Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Optatus Nchimbi (Part 1 of 6)

Role:	Information Network Assistant
Country of Origin:	Tanzania
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Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Lisa P. Nathan
	John McKay
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Optatus Nchimbi outlines his information management responsibilities at the ICTR. He explains the evolution of processes for archiving audio and visual materials collected and generated by the Tribunal. He comments on the importance of different levels of security and access to trial archives for Tribunal personnel that depend on role and seniority. In addition, speaking in his role as President of the ICTR Staff Association, Nchimbi describes the Association's purpose and discusses various tensions between staff and their supervisors.

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Part 1

00:00 **Lisa P. Nathan: So I'm going to begin by asking you your full name and what country you are from and what your role is here at the ICTR.**

00:10 Yeah, my name is Optatus Nchimbi. I'm from the United Republic of Tanzania. I have been working with ICTR for the past nine years. Initially I was recruited as records clerk but in course of time I was promoted to Information Network Assistant. Initially my role was to deal with the audiovisual material, including court exhibits or exhibits that was coming out of the court.

00:40 I was dealing with that once. Now later I was promoted to Information Network Assistant attached to a special software called TRIM; that's Tower Records and Information Management. It's a database electronic management tool.

00:57 **LPN: Thank you. So, to go back a bit of time, you have been here for quite a few years.**

01:04 Nine years, yeah.

01:06 **LPN: Can you recall where you were in the spring of 1994?**

01:11 In 1994, I was in school. I was in India doing my post-graduate diploma in Records Management and Archives Administration.

01:30 **LPN: Do you remember when you first heard about the events in Rwanda in '94?**

01:37 Not really, because I was outside the country. I was in India so in fact most of the information about Africa in India, it was very rare to get them. It was very rare.

01:51 **LPN: So can you recall when you first began? Tell me the story of how you first began working for the ICTR.**

02:01 Okay, in 1998 I was in Dar es Salaam. I was working as a librarian with the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam. Then I just f-, come across an adver-, advert asking for a p-, a posting of the R-, the Records Clerk. Because I thought it was within the sphere of my qualification, I decided to apply. And then I was called for an interview. I had a successful interview and I, I was offered the job in September 1999.

02:46 **Note: Gap in interview (Approx. 20 seconds in duration.) Gaps occurred due to interruptions during the interview, technical issues, or corrupted data files.**

02:55 **LPN: Can you describe what it was like when you first came to work here? What your responsibilities were?**

03:02 Yeah, at first when I came here there was no, there was no archives, especially audiovisual archives. It was not there. So in fact basically they brought me here in order to set up from the scratch. So I set up the archives, majoring in audiovisual material and to take care o-, of all the exhibits; court exhibits. Basically when I came here in 1999

there was only two forms of recording that was done in the audiovisual – I mean done on the audio cassettes.

03:34   And then all the other electronic form was just the diskettes. That way we started from the diskettes initially. We've been using the Word Perfect during those time. The issue of Microsoft Word was, was not even there. So we started with the Microsoft, I mean audio, Word Perfect. That was the first program we started to use here.

03:55   So we set up the database to make sure that all the information, all the material that has been recorded in the court are put properly. In fact when I came, all the audio tapes were just on the ground. So I started to sta-, to sort them by dates ri-, right from the beginning to make sure that everything is in place, to put them exact according to where they're supposed to be, to identify which case was that, and from which date.

04:21   So that's it. In fact during those, those days, when, when they've been recording the material, they will put just in the cassettes, audiocassettes. It lasts up to 60 minutes so for the day they ha-, they sometimes have about, about three cassettes in one language, and three cassettes in another language. Basically they, they are using three languages here. The first language is known as a floor language.

04:48   That's an original language of the speaker. And then there's the English language, and then the French language. English language and French language can have some distortion because it can be translated from the floor language. It depend on which language (__) is in the floor. So that was the, the (_____) of exactly what it was supposed.

