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INTERVIEW WITH JANUARY MONOKAME

Dale McKinley (DM): First of all, thank you very much for talking with us.
January Monokame (JM): Thanks.

DM: Can you, for the record, state your full names please?
JM: My name is January Monokame.

DM: January, how long have you been living in Rammolutsi?
JM: I have 22 years staying Rammolutsi.

DM: Do you have a family?
JM: Yes I do.

DM: How many children ... how big is the family?
JM: In the house we are four.

DM: Ok, first we want to explain that we want to do a personal history before we talk about the place here
(*Explanation given*)

DM: 22 years ago when you came here to Rammolutsi what were you doing here?
JM: I was working at the farms at that time.

DM: What were you doing on the farms?
JM: I used to drive a tractor.

DM: Was that farm close to Rammolutsi?
JM: It was far, it is about 13 kilometres away.

DM: Were you living on the farm or in Rammolutsi?
JM: I was living in the farm.

DM: Can you just tell us what life was like on that farm when you were working there?
JM: It was a difficult life.

DM: Why was it so difficult?

JM: It was difficult because there were no shops around. Like when you have money and you want to buy something for your kids that shops are far away.

DM: How was it to work on that farm in terms of the relations with the farmer?

JM: We had a good relationship.

DM: Did you have a house there with water and electricity?

JM: No I used to stay in a ground house.

DM: A ground house? What is that?

Interpreter: Like a house they make with bricks and sand ... they started building their own house.

DM: Was your family there ... did your father work on the farm before ... how long did you stay on that farm?

JM: I stayed 8 years there. When I was staying on that farm it had been a long time that my parents had passed away.

DM: What made you leave the farm, why did you leave?

JM: It was because of money and struggle.

DM: Can you explain what do you mean by money ... not making enough ...and struggle?

JM: The money was little and also when our children were sick there was no transport to bring them to the doctors .. we would have to hire transport to bring them

DM: When you were working on the farm how much money were you paid?

JM: R250 per month.

DM: When you left the farm where did you come, did you come straight here to Rammolutsi?

JM: I came here straight.

DM: What year was it?

JM: 1992.

DM: Where did you move to? Did you come to the informal settlement? How did you live here in Rammolutsi?

JM: I used to stay at the informal settlement.

DM: So you built your own mukuku?

JM: Yes I built my own.

DM: How long did you stay there, at that place?

JM: I stayed almost four months, after the fifth month I got my own place.

DM: After five months you got your own place?

JM: Yes I found my own place.

DM: Another mukhukhu or a house?

JM: It was a mukuku. Even now I'm still staying in the mukuku.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): But was it on a stand?

JM: Yes, on a stand

DM: You came here back in 1992. At that point things were beginning to change ... the political things in 1993/94. What were you expecting that you were going to have here .. in terms of your life in Rammolutsi with those changes?

JM: My aim was to work for the government, that was my intention.

DM: Can you tell us what kind of work did you find or were you able to find when you came?

JM: I wanted to work with water, especially with the pipes.

DM: Why?

JM: I wanted to fix the leaking pipes.

DM: Did you apply for a job with the municipality?

JM: Yes I did.

DM: And what happened?

JM: They gave the job and I worked from 1994 to 2001.

DM: You were a municipal employee for seven years?

JM: Yes.

DM: Tell us how it was to work for the municipality in terms of the conditions of employment and working for the new municipality after 1994?

JM: It was a bit difficult because we got the job when there was a strike ... there was a strike when we started working.

DM: What was that strike about?

JM: The municipal workers wanted a salary increase.

DM: What was your basic salary as a worker at the time?

JM: It was R750 a month.

AV: So you were on contract?

JM: Yes it was something like that.

AV: How did the other workers treat you because you came in while others were striking?

JM: They were treating me good, because we were all hired as temporary workers. The permanent workers for the municipality were staying at home and toyi-toying.

DM: So as a temporary worker did you join the strike?

JM: No, I couldn't because I was only appointed on a piece job basis.

