**Lucy (Refugee Family) | Duration: 51:15**

I: Pole pole tu. Okay, good afternoon.

L: Good afternoon to you.

I: Who am I speaking to tell me a little bit about where you grew up and yeah, just tell me a bit about your childhood.

L: Okay. My names are Lucy Jua Nduku. I’m a South Sudanese living currently in Kenya as a refugee. I grew up in South Sudan, where I was born. I’m the last born in our family, we are six in our family. My elder brother passed on. Current- Right now we are five. We have two boys and three girls. So, I grew up in South Sudan. I met my husband there. He was He is called Isaac Vuni. But he has passed on during this war in South Sudan. He was a journalist. At the same time, he was a secretary general in the church. So, we came to Kenya, we didn't have children. Right now, I have five children.

I: Nice.

L: One boy and four girls. Yeah, so they're in school, one has graduated. There rest are still in school. So, I love being in Kenya. Kenya has been my home now for the last 26 years. Yes.

I: And we have one of your daughters here. Maybe you can introduce yourself.

S: My name is Sophie Faith Jua, daughter to Lucy Jua. I'm a South Sudanese but I was born and raised in Kenya. I have three sisters and one brother.

I: And how old are you?

S: I'm 14 years old.

I: Super, super. Lovely to meet you both.

S: Thank you.

I: So, growing in South Sudan as a child, right before you started your own family, what are some of the values that your parents taught you or your community taught you, that you grew up with and you thought are quite good?

L: Okay. In fact, my, my father passed on. I have never knew what is a father, the love of a father. My father passed on when I was two years old. So I usually hear the story when they are talking about it. So, I was brought up by my mother, and my siblings. My life has been shared between my siblings and what they taught me was love, love in the family and then a spirit of sharing because life is not easy. The little you get, we should be able to share among ourselves. That's why my growth my coming my growing also my life has been shared among they have shared it themselves, so that at least I can be somebody else. Yeah, and they taught me how to love. They taught me how to, to do work to help in the family. Yes, so that is it.

I: So, at the point when you started your own family, what are some of the- Are they the same values that you wanted to bring into your own family?

L: Yes, in fact, that was the same family that I was praying for, to be in my family. And right now, this is what is taking place in my family. The little we have, we share together. Like when my husband was killed in 2016, he just left us. We didn't have any relatives, we didn't have anybody who can whom we can look to. Yeah, but we have our sisters who are in Christ who came, we stayed together during that period for about 10 days, I think, 10 days, yeah. We did the last prayer and then from there as a family, we, we unite together. They little we get, we share together. Even her, the girl who is 14 years old, yeah, you can bring a sweet, you can give her a sweet and she will make sure she want to divide that sweet into pieces, so that we share. So, it is the it is it is the individual who will say, “Oh Sophie, I'm fine. Just eat.” Yeah, so that is what I was, I was praying for and God have accepted my prayer for that, yeah.

I: Yeah, and at what age did you start your own family? When did you get married?

L: Okay, I got married early. I was when I was 20 years.

I: Wow.

L: Yeah. I was 20 years, I got married. Yeah, we I stay with my husband for one year in South Sudan. Because of the war, he was been accused many times that is collaborating with the with the SPLA SPLM. So, one of the officer from army, he came and advised him my friend just leave this place. If not, if they arrest you for three times, for the third time

I: Yeah.

L: You will be killed. But then he was arrested twice. He is usually being picked from home at night. That's the time we came to Nairobi. So, we started just with a small house. We came with a- with one Thermos, two cups and few, few dresses for myself and for him he picks also his. But we left our house just like that. We did not carry anything.

I: You didn’t want them to know also that you were leaving?

L: Yes. So, but in another way it was, we were feeling safe, that we are leaving that horrible [unintelligible] area, we are coming to a safer place. So, we started with a We just started with a mattress, we put mattress down. We have one sufuria plus two plates. We cook first mboga and then we empty it and then after that

I: You make the ugali.

L: Now we make the ugali. Yes, that's how we have started our life, yeah.

I: And why did you choose Kenya or Nairobi specifically? Was there a particular reason?

L: Of course, during war, during war, you will not know where you are going. We'll just start going you will not know where you are going. So, the nearest border where you can reach to is when now it can where it will take you to a safer place where there is no fighting.

