



Compte rendu d'entretien
Nairobi – Kenya

PORTRAIT : OUSMANE MOHAMED

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I am Ousman Mohamed, I was born in 1965 in Nairobi, my grand father comes from Sudan, he was working with British protectorate. The British give to my grandparents a land and they settled down not fare from Nairobi, near to the Nairobi national park.

Can you tell us something about the place where you live?

I live in Khibera. Khibera now is very different from the past because initially it was a forest. Initially my grandfather settled down in a place called Lomle, this village was broke down 1978 to give rise to modern estates which is Aiani. The house where I stay in Khibera is not my house, is a family house, the British government gave it to my grandparents.

Can you describe us how is your house?

At the initial project, it was one bedroom, but one bathroom, one kitchen and one bedroom were building up by the National Housing Co-operation. My house is two bedrooms, one livingrom, one toilet, one kitchen. One my father was still alive, that was is personal house but he opted to live in another part of Nairobi and he leaves this house for renting. So as I was already working, as I was already employed, I paid a rent to him to stay in this house. I paid this rent until he died. When he died there was nobody so I continue to stay in the house but now it is mine. But it is a family house in the sense that if I have a family member who has a problem I have to assist him in one way.

Do you have brothers or sisters? Can you tell us something about your childhood?

I was born in Khibera, I grown up in Aiani, I went to school to Khibera, the old Khibera, because now we have the old and the new Khibera. I went to old Khibera primary school from standard one to standard seven. After I went to form one in a school in Nairobi. I couldn't finish my studies because my parents cannot afford the school fees. In a family of nine, we had only one of us, the second born, who menage to arrive till form six. The government employed him, not he is retired and he settled in Samburu district. Our first born died, some few years before, about 25 years ago, the third one died. After there id s me, and then there is a sister who follows me and after that sister we have one brother, who teaches in a Coranic School, in a private Muslim School in Nairobi. Then we have a brother who follows him, at the moment he stays in Uganda, because he decided to settle down there. And we have another sister who follows him, she got married in Uganda. And then there is the last born, he is a teacher and he is settled in Narok. My father was teaching in a Coranic School



but before I was working as a security man for a British Company. When he retired he was a little bit bored, he didn't have lots of things to do, so as he knew the Coran he decided to tent teaching. And so he was a Coranic teacher until he died and he was a very respected imam in the Namibian Comunity in Khibera. I am Muslim, I grown up in a Muslim environment and I am a practicant Muslim

Can you tell us something about your own family?

I got married two times. I first got married 1996, I had a bit of problems so I divorced but I have one son from that marriage. I got married for the second time in 2001. My wife before had a temporaty job in Dubai and when the contract was finished she found another job in Libya, she is working there with the hotel industry. She works in Tripoli, the capital of Libya. She was for two years in Dubai and now in Libya she has a contract for six months. Normally she comes once a year. I have a kid also, he stays with me, he goes to a primary school and he does the Coranic School in Khibera. He goes to daily school, he starts in the morning, a bus comes to pick up him and he comes home in the evening. I have chosen this school for him because in the schools near my environment it's not so good because the classes are overpopulated; sometimes you have 90 children in one class. Because now in the slums the education is free and the teachers don't pay much attention to teach so the performance of those children is under the expected standards. So I decided to take him far in a school where you have 40 or 45 children in a class so that the teachers can concentrate on the number of people they have in the class. It is a public school but before he finished his studies I want to take him in a private school because private schools teaches much better than public schools, the teachers really concentrate on the students and the performance is good, it is not like in governmental schools or in public schools. In public schools the teachers don't care but in private schools the teachers are better because they get business from that, because we pay for this more, they have to prove to be better than public school teachers.

If you take your son to a private school how much would it costs you? And how much would it cost if you leave him in the public school where he goes now?

If I leave him in the public school, I have to buy him the textbooks, to buy him the uniform, I have to pay for his lunch and I have to pay for his transport. For the private school I would pay 40000 Ksh per year, it would be all included, I would spend more than for the public school but the performance would be better.

Can you tell us what kind of job do you do?

Right now I am employed with the French Institute for Research in Africa, which is IFRA since 1987. I am a driver and at the same time I have other duties, I do something like logistic offices. I have been doing this job for 22 years.

How did you come to work with the French institute?



