*, or neighbours in English, was identified as a more appropriate and respectful reference to the communities and individuals with which CARE works.

² For more detail on CARE Burundi's Journey refer to its Strategic Journey Document, March 07. Contact Kassie McIlvaine at kassie@care.org.bi for a copy of this report

The actors who are central to this practice (described below) have succeeded in illuminating the question of inequality and furthermore, the issue of domestic violence. These individuals have succeeded in creating a critical mass of men and women who are throwing into question the behaviours and practices that prevent couples, families and communities from living a harmonious life. Certainly, this practice could explore other themes bound to the diversity of issues affecting communities, such as ethnicity, age, people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, among others.

3. Description of the practice

The practice includes several stages as summarized in the box below:

Summary

Stage 1: Enter into a meaningful dialogue with men and the women of the community (*Dialogue Valorisant*).

Stage 2: Identification of change agents (minimum 1 man and 1 woman) to testify in their communities.

Stage 3: individuals testify or share their stories with others in the community and discussions around the change take place.

Several possible ways to promote testimonies and discussions exist:

1. Organize specific meetings in a community using focus groups (women and men separately)
2. Seize the opportunity during a community meeting to have a story told.
3. Engage in a dialogue at the individual level, or at the household level
4. seize the opportunity to tell the story with a small group such as around a well
5. Mediation in the households in case of demand or in the case of a problem (e.g. domestic dispute)
6. Follow the already changed people at the time of a previous meeting
7. Visit a household where individuals have changed practices with a group of people from the community

Stage 4: Identification of 'second generation'³ actors that have changed their behavior and who have made the decision to share their story.

Description of the stages

Stage 1: Dialogue Valorisant

'Discovering the life stories of members of the communities'

Project staff enter into meaningful dialogue with different community members. This entails a deep one on one dialogue about the chosen theme. It is during this initial dialogue that positive life stories are shared (see the method of Dialogue Valorisant,

³ Second generation are those individuals who upon hearing the story of someone who has changed – decide to change

described in Annex 1). These stories are then documented and kept on file. These stories allow us to more fully understand the issue(s) in all of its complexity.

Stage 2: Identification of change agents

'Extraordinary people with extraordinary stories'

Normally, during this process of dialogue a very touching personal story will be told at some point by a man or a woman, and in this story will be testimony of extraordinary behavior change. However, not in all cases and they should not be forced. These courageous men and women exist in all societies! An important element to the story telling is that the narrator his/herself is the only agent of his/her change, even though their behaviour has been sustained and supported by others. History shows that one can take his or her destiny in hand.

In addition to the positive element of a life story and its narrator who is eloquent, convincing and especially motivated to testify, there is also the person who is necessary to start the following stage. It is important to identify at least one woman and man to start the process of testimony and discussion. The change agents have been referred to as 'éclairs', or in Kirundi, the **Abatangamuco** = those that bring light).

Stage 3: Testimony and discussions

'A story that touches deeply...'

It is during this stage that the work of the *Abatangamuco* begins. The stories and discussions can take several shapes, of which some are inspired by the opportunities that present themselves: a precise event, an observed behavior, a meeting between friends, a visit, a conflict, the desire to share and discuss personal situations with neighbors. It is a process that these agents of change can manage alone (without the financial support of the project) and to their suitability.

The process can begin spontaneously or during a specific meeting organized at the community level by the *Abatangamuco* and assisted by a CARE staff member in charge of the project. At the time of invitation to the meeting, the 'promoters' will remain vague on the content, but insist that men and women are present.

During the opening of the meeting, (with both women and men present), the topic is introduced briefly; in a way that is general enough so not to scare people away from discussing such sensitive topics. For example the topic may be presented as a 'debate on the improvement of life in household'. Men and women are then invited to join separate focus groups. The *Abatangamuco* man, assisted by a male staff member of the project, will be joined by the men, and an *Abatangamuco* woman, assisted by a female project staff member, will be joined by the women. The focus group discussions then follow, with women and men separately and in different places.

Every focus group begins with the story of an *Abatangamuco*. This entails a sincere testimony, full of emotion that normally touches all present. This is a critical point at which others listening to the story identify with the story teller and make parallels between their own behavior and

Excerpt from Purcherie's story

My husband started to understand the value of associations. He would see community members coming to our house looking for me, he realised it was an honour for our household and he started to let me participate in meetings. These associations were a solution to my problems because I started to share with others, I learned about their strategies to tackle similar problems that I was facing, other women told me how they negotiate sexual relations, etc, I started to have a

the one standing before them. This testimony can incite immediate reactions, whereby people who have been immediately touched by the story want to share their own during the same forum. Or, sometimes this process of recognition is an internal one and one can observe people in the group who look pensive and inward looking. No one is asked to testify publicly. Sometimes the testimonies begin timidly but then often the atmosphere becomes excited and many people end up talking about their own lives. Sometimes people are incredulous and hot debates take place, that lead to deep discussions between the public or between the *Abatangamuco* and the CARE staff. It should be stated clearly at the outset that each person is responsible for his/her behavior and can decide to change it. All reactions and emotions are considered positive. An important part of the process is to give the space to all these spontaneous feelings.

The content of life stories told in focus groups will not be the same for a group of men and a group of women, as it will be oriented by the testimony of the person implied and lived (interpreted) by the people present. Refer to Annex 2 for detailed examples of testimonies of the *Abatangamuco*.

By the end of the focus groups many of the men and women in attendance do not resemble the person they were before the dialogue. Often the participants ask to organize other meetings in order to be able to invite more people, including their husbands, or their wives. Surely, this way the message will be transported in the whole community!!

It is the *Abatangamuco* who manage the discussions, including the different shapes of interventions. The project staff only assist during the focus group discussion, and only if they want or need it. It is the *Abatangamuco* who are free to facilitate the discussions; they are in charge of the process.

Stage 4: Identification of 'second generation' actors

'Other people rise...'

At some point in the process the *Abatangamuco* realize that some people (men and women) have been touched by their efforts. These others begin to change their behavior and more especially, they want to invest in motivating others to change their behaviour by sharing their own stories of positive change. These are the people that we call the 'second generation', and those that are in turn touched by them the 'third generation', and so on. The impact? A critical mass of people who have changed and who are motivated to convince and support others to change.