DM: What happened as a result of the strike ... did conditions and salaries improve?

JM: Yes, the payment was increased. It was in 1996 and we managed to get R2400.00.

DM: When you say they increased the salaries ... was it for the full time or part time workers?

JM: The municipality increased the salaries of all the workers.

DM: How did that make you feel to go from R750 to R2400? ... that's a good increase.

JM: It was better because our money had been raised.

AV: Did they still keep you on contract or was it permanent?

JM: I was permanent by that time.

DM: What kind of work did you do for the municipality for the next few years until you stop working there?

JM: Even now where I am working, I'm working for my pension.

DM: In the 1990s, were you working at this rubbish dump site or you were doing other kinds of work for the municipality?

JM: I was doing other jobs of the municipality in town.

DM: As a municipal worker how do you think the relationship was between the municipality and the community?

JM: It was bad and people were struggling a lot. Most of the people were staying at the backyards in the old location ... they did not have their own stand and things were mixed up.

DM: Can you give us an example of what kinds of bad things were there in the community?

JM: In such a small yard like we have here in Rammolutsi, up to twenty people were staying, sharing the very same yard.

DM: How did you feel about the programmes of the municipality to deliver services to the community?

JM: The services were of poor quality but now it has turned out to be better.

DM: When did things start to change?

JM: From 2001 when our municipality was joined together with Kroonstad municipality.

AV: So you became part of the bigger municipality?

JM: Yes.

DM: What kind of programmes after that did they start implementing in terms of service delivery?

JM: To build the RDP houses ,give some people stands and build new schools.

DM: What about water and electricity?

JM: Electricity was implemented between 1995-1997 but we experience power failures regularly and it gives us lots of problems.

DM: Did you as a municipal worker ... were you satisfied during that time you were doing this kind of work ... with the working conditions of the municipality and what you were making?

JM: I was satisfied because there was nothing I can do.

DM: So when did you start working at this rubbish dump?

JM: I started in 2001.

DM: We understand that there was an old rubbish dump site over there (pointing) that was the first one. Tell us about how and why the move came from the old one to the new one?

JM: There were holes dug up at that side and they became full – that was why we moved to this side.

DM: When did that happen?

JM: They started to dig the holes from 1969 and by 1999 it was full. They started digging the holes and by 2001 we started working in this new area.

AV: How did they clean up that area there?

JM: They just covered it... put more soil.

AV: So it was just covered that was it?

JM: Yes just like that – they take a bulldozer and make level.

DM: During the time when that rubbish dump was operating were there a lot of people coming to the rubbish dump side to get plastics and other things?

JM: No, not that much.

DM: Why do you think they were not so many?

JM: They were not so much because there was not much recycling like now. They were juts coming to pick up the things they need and looking for fire wood.

DM: Were there people coming, maybe trying to find little scraps of food and things like that?

JM: Yes they were coming.

DM: From Rammolutsi here?

JM: Yes right here in Rammolutsi.

DM: Were there quite a number of people or how many people would you say were coming to that place every day?

JM: They were so many people ... even today these few people that are here now will become lots of people in the afternoon to pick up the chickens.

DM: When you say chickens where do those come from?

JM: They come from the chicken factory – Tulani at the industrial sites.

AV: Its not actually chickens it is chicken feed, they then separate them..

Interpreter: No it is chickens.

DM: So, it's the carcass of the chickens or is it the actual chicken?

Interpreter: No, it's the actual chicken.

DM: Why would they want they dump them here?

Interpreter: Because there is a chicken abattoir there at the industrial, so the dead ones they come and dump them here. So people are coming to collect them here to eat them.

DM: I want to follow this for a minute. The chickens that are brought here by the abattoir ... the ones that are killed. Are they the ones that are rejected by the abattoir, those are the ones?

JM: They are the dead ones.

DM: So when they bring them what happens? Do they come and dump them out or do people come and get them off from the truck or what happens?

JM: They just dump them here and then the people start picking them up.

DM: So, people just come ... ok, that's amazing. How many chickens would you say they come and dump here everyday?