I: Yeah, Makes sense, makes sense.

L: Because, we came through Lokichoggio and then we reached, we look, reached Lokichoggio.

I: Yeah.

L: We reached Lokichoggio because he was secretary general in the Catholic Church in Juba, so we met one of their friends, a priest, yeah. Through him is how we managed to reach in Nairobi, yeah.

I: So through all this, what does the word family now mean to you?

L: Okay, for me family is is is is a mother and a father and children who are staying together. But now, during this, during what through what is happening, what is taking place, it has gone- it has gone beyond that. It has gone beyond that. Like now, me I don't only stay with him, these are my children, my family putting around things around them that I have to protect them only, yeah, because, because of the war because of the neglect what is happening. You found, you will find that in one in one way or another, a different person has joined your family. So, a person who has joined your family, you’ll look at them like that is your own family.

I: Yeah.

L: Because, if you are responsible for them, like for me, I have kids who are separated who are child headed households, they come sometimes, they stay here, they stay we stay together, what we are eating is what they are eating, what we are drinking is what they're drinking. Until they will get their place. So, that's when they will go. So, a family for me is a person living together, they are happy, they are sharing the same environment and they are sharing the same, yeah, let me say the basic needs that you share together.

I: And you've- How long have you been offering your house as a home for people in this way?

L: For the last almost- Since when? I think almost for the last 20 years now it has reached.

I: So Sophie, you were born into this.

L: Yes, yes.

S: Yes, I was.

I: So, tell me about now growing up and having your house be open and welcome to so many different people.

S: Okay, I'm not sure I can't remember a lot when I was a kid, but from a couple of years ago, there were some people who came and left and when they came in, I didn't see them in any different way. There were some There was a person who needed help, so I just saw them as a brother or a sister, welcomed them and sometimes I would be shy to talk to them, that's true, but I would try my best and at the end of the day, you'd find that we'd actually talk and become good friends. And up to today I still talk to some of them.

I: Oh, that’s so good.

S: Yeah. So, yeah, I take them as brothers and sisters, even though they're not necessarily bound- we're not bound together by blood, I take them as brothers and sisters, yeah.

I: That's that's really wonderful. Does religion play any role in your life? I can see all the crucifixes and I know your husband was part of the Catholic Church but I'm curious about how you view religion.

L: Yeah, religion, I think it plays a very great role in the, in my life, in the life of my children. For example, there was a time I was doing a training a place called Amani Ya Juu. So, at Amani Ya Juu, we have a program for children. Usually, it happens three times in a year, whereby they go there, the children will be taught. You know- You know these are children who came from the warzone. Some were born here, some have witnessed what is happening to their parents or to their aunties, or to their relatives, to their mothers to their father, how they can be killed in front of them. And although those who have been born here in Nairobi, it’s still in discussion in the house, they hear what is happening.

I: They’re aware.

L: They’re aware. Like now, like now my husband, he has been killed. He was not sick, he was killed. You see? You know that bitterness, usually the children have it. So, we usually bring the children together, I think all of my children has gone that procedure for that program, it is called Amani Watoto. So they come together, we share the Word of God, we talk to them out how they can how they can be the peace ambassador. If they grow up, they should not take revenge through the words of God. So, it has really empowered them, like those who have found it, they were part of the Amani Amani Watoto. So, usually they come three years- three times in a year. And then they will be taught the Word of God. And even me, being a mother, we have time where, after work, we are doing stitching. After work, we break, we go for a for a word of God. Yeah, you find in that group, people share what they've gone through. Sometimes, you feel yours is much burden, you're carrying a lot of burden. But if you hear somebody sharing her testimony, you feel like yours is much better. So, you if you hear it will give you encouragement. It will give you energy, it will make you strong, so that you continue by day by day. Although you don't have anything, we have come a long way, we have come a long way. Sometimes you go without anything, you don't have anybody whom you can ask. But for me, particularly, I said there was a time we I think for the last two days, we didn't eat anything, when I was still, I was still having Foni I think. So, I really, I knelt down, I prayed with tear. I told God to give me something that I can do with my hands. I don't want to go and beg because begging from offices to offices, you will get tired. Sometime you go you don't get anything. And indeed, that time God gave me something to do. I started- One of the organization taught us how to do tie-and-dye.