It is also possible for these men and women to travel to other communities to share their stories; this really depends on their will and their internal strength. In deed, this has already started to happen whereby second generation *Abatangamuco* have started to travel to other communities and are leading the process of change in these communities. Thus, the process spreads throughout different communes and across geographic areas.

4. Management of practice

Several elements are important in the management of this practice:

1. The choice of project staff members

'Those who are convinced and can convince others'

At a project level, it is critical to train staff in the method of Dialogue Valorisant, to allow the extraordinary life stories to emerge. It may not be necessary for all staff to be trained (although this would be ideal!), but those who would be responsible for assisting the *Abatangamuco*.

It is important that project staff who are chosen to support the *Abatangamuco* must themselves be convinced and convincing in relation to the sought-after change. They must have lived this change in their own life, and they must be fighting against the injustices that the *Abatangamuco* aim to challenge. An example is the life story of Jean, a CARE staff member who is supporting the *Abatangamuco* (see Annex 2). These staff members must not be afraid to tell their own stories in the focus groups in order to create an environment of trust and confidence. It is also important that any external persons attending the focus groups are ready to commit to the process and share their own stories, if not perhaps they should not be present.

2. The characteristics of the *Abatangamuco*

'The enlightened combatants'

There is first of all their story, the story that must be a calling to others. The person must be convinced, convincing and have an open mind. They must be sincere listeners, open to learning and motivated to challenge the status quo. This is about a modest person, humble in spite of his/her social position. Certainly, they will take you to meet their spouse to ask them to testify before you of the changes that occurred in their households. Age does not factor, and both young and old have been touched by others and in turn share their own stories. Often these enlightened people also are very adept at facilitating discussions in a pointed and constructive way and in the mediation of conflicts.

The *Abatangamuco* must be ready to testify before others and very motivated to lead a struggle. It may even be that some of these people have already begun this struggle in their communities before they were ever a part of the project. A skill of project staff in this regard is to be able to seek out these enlightened people and support and encourage them to share their experiences.

It is also important that these people have a relatively important position in their communities, that they are perceived as leaders: either a member of the local administration, an association, in the committees that manage conflicts, in the parish committees, etc. This allows them to unite members of the community more easily for meetings; it also allows them to assume the lead at the time of the communal meetings and to mediate when there are conflicts. It also gives some weight to their words. It is not necessary to have knowledge of specific theories and theoretical concepts, as the essence of the practice is to speak from the heart in order to reach the hearts of others. These people don't get involved in the cerebral exercise of

arguing pro or cons against the change. The change of behavior is not itself a result of reasoning, but from the fact that one's heart has been touched deeply.

Training in conflict management and resolution is also very useful for these people to have, and this is something the project or one of CARE's partners can provide. However, these men and women must be also ready to face difficult situations, to be treated of 'all names'. It is not a process that works on roses. In the practices that are described here, all *Abatangamuco* say they have been strengthened by their struggle, and are even more convinced than before of the importance of it. Also stated by these change agents is that they continually learn from others stories and experiences and that behavior change is a dynamic and evolving process.

3. The link between the actors in the community and the project staff

'The Abatangamuco in charge of the process'

Contrary to what project interventions usually entail, it is the *Abatangamuco* who are in charge of the process and who orient it according to their necessity. The project staff assist and support them when they are requested to do so; they must feel supported in their struggle. In the practice described herein, project staff had the responsibility 'to discover' the *Abatangamuco* of the 'first generation'. These staff members were also present during the first focus groups. The attendance of project staff during these meetings is (and has been) important in order to publicly show support of the *Abatangamuco* and their role as change agents.

4. Remuneration

'Material change thanks to the change of behavior'

These committed individuals are not paid by the project. Their position is clear in their own eyes: the improvement of their material situation is along side the continual change in their behavior (including attitudes and beliefs) and the consequent harmony in their domestic life. These people work by conviction, and not for a salary. They are not agents 'paid to say something', anything that is said comes from conviction. However, the project does provide compensation when people have to travel for project related meetings, and if there is the will to travel to other parts within the country to share their stories.

5. Measuring impact

'More and more people who change their behavior'

To be able to measure the impact of the change process, the *Abatangamuco* identify and communicate to project staff the people who have been touched by their stories and are now showing a change in behavior and or attitude/beliefs. The *Abatangamuco* create an opportunity for these people and the project staff to meet, usually in the presence of their spouse and/or family. It is during this meeting that their names and their stories are documented by the project staff (if the *Abatangamuco* have not already done so (this depends on literacy levels). It is the stories (the testimonies) that indicate the quality of the behavior change. The number of stories collected from different people will be the actual indicators of impact. Also worth considering as an impact indicator (behaviour change in men) is the number of men (highlighted by their documented stories) who are willing to testify publicly. The willingness to tell their stories in public, and especially in front of other men who are their peers, is considered a significant act of courage and

conviction, as they are openly challenging deeply rooted cultural traditions and practices.

5. Influence of the context on the practice

We were able to identify some elements that are favorable or unfavorable to the success of this practice.

1. The influence of religion

'Struggle if you favour paradise on earth'

Christianity, as it is practiced in Burundi, emphasises the value of understanding and harmony between couples. The notions of sin and a second chance to change behavior are important values in Christianity. Due to the fact that the population is in general deeply religious, it systematically makes an association between the will of God and daily practices. The local language reflects this religious conviction. For example: a quotation from one of the *Abatangamuco*: *If we can change the mentality of many people, our community will become paradise.*

In a context where the consumption of alcohol is not accepted by religion (e.g. Protestantism, Islam), there is a certain safeguard that helps in reducing violent behavior.

2. Other processes in motion

'Discover what already exists'

In all communities, there exist 'niches' where intimate household affairs become public knowledge, such as in the case of mediation during conflicts. Sometimes, people considered by others as 'wise' and 'fair' are consulted in the case of a problem. Conflict management committees may also exist (e.g. communal, parochial, traditional). Typically, the people who are consulted are those aware of the difficulties of others and that can influence behaviour change. CARE Burundi's experience with this practice, show that the *Abatangamuco* identified thus far have in one way or another been involved in conflict management. Some have in-depth knowledge on the difficulties of couples in their respective communities and were already trying to encourage understanding between couples – at times by using their personal experience. It is important to specifically target such people during the first stage of the practice. Maybe someone motivated amongst them will be found who has a remarkable life story to share.

