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## **INTERVIEW WITH GABRIEL MASHAKHALE**

**Dale Mckinley (DM):** Can you just tell us your name

**Gabriel Mashakhale (GM):** My name is Gabriel Mashakhale

**DM:** Gabriel, what is it that you do in this community?

**GM:** I was on the ward committee for about 5 years until last year.

**DM:** And now?

**GM:** And now I'm not.

**DM:** And you are also a pastor?

**GM:** Yes, I'm a pastor.

**DM:** And what church is that with?

**GM:** My church is Jerusalem's Apostolic, I use the drums.

**DM:** How long have you lived here in this community?

**GM:** From 1998.

**DM:** 1998 it's been 9 years?

**GM:** Yes.

**DM:** Thank you for talking to us. As I think I explained earlier, we are going to ask you some general questions and also about your personal life and life in the community. It's more of a conversation as opposed to a formal interview.

**GM:** Okay

**DM:** Before you arrived in this community, where were you living?

**GM:** In Vereeniging.

**DM:** By the way, feel free to answer in Sotho, you don't have to answer in English. Okay, so you were living in Vereeniging. What were you doing there?

**GM:** I was working there, painting job in the council.

**DM:** How long have you lived there in that community?

**GM:** I worked for the council for 18 years.

**DM:** So that was your home for a long time?

**GM:** Yes and my father is staying there.

**DM:** Why did you move to this community?

**GM:** I came here to live with my grandmother.

**DM:** You have a family in this area?

**GM:** Yes.

**DM:** Is it your original family area here...

**GM:** Yes only my grandmother.

**DM:** Just to go back, this project is particularly interested in things since 1994, so what we want to get here is your opinion or perspectives on life during the last 14 to 15 years back. Not only in Rammolutsi, but your life in general.

**GM:** Since 1994 it was little bit better for me because I have faced those challenges before 1994, so now life is a little bit better than before.

**DM:** What kind of challenges did you face before 1994? What was life like for you then as a worker in the Vaal?

**GM:** It was hard. We were forced to do things against our will, because of the apartheid – we could do nothing without the authority of the person (like a supervisor) in charge. And if you were not married you couldn't get a place of your own to stay. That was a big problem to be sorted then that is the part of problem that existed.

**DM:** Okay a lot of it obviously in those apartheid years was around racial discrimination because you were a black man?

**GM:** That was a part of apartheid

**DM:** How was it working for that municipality? How was the working condition for you?

**GM:** It was very difficult before, but after 1989 things became better.

**DM:** In 1989 why did things start changing?

**GM:** I joined SAMWU (union)

**DM:** And things became a little better because you negotiated? And were you politically involved because there were lots of things going on in the Vaal then?

**GM:** I was just part of the church and also I just joined SAMWU.

**DM:** Tell us more about your family background. Where did you grow up?

**GM:** I was brought up by my step mother - I never knew my real mother. I never went to school. Sisters of the Roman church, they were the ones who bought me clothes.

**DM:** That's where you grew up, In Sharpeville?

**GM:** Yes. I had jobs at local shops in the area. I started working at ISCOR section, learning how to paint. I worked there until I got married. I was found by some 'father' who lived in Vanderbijlpark section, Bophelong, helped me till I found my feet.

**DM:** Now you are a pastor in the Apostolic member and you mentioned that Catholic sisters helped you. So you've been involved in the church from a very early age and you always have been?

**GM:** Yes.

**DM:** After 1994 elections happened, as someone who had been working in the Vaal – an area that was very 'hot' - how did that make you feel?

**GM:** That was very hard, because I remember the Boipatong Massacre; we were at work when it happened. When the people came and started burning up tyres etc, they chased us away from our work. They even burnt people, and were taking the equipment of the municipality and were chasing us away.

**DM:** How did that make you feel as a person?

**GM:** I was very scared.

**DM:** When the political changes happened, when the elections happened - how were you feeling at that time, when ANC came into government?

**GM:** After the elections, things were a little bit better, but there was no hope that things would be like they are now. The situation was very critical, but I did not hope that the situation would be like this (i.e. as it is today)

**D.M:** I heard you mentioned Inkatha. There was a lot of fighting there at that time ... so, did you just leave yourself out of all those things?

**G.M:** I was afraid, because sometimes in the morning when we went to work we saw people dead on the street. That was the part of Inkatha and that also made me afraid.

**DM:** It is interesting because what you saying is that for you 1994 was almost like a relief because things in the Vaal area was very bad. So, what did you expect was going to happen after the elections?

**GM:** I thought after the elections there was going to be a war like what is happening now in Iraq.

**DM:** So, you were expecting there to be more fighting after the ANC came to power. And what happened in that area after the elections in 1994?

**GM:** After the elections I saw some changes that are coming .... unlike before there were a lot of changes.

**DM:** What kind of changes were those?

**GM:** I had access to go wherever I want – for example if you wanted to go to Klerksdorp someone would demand your ID. Now if I want to go stay in Klerksdorp or somewhere like that, I am free to do so without asking someone's permission.

**DM:** And what about economic conditions? After 1994, did you start experiencing different working conditions etc?

**GM:** At least the salaries became a little bit better

**DM:** As a municipal worker going into the townships there in 1995/96, how did you think that the new government would deliver the promises in townships that it was saying to the people?

**GM:** There was a service delivery but it was very, very slow.

**DM:** And what did that make you feel like as a municipal worker ... the slow service delivery?

**GM:** The situation in cities versus the locations was different because in the cities the service delivery was a little bit faster than in the locations.

**DM:** Were you satisfied? How did you feel about the people who were in positions of political power - in 1995 -1998 in those areas?

**GM:** The political parties were a little bit better then because they were intending to keep the service delivery (even if there was a difference between the cities and the location). But these ones now are only watching for their pockets.

**DM:** You said, earlier that you came to Rammolutsi in 1998. What made you move here? Was it your grandmother?

**GM:** I only moved to Free State just to improve my life, because of the situation in the Vaal, and to experience life here.

**DM:** When you say the situation, what do you mean? What were you trying to get away from ... what is the situation you are talking about?

**GM:** The life in Vereeniging was a little bit more expensive than here.

**DM:** When you arrived here what did you think?

**GM:** When I arrived here, life was very difficult in the informal settlement. There was no water and there was nothing like lights/electricity. So we tried to combine as people staying in the informal settlement and collect some R2, at least so that a tap can be installed and we can get some water.

**DM:** When you moved here did live in this place where you are living now or was it someplace else?

**GM:** It was on the other side – the informal settlement there.

**DM:** And did you erect a shack? You made it yourself?

**GM:** Yes, I built a shack.

**DM:** How did you live? Were you working or did you look for work?

**GM:** No, I was sick. Since 1998 I haven't got any formal work. I made a request for a sick pension

**DM:** What kind of illness did you have at that point?

**GM:** I have 7 operations on my body and my feet are swollen..

**DM:** When you left your job did you get any disability payout or grant of any sort?

**GM:** Yes, I am still getting the disability grant from the place where I worked, monthly.

**DM:** How as it for you to come from Vereeniging – where you had a job and lived in a house I assume – to Rammolutsi where you live in a shack. What was that like for you, what did it make you feel like?

**GM:** Because that was my decision. I had to live my own life since I was married, even though it was very hard. The community was very good to live with and I used to lead them on some occasions, I used to gather people to meetings where we would discuss our problems and try to make things better.

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