JM: Sometimes it is not many but other days they bring huge number of bags, maybe like 100.

DM: How many people will you say on average show up here everyday to try to get these chickens?

JM: They are many people they can be more than twenty.

AV: Are they eating the chickens?

JM: They are eating them.

DM: Tell us a little bit about how this dump works. Who is allowed to dump here and who is allowed to come and look for things in this rubbish dump?

JM: The people who are allowed to come are only seven women - those who are doing the recycling (of plastics etc.).

DM: How was that decided ... that only seven women are allowed to come?

JM: Basically, they found that there are scrap companies who are interested in getting the plastics, the 2-litre bottles ... then they went to the municipality and they were finally given some cards to identify them so they can be allowed to work here.

DM: You said there are some companies ... do companies come here to get some things from this dump?

JM: Yes they are, but it is only one company that is allowed.

DM: Who is that company?

AV: I don't know the name of the company but it is from around here in Viljoenskroon – it is somewhere there in the industrial area making the pipes.

DM: That is a private company ... it is not owned by the community of Rammolutsi?

JM: Yes it is a private company because it has its own owner, it is not under the Rammolutsi community.

DM: So, as someone who has been here for several years managing this dump ... what do you feel about that ... that only a very small number of the community is allowed to access this dump ... what do you feel about that?

JM: I am satisfied with the small numbers, because if they can be in large numbers there will be fighting each other and that is not nice.

DM: What happens when a lot of people show up here and they don't have the cards and they want to get things from the dump?

JM: They just come as they please and they come through the broken wall ... but they are here to collect whatever they are interested in and we have no problem with that.

DM: What kind of things are they looking for?

JM: The ones with the name tags collect plastics while the others are collecting the cans, the iron and steel.

DM: Who is allowed to dump things here?

JM: All the companies in Viljoenskroon are allowed.

DM: Is this also the dump where all the municipal waste is dumped?

JM: Everything is coming here.

DM: I want to know how often do the municipal trucks that get waste from Rammolutsi how often do, they come and dump here?

JM: They come three times a day just from Rammolutsi .

DM: Do you think ... what do you feel in working here about the conditions under which these people are doing this work?

JM: I am feeling ok because they are taking out some of the irons and bottles (sharp objects) which can be dangerous to the trucks (punctures) and the people at large.

DM: I am thinking about the hygiene, the safety for the people. You work here everyday. Does the municipality provides you with any kind of safety equipment?

JM: Yes they are available.

DM: Do you use them?

JM: Yes, we are using them, but not so much.

DM: Do you have many accidents here where people get hurt or cuts or things that happen?

JM: Yes, it is like that.

DM: Give us examples?

JM: Yes they get injured through cuts in the hands and legs as they use the hands to dig for some of the things and they don't see what is under the rubbish.

DM: Are children allowed onto this site?

JM: No children are not allowed.

DM: A few last questions. You said things were beginning to improve. As a municipal worker you can see some of the deliveries improving and everything else. What do you think as a municipal worker as someone here, what kind of things do you think need to happen in this community for peoples lives to become better

JM: The most important thing is that there must be companies so people can get jobs and be working.

DM: What about ... you said earlier on you were living in the mukhukhu , yes?

JM: Yes I am living in the shack.

DM: So what about the housing situation? You are employed yes, but still you are still living in the mukhukhu?

JM: The development of housing must also continue because we can't remain in a mukuku..

DM: Have you been waiting ... have you applied and been waiting for an RDP house?

JM: Yes I did.

DM: For how long?

JM: Twice.

DM: How many years since the application?

JM: I have just applied this year in January when they said we must come , but there is no answer.

DM: Very lastly is there anything that you would like to say that we have not covered about your work place or your community?

JM: There are so many things. The municipality must give people stands. People are not doing their job, people are still living in the informal settlement as they are not able to find their own stand. Therefore I am not satisfied because our children are still staying at the informal settlement and growing up in the mukhukhus. That is not good for our people.

MINUTES: 36:07