3. Legal framework

'Supported by the law...or not'

The law can support the process of positive change. For example, the law that forbids polygamy can serve as a safeguard against adultery and attempts to polygamy. A state apparatus that severely punishes offences (e.g. acts of sexual violence such as rapes) also provides support to the fight against violence – especially violence against women. The law provides the standard, even if in practice it is not always the case.

4. Cultural aspects

'Cultural ills'

Sharing beer is a very good way to express the culture of fraternizing in Burundi. But the consumption of alcohol has a negative side: especially contributing to an increase of domestic violence. This type of cultural practice does not facilitate positive changes in behavior. In deed, some of the *Abatangamuco* men interviewed indicated that they no longer take alcohol, as it was perceived to be contributing to their violent behaviour.

6. Risks related to the practice

1. Follow up after the first focus group

'Do no harm'

It is after all difficult to measure the effect of the first focus group. The public is caught unaware and it is not easy to capture everyone's reactions, more specifically of those that never speak up but may be experiencing quiet but deeply personal reflections. A community touched by the practice must thus be monitored. This follow up becomes easier when second generation *Abatangamuco* are found who are ready to continue the work already in place. Moreover, these new *Abatangamuco* can provide information to the team on the different reactions after the focus group. In any case, it is necessary to follow up the first meeting with a second one after a very short period of time to continue sharing and discussing.

2. Unending discussion

'Let's remain at the emotional level'

It is critical to use the most important means of this practice, notably the story lived by the *Abatangamuco*. Avoid public arguments (in a reasonable way) on conceptual notions such as: is a woman's task heavier than that of men? This is a discussion where everyone engaged has a 'correct' point of view. It will be difficult to convince the most radical of the groups, and there is an increased risk for more arguments and for those not in favour to influence the public on their side. This is not the level at which this practice is played. It is played at the level of recognition of a detrimental behavior at the individual level. It is the told story that brings about a revealing moment at the individual level - in public eyes are opened, one realizes the damage done and the ongoing negative effects, and one is embarrassed and wants to change their behavior. These are the important moments. Obviously, the risk always exists that somebody in public will break the magic and start to argue in very intellectual way. If the public is caught by this game, the exercise will become more difficult. It might be wiser to postpone and continue another day

3. Mixed nature

'Not too fast'

The public nature of the focus groups can lend itself very early on in the process to engage women and men in debates. One must be careful in quickly giving way to their desire to argue a point. In a mixed group there is the risk of quickly finding women and men in opposed camps whereby 'generalities' on the other sex are produced. The confidentiality of one's group is an important element of security and respect and should not be neglected. In the early stages it is important to not

integrate a person of the opposite sex in a focus group composed of the other, even if it is someone who falls outside the risk of compromising the sphere of confidentiality. However, it should be noted that during this exercise we experienced a session whereby a male *Abatangamuco* shared his story of positive change before a large group of women. On this note it is also important to show women who are not convinced that men are capable of changing. However, this type of interaction is in general better placed after the initial focus groups when the groundwork has been laid. This will provide a new dimension to the debate at this point.

4. Fatigue

'Committed to the struggle, but tired of telling the story...'

The essence of the methodology is continued testifying by the *Abatangamuco* of their own experiences to bring others to a point of change. This only works if the story is well narrated with the accompanying emotions. Without this, it is difficult to touch other people. Yet, it is only human that a story told 20 times no longer moves the narrator as it did the first time it was shared. And, unfortunately, an actor only has one story: the story about why s/he decided to change their behavior. S/he can thus not vary too much, yet this enthusiasm, this air of truthfulness is indispensable in order for the methodology to succeed. Each *Abatangamuco* must judge for themselves if he/she is too tired of telling the story, especially at the level of focus groups. In this case it might be wise for them to leave their work in the focus groups for sometime and continue with the work of fighting for change in other ways until the feeling comes back. This is one of the reasons why it is necessary to continually recruit other change agents who are ready and capable of sharing their stories. The importance of establishing networks is also at this level.

7. Institutional Learning

CARE Burundi has committed to valuing these inspiring stories and the people from which they come. This practice places the *Abatangamuco* on the frontline as main actors of the process. It is by its very nature learning for an institution which positions itself in the 'second lane'. Engaging in a process of Appreciative Inquiry is an enormous opportunity for a project and the entire mission, to learn how members of communities are confronting such issues as domestic violence (among others), judged for a long time as too 'sensitive' to tackle.

The practice is essentially about sincere listening to the communities in which CARE works. Listening not only at the beginning of the process of dialogue, but throughout the practice - because life stories are never finished. Everyday, these *Abatangamuco* live new things that can teach the projects / programmes of CARE Burundi and enhance its institutional learning. On going documentation of these life stories is one of the tasks of the mission and a system of documenting, collecting and storing these stories is underway. The dissemination and reading of these stories have and continue to inspire project practices and the personal lives of CARE staff. The practice deserves to be mainstreamed across all projects, but with the assurance that all conditions are met to properly do so.

8. Future paths

This practice is not finalized, but is rather in its starting phase. New paths are emerging and others are worth considering as outlined below:

1. Create a network of *Abatangamuco*

The idea of establishing a network is currently emerging amongst the *Abatangamuco*. The time has come for the *Abatangamuco* from different communes to meet on a regular basis⁴. There is, of course, relationships already between actors of the first and second generations, but it would be good to extend these relationships across geographic areas. A network would serve to mutually encourage change agents from different areas and provide the space to exchange experiences and strategies on confronting harmful practices, to welcome new actors, and to air frustrations. Such a network would provide support and a sense of membership/belonging, especially in cases where people may initially feel marginalized in their community due to the change in his/her behavior. A network would provide the opportunity and space for the exchange of stories and experiences between the different communities. This would be a network of change agents for change agents: men, women, couples, supported by the project according to their needs. In addition, it would provide more visibility to their efforts - maybe even on a national scale⁵.