I: Oh wow.

L: Yeah, so immediately we finished, I started doing my own. So, I was able to get something for my family. Slowly by slowly, I started how to stitch. I stitch a lot of bags, yeah, stitch bags, I stitch table mats, I stitch table runner for things for babies. So, I thank God for that and he has answered my, my prayer. Yeah, so and that's why I keep my hope alive, I keep my faith alive, too. That's what is keeping me going on, the Word of God.

I: That that's really beautiful.

L: Yeah.

I: I'd like to know, do you consider other kinds of relationships other kind of connections as part of family, because you mentioned, you know, being received at the border by somebody from the church, you know, the church coming and staying with you, those first 10 days, well, the 10 days after the service. Are there other relationships that you have built, that you feel like those also can expand and be called part of your family?

L: Yeah, yeah, that can be part of my family. Because if we have already created that relationship between between in between, with somebody who is not your blood and you are communicating well, that is already part of the family. Because you you can have your family but they are not like we were having we were having families I having brothers and sisters.

I: Yeah.

L: But they're not here.

I: Yeah.

L: But I found a lot of Kenyans who are my family, whom we share together, whom we talk together. If you're in problem, they intervene immediately. Yeah, so although, they call it extended family, for me I feel it is a family. Yes. Yeah.

I: Super. So tell me about your beautiful household and how you run it. How do you divide the tasks? Who does what? Is there a roster?

L: We don’t have rosters because I think everybody is responsible. Yeah, but since this COVID-19 started, I think Sophie has taken the role in the morning.

I: You wake up very early in the morning?

L: She wakes up, she prepare tea for me. And then sometimes she mop the house. And yaani we don't have a specific roster. All of us are involved in doing. Like, if I'm mopping, like when I was mopping the sitting room, they were in the kitchen, washing the dishes and preparing teas. Yeah, so I have my son is also here. They also participate. I have my nephew, whom I brought when he was nine years old. He grew with me here. Yeah, he also he's also part of it. We do all the house in the house, work in the house.

I: Super

L: Yes.

I: There are no lazy bums here.

L: No, no.

I: And how does your family meet its financial needs? Are your children supporting you? Are you receiving support from somewhere else? How do you make sure like all the expenses are catered for in the household?

L: Okay, from the beginning, I said, we have learned a spirit of sharing. Yeah, for me, I stitch on the machines. The little I have like I, I put them together. And then also Foni, sometimes she travels. Yeah, if she gets, we share together. She give me or she will, she will take the responsibility of paying the rent. Yeah, like if she paid the rent, the little I'm getting, I'll I’ll make the use of buying food in the house. Yeah, so we are sharing, we are sharing the responsibility. If any of us is having, like, not me, now, any of the children who is having something kidogo, like money, they will they will go they can go even themselves and buy what they want or they can give me. Yeah, that's how we are trained to share the responsibility.

I: And who makes the important decisions for the family? Is that Does that still follow you or is it a matter of discussion?

L: It is a discussion. Yeah, we make a discussion. Yeah, so you know now for me, I'm, I'm, I'm their mother. I have to guide now, yeah. We I make sure they don't make the wrong decision. Yeah, we make it we'll make a decision as a family, but now I have to guide how the decision will be made, yeah.

I: Can you give me a small example, a moment? It could even be deciding what, what to eat. When are we next going to eat chicken? Who is going to buy it? Who is going to make it? It can be something like that. Sophie, do you have something to share?

S: No, no.

L: Okay, okay. Like, sometimes we might have lunch, and then they'll start, “What will we eat for supper? What will we eat for supper?” and then one person will say, “Okay, so we have peanut butter, we have, we have bread in the house, we have milk. Why can't we just take tea for supper?”

I: Yeah.

L: Yeah, so we agree upon it. And then each person will say, “Okay, that's fine, that's fine.” So, we come to the conclusion.

I: It's a very democratic household. So, tell me about your view of the concept of marriage. Has that changed over the years? Is it still the same? Is it- What did you observe as you were growing up? Kind of like maybe the traditional marriage system. Is that different here? Like just, I'm curious about your idea on the concept of marriage.

