

## CASSILDE NTAMAMIRO : AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

- A. Identity
- B. Family ties
- C. Educational background
- D. Professional Experiences
- E. Spiritual journey
- F. My work with F.W.A.

### MY IDENTITY

First name: Cassilde  
Last name: Ntamamiro  
Spouse's name: Nzohabonayo Ferdinand  
Country of origin: Burundi  
E-mail address: [ntacasy@yahoo.fr](mailto:ntacasy@yahoo.fr)

### ABOUT MY FAMILY

I was born in the hillside of Nyarutiti village, Cankuzo Province, Eastern Burundi, in March 1958. My father, Michel Ntamamiro, was married three times and my mother was his second wife. With his first wife, he had one daughter who died in 1945 along with her mother. My father soon remarried my mother, Julienne Nsabimana, with whom he had two sons and five daughters. From this second marriage, one elder brother Daniel Ntamamiro, one younger sister Anne Marie, and myself, Cassilde are the only ones still living.

The first child, a girl named Seraphine, died home at the age of two. The second, Josephine Ntamamiro, grew up. She died very recently at the age of 55. She had done teaching training at Mugeru, where she graduated in 1968, thanks to the effort and support from our mother. She married a teacher, Nicaise Sindakira, in 1970, but became widowed during the 1972 war while pregnant with her second child Alexia; her first daughter is Odette. At that time, many other of her in-laws also died. Others got scattered to Rwanda, Tanzania, Congo and Europe. By that time, I was living with them because my sister, Josephine, was paying for my school fees and also caring for my other needs. She was just like a mother to me. Later this sister, Josephine, met Andre, who became her second husband in 1975. They had seven children and adopted two others.

The third child, Daniel Ntamamiro, is now a grown man. He and his family stayed in the village to take care of the family farm. The fourth, Gaspard Ntamamiro, died at home, at the age of six.

The fifth child is me, Cassilde Ntamamiro. I got married to Ferdinand Nzohabonayo in 1985. Ferdinand attended Kibimba High School before he went to Kansas Friends Bible College, now Barclay College in 1979. Then he received his Master's degree in Missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary, California, in 1984. He still is working for his doctorate degree at Azusa Pacific University, in California. He was the Director of the Great Lakes School of Theology for the last five years.

Ferdinand and I do not have our own natural children. Ever since our marriage in 1985, we have taken in our brothers and sisters in order to help them finish their studies. We have continued this care with many other nieces and nephews. Patrick, who was the youngest child in our home, passed away on November 4, 2003; he was eleven years old. Today in our home, we have several of Ferdinand's younger siblings: Cynthia, Agnes, and Prosper who escaped from night killers in their village. Their father and one of their elder sisters were killed home in 1996 during the current war. Their mother lived in a refugee camp for two years after which she died of tuberculosis.

The sixth child, the one who came after me, Angelique Ntamamiro, died in 1991. She had graduated from Burundi University in French literature in 1988. She was married to Basile, one of my brothers in-law who had come back from Russia in 1983. Over the years, each person in this family—Angelique, Basile, and their two children—died in my arms, one after the other, all victims of AIDS. Finally, the seventh and the last child, Anne Marie, is now the accountant for Burundi Yearly Meeting; she is married to Cyriaque.

After my mother Julienne died, in 1979 at the age of 45, my father married another woman, Immaculate, and they had five more children, before he died in 1992 at the age of 70.

## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

I did elementary school at Muyaga, the first Roman Catholic Parish, built by the Belgium priests, near the Tanzanian border, in Cankuzo Province. From the east, I entered Bukeye High School, in the west of Burundi. After graduating from Bukeye, I did the Nursing Training School of Gitega which is located in the center of Burundi, and I graduated in 1979. Most recently, I studied at the Great Lakes School of Theology where I received a B.A. in Christian Leadership in June 2002.