2. Accelerate the identification of second generation *Abatangamuco*

It is possible to identify individuals and couples that fit the profile of the *Abatangamuco*, although they may not have given a thorough testimony in public. This could be explored by putting such people in contact with the existing group of *Abatangamuco* leading to a testimony and engagement in the process. For example, a person could share their story of change in the intimate atmosphere of a similar group of people. Such persons might be ready to travel to another community to testify rather than in their own community in order to gain the courage to publicly work in their own hill of origin (community). Such a process is worthy of further exploration.

3. Bring *Abatangamuco* couples together

The process to date has shown that there are some people who are demonstrating a real will to change within the domain of their relationship (marriage). It is important to bring these couples together from time to time in order to delve into the issues with other *Abatangamuco* (also couples). Hence, they can mutually exchange and reinforce each other without having to live the criticism of others who are less convinced. This would also provide CARE the opportunity to learn more about the way certain sensitive subjects can be discussed in a mixed group.

4. Large criticism in the community

An isolated testimony has a certain effect. But what would be the effect of a number of testimonies at one go? One could try out the experience of bringing together a certain number of people (5-6) who have changed their behaviour and who want to share their stories publicly. This may not be feasible during the first focus group, but maybe during the second or third one. What would be the effect on a community when they find out that it is no longer an isolated individual but several persons advocating for change? ⁶

⁴ Shortly after the documentation of this report, these cross communal meetings began with the logistical support of CARE staff.

⁵ At the time of this writing stories of positive change have been documented and will be aired on Burundian national television during the weeks of 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women.

⁶ At the time of the finalisation of this report, a process of identifying 7 *Abatangamuco* who are willing to take part in a cross regional advocacy initiative under GLAG (Great Lakes Regional Advocacy Group) is underway.

5. Complete capitalization document

The present document only describes the first part of the practice. It is felt that the practice has a lot of potential to be scaled up and developed further into more specific advocacy work. It would be important to revisit this document and complete it with the elements that will be explored in the following months. In six months, we will have learned much more on the strategies of behavior change.

9. Contact Persons

Resource Persons at CARE Burundi:

Domitille Ntacobakimvuna

Jean Nimubona

Resource Persons on hills (*Abatangamuco*):

Salvatore Bigirimana, Kibimba Hill, Giheta Commune

Faustin Ntiranyibagira, Muremera Hill, Giheta Commune

Paulette Ndayagumiye, Murago Hill, Makebuko Commune

Purcherie Mbonimpa, Bihororo Hill, Giheta Commune

Annex 1: Appreciative Inquiry

'Dialogue Valorisant,' as it is called by CARE in Burundi, is a translation of the method called Appreciative Inquiry which was developed by D. Cooperrider from Case Western University of Cleveland, Ohio. Refer to the AI website for further information on the approach: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>.

Here is how the Appreciative Inquiry method is used in Burundi:

It is a dialogue of three people: a narrator, a pilot and a writer. It is a very intimate interview consisting only of the 3 persons. It focuses on the most positive qualities and key success elements experienced by an individual. It helps to create a vision in order to improve the future.

The dialogue begins by a discovery. The narrator tells a real-life story of his/her choice, the one that he/she deems the best and which he/she is most proud of or inspired by. With the narrator, the pilot discovers key elements that make this experience so exceptional. It is from these successful elements, that the narrator imagines a different future from what he/she is currently living, one that he/she is dreaming of.

Arguments in favor of the method

- Sharing of experiences, life stories and values, gives energy and pleasure to participants to dialogue
- Learn / know remarkable life stories, which deeply touch both the storyteller and the listener
- Mutual learning: the two parties learn when they explore together the exceptional life experiences
- Give voice to the inhabitants of the communities and towns in which our programs and projects work

Unfolding of appreciative inquiry

1. Introduction: why are we here?
2. Meet each other at an even level
3. Introduce questions in order to bring about the life stories (following the drama arc. The quality and effectiveness of the positive question):
4. Mainstream the questions in order to discover the strengths and key success elements
5. Mainstream questions to help the person dream
6. Recall what you have learned, including the feelings and emotions that it triggered in you

Important elements in the pilot's attitude:

1. Carefully elaborate the positive questions
2. Appreciate the silence
 - Active listening
 - Show your feelings
 - Share your personal experience
 - Be curious, be interested in details

- Support narrator to give form to his/her story (including the different stages of a story as per the drama arc⁷)
- Bring the narrator to get connected to his/her values, feelings, aspirations.
- Bring about positive energy
- Be flexible

Good notes include:

- Details of life story (stages – starting situation, complication, resolution, new situations, dates or era, number of people involved....)
- 3 - 7 pages
- That which is important for the narrator
- Word for word quotation of the narrator
- Punctual indications on the special conditions, emotions, energy of the narrator

⁷ The drama arc of a story is a sequence of events: description of a situation (painful) from the onset, the coming of an event (complication), the reaction of the narrator and his/her consequent actions (supported or not by others) (resolution), the description of the changed situation (new situation).

Annex 2: Examples of life stories

Paulette's story: They call me the Peace Maker

My name is Paulette Ndayagumiye and I live with my family in Makebukoko in Gitega Province which is in the centre of Burundi. Gitega is filled with rolling hills, small scale farms that grow bananas, beans and coffee. I am an older woman aged 54 with two children a boy, Aloys aged 20 and a daughter, Marie, aged 17. Our life has not been easy we have faced poverty and war but we have survived. Through all the suffering, thanks to CARE's Livelihood Security program I have actually improved my life and am now able to look after my family and am respected in the community. Let me tell you my story.

As you may know, Burundi has suffered a war. In 1993 the first democratically elected President was assassinated by armed forces. He was a Hutu and the armed forces mostly Tutsi. The majority of the population is Hutu. The assassination created a public uproar and inter-ethnic massacres throughout the country. That day I was at home, in our small house made of mud brick with a straw roof. The children were playing near by and my husband was around. A neighbor passed by and told us the news: the Tutsi's are grouping themselves together and the Hutu's are starting to prepare to attack the Tutsis. Even though we are Hutu, we found the other Hutus very very angry and we decided to go seek safety where the Tutsis had grouped. We gathered together a few basic items, I wrapped two cook pots in a piece of material, gathered a small sack of beans and some maize. My husband grabbed some plantain bananas while I gathered the children with some bedding. The children were young, ages 5 and 8 and they were confused and frightened.