L: Oh, like like now from my perspective? The idea of marriage concept is, you know, it is good for people to get married, to be together and being together is accepting responsibility. Being together as you enter into marriage is avoiding secret. If you have a secret, you should not have secret anymore because now you are together. That has been made one body, yeah. You should agree upon on what you're supposed to do, yeah, because like back home, what I've learned when I was growing is the courtship has to take for about some years, like from three to four years for you to get married. And to get married is like that person whom you are talking to, should accept you as a wife and even you, you have to accept. Like, if I have daughters now in the house, I have to accept the my son-in-law who is coming in, yeah. So that even my daughter who is going to that home, see she should be accepted there. Yeah, so that to run, the marriage will run so smoothly. Yeah, that is what I used to know. But this day, you know, there is nothing like that. If people say, this is mine, what I want is that, this is what my life. But now your role is just to explain to them what is the meaning of marriage. Because marriage is something that is not something like a contract. Marriage is something that you have made a decision for the rest of your life.

I: Yeah.

L: Yes, so you have to explain to them into details, what's the meaning of marriage? No, you should not you should not have secret, you should not have doing you should not have been doing something behind your husband when your husband is doing something different.

I: IT should be like a unified

L: Yes, yes, you should be together. Yeah, and I feel marriage is good, although these days there is a lot of single mothers. Marriage is good in the first place, it give also respect for a woman. You know, if you’re you’re married, you have a husband in the house, you will have a respect in this society these days. Yeah, nobody's going to play around with you. But now single mothers, anybody want to come to talk to you, you know, that so, I feel they should continue with, with getting married and being responsible and respecting one another during their marriage.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about the South Sudanese, the marriage rituals or kind of the steps that people used to take traditionally?

L: Traditionally? Okay. For us, we have the 164 different tribes in South Sudan and they have their own way of getting married. But I will speak on my side, because others are getting married with cattles, yeah. But for us with- during the courtship. If you're

I: Do you mind just telling us what tribe that is, so that we know?

L: We are Madi, Madi, M-A-D-I. Yeah, that is called Madi. We are not large, we have a small number. We are bordering Northern Uganda. Yeah, our area is called Nimule, from Nimule to if you're proceeding going to Juba, yeah. So, that courtship in between, it depends how long it will take. After the courtship, now if you feel if the two feel now they're they’re okay, they can get married. Maybe, they fought, they fight, you know, during courtship even people are fighting.

I: Yeah.

L: You fight, now you know…

I: You have to test.

L: You know the attitude of this one. Okay, say okay, we can manage. Now, the parents of the boy need to write a letter, an official letter. There There are different types of marriage but I'll start with this one. Like, they will write, write a letter. After writing a letter, it will they will send somebody to bring it to the home of the girl, yeah. So, it will be given there. Now the elder of that home, they will sit down and read that letter. If they read that letter, they will do now, they will reply. Yeah, they will reply. You can come on this day and they will write all the requirement that you're supposed to come with it the first, the first time.

I: The first visit.

L: Yeah, the first visit, like introduction.

I: Yeah.

L: So, they will put it like You know, our people, they got married with a lot of money. They will put like, cows, not cow, goat this amount, we have something like mafuta ya taa, alafu tuko na kiberiti…

I: Interesting, everything like

L: Yes, yes, inaandikwa chini. Sabuni, sabuni, kiberiti, matchbox, alafu wallet. Si unajua wallet unakuja kuhesabu pesa?

I: Wow.

L: We have that wallet and then tuko na kitambaa, you come na, ukuje na kitambaa. Hiyo kitambaa it will be laid down. That money you come with it, it will be counted on that kitambaa. After you finish counting money, now you put it in that wallet.

I: Interesting. So, it is almost like also like starting something new, completely.

L: Yes, yes. Yeah, so all the requirement will be put down.

I: Yeah.

L: But you don't come with all those things at the same time, you come with the basic that is needed, yeah, that is there for the first visit. The second visit, you come now at least what has been given to you to pay, at least you should reach three quarter of it, yeah. Now, if you reach the three quarter the second visit you have reached three quarter, now the third visit you can come now and and and have this peanut butter.

I: Oh!

L: They will grind a peanut butter full of bucket…

I: It’s It’s like a traditional like it’s actually part of the dowry process.