05:07   So even the information that contained on the translated version, it was slight different from the actual, I mean the, the original, the original language. So we have to identify exactly what was it. There's some other problem that when they're recording, normally sometimes they did not even label. You can just find it's just a plain cassette; there's no label.

05:27   But if you listen to it then you start to guess okay this is this particular, particular case. So it was difficult in those, in those days especially to identify. So we have to play the cassette right from the beginning to see exactly who was there. To cross check you can just check the transcript and try to read and listen to what is happening so that you can iden-, identify this is from this particular case, yeah.

05:51   LPN: Can you describe the team that you were working with at that time?

05:55   At that time in fact I was alone in the audiovisual. I was alone. The rest were attached to the normal records. Mine was electronic records dealing with ex-, exhibits and audio-, audiovisual material. In fact we were recruited about four of us. The rest were just attached to the paper, paper form records. Yeah.

06:17   LPN: So ha-, has that changed now in that job?

06:20   Yeah, it has changed.

06:22   **LPN: Can you describe what the team is like now?**

06:24   The team now is composed of four, four persons in each chamber, all the documents assistants. They're about four in each, in each chamber. But now again, on my side we're just two, two of us; my, my, my supervisor who is a TRIM LAN administrator and I'm TRIM, in f-, I mean TRIM LAN assistant. So what's funny is that even my supervisor I trained him about the TRIM.

06:51   Because when he came here he was attached to EDP, Electronic Database Processes Unit; he was not aware of what TRIM is. But when the post was advertised at that level, he applied. But now he was supposed to learn TRIM, to know exactly what TRIM, what TRIM is all about. I, I was privileged to be trained here on the TRIM when it was first ins-, I mean, installed.

07:15   We had a guy from, a gentleman from Kenya who came to install TRIM right from the scratch. So I was working with him right from the beginning, to take him through the process to see exactly what features should be captured in the system. So we worked on the ground from just day one. So later then we got a consultant from Australia who trained us on how to use the software.

07:39   So initially we were only three of us; one lady from Kenya by the name (_____) who was in charge of the judicial records. And then that guy from Kenya, (_____) who is, who started from the scratch to, I mean to install TRIM right from scratch. So in the course of process we learn how TRIM is. So we, initially I, I was just (_____) that I'm supposed to be a trainer to train other people on how to use the software.

08:06   So right from that point I started to take higher responsibilities of training everybody about the TRIM. So my duty was basically to install TRIM, to train them and if there is any update we just use to update them to higher version. When we started TRIM initially, we started with software called TRIM Captura that was first version. And then we moved to TRIM Context Version Five.

08:30   And then in recent years we get a consultant from, from Uganda to update the version. We have updated the version but theoretically not prac-, practically. It's now TRIM Version Six but we're still using TRIM version Five. Yeah.

08:46   **LPN: So for your work with TRIM and as you've tried to learn about TRIM and how it works with the records that you have, what are some of the challenges that you have found there?**

09:02   My, the challenges about the system is in fact when you want to configure some-, a person in the system, you should get a permission from the supervisor to know exactly what security level you should give to that person. And basically we have got about six security levels.

09:22   The le-, levels known as unclassified security level, all the documents which is, which are open to everybody. And those documents you can even find them on the website. The second security level is called confidential security level – this can be accessed by a person with, a person who access, who has the confidential security level, can access also the unclassified one. That is public.

09:49   And then level number three is strictly confidential. So a person with strictly confidential can have access to the rest of the, the two but the person with the unclassified only cannot have access to the rest of the documents. And then the fourth one is called ex parte prosecution; document filed by the Prosecutor they don't want the defense to see.

10:14   And then another one we have is ex parte defense; document by, filed by the defense and they don't want to share with the Prosecutor. And the last level is called non ex parte security level. This is the highest security level. So a person with non ex parte can access everything in the system.

10:35   LPN: And what would be examples of the roles of those people who could access everything?

10:41   The roles, most of them are the judges – judges, the Registrar, and those who are working in the judicial records and archives unit, because they're the persons who used to put them in the system. So they have access to those records.