In 1983 when I had just stopped my education I had to look away because I had turned 18, I had to get income because I cannot depend anymore on my parents and I had a friend who introduced me to a person who can help me to become a caddy, you know a caddy is a person who assists the golfers. So I started doing this job, it was a part time job, you are paid as you finish the rounds, slowly by slowly I got a friend who I usually assisted who was the director of the French Cultural Centre and he told me if it was ok for me if he gave to me a part time job, he told that he can see that I had a great potential. And I said that for it was ok, because when I came to play golf it was not daily it was like two times a week and so if you don't get another job it means that in a week you only get like little money as possible. So he told me that he would give me a part time job, and then, depending on my efforts, may be you get employed. And I accepted. I took a part time job as a receptionist at the French Cultural Centre in 1986, as I told you it was not a full time job but the pay was quite good because every month I used to be paid. And then in 1986 the IFRA was looking for somebody to work as a messenger, a driver and I thought that I could try doing this job. Do they gave me a three month period for trying, for them to see if I can do the job, and after the three months, in July 1986 I was confirmed full time. Before that I had already worked as a deliver in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Southern part of Sudan. I have done this job for two, three years and I stopped it when I started to work as a caddy.

How much is your monthly income?

I get around 22000 Ksh per month, which compared with the number of years I work for IFRA is quite slow. As you can see this money is not enough to keep me going, especially with my son going to school, so I had to find another way of getting extra income to make me live comfortably, to pay my bills, electricity, water, provide for my transports. So for example in IFRA when I get over time I came make a little bit of money, and in addition to this I work in club a night per week, usually the Saturday night. And sometimes I get others jobs from the French. So with those extra jobs I get minimum 30000 Ksh per month, I said minimum, because when you are lucky you can get 35000 Ksh.

A person who get 30000/35000 Ksh per month does he/she live comfortably in Nairobi?

With 35000 Ksh you can live in Nairobi but you have to struggle. So I think that the minimum salary for a person who works in Nairobi has to be 40000/50000 Ksh per month. With that money you can manage to live comfortably. But with 30000/35000 Ksh you have always to struggle to make the ends meet. I have to struggle because there is a period in which delivering food on the table is quite difficult, you may have the stable food with you, like for example in Kenya ugali, but **you** have to look for what we call the sauce. So sometimes you have to borrow something from a friend or from a shop where they know you and pay at the end of the month. So you see that you always have to calculate to make the ends meet.



Do you help economically some of your family members?

Yes, I do. Sometimes a member of your family asks for your help because he/she doesn't have money to pay the school fees for his/her child and you have to help him/her. Otherwise they would think that you are not a good person, that you think that I live in the family house and I don't even want to help them. You know in Africa there is this problem of the extended family, it is not like in Europe, when after 18 you earn for yourself, it doesn't care to look after your parents or the other members of your family. If your parents are alive they depend on you. You have your brothers, your sisters, cousins and things like those to support, to help economically.

Why do you use the term “problem” when you refer to your extended family?

They are a problem because when they come to your house, they expect you to cooperate and help and maybe you are not in the position to afford it, and you cannot simply tell them that you don't have the money because it's your responsibility to help. So you just say ok, you say for example give me one or two weeks and during those weeks you try to have the money they ask you. You may be do an extra job or you borrow it from a friend. Otherwise, if you don't do that, when it's your turn to ask, they wouldn't help you. Maybe you don't need only a financial help, sometimes you also need an assistance help, for example, someone who takes care of you when you are sick, a person who assists you. It would be tit for tat. If you don't help them, they won't help you.

Do your family members help you?

No, it's not really help because for them as I have this job it is easy for me to help them. Because not all of my family members are employed. They think that because I have a job in a foreign company I am well paid. So even if you ask them to help him they think that you really don't deserve your help, because you are rich, you have money. They think that I don't really deserve their help because I have only one child, as they have six or seven children, because my wife works in Libya and so on.

Does your wife send you money?

Yes, especially when I have a problem, I always turn to her. When I get less than I told you before I ask her to send me money.

How do you do for health?

Fortunately I am covered by the IFRA but this year I tried to talk with the director of IFRA to include at least one child or my wife. But they don't want to do this, they told that they would implement my insurance in 2008 but now we are in 2009 and nothing is coming. My insurance covers only me and not for everything, for eyes, for example, you have to pay separately. The lucky part of it is that I am almost never sick.

When your child is sick what do you do?



When my child is sick I have to take him to a private clinic and pay for that from my pockets. That's why I want that IFRA include my child also, because lots of companies in Nairobi give you an insurance that covers also your wife and at list one or two of your children. In the private clinic for a consultation is around 1000 Ksh and then you have to pay medicines. So in total is 2500 Ksh per visit.

Are you involved in politics?

Politics I detest. I don't like politicians because personally I think that they let down of this country, in general. Look at the politicians in Kenya what they do. They try hijack everything. They really work for themselves and not for the ordinary Kenyans. When you see them coming to you is when they need your vote. And after voting everything is like it used to be before the election. What we need is to change the type of politics and the type of politicians we have.

What is your solution?

Personally I think that what we need is a revolution to change the type of politics and the type of politicians. Look at the leaders we have today: they are the sons of the previous leaders.