L: Yeah, yeah, now that one they are giving you the okay, you can go to the church…

I: Interesting.

L: …with the girl. And then they will bring a goat, yeah, this goat will be decorated. Will put on earrings,

I: Really?

L: Will put on glasses and then will put on even watch…

I: Wow.

L: …and will tie a wrapper wataweka wrapper hapa kwa waist, nini, kitenge, nini, leso.

I: Yeah.

L: That’s a very fashionable culture. So, this goat will be slaughtered, you will eat when you're eating this peanut butter. Yeah, so, the what they have been put on the the goat, you will be you will remove it one by one. You will remove the earrings and you pay money. You remove the glasses, you pay money. You will remove the- Yeah, so it is like that. It It is just to make it fun.

I: Yeah.

L: To make it fun. So, now they will slaughter the the goat and eat and and cook. It will be served together with the peanut butter. So while eating the peanut butter, while you, while the the groom, the groom, the groom si ni vijana. Wakitaka kukula hiyo peanut, now they will request money from the from the girls to open up their mouth to eat a certain amount they have to pay.

I: Wow.

L: Yeah, after that, now even the girls are going to play their parts. Like if you ugali na peanut butter without water, si itakunyonga?

I: Itakunyonga, yeah.

L: Itakunyonga. Ikikunyonga, si you you you call for water, you swallow ukikunywa maji. They will say, “Okay, you are trying to undermine our culture. You have to pay some fine.” Yeah, those are the basic I can remember.

I: By the way, do you think that still happens now? Are people still doing that? Do they still have the goat?

L: It happens It happens but but sometime like you know, dressing these goats, sometimes people are saying, you know, these days people are Christian, sijui people are what, so we should not dress these things.

I: Yeah it is not good, like we have attended one in Nairobi here. They didn't want the goat to be dressed, so they said, ”We don't want. We are Christian,” yeah. And the funniest things in our tribe, if you’re you're having relationship you never eat chicken together with that boy.

I: Ever?

L: Even in a nini

I: Even Sophie is-

L: Like like…

I: So, no Kenchic, nothing.

L: Yeah, like during that but mostly during during the when you are paying the dowry, hakuna kupika kuku. Yeah, because there’s wanasema kuku, blood yake iko hot, inaaweza ku nini hiyo, it is a belief, Inaweza… Hiyo marriage inaweza kuharibika.

I: Oh wow.

L: Yeah. But now, when they pay all you dowry, hiyo nini during the wedding they can now eat.

I: Yeah. Okay, after everything now everything has been sorted out.

L: Yes, yes, they can…

I: It’s safe now. The chicken has been cleansed by the money. Oh, that is so interesting.

L: Yes, yes. Yeah. There’s a lot of thing, a lot I can’t even mention all of it.

I: It sounds like marriage was viewed very as a very special union and that it needed all this ceremony to make it to remind people that that it it means a lot, that you have a commitment for life.

L: Yes.

I: And so it makes sense, they are all symbolic…

L: Yeah.

I: …symbolic things and I'm really curious about whether things like polygamy, polyamory, you know marrying a woman with many husbands, a man with many husbands, was that part of the culture or people marrying multiple partners?

L: They are there. It is there. There are people who are like, like, in our, in our tribe, at least maybe people can marry even four wives, yeah. But now if you get married to four wives, you can’t go to church, yeah. It is just remain traditional at home.

I: Maybe only just the first one that you can marry in the church?

L: The first one?

I: All of them.

L: Yeah, the first one you can, but no, but if you marry in the church, you you did a wedding, you're not supposed to get married to another wife.

I: Oh, that’s true. But now these days, people are trying to change everything. Yeah. Things are changing. Yeah, you find somebody who get married with through weddings, he still want to get married, yeah.

I: Traditionally?

L: Yeah, yeah.

I: Okay. So, unfortunately for you your husband has been passed away quite early in your in your life. But you have raised your children and you have given them values. And, are there other people who've helped you raise your children, kind of giving them guidance? For example, you have a boy, your male relatives stepping in to assist and give ideas or have you raised your children?

L: Okay, when their father was around, he used to talk to them even to speak mother-tongue. Like now they can speak mother tongue…

I: Oh, nice!