The situation was getting more and more tense, there was a buzzing in the air and all over our hillside there was confusion. As we were leaving we noticed that the group of angry Hutus had gathered together machetes. My husband and I, with the children running behind, ran to tell the Tutsis and we advised them to leave the location. During this running about I was separated from my husband. I decided to stay put with the children in the central area of our community, the place where the community holds its meetings, ceremonies etc, I was sure my husband would look for me here. I also knew it was a good spot to follow the evolution of the events building around us.

After a few minutes, I saw a young Tutsi man arrive. I approached him and told him he should leave, he should not fall under the anger of the Hutus. He looked me in the eye and said "I am prepared for combat, I have no fear". While I was speaking to him, a group of 3 Hutus arrived and immediately jumped on him and started to give him a rough time. Holding my children behind me, I recited to the attackers from the bible "he who kills with a spear will perish with a spear". The 3 attackers, one who was my cousin, upon hearing this passage, they hit me and I fell to the ground. When I fell, they immediately killed the young Tutsi and they buried him there in the central square, just near the large mango tree, the same spot where we hold our public meetings and just 30 feet from my house.

Two of the attackers fled the country to Tanzania and the third was arrested and imprisoned until 2006.

After the period of violence we as a family tried to get on with our lives. Much had been lost and we were poor before all this happened. To make ends meet, my husband and I worked as laborers on other people's land. When the children were old enough they joined us as well. Things were difficult and relations between me and my husband were tense. I remember one day he slapped me over a small piece of tobacco. I even left him for a period as things were tense.

One day of sunshine arrived and that is when the CARE Livelihoods program started working in our area. The first thing they did was talk to community members about what their program was about and how they wanted to work with us. They insisted that we elect a committee that represents all different members of the community and this committee would manage the activities. Can you believe it? My neighbors chose me to represent the most vulnerable. I was so proud.

As a member of the committee we received a variety of training we learned how to design and develop small projects, we learned about decision making and organizational management and we learned about conflict management and resolution. Little by little my life started to change. I created an association with some other women and together we did some agricultural activities thanks to the improved seeds that CARE gave us. We knew we had to manage this resource well, because at the end of the season we were obliged to repay the seed loan so that another group could benefit. With our small earnings we opened a restaurant and we started a small credit and savings scheme so that each member could borrow money when we had household needs or wanted to make an investment. I decided to invest in a goat and this was a wise decision. It grew well and bred and soon I had 5 goats. I sold one to purchase tiles for the roof of our house, to replace the straw that we had before. When my husband noticed that I too was a useful element in the household he started to respect me. He no longer beat me and slowly I found my dignity in the family.

Recently we have once again held democratic elections. It was a scary time as we had so many bad memories. But these went well and a new President was elected. As a result many Burundians who had sought refugee in Tanzania started to return to their homes, including the two men that I had witnessed killing our neighbor all those years ago. In addition, the President announced the release of all political prisoners from 1993. When people in our community saw that the 3 who had murdered a neighbor in the central square of our community had returned they were worried and scared, especially about what the family of the dead man would do.

Because I was a leader in our community development committee and had received training in conflict resolution from CARE, I decided I had to do something to ease the tensions. I started by approaching the 3 men that had killed the young man as well as the family of the deceased. My husband and family thought I was crazy. They said "you are exposing yourself to death, you were a witness to the death, you are a very dangerous witness for those men. But luckily I felt skilled with the training I had received and I reached my goal.

One day the sister of the man that was killed came to see me at my house. She is a young woman about 23 years old and recently gave birth to her first child. She told me, "you know I am scared, those people that killed my brother they have returned. I have difficulties accepting the idea that I am going to have to see them. I am scared they will kill me and my baby as well. In order to keep the peace, I think it is best that I flee and leave the community". I did my best to give her advice and I

promised her that I would occupy myself with the 3 men and see what their plans were. One by one, I approached the 3 men. I found out that they were having trouble reintegrating as they were scared of their neighbors, most specifically the family of the deceased. I decided that we needed to bring both sides together as I had understood each sides fears.

One day, the following week, the village leader called a general meeting. It was held in that same central square where the boy was killed and buried. Luckily everyone in the community was present including the 3 that had killed the young boy as well as the family of the deceased. I noticed the family of the deceased were there staring fixedly on the grave of their brother. After the meeting I brought the two sides together and asked if they had the time to chat. They all accepted, so we removed our selves from the central square and found a nice shady tree a short distance away. Here I was able to use my mediation skills that I had developed thanks to all the training. Eventually, the three men who killed the young boy stood-up and asked for the family of the deceased to forgive them. The family of the deceased replied "we cannot build our country on the past massacres. We think we need to learn to forgive in order to build our country. After all, we are all obliged to live together". After these powerful words we all stood-up, we all embraced each other and asked for forgiveness. The 3 men who killed the young boy invited the family of the deceased to share a drink together, which in Burundi is a great sign of respect.

For the moment the people involved have completely forgiven each other. I often see them visiting each others homes, they invite one another to ceremonies and other joyous events. The atmosphere in our community is actually really positive now, even after all we have suffered.

As a result of my role, I have a new level of respect in the community. The elder wise-men of the community that are normally responsible for resolving conflicts often invite me to help them with conflicts, even though I am a woman and this is not in our tradition that woman play this role. Thanks to the support and training I received from CARE, I now have a new name in our community, the Peace Maker.

Purcherie's story: I have found my dignity now I have the power

My name is Purcherie Mbonimpa, I was married at the age of 18 when my husband was 26 years old. His name is Augustinin. We now have 7 children, 4 boys and 3 girls. We live mostly from agriculture, cultivating a small plot with beans and sweet potatoes and we have a few banana plants. My husband has a small job working as a cook at the school for the deaf and dumb in the near by town. We live in Gitega province, the commune of Giheta and the hill of Bihororo.

In the first few months of my marriage my husband told me " I have married you, but you will never know who I am." As my husband does not talk a lot, I reflected about what this might mean "you will never know who I am" I could not understand what he was saying.

We were very poor. I only had one pagne, a traditional printed cloth the woman wear here. My husband had one pair of trousers and a shirt, that were ripped and torn because he loved alcohol so much and did not worry much about the family.

