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INTERVIEW WITH SIMON SILOANE.

Dale McKinley (DM): Ok, can you just tell us your name, please?

Simon Siloane (SS): Simon Siloane.

DM: Simon.

SS: Ja.

DM: Ok thank you Simon. Simon I just want to very quickly explain what we are trying, what we want to do is to have a conversation with you. It's not so much me asking all sorts of questions but a conversation about life in this community particularly since 1994.

SS: No, I don't see any changes.

DM: Ok, I am going to ask ... that's what we are going to talk about. Ok Simon, can you first tell us what the nature of your disability is?

SS: No, I was not born like this, it started when I was 10 years old and it's not an accident.

DM: And how old are you Simon?

SS: I am 43. I was born in 1964.

DM: 43, 1964, ok. Can you tell us a little bit about before 1994, before the elections and Mandela becoming president and everything? How was life for you here as a disabled person in this community, during the apartheid days?

SS: To me, I didn't see any important changes.

DM: No, I am not asking about the changes. I am asking about what was life like pre1994, in the apartheid days? What was it like, ja?

SS: For me, I don't see difference.

DM: No difference at all. So can you say tell us for you ... ok what I am trying to, we are trying to do is ... I need you to tell us a story about what life was like not whether there was a difference or no difference. What was daily life like ... for him to get around - transportation, facilities, schooling, all of these kinds of issues?

SS: Ok, I used a bicycle to school. Even if I was going to play I was using a bicycle and even now I am still using it. I have never used a wheelchair.

Emmanuel Mokgoga (EM - intepreter): Where did you go to school?

SS: I started my primary at Setlopong.

DM: Where is that?

EM: That side when we are going to where I am staying.

DM: How far is it for you to go? How many kilometers?

SS: I think is five kilometers.

DM: And you ride your bicycle there everyday?

SS: Yes.

DM: When you were at school, was it easier for you to walk when you were younger or it got worse when you grew up?

SS: It was better when I was growing ... to go to school, now is becoming harder.

DM: Ok when you were at school, what were your parents doing, what did they do for a living?

SS: My father was working.

DM: What work did your father do?

SS: He was working at the hospital in the kitchen.

DM: Ok can I ask you prior to 1994 when you were a teenager, a kid and then young man, were there any services provided for you from the government?

SS: I have never received anything from the government. I received disability grant in 1998.

DM: 1998 you started receiving disability pension, Ok. When you were at school what did you want be when you grew up? What did you want to do?

SS: I wanted to become a social worker.

DM: A social worker.

EM: Ja, I just want to ask him because as far as I know he did manage to pass standard 10, so what were you doing with your standard 10?

SS: I am not doing anything; I am just sitting with it.

EM: What would you like to be doing?

SS: If I was working and earning money which I can make the living in my family.

EM: Ok why did you want to do social work?

SS: What?

EM: Why did you want to become a social worker?

SS: I was encouraged by the subject I was doing.

DM: Ok can I ask you, you did standard 10; you went to school. Were there no opportunities for you to get work or did you feel discriminated against as a disabled person to get a work or to do what you wanted to do?

SS: I can do anything. I managed to go to school but I did not get the chance to go to tertiary because my parents stopped me not to go to tertiary due to financial difficulties.

DM: He said earlier that he has seen no changes since 1994. Has he seen that there have been changes in people's attitudes/from government, towards disabled people or nothing?

SS: The change that I can see now is that they (disabled) receive disability grant but they don't get jobs which means they are still discriminated.

EM: Tell me when you were a youngster before 1994, when you heard people talking about liberation and the struggle and so forth, what did you expect to happen after the elections?

SS: What I understood was that there was going to be democracy even to us disabled people; services will reach us and things like jobs and all sorts of things. I thought we were going to be recognised.

DM: I just ask out of interest ... have you voted in any elections?

SS: Yes.

DM: Ok, so you participated in the political?

SS: Yes, I am participating.

DM: When the elections came how did you feel personally? Were you happy?

SS: Yes I was happy and I even voted.