L: although it is not that fluent.

I: It's good to know. It’s better to know.

L: Yeah, yeah. But you know, my husband passed on in 2016. His death was was was something connected with LAN with LAN and there was a time ago, you know, he was a journalist. There was a time he exposed corruption. So, in between we did not know exactly, who, who, which are the, who was killed him. And people back home, they were too feeling guilty. For the last four years, we have never communicated with them. Never, never, never, nobody's calling, everybody's quiet. Even us we are quiet. At last, we just we decided with the children, okay, you know, anywhere you can stay. Because you keep looking for relative and they're not helping you, they're not even communicating. It doesn't give add any value in our family. So, it is better for us to take away whereby we will be able to, to be united and run our own affair as our family.

I: A family.

L: Yeah. Like what we know is our our dad is not is not there anymore. But we'll stick together to of course, before he died, he has a he has a he has a vision, whereby you want to bring his child children up to be responsible. So, I told my children, we are going to fulfill his vision.

I: Okay.

L: Yeah, that's what I told them. So, we’re staying. And this year, this year in January is when people back home they call me they say “We wanted to, to do a prayer.” Because now, because when my husband died later, I think there are people who came also died on accident. People are dying, people are dying, they say no, we need to do A B C D. So, that is the time now we went and did the prayer and now at least these days, they're calling us. They're calling and saying, “How are you?” Whether you are doing okay, because everybody has talked about that bitterness is how is going through is going through. So we talked and

I: now things are…

L: We have forgiven one another, now all, all is good, yeah.

I: Who determines the educational path of your children? Is that something you discuss with them, like, kind of like their ambitions and their career plans. Is that something you discuss together or do they come to me and say, “Mom, I want to do this and this and the other.”?

L: Okay, for their career, they they identified what they can do, and then for me is to support them in it. Yes, yeah.

I: You are a very democratic and loving mother. Sophie, is that correct? Is that true?

S: It's true.

I: So, tell me about your own like plans and ambitions, like maybe we have discussed now with that we've been discussing with your mother.

S: Okay, right now, my vision is later in life, I want to become a doctor. I'm still not sure where the field that I will specify, but I was leaning towards psychology or maybe psychiatry. But yeah, I've talked to mom about it and she says that it's actually okay, and yeah, she’ll hopefully support me. And yeah, my aunt says that too. And they've given me their blessings. Yeah.

I: That’s good, that's really good. It's important that, you know, you feel like, it's all connected. So tell me about like the back home, or maybe about the way people were perceived back home, about the older members of the society. Is there a tradition where they are taken into the family, and you know, and kind of taking care of them or is it that they are like kind of separate, kind of put up country and you know, maybe there’s a worker who works with them. How do you treat the older members of your society?

L: Ebu come again?

I: So say, for example, like grandmother and grandfather are they typically staying up country in the villages and then maybe you send some money to take care of them, or are they usually brought into maybe not just in your family but kind of like how things were approached. Were they part of the, you know, raised, not raised, you know, taken care of inside the family or were they kind of separated, but still taken care of, but kind of separated?

L: Okay, for us, in our culture, we don't separate the age. We just stay with them and take the responsibility until there comes, their times comes for them to go and be with the Lord. So, like, I will give the example with my, with my uncle, who is now the only person who is left on the side of my mom. Like, she's now, he's now very old. Yeah, he could not even walk but the families are there for for him. In generally, the family are there for him. Like the daughter, the real daughter was not around sometimes but when he got sick, I think last month, all the families, all the people who are around even the neighbours, they came and they were taking care of him.

I: Oh, that’s nice.

L: Of course, he can't go for this. If he want to go for long call, he cannot go. He needs to be held, so that he can be taken. Yeah, so all the people they came, they took care of him but meanwhile they were calling for his her daughter, his daughter to come. Yeah, because he was not feeling well at all. So, for us they consider that is a blessing. Yeah, so they don't separate they don't neglect. Unless if somebody you know there are people who grow in the community, they don't have children. Sometime there will be a bit of challenges, but still you find people are taking care of them.

I: They still show up.

L: Like, yeah, like my mother in law, my the mother to my husband. So, when my husband was in Juba, we stay with him in Nairobi here until he passed on. In in my hand even.

