



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Justine Ndongo-Keller (Part 8 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.

The transcript of Part 8 begins on the following page.

Part 8

- 00:00 **Donald J Horowitz: You obviously are speaking for, for yourself, but you also have colleagues here, and I'm sure some of them have talked to you and you don't have to use their names. Can you tell us what patterns or the kinds of examples that, that others may have had with respect to this?**
- 00:20 I have to say that most of the time, those who were in a, in a family setting, it was a bit easier for them. Those who were alone, be them, they women or men, it was a bit more difficult for them. When my, a cousin of mine joined me with my two girls, it was easier for me because I could go home to, to my family, you know, and talk and some weekends we'll leave, you know, just go to some place, sit and you know, in a lodge or in a place.
- 01:01 I believe that some people were affected in a way – you know, you, you may be affected and you don't know that it affects you, you see. Nobody will come openly and tell you that, "Justine, you know what I heard yesterday," but I know that women were very affected. The women colleagues were affected by the, the, the narration, the stories narrated about rape, you know.
- 01:43 I remember one day sitting in a booth with a colleague, and she just started crying, you know. This woman was describing how she was raped and then I just saw tears and we all had to leave, you know, and, and men were, had sit there and they were working. But again, that same colleague, a year later she will sit and hear about rape and she will be there, interpreting. No more tears, no more – just repeating what she heard.
- 02:17 **DJH: The numb stage that you were talking about.**
- 02:18 Yes, the numb stage, yes. The numb stage. We all went through that at one stage or another.
- 02:26 **DJH: And what happens past the numb stage?**
- 02:31 Past the numb stage, you continue to live. As I said, you don't know how it affects you but I – because I try to reflect on it, I know that at one point it comes out some way, somehow. I don't know how it will come out as far as I'm concerned, or maybe it has affected some other people already.
- 02:56 But what was good was that at least about two years ago, some people were brought here. We went for a, a group, you know.
- 03:08 **DJH: Group therapy. Yes.**
- 03:09 Group therapy where people could talk, you know, just air it, you know. Remove it. Let it come out. Just to talk how it affected them.

- 03:20 DJH: And they were professionals who . . .**
- 03:21 Yes, three professionals came from Nairobi that listened. But then again, people will not talk publicly, you know. They want to have a one-to-one session with who, whoever is there and then you will know exactly what will transpire. But at least they, they, they could – things like breathing, how you could breath, you know, just to de-stress, you know, because the stress was too much.
- 03:52 To de-stress, you know, sleeping disorders, you know. These are the type of thing. You go home. You don't sleep. You don't know why and this is not a problem that you, you ha-, you've been having. You know, how to de-stress, how to try to sleep, et cetera, et cetera.
- 04:08 I don't want to touch on the issue of alcohol because some drink, but I don't know if it's related to what they've been seeing or hearing. I don't know if they had that problem before coming here, you know, so I don't know.
- 04:28 DJH: Yeah. And had you – and I don't mean just you – had somebody in authority in the, in the language section had asked for that help that came or did, did the superiors, the, the people above decide, you know, those people, the interpreters (____) . . . ?**
- 04:49 I really do not know how it came about. It wasn't only for us. It was for the whole tribunal.
- 04:54 DJH: Ah, okay.**
- 04:54 Yeah, it was for the whole tribunal. I don't know how it came about.
- 04:58 DJH: So they had different sessions.**
- 05:00 Different session, yeah, went into that group therapy, you know, the people who listen to them.
- 05:05 DJH: Was it just one session at that time with the, with the inter-, with your . . .**
- 05:08 Yes. We went to, there's a lodge not too far from here called (____). We were there for three days.
- 05:15 DJH: Oh, okay. So it was quite a long . . .**
- 05:17 Yeah, it was.
- 05:18 DJH: Okay. (____) . . .**
- 05:18 We were there for three days, then there was another session just to go somewhere and relax, you know, stay with colleagues and joke about anything, do some games, you know, yeah. We had two such sessions.

- 05:30 **DJH: Yeah. Two such sessions.**
- 05:32 Mm-hmm.
- 05:32 **DJH: And did that help you to sha-, when they were gone? The people, the interpreters, the (____) . . .**
- 05:39 Yeah, it did help a lot. Yeah.
- 05:40 **DJH: . . . share, I mean, not just individually but – so they felt a little more open with each other?**
- 05:44 Yeah, it did help, yeah, it did help.
- 05:48 **DJH: Has it lasted, do you think or . . .**
- 05:50 Yeah, I believe.
- 05:51 **DJH: Have there been more, or just that?**
- 05:53 No, we only had that one.
- 05:55 **DJH: Okay. Now I heard the other day that last year, there was a permanent psychologist or person who was brought on staff. (____) . . .**
- 06:06 No, he's here. Yeah, he's here now, yeah.
- 06:08 **DJH: And is, is, has that person been made available to . . . ?**
- 06:15 He is. The way I see it and there's an e-bulletin now that, bulletin that he sends, you know, on several issue, career development, alcohol, how to deal with it and blah blah. It's a weekly, you know. He sends it, he writes it, sends it to us for revision, we revise it for him and then it goes out, yeah it's readily available.
- 06:36 **DJH: (____), if somebody on your staff for example is having problems, you know, as you described, could that person seek this, this, I don't know, psychologist, I'll call it? (____) . . .**
- 06:51 I should think so, yeah. Yes.
- 06:52 **DJH: Okay. And could get maybe some one-on-one time with that person?**
- 06:57 I sh-, yeah.
- 06:58 **DJH: You think so?**
- 06:59 Mm-hmm. Definitely.

- 07:00** DJH: Do you know, again without using names, do you know if any of your staff has done, has taken advantage of that or has used that?
- 07:07 N-, no.
- 07:10** DJH: They wouldn't have to tell you if they (____) . . .
- 07:12 Yeah, yeah. But I would go if, I see him if I had a problem. If I wanted to talk or, you know, yeah I would do that.
- 07:18** DJH: Do you know what his qualifications are? I mean, has that been . . . ?
- 07:23 He did. He did send something. I don't, it's, it's, it's, it was available to us. I don't, I cannot tell you exactly what, you know, but I know that he's been working such settings before.
- 07:35** DJH: Is he African or . . .
- 07:36 He's from Latin America.
- 07:39** DJH: From Latin America?
- 07:40 Yeah, mm-hmm.
- 07:40** DJH: Okay.
- 07:42 He's called Jorge Sierralta.
- 07:45** DJH: Okay.
- 07:45 Yeah.