Because there was hardly any communication between Augustinin and myself I was not aware of what I could and could not do. He did not want me to go out and visit my friends and family. He did not want me to participate in community meetings or even be a member of an association. He never told me this and I remained ignorant of the fact he did not want me to move beyond our household, however I suffered from this in many ways.

In our culture we survive and resolve many problems by helping each other. If you need something that you don't have you can always call on a friend or a neighbour and they will lend it to you. However, my husband did not allow me to share with others nor ask help from others.

Because of all this, I was constantly beaten. I would ask myself, why am I being beaten but I could never understand what I had done wrong. Each time I did something not to his liking, he would call me, order me to get on my hands and knees and he would seriously beat me, often I was wounded or had large bruises. In all this, I was ignorant, I had no idea why he was beating me.

I could not divorce him, because here in our culture if you return to your parents house it is an insult and a disgrace to your own family. I fled one time to my mothers and she chased me away. There is a proverb in Burundi that says «Niko zubakwa» which means all girls that marry, leave the family roof and with the advice of their mother or their aunts they must submit themselves totally to their husband, to obey them even with unjust, or in times of torture or violence.

I had to give to my husband all earnings that I made from the sale of harvests, even my own revenue. I had no access to money. I can never forget the time that before he went to work, he told me " I am going to work now, I have purchased a field with straw, you need to go and cut it, transport it back and when I come back I want to see that you have finished replacing our roof with this new straw."

I was pregnant at the time and it was a task that was difficult for me but I managed despite myself. In our culture women never construct houses or cut grasses because these are tasks that require a lot of physical strength. Culturally this work is for men.

What was I to do? I must get the work done before he came home if not...In order to do this, I worked on a field as manual labour and earned enough money to employ a craftsman to place the straw, I played the role of assistant passing him the straw. When Augustinin returned he found the house covered with new straw. He was so happy that he had exploited me in this way, making me do "men's work" because in our culture it is the woman that must be submissive and do what the man says, regardless.

During the civil war in 1993, our house was burnt down and all our belongings stolen. We were lucky though to have an NGO working in the area that helped us to rebuild our house. However, each household had to participate by contributing mud bricks and manual labor for the masonry. My husband refused to pay for this manual labor and I could not do it. I was obliged to ask for help from my parents. My husband never knew how I managed he left for work and when he returned he found the house completed with a nice tile roof.

Despite all that I did, Augustinin never recognised me, except for the fact that I was often beaten to the ground. I asked myself, "why all this torture? I do everything that he asks me to do, whether easy or hard I do my best to satisfy him".

One day I understood who my husband really was. Augustinin had given me some clothes to wash and I went down the hill to the water point to wash. Before soaking the clothes I checked the pockets to make sure there was nothing valuable that would be lost and it was then that I found a small notebook. In the note book I discovered he had documented and written down all the errors that I had committed according to him, with exact dates as well. For example " in this and that date, she went to her aunts house or she helped a neighbour with this and that. Now I understood why I was being beaten without having done anything serious – he was beating me for helping others and seeking help and advice from family. I had no idea that these were concerned serious errors that merited a beating.

One day my brother-in-law's younger brother found me on my knees being beaten by my husband. He looked at me and said nothing, but when he got home he called his sisters-in-law and told them " if you have a bit of respect like Purcherie you will accept to be beaten on your hands and knees and I can say that my brothers have married wise women".

When the women heard this they came to me. They said "what is this that you accept to be beaten on your hands and knees by your husband? You are a disgrace to other women, you must no longer accept". These women opened my eyes, I decided from that day I would no longer get on my knees for my husband, I even learned how to flee from him.

The misfortunes I have experienced do not stop there. In terms of sexual relations, my husband took me by force anywhere and anytime he wanted without asking me. In the night he would wake me as many times as he wanted. He would rape when I was in the kitchen preparing the family meal or when I returned tired from the fields before I had even bathed. The children would often walk in but that did not bother him. This situation tormented me and I often thought about how I could get away from this situation.

I will never forget the rape I suffered just after giving birth to my second child and the suffering I under went. In our society there is a culture that is called '*Gukanda*

umuvyeyi' these are sexual acts that take place several days after giving birth. People believe that this allows for quicker healing after a pregnancy if you had cuts during the birthing. Normally one waits several days after the birth but the actual time depends from man to man, most men wait at least two weeks but Augustinin raped me 3 days after the birth. I advise all women not to accept this as it really makes you feel bad.

After several times being raped I suffered from many infections and I fled to my mother and she sent me back saying " you left our household for this, this is part of marriage, return to your husband". With all this suffering and pain I was feeling, I could not return to my husband so I went to a couple who in our community was involved in our marriage so plays a role of conflict resolution during the marriage. I told them about what was happening and all my problems. They came and spoke to Augustin and after that he reduced the frequency of our sexual relations, a bit. But as always there was never any discussion between us, I was truly a slave.

I suffered for 10 years and saw no way to regain my dignity or self respect. I saw other women in the community, my neighbours who were loved and valued by their husbands. From time to time I would withdraw and reflect on my married life and it would disgust me because I had no solutions and no where to return.

The sun shone for me one day, finally. CARE came to our community with a credit and savings project and a livelihoods project and they invited people from the village to come to the meeting so they could tell us about the project. I decided to go to the meetings, even if it was forbidden by my husband. For the livelihoods project the CARE staff asked us about existing associations and asked those that wanted to join a seed production association to let us know. We created an association and I was chosen by the other members to be the head of the association. When I returned home, my husband roared at me, I stood firm and said nothing but he did not beat me.

The next time was with the project Kazoza Keza, which is Kirundi for "positive future" which is around credit and savings through solidarity groups. Once again CARE came to the community to present the project and in a clandestine way, I participated in the meeting. Here we were asked to create solidarity groups and once again I was chosen by the other members – this time to be a community trainer for two of the solidarity groups. They told us that community trainers would receive a series of training in 8 subjects regarding the CARE methodology of credit and savings. I asked myself, how am I going to explain this to my husband – especially as he did not know that I came to the meeting. I realised that I could not sneak out each time I participated in a meeting, I could not hide this from my husband. So I made the resolution that little by little I was going to explain to my husband the advantage of these different associations – he listened to me but said nothing.