I: Wow.

L: Yeah, so we don't neglect them. I can remember one day when he was very sick, I took him to the hospital. One of my neighbor was telling me, “Wewe, you Lucy, you are spoiling money for this old lady. Just take this old lady and leave the leave her at Kenyatta and write a different name.” They say, “You, you know this, this lady, this old lady has raised a lot of people who are now they have potential in the community.” We can't leave her until they time God will call her. Yeah, so they have that concern for the elderly people. Yeah, although, you know now because of the war, there is a lot of, there is a lot of people who went to the exile. They're coming back with a different attitude, this adopted attitude, yeah.

I: It's a shame, but at least you're you're still holding on to…

L: Yeah.

I: …that what you learned about love and sharing and taking care of each other. So, now that you came to Nairobi and you are building your life here, can you talk about how many times you've moved where you've lived as a family? If you can kind of trace all of that until, until here?

L: Oh, okay. Okay, the first time we arrived in Nairobi with my husband, we we stay with a family friend in Kibera for 45 days. From there, we move to Kawangware, where I stay we were putting one mattress down with one sufuria. We stayed there for about I can't remember the the year but maybe I can mention that the place where where we have moved, we stay there for sometimes and then we moved to 46, 46 near the market. We stay there for we did not even stay there for a year. Because the place was very cold and there was water coming in the house. So, we moved from there, we went to Satellite, Satellite that side of Le Pic. Yeah, we stayed there for about two years. The place was not good. One day there were thugs, they came and attack us. My husband was beaten, he was beaten here. Like, we thought that he was going to pass on.

I: Wow.

L: He vomited the whole day, the whole day but the goodness we managed to take him to the hospital. He was treated. From there, we moved to back to Kawangware in near primary school, Kawangware Primary School. We stayed there for about three years? Yes, I think three years. And then from there, we moved to Nyakinyua Road.

I: Wow, you have really moved around this city.

L: Nyakinyua Road, we stayed there for 13 years. 13 years? No, not 13 years, it is less than that. Yeah, we stayed there but now that was that was also when my husband now was involved in accident. He was sick, there was a lot of issues. We couldn't even pay the rent. Yeah, so we stayed there for some times and the house was now small, the kids are grown up. The sitting room is very small, we sit all our legs are coming together. And then we move from there, we moved down here, Kawangware, Satellite hapo chini. Hapo, we could have stayed there but now there, there was, there was no we were we were having electricity but there was no bill that was coming for electricity. We stayed there for about a year. And then somebody told me, you, you have light and you don't have nini the bill. One day, they will bring a huge amount of money…

I: Yeah.

L: …that you will not be able to pay. And they will say maybe you are, you are trying to steal this electricity. And I was told it was connected through hiyo njia sio mzuri. So, from there, now we moved here, yeah.

I: And here how many years have you lived here?

L: 2013. Saa hii hiyo ni ngapi? About seven years, yeah, yeah. About seven.

I: Wow.

L: Yeah. So, we are satisfied here.

I: Yeah. It’s a nice home.

L: You see from now here either we go to South Sudan or either I don’t know. Yeah.

I: And do you I know you said that you don’t talk to your family but more recently towards the last four years. But, but prior to that, were you were people coming to visit you, were you going to visit them, were you, do you have other family or other relatives in in Nairobi or even within the region that you are kind of seeing each other? Or are you kind of cut your friend there?

L: We’re talking We’re talking with the family on the phone through the phone, yeah.

I: You were never visiting each other?

L: Within? Within Nairobi, ama outside?

I: Were they in Nairobi?

L: No.

I: Some of them?

L: No, we have relatives in Nairobi. We usually visit. Yeah, we visit often. But my relative that are in the camp, By the way my relative are in the camp. Yeah, because, because of the war that currently that is happening still in South Sudan.

I: Yeah.

L: The war that the conflict that break out 2013. So, all of them they went to the camp in in Uganda. So, I used not to travel because you can’t travel without a document.

I: That’s true.

L: Yeah, but later when this traveling document of UNHCR together with Government of Kenya, they I managed to get one. So I travel. About two years I was travelling now to see them in the camp.

I: Wow! Do you think they will come this way or do they hope to stay in Uganda?

