



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Justine Ndongo-Keller (Part 4 of 13)



Role:	Chief of Language Services
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	8 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Donald J Horowitz Lisa P. Nathan
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Justine Ndongo-Keller describes various roles within the Language Services Department at the ICTR, clarifying differences among interpreters, translators and reviewers. She stresses the importance of effective, high-quality translation for the Tribunal's overall success, as well as the significance of review in the translation process. An original member of the language services team, Ndongo-Keller also provides a perspective on the department's evolution. She comments on the personal toll to individuals in language services from extensive exposure to materials about the genocide.

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Part 4

00:00 Donald J Horowitz: So, we had you in Kigali and then you, you came to Arusha.

00:06 Yes.

00:07 DJH: And in Arusha, what was, what was your role? What were you doing?

00:12 Basically working in the courtrooms, you know, interpreting during the hearings on the court sessions and continuing with translation as well. Now, we were working on the simultaneous mode for French and English and our colleagues with the Kinyarwanda had to work on the consecutive mode because you – we, we have to understand that these are colleagues that were not trained to be a translator in the profession of translation and interpretation.

00:44 They were, I don't know how they were selected because I met them, you know, when I got to Kigali so they had to like sit by the witness, listen to what he had to say in Kinyarwanda, give it back to us into French and then we will be interpreting, you know, to the judges and the defense in, in English.

01:06 DJH: Did there come a time when the people who were working in the Rwanda language, or you got to give training to people or they were specially trained to become interpreters?

01:18 Then we were working on the consecutive mode, and the, the presiding judge at the time was becoming a bit restless because it was time's ticking, you know. It was taking too much time. The witness would speak, you know, then he will have to be consecutively interpreted into English or French. It was taking so much time that, you know, he began to say these people needed some training.

01:53 Not because they were not good interpreters. The problem is they had not had the proper training. So we happen at that time, our chief Joel Kenneth had left and was replaced by a gentleman called (_____) from the UN, from the headquarters from New York. So he came and then we started discussing, "How do we improve?" You know, because many a time we had to be called, you know, in the courtroom.

02:26 The judge was not happy because it was too slow. It was, something has to be done. Then, he came up with the idea of training, this training. So I happen to be a trainer because I had been at the school of translation and interpretation in Buea, so he asked me if I could do the training.

02:48 And at the time, he had, we had, he had brought on board a gentleman by the name of (_____), a Rwandese, you know, so a gentleman from Rwanda working into French from English. So he had the Kinyarwanda language, so he was on board.

- 03:09 So we started the training. Myself, I was heading the training unit with a colleague that had been teaching in the school of translation in Cameroon in Buea by the name of (_____) and (_____).
- 03:26 So, the first trip we went to Kigali was myself, (_____), a lady from France, and (_____), a gentleman from Rwanda (_____). We selected a few candidates then we started the training on the spot in Kigali. Then we tested them. We tested them not for them to come here and start working but to come here to Arusha and be trained again.
- 03:59 So we were working like from Monday to Friday, and Saturday and Sunday we'll do the training. So we trained these two people. So they were the first to go into the courtroom and work into the simultaneous mode, but there were only two of them so they could only service one courtroom.
- 04:16 And then we needed even a third one to be with them in court because normally teams are, you know, each booth should have at least three people, not two because the shift are 30 minutes each.
- 04:26 DJH: Ah, so they go 30 minutes each and then they rest . . .**
- 04:28 And then they would rest and somebody else takes over.
- 04:31 DJH: Okay.**
- 04:32 And then you're supposed to do two session, then you rest. Two session: one session is like from Nine to Twelve, and then the, the second session will start like from Two to Five or Three to Six; then the next morning you're supposed to rest.
- 04:47 DJH: And then you come the next (_____) . . .**
- 04:48 And then you come the next afternoon. So after each two session, you rest for one session. It's a UN rule for interpreters.
- 04:56 DJH: Is that true in both simultaneous and, and consecutive?**
- 05:01 Yes. Yes.
- 05:02 DJH: Okay. (___).**
- 05:04 So, we had these two then we, when we brought them on board, we went back to Kigali again, tested some people, trained them then, I believe if my memory does not fail me, we managed to have about, to get about six of them this time. Now, we could – we brought them here. The, there's a room downstairs, the S355 it was basically, you know, put in place for that training.

- 05:37 Even right to this time, when they want to use that room they ask for me, for my permission. I mean, “Justine could we . . . ?” I say because we asked, you know, for that room to do the training. So we trained them. And then we did four such of training session, and now we have a team of 12, 13 Kinyarwanda interpreters translators.
- 06:02 In between, we brought in a gentleman that used to be a lawyer in Rwanda by the name of (_____), a second one called (_____), a teacher in a university in, in Rwanda who came and were doing translation and re-, revising whatever these people were translating because they had this legal background that, yeah.