Another day, CARE and the local government organised a meeting to elect members of the community development committees. I asked my husband if I could participate and once again I was elected and am now a member of the committee. Shortly later, CARE staff came and asked the committee to select the members of the community that would benefit from seeds and goat distributions. When my husband saw the position I held in the community and even more so when I returned with banana seedlings and sweet potato cuttings he finally understood that I am not a worthless being. I am worth something and valued by the community and maybe I add value to the household.

My husband started to understand the value of associations. He would see community members coming to our house looking for me, he realised it was a honour for our household and he started to let me participate in meetings. These associations were a solution to my problems because I shared to share with others, I learned about their strategies to tackle similar problems that I was facing, other women told me how they negotiate sexual relations, etc, I started to have a bit of power in our household.

One day my husband did not have any money to pay for the school fees of the children. I told him that I could go and ask for credit from our solidarity group which we would have to repay with interest. He asked me "what it is possible to take a loan? If you succeed to get this loan I will repay it the soonest possible". I already had the money on me - but pretended to go the credit and savings groups and get the money. When I returned he said to me " Madame, I am sorry, I did not know that it was for that reason that you participate in the associations, I give you authorisation to participate in the associations from now on." This was the first time ever in our life together that he called me "madame", which is how men who respect their wives address them in our community.

Working with the CARE projects I had the chance to participate in a lot of different training in relation to credit and savings, conflict resolution, and agricultural techniques. The training opened my eyes and offered me so many opportunities and skills. In my community I have become a respected person I am beginning to believe that this has influenced my husband and brought him honour.

Through these associations I have also been able to increase our household's resources. We now have 5 goats, one pig and I am involved in small income generating activities such as selling small cakes, I use my money how I want to. Now even my husband trusts me with the household resources, the other day he gave me his identity card so that I could collect his salary and can even purchase things with his salary if I tell him.

In 2005 Burundi held its first democratic elections and I was elected amongst 5 representatives for our community. My husband did not understand. He noticed that the community found in me a strength and that he was now respected because of me. The Chief of the Community cannot make decisions on conflict resolution or other issues, if I am not there. I am very proud because in the past conflict resolution was something that women were not involved in – it was a man's job.

I continue to battle for my dignity and also to fight against sexual violence. As I have 7 children our house is very cramped so I told my husband that we need to build another house just next door so as to not scare the children when we are having sex. Now before having sex we both agree and we go to the little house next door. I can even refuse if I do not want to have sex or if I am tired or sick. We are also helping each other – when I have to travel he takes leave from his work and stays with the children and he has even helped me to cultivate the fields. We communicate, we share and we plan together.

From time to time I think of my previous situation and I look at my life today. I tell myself it is a dream. I am joyful that I am useful for my community as a "woman" thanks to the support from CARE International.

Because of all I have been through I have committed my self in ensuring that the dignity of other women is respected. Around my household and wherever I go, I am fighting against injustice of women. The way I do this is I share with other women my life story - I tell them about my difficult times and I share my strategies on how I changed my life. CARE has helped me share my story and brought me to other communities where I can reach more and more women, who might be in similar situations as I was. Just two months after I started sharing my story 5 men announced that they would no longer mistreat their wives one of these was the Chief of our community. I thank CARE for what they have done for me, I have re-found my dignity.

We the women of the world, we are victims of ignorance and our cultures. We are scared of our husbands and they profit from our fear to treat us like slaves. Les stand-up together to affront our fear and the cultural barriers. Obviously we need men to help us in the battle - we need their help to fight against injustice and violence against women. Brothers, come and help us in this battle.

Faustin's story: As iron sharpens another, in the same way a man's good behaviour in the community influences the attitudes of his neighbours

My name is Faustin Ntiranyibagira and I am 36 years old. I was married in 1996, to my wife Leonie Nduwimana and we have three children - the eldest a girl and two boys. I live in the hill of Muremera, Giheta Township in the province of Gitega, and I am a native of this hill, where I am also the elected Chief.

I work in agriculture like all of my neighbours and our property is more or less sufficient to provide for my family's food needs. I also like to enjoy myself, and I belong to a group of traditional drummers of our hill. Some times I also join a local interactive theatre group that is very much loved in Burundi. What pleases me is that through participating in these activities, I take the opportunity to share messages of peace and reconciliation.

But first let me tell you about my story. I was born into a poor family and my parents were farmers. However, my father didn't cultivate much, and it was only the banana and coffee trees that provided him with the money that he often used to buy the banana wine. Most of the days of my father's life were spent intoxicated, and in the evening when he returned home singing, we would run to our beds to hide, especially from the arguments he had with my mother as we did not like to witness this. My mother had the habit of preparing food very early and extinguishing the fire quickly so that my father would not find us still up when he returned home. My mother always felt insecure and feared every evening that she would be beaten by my father. Every morning my father measured the quantity of beans, cassava and all other food items for our daily ration; no one had the right to add any more.

In spite of my father's behaviour, I envied him a lot. I saw in him as a supreme authority, I would even say a "president" in his household, because everybody in our house, my mother included, trembled when he spoke. I told myself that "one day I would get married so that I could also have a woman and children to whom I would give orders to."

This strong desire pushed me to start my family at a young age, and up until recently I believed myself to be the "president of my household". My wife was young and beautiful when we married, but a life of tedious chores waited for her: to plough fields all day long, responsible for all of household activities, to accept violence of all forms (sexual, physical and psychological). Indeed I followed my father's example. It is true that I did not (and still do not) drink beer, but I would do everything necessary to show my wife that I was a man, just like my father was, and to show my father that my woman obeyed all of my orders.

I passed most of my time in the local bar where groups of the men hang out without anything better to do, let alone contribute anything to their household. I remember that we reassured one another that it was necessary to show our wives how we are men and that it is necessary to beat them in order to better educate them - I was the first to make the others understand it.