L: Once in a while among there are people who come. Like my nephew he comes, he comes sometimes to Nairobi. Even the girls, they comes, they comes for some time and then they go, yeah.

I: Okay, now we’re at the end. Feels like we’ve been talking forever. So, I wanted to know in your opinion and maybe you can chime in Sophie as well, what makes your family special? And I know you said that it’s not just your blood family, it’s your extended family so you could respond in any way you feel makes sense to you. And then I would also love to know some exciting stories or your favourite memories that you’ve shared together as a family. So, we can start with what do you feel makes your family special?

L: Okay, what make my family special, like my children is so special to me. They They protect me, they sit around me. Some time like I feel bitter, of course that one is there is come automatically. But if you have seen a child who is sitting beside you and they are sitting around me, you know, it, it make you to to love, to they give you hope, yeah. And then another way my children are special, let me say, my biological children they are so special for me because care for me, they value me in their life, yeah. I know we might have, I might have like they said if, you know there is a saying, where they said, if you don’t have your own, somebody’s child might love you but not up to that extent where your child can give up to you. And then for those who are around me they are so special in life, of course, if they grow up, they have they will be able to deliver something in the community. So, they have that potential. They only need guidance and care…

I: Yeah.

L: …so that in future, they will be able to deliver something in the community. That’s make them so special because a child who do not have parents, if you have a child, you can look at your child so special but that child is also special, it is only because they don’t have their parents.

I: Yeah, yeah.

L: So, yeah, so they are I think so that they will be able to deliver things in the community.

I: Yeah, well, it’s interesting you are saying community, because I know you are a community worker and many of them, they call you mom. So, how do you feel about that when they call you mom?

L: You know, I feel good, I feel good because like I have one here who is a Congolese. He usually come and if I talk he says, “Yes Madam, yes Madam.” You know, I feel good because, as I have said, I don’t want to see I I was talking to Foni even I say one day, it is only that this world is not good. I wanted to have my own organization, that I will be able to support the children. Because I feel it is from my deep heart I want to care for children, yeah. So, I like in the community they know they people look at me, they feel that I should help them, or I should talk to them. Helping I cannot but me I talk to them and I advise them and I tell them the truth. I talk to them and it is them to make the decision for themselves, I do not make decisions for them.

I: That is really good, support is so important.

L: Yeah.

I: Okay, so Sophie tell me, what do you think makes your family special?

S: My family, I think it’s special cause no matter what we go through we are still together, nothing breaks us. For example, in the aftermath of our father’s death we were all heartbroken. Yes, we thought that it was wrong what happened to him, yes we did, but we didn’t allow that to break us. We decided that we would be together and then we would get through it together and, yeah. I love the fact that even at night, we would just get together and start talking about the random things, that you wouldn’t expect a family to be talking about. It is actually really nice.

I: Okay. So, now this is a good time for you to tell me an exciting story or a favourite memory you have about you and your family.

S: Okay, I vaguely remember this but when I was a child we used to gather around at night and make this Shamballa with beads and paper. We used to do that while just making stories. That’s one thing that I really remember and loved but these days we don’t do it that much but we still talk.

I: What about mum?

L: Okay, for me is is a memory that we still keep alive is like my husband used to sing a lot, the, the song from our mother tongue. And up to now I think we still sing.

I: Can you give us a small chorus?

L: So, yaani, we feel good, like that song, we we share together. And then like if they don’t understand the meaning, I will tell it, I will tell them the meaning.

I: Can you give us a small

L: Ni gani Sophie?

S: Mum? Okay.

L: Unakumbuka gani?

S: I’m very self-conscious about singing in front of people.

I: Okay, I’ll close our eyes, we’re not looking at you. The camera is off, Julian is not here. He is still on a bike looking for the house.

S: Okay, I’m not very sure about the ones in mother tongue but the one that I know he really loved to sing was By The Rivers of Babylon, yes.

I: Nice.

L: Yes.

S: Yeah, that song. Okay, do I sing it now?

L: Yeah, that’s the one.

I: If you want to.

S: Okay, I’m not so sure I know all the words but just take what I can give. Okay, (SINGING) *By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down, everywhere, when we remember Zion.* Okay.

I: Beautiful, good job!