



Compte rendu d'entretien
Nairobi – Kenya

PORTRAIT : SALLY
Date de l'entretien : Juin 09

My name is Sally. I'm working in a restaurant. The last year I decided to come back to university, even if I have already done my college diploma. I have done something in the NGO sector but then I decided to come back to university and at the moment I am jumbling between working and college. It is very tiring because I can't go to classes and I have to study for the exams on my own and sometimes I don't ever have time for sleeping.

In what consists exactly your work?

Actually I run a restaurant, I make sure that there is all enough, that the places are ordered when the clients come, I make sure that they are served properly, in case of complains I am here for that. My boss normally is not there so I have to organise take away and catering, I talk with the clients. Now it's 8 years that I am doing this job. But with the money that I earn working at the restaurant I don't manage to pay the totality of my university fees.

You told that you have lots of sisters who live in America, can you tell us exactly where do they live?

One of them live in Atlanta, she went there to study and she got married there. That's about the sister who follows me. My big sister lives in Canada, in Ottawa, she is working with the government. My brother too is there, he works in a hospital. My other sister is in Switzerland, she went to study there and she got married there. My other two sisters are here with me.

So how many sisters and brothers do you have in total?

I have six sisters and one brother.

Can you tell me something about you family? Where did you grow up?

My dad is Tanzanian but moved to work here as an engineer and my mother comes from Kenya. They got married and they settled down in Mombasa and most of my sisters were born in Mombasa. Only me and the sister who follows me were born in Nairobi. We grown up here but when my father passed away we have to move into an apartment, there were only two bedrooms and we were so many people. I was about 8 when we moved to the apartment.

What was your mother's job?



She had a small business, she cleaned clinics and offices. It was very hard for her when my father passed away because she had to support the family alone. And when my father passed away my sister and I didn't yet go to school.

Can you tell me something about your education? You and your brother and sisters did you go to private schools or to public schools?

We all went to public school. The school we used to go to now is the worse school to go to but before it was ok. For the primary school me and my sisters went to the same school. For the secondary school, we went in different schools, all over the country. My second sister arrived till form four, my other sister till to form six, my brother went studying as an engineer at the University in India. And my other sister decided to go studying in Switzerland and to support her studies she had to find a job there. Then my other sisters arrived till form four and then she went to the college. And about me, I went to college and at the moment I am struggling to pay my university fees. Another sister arrived till form four and then she went studying in USA.

How much do you earn?

I earn about 14000 Ksh per month. With this amount of money I have to pay university and I have to do other things. Sometimes I tried to organise people events on the side to get a little bit of money. I organise every kind of events: baptisms, marriages, official events.

How much is the income coming from this second activity?

Actually this activity permits me to pay my university fees, that are about 16000 Ksh per trimester. And I also rent my flat, so that's another source of income.

Did you buy your flat or did you rent it?

Actually I bought it through the last job I was.

Why did you decide to buy a flat here and not in another place where it could be less expensive?

As I told you I work in a restaurant in town and I have to go there everyday. So I decided to buy a flat here because of the distance, because of the traffic, and because it is a safe place and that's important for me because sometimes I finish working at midnight and so I needed a place where I can dash in and out without any problem.

How do you place yourself in the Kenya society?

I place myself in the middle. But there is a big gap between us, between my family and I and the rich people. Anybody could ever cover that gap. We can consider ourselves as members of the middle class, we are strugglers, because we have to manage to get what we want. I am happy with what I have achieved at the moment. If I compare myself to some of my friends I realise that I have achieved more than them. I live in a place where things are good.



You said that between you and the rich people there is a big gap. Can you explain me in what consists exactly that gap?

Yes, there is an huge gap. The rich people have a lot and they want to have more and more. And we, may be if we are qualified we can't never get that. Because you don't know the persons that can give you a good job. There is a difference between them and us in the quantity of the things they posses and in the influence they have.

And what are in your opinion the most important differences between you and the poor people?

It is a very big difference. You know people who live in the slums areas if you go there and you give them 200 Ksh they have the impression that you are giving them a gold. Because they don't have money and sometimes they didn't menage to eat neither once per day. They don't have anything. They live in an house that is may be 3x3 or 4x4. Normally in the family is only the husband who works, he earns 3000/4000 Ksh per month and the wife is an housewife and they have like six children. Those children in most cases don't have even the opportunity to go to school because the parents can't afford it. It is a miserable way of life.

Some people say that poor people cannot project themselves in the future. What do you think about it?

They can't think about the future. They live in the present. They can't go forward, they can't go back. What they have is here and now and they don't think about tomorrow.

And you, how far do you project yourself?

I project myself daily. Today is today and tomorrow is tomorrow. But I am happy of what I have achieved today, if I have achieved something good.

What would you like to achieve in the five coming years for example?

I would like to change lives of people living in slums areas. I would like to give them a chance to change theirs situations. Make them understand that they also have a future, which can look forward to.

And what about your personal achievements?

My personal achievements are strictly linked to the members of my family.

Have you ever think about emigrating abroad?

Yes, I though about emigrating, about going away and coming back with expertise. I though about going studying and working abroad.

Why you didn't do that?

Because every time I woke up too late. You know in life you sleep a lot, you think that everything gonna be alright till the day you realise that your life is not like you have



projected it, so you have to wake up and think about your future. In part I woke up three years ago, when I could see things that weren't going right for me, my mum is old, I realised that I became older and things didn't happen the way I wanted to be, I realised that I wasn't going anywhere. Also with the work, things weren't going anywhere, you know, you always do the same things, you wake up early in the morning, you go work and you come back home.

Do you have a family? Do you have kids?

No, I don't have kids. I only have a boyfriend.

How old are you?

I am 31.

Are you involved in politics?

I follow a lot politics reading the newspapers and everything but I don't want to get involved.

Why?

Because politics are a lot insincere. Politicians are not sincere to anybody, neither to themselves. So the last thing I want to do is being a politician. I saw them everyday at the restaurant and I know them and the last thing I want is being like them. Politicians are greedy. They only think about themselves, they don't think to the other people. Here in Kenya whichever person you choose is the same. Once they arrived to the power they are all the same. Politics is not for me.

But if middle class people don't want get involved in politics where will come from the next generation of politicians of this country?

You know here in Kenya it has always been this way: politicians who have power are here because they are the brother or sister or a relative of another previous politician. Or because they are friends of another politicians. That's why in my opinion middle class people don't want to get involved in politics. When the mentality will change they will want participate more to the political life of their country. By the way I'd prefer doing politics at a local level than at the national one.

How many people do you support with your salary?

With my salary I take care of my mum and sometimes I also support my nieces

What do you do in your spare time?

I love dancing so I go dancing with my friends or just I go out and have a drink with my friends