DM: So can you, even just not necessarily because you are disabled person but just as a citizen as a normal individual, how do you see things of the 1990s and over the last few years in terms of the services in the community and the role of the government ... has it become better or do you think nothing has changed?

SS: There is service delivery but it coming slowly and according to me I think it discriminates.

DM: Do you think they should be faster, do you expect; I mean I see you have electricity here but no other services.

SS: They should be faster and we should be covered because houses are coming but we don't get them because of our disability.

DM: So this house here is the house that you and your family built for yourselves?

SS: Yes.

DM: Ok, no houses in this area have built by the government?

SS: Some of them have been built by the government.

DM: Do you have any ... what do you think about your local counsellor?

SS: I have been pressurising him, going with him to the meetings but when coming to service delivery I don't get them. And I have been filling forms and they told me that my house has been issued but I have never got it.

DM: So do you feel that you have been let down by your representative, your local counselor?

SS: Yes, because he keeps saying that houses are coming but when they should be built for us instead they go to someone else.

DM: What do you think about the arrival of the mines in the community in the late 1990s and now we have Modikwe and these other mines? Has it made any difference for you and your family and what do you think?

SS: The mines have not brought any important things to me and we were the first 18 to choose the directors. Those directors hired people and they didn't count us because of our disability. We even filled in the forms and I asked them where they can put us because we are disabled, they answered me by saying our time will come. It's been five years now and nothing has been done so we are still waiting for that time.

DM: And, do you, can you identify any other thing that results ... I mean so those are the things that they haven't done but the things they have done ... have they been good or bad for you and the community do you think?

SS: I think they have done bad things.

DM: Bad, what kind of bad things?

SS: We are left out; we were supposed to be working in the mine. There are simple jobs in the storeroom that we can work.

DM: Why do you think ... the mine is the main industry here in this area right, you know it's the big thing ... Why do you think they act the way they do... why do you think they do these kinds of things, they don't hire local people, they don't make their promises to the community?

SS: I don't know the reason because when the mine started they said first preference will be given to the local people but to my surprises there are many people from different places.

EM: I just want to know who made that promises?

SS: Simon Kgwete is the one we meet at the meeting at school and he is the one who made those promises before we can start to vote for the directors.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): And then I want to ask you, when you were a child what was your favourite thing to do?

SS: (Laughing) I just wanted to be employed as a social worker at the hospital.

AV: Ok. But I mean not what you wanted to become but when you were a child what did you enjoy doing, like maybe it was a game playing with your friends or going swimming?

SS: When I was young, I used to love soccer.

AV: Tell us a little about it?

SS: (laughing) What should I tell you? Should I tell you about soccer?

EM: Yes, tell us a little about local teams and when they were playing, which ones were you enjoying?

SS: I used to be a coach for Crossing White Movers here at home in 1993. I took many tournaments with the team, two at Mpuru, another two at Mogatele and one at Diphale, all of them taking position one.

DM: Ok why did you stop?

SS: I stopped in 1995 because we were struggling with the transport.

AV: Do you still go and watch the games?

SS: Yes, I watch their games sometimes.

AV: And when...now that you are no longer involved in soccer, what is your favourite thing to do?

SS: At the moment I'm busy attending church.

AV: So church is the main thing in your life at the moment?

SS: Yes.

AV: Have you felt in this community, have people accepted you even though, I mean you don't move quickly as everyone else or because you are disabled, do you find it accepted by the other people in the community?

SS: Yes, I've been accepted and everyone likes me. I don't even remember making something wrong to anybody.

DM: So I want to go back to one of the first things you have said, I mean that I asked you about your expectations, what did you expect after 1994. You know in the new South Africa, Mandela becomes president, the ANC is in power, liberation movement has won ... we are going to think life is going to be good and everything else, (but) why if you are saying that things haven't changed very much? Why does he think that is, why does he think things have not changed, not that they haven't changed but why have they not been changed?

SS: I don't know exactly what it is because our government is available and is delivering somehow. From Mandela I think the ANC government is good but people in the local government are the ones who are corrupt.