### *Complementary Studies*

Besides Nursing and Christian Leadership, I had the opportunities to study and to receive complementary certificates in the following topics:

- Family planning clinic management.
- Conflict resolution techniques (A.V.P. Effective Dispute Resolution).
- Combating severe malnutrition
- HIV/AIDS and development
- Children's immunizations programs
- Computers applications (window and Excel, e-mails).
- HIV/AIDS home-care basics.
- Basics of accounting
- Secretarial techniques (public relations, archives, and letters).
- Teaching and communication skills.

## MY PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES.

From 1979 to 1980, I worked as a nurse to the Murore Hospital, in Cankuzo Province. Then, from 1980 to 1982, I served at the “Clinique Prince Louis Rwagasore,” which is located in downtown Bujumbura.

From that time on, I have worked as a Public Health Supervisor, linking the national health structures with the rural health sectors in many districts (provinces) of Burundi. I was in charge of training nurses, introducing new programs, doing health care statistics, and promoting educational services. I especially worked for the Minister of Health for the implementation of Family Planning Services in Burundi since 1983 to 1987.

From 1989 to 1999, I was elected member of the Central Committee of UPRONA Political Party (unique party of the time) and representative of Cankuzo United Women Movement (U.F.B.).

From 1992 to 1999, I was the founding president of the women’s association, called “Madona House” in Cankuzo, whose aim was to improve the women’s economic status.

From 1999 to 2002, I was the coordinator of the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services, “THARS,” which is sponsored by AGLI; and I founded the “Twarirengeje Association” for the Rohero Friends Monthly Meeting.

From 2002 until now, I have been the coordinator of the Friends Women’s Association (F.W.A.), which works for peace by educating women about health issues and in particular by awareness and training about HIV/AIDS.

## MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

I was born to Roman Catholic parents. Later, while I was at the nursing training school, I had the influence of a protestant religion. Some students from a nearby Bible institute, called Mweya, used to come to tell us about salvation from our sins by Jesus Christ.

In addition, while working at the “Clinique Prince Louis Rwagasore” in Bujumbura, in 1982, I received a special testimony from a group of physicians and nurses who were very committed to their profession and who were focused on Christ. These health practitioners had discovered that more people enter hospitals than go to churches. Often they found they could help people with their spiritual commitments better than ministers could, and thus they cared for both the patients’ “physical and spiritual needs.” At that time, I decided to receive Christ as my personal Savior and the Lord of my Life.

Today, I’m the clerk of the Rohero Friends Church and the Chair of the Kamenge Quarterly meeting for the women’s department.

## MY WORK WITH F.W.A.

Many factors have influenced my life and turned my interests toward nursing. First, I know from my mother's talk that I had a very difficult infancy, because I was often sick and almost died of measles. Second, it was very difficult as I grew up to receive the care of a medical doctor; there were no immunization programs for children during these years. Thus growing up was a matter of nature and chance.

Third, in my teens, I was taken by a Catholic nun to one hospital far from school, because she decided I needed some minor surgery. This surgery occurred just prior to the time that my school required me to fill out forms to select the major for my course of study. As a consequence of my experience, I decided that I wanted to help those who suffer in a hospital and cannot understand all the technical, medical words.

Fourth, when my close family members and other people I cared for started to die with HIV/AIDS, I was quite shaken and wanted to fight the disease as much as I could. After the deaths of my younger sister and her husband who had been raising the family orphans, I had all of these children in my charge. I lived with the fear that one or more of these children might have contacted AIDS. Fortunately none turned to be HIV positive.

Fifth, AIDS is silently taking lives of members of the Burundi Yearly Meeting. The number of orphans is growing and no effort has yet slowed down this expansion. Fifteen per cent (15%) of the whole Burundi population is affected.

My commitments are:

- i. to inform and educate those who not yet are affected by HIV/AIDS so that they know and care for their lives.
- ii. to train church women who as mothers stigmatize people living with HIV/AIDS, and thus to turn them into care-givers of the sick in their respective communities. They will help in the education of many other people to bring awareness of the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- iii. to use all the F.W.A. members to manage our HIV/AIDS cases in both the spiritual, the psychological, the social aspects as well as the treatment of the disease and its effects.
- iv. to help those who want to do blood tests in order to know their HIV/AIDS status.