The paradox in all of this is that the other men saw in me a "man of speech and influence". Curiously a good day arrived with visitors of CARE who facilitated a meeting on our hill, at the end of which they invited us to choose a development

committee. Many believed that it was a waste of time, but for me the time was not a problem because I didn't have anything else to do. I wanted to take part. I was elected by the men to be part of this committee because they knew that I would always support the superiority of men over women. As a member of the communal development committee, I had opportunities to participate in training on «communal leadership, on the peaceful resolution of conflicts, on agricultural techniques, on the struggle against HIV/AIDS and other trainings.

These trainings contributed to the development of my leadership capabilities and a commitment to serve my community. But in spite of these changes in me, the relations with my wife remained bad. My wife continued to work alone, the domestic violence continued, and my wife looked worse everyday, with no good clothes to wear. I also had only one pair of trousers, a shirt and a jacket. I spent my days circulating in the hills, and my wife never saw my money. Even when I slept, the money was kept in my underwear. I remember that when my wife asked me for money to buy salt, I would hide to withdraw a small amount worth .50 cents US, so that she would not see how much I had. In rare cases when the harvest was very good, I gave her some money to pay for her hard work

Gradually my wife began to get thinner, to be dirty all the time, and the production of the household decreased considerably because we were not actively cultivating crops. My wife was exhausted - from the constant domestic violence, poor food and low self-esteem. As for myself, I often ate the grilled meat in the local bar and continued to behave badly.

My wife ended up falling very sick, but I wanted to hide that there was a problem at home. I had to stay home to prepare food, I rose at four in the morning to go and fetch water so that no one would see me, but unfortunately one day I met a neighbour who had risen very early. I implored him not to tell anyone that he had seen me, I even gave him some money not to tell. As for firewood, I pulled the wooden supports off of my house to use, so I would not have to go in search of it. At the end of each day I was exhausted from all of these domestic chores.

As it is normal in our custom, a girl who starts a family receives from her parents a parcel of land that she can go back to and cultivate. The distance that separates my home and the home of my wife's parents is about 20 kilometres, and my wife was no longer capable of making the journey to cultivate this parcel, as she had been so sick. Even when she was convalescing, she seemed very depressed and without hope.

Then, one morning, she proposed that we sell this parcel of land. As it meant money I agreed directly and we sold it for a decent amount. What astonished me the most is that while arriving home my wife handed me all of the money while saying "here is the money, decide what we can do with it ". I was a bit shocked because she had never seen my money. That night I didn't sleep and I thought about my wife's reaction and what it meant, but it didn't stop me from continuing to mistreat her. Something made me decide not to waste this money, and instead I added more money and I bought another parcel of land nearby. My wife was very happy, although she said nothing at the time as she was still intimidated by me and would not show feelings of joy in front of me. It was only later that she told me how she really felt.

I continued to put the knowledge learned from the different trainings offered by CARE to the service of the community. Because I assumed several functions at a time (member of the development committee, member of the committee for peaceful resolution of conflicts, agricultural trainer) it gave me power in the community and people became more and more confident in me. As a result, I was elected Chief of the Hill in 2005.

Last year, CARE organized discussions with groups of the men and women separately. I took part in the men's group. The discussion focused on the sharing of the decision making within the household, and was facilitated by a man of my generation, a farmer who had come from a nearby hill of our township. He related his life story, a story that perfectly resembled my own, except that he had changed his behaviour and was now making decisions together with his wife.

His history touched me very deeply and confirmed to me that my behaviour was based on traditional customs; I also realized that my violent actions towards my wife were useless and did not make her respect me or my position as a man. This was the moment when I realized that I was a victim of ignorance based on stereotypes and lies, and it was then that I decided I had to change my behaviour. I decided to tell my story immediately to the whole group of men, and although we were neighbours for years, no one really knew what occurred in my household.

I also decided to speak with my wife about the benefits of sharing in decision making concerning all household issues. In fact, I opened up completely to her. Deep inside myself I began to realise that my father was not right in his cruel actions, that a woman is not a child, that she is in fact intelligent and capable of making good decisions.

Some days later, my wife asked me for some money so that she could process the cane into sugar for selling at a higher price. I gave her the money, but I still had some fear that the money would not be managed well. She began her production and travelled to Gitega (15 kms away) to resell it. At the end of three months, I witnessed some miracles – my wife had purchased a goat, and two months later another, whereas all of my life I had not even been able to purchase a guinea pig! And during all of this period, she didn't ask me once for anymore money to buy salt, oil, soap or all other household items, as she was using the money she had earned and investing it!

I slowly began to cultivate in the fields, to fetch water for the household, but when someone asked me why I was fetching water when I have a woman to do that, I said that it was to manufacture the banana wine. My wife was worried that if people saw me doing chores that were traditionally thought to be for woman only, people might start rumours that I was 'be-witched'.

I persisted in doing these chores - I began to split wood, to peel the sweet potato and to do all of the household activities during the days when I was not working on administrative duties in my position of Chief of the Hill. But still, in spite of these changes, I still feared being seen by the men of my community.

As we became accustomed to sharing activities, the decisions and management of the household, my family entered into a life of happiness. Together with my wife, I was no longer ashamed to work together. I no longer hid money and the violence

stopped. My wife who had stopped speaking and lost so much weight because of the grave situation was rejuvenated. My wife is very beautiful and I love her deeply.

I am also very active at the communal level, and I am especially involved in the resolution of conflicts, especially domestic conflicts – the ones that in the past I considered to be the faults of the women who were disrespectful to their husbands! Imagine...

I have the wish that the happiness I have in my household serves as a positive example to other households of my community – *“ as iron sharpens another, in the same way a man's good behaviour in the community influences the attitudes of his neighbours”*. Thus I began to organize discussions with other men in my community about the importance of sharing decisions. At first this was not easy because my neighbours were against my ideas and said that I would destroy the society if our customs were changed. Still, there were a few men who understood that changing their behaviour would result in a better life, and also decided to change. CARE is helping to facilitate these discussions and sharing of stories of positive change.

Currently there are twelve men in my community who are telling their stories before others, and whose wives also testify that their husbands have in fact changed for the better. Together we are committed to lead this struggle, especially for the transformation of our community, the ceasing of harmful customary practices that are based on injustice and not valuing others.

I also take advantage of my position as a Chief to carry this message of peace, and I can affirm absolutely that as more and more positive changes occur in the households of my neighbours, in time our hill will become almost like a land of paradise!