DM: So do you think that the national government and the provisional government in Limpopo are doing things ok and it is the local government who's got a problem?

SS: The national and the provisional government are doing things just fine; the problem lies with the local municipality.

DM: That's where the problem lies, ok. What kinds of things Simon would you like to see happening in the next five years, in the next while ... the things you would like to see happening for yourself, your family and the community?

SS: I think if I can get a job and be able to live with my family and my two children which they are not available now. For my community, they should provide facilities so that the community as a whole can participate. They should build things like halls and get the community to participate in certain projects.

DM: Ok so do you think it's going to be - those things are going to happen - because government and the private, in this case the mine, are going to do it? In other words, my question was who is going to make those things happen? Ja, those changes, those good things ... is it government or what role can the community play? I think there is clearly a lot of people who are skilled, intelligent they are not doing much of things ... who is it to make these changes? What does Simon think?

SS: Things that can happen quickly is from the mine because it is situated here, it should be responsible for services delivery of this community.

DM: ... Simon if you look at the last 13 years, since 1994, what score card would you give the government if you were looking at 1-10, 1 being the worst, 10 being the best? What score card would you give the government in terms of its performance and things that have changed or not changed?

SS: I think I'm happy.

DM: He can be happy but where does he think they are now?

SS: I think we are still down, I can give them somewhere around 4 and 5

AV: And yourself right now is there anything that you are looking for, like something that, like you know besides the World Cup in 2010, but for me I am looking forward to the world cup in 2010, but what are the things that you are looking for, like what you are hoping for the future?

SS: There is nothing much that I am looking for; even the 2010 World Cup I think it can not benefit me.

AV: You have children?

SS: Yes.

AV: How many children do you have?

SS: Two.

AV: Two, how old are they?

SS: What?

AV: How old are your children?

SS: One is seven years and the other one is four months old.

AV: For your children, what are you hoping for?

SS: If they can have a better future and get educated so that they can take care of me.

AV: Do you think that the way to go forward in life is education, is that what you are saying, is that the most important thing for your children?

SS: I wish it could be in that way but as you can see there is no money, I am just making my living on 870 disability grant.

AV: Do you think that the education facilities that are available for your children today are better than the ones that were available for you when you were growing up?

SS: For now I think it's the same. Its just that I have attended the local schools travelling long ways and even now they are still travelling those long journeys to school.

AV: Is it the same school ... are your kids going to the same school that you went to?

SS: Yes.

DM: Would you like to see a different kind of leadership in the community at local government from the present one that has been there since 1994?

SS: Political leadership always talks about service delivery but I don't see these happening to our community, so there should be changes.

DM: One of the things that we would be interested to know from Simon ...like in the rural communities ... as opposed to let's say Soweto in the townships ... here it's very difficult to get information about the mine, information about local government, information about things that will help you in life. What kind of information does Simon think he needs both as a disabled person but in his family that might be able to be used well, to do things for the community or to find out things that they need to find out?

SS: I wish if I can get a job at the local government or municipality. Even at the mine if I can get the information that they can call me to come and work I can do the job instead. We have been filling in forms but I don't know where they ended up.

DM: One of the last questions we have ... where does ... Simon where do you think that things are headed for in South Africa? Do you see good things in the future ... as you are looking forward to things ... or maybe not so nice ... you know, how, when you look at your future and the future of your children, what do you see?

SS: I think my children will end up like me because I don't have money to further their education. And the money that I receive for disability grant is very little for us to live better.

DM: Let me just get that clear ... what you are saying Simon is that the future doesn't look so good ...?

SS: Ja, for me I think it doesn't look good.

DM: The one last thing we wanted to ask is that ... is there anything Simon that you would want to say to us and say to you know here ... this is going to this video and these recordings are going to be seen by quite a lot of people, they are going to read them maybe its some government people, researchers ... is there anything that he thinks that they should know about himself, about this community that we haven't talked about?

SS: I would be happy if they can tell the world that all I need is a simple job so that I can feed my family.

DM: Thank you very much Simon. Thanks.

SS: Thanks.
