

WIREDU - SIDE A

(Mama, Please what is your name?) Ehe-he
Comfort Wiredu - (Please, how old are you?)
Eeh, fifty nine (fifty nine years?) Thank you.
Please your address) Eeh, P O Box 2774 Kumasi
And house number 59 / stroke 50, Block B Tarkwa
Maakro Kumasi. (Thank you. Please, where
were you born?) Eeh, (Please, your home town
where you was born) Aaah, I was born in
Kumasi. (Please, what part of Kumasi?) Ash
Town (Thank you. Please, are you married or
not?) Aah, I got married, but my husband is
dead (Please, sorry (then you are) -- ehehe-he
(Then, it is both of us) Eem, (Please, how many
children have you?) Six (We thank the Lord)
Four girls, two boys (Thank you very much.
Please, Mama, now what is your profession?)
As at now, I am manufacturing -- garment.
(Do you manufacture garment?) Garment
(Please, what kind of work did you start in
first as a young woman?) Well, when I finished
School, I attended training collage, when I
completed training collage, I was became a
teacher for thirteen years, and I became a
Head teacher for eight years. (Thank you.
Please, when you was not doing this, were
you at school, or you was working?) Eeh,
I was (when you was very young) Eeh, when I
was very young, I choose dress making as
my hobby, so when I close after school, I
go to the market to pick pieces (yes) and I use
it to sew dolly's and dolls and so forth
especially, when I was a child, even, when I
was at the elementary school, when I was

at standard six, my father bought a sewing machine for me, so I used to sew petty petty things, little by little. (Thank you. Please Mama how did you start your present business?) Well, it was in 1970, that the British Counsel gave some teachers, those who were going to start Kindergarten, and they sponsored ^{some of} the Head-teachers to tour Britain (yes) to tour the Private and Public schools. And if we go to the tour for about nine o'clock in the morning, we would close at twelve o'clock, so if I return home, to while I wait the time, it was at that time, that I decided to go to Palm School of designing and dress making and polish the sewing a little, so, if we close, if we return from the tour, then I go to the part time, from two o'clock till the evening, nine o'clock (yes) till the time we finished the programme, so, I registered at that place, so that, every academic year, I go and continued. So, in '76 I got my diploma in designing (yes). When I returned, I resign and set up garment industry. (Thank you very much.) Please, what difficulties or problems did you have?) Well, I have no problems now, but the only problem I have is working capital (Mm) because the business is ~~expanding~~ ^{extending}, so I need financing which can buy raw materials so that the business would extend, that is the only ----- And some modern machines ----- (Thank you. Please, I don't want you to remember your sorrows, you said that your husband is no more, Please, when you started your business,)

Has your husband ever objected to your business activities or helped you in business? Well, he objected to my business activities (yes) but with my determination and hard working, he couldnt overcome me, because I was, --- I usually did --- I was a chairman for small scale industries the whole Ghana, so if I was going to such meetings, everytime, there ~~was~~ is something. -- (Eeh, he was worried) Yes (mhoho-ho-) He dont want to allow me to go, but I didnt allowed him to over-come me, so I tried always so I did it for about ten years, this gave me the chance to become one of the Board of Directors for small scales. (Thank you very much, what helped you to move forward in your business?) Eeh, it is hard working determination and comitment. (Thank you very much. Please, have you been able to acquire any property because of your business?) Yes, now I have built one storey building - it is two, one is uncompleted and one is completed. The factory is in one of them (yes) it is, one factory, one residence. (Thank you. Please. Has your the business enabled you to help family members or other business?) Yes, at the very start, (has the business enabled you to help somebody?) At the very starting, I sent one of my sisters to Britain to learn designing and dress making (yes) and later, my four children, Eeh, two girls, two boys. They are all at Abroad and they are studying (Thank you, you've done well, we thank you. Please, it seems to me that it is the

same question. Please, have any of your children joined you in your business?) Mm now Eeh, the Deputy Director is my first born (yes, eei, yes) And the Production Manager also is my second born, (Mm) It means, the third ~~and~~ fourth and fifth born are in Abroad (mm, but even the last one is learning textile designing (yes) (yes) (Thank you very much. Please, have you trained any other woman in your business?) Mm, initially, I started something like vocational school, and at the time, when it was improving, I ~~felt~~ feel that, if I start set up the industry, it would help me more in future, so, the first people who passed out, I took them and employed all of them, they were about twenty five workers I employed them and started the industry, ^{with them} I pay them. (Thank you very much. Please, if any young woman come to you for advice & about starting this kind of "work" business, what would you tell her?) Aa, what I would tell her is that, she has to be humble, and have patient you see? and stand firm, because, there are some business If you are going to learn it, and you dont have love for the business (Mm) you cannot do it. In the first place, she must have love to the business which she is going to start, and again she must be torelance, because maybe you would meet some workers, who may do you something; If you did not have patient and toretale ~~stsh~~ such things; you cannot, (you cannot) Again you must work hard. (Please, how does your life differ from that of your mother)

and grandmother?) Mm, none of them never attend school (yes) So, the difference is great (yes, can you explain it?) Eeh, somebody who never attend school, and somebody who have attended school -- and my mother also, she never did any business, (yes) my grandmother also, she was at the village, so the only difference is that, we are working and ee, earn some income, and she was something as house-wife somebody struggle and bring it to her (Mho-ho Thank you. Please, would a young woman today be able to start as you started?) How? (Today's young women, you see that, they don't like work, most of them and so on, I think that they have money problems, if somebody wants to start as you started, today's young women, can she do it like you?) Then, it depends on the individual, her own mind (yes) We have some people, if she gets a little push, she can do it (yes) you see? In all, she would be aided out with financing (Mm) Mm, if she gets a little push from somebody, everything she would do - (Please, there are many changes in our lives now and the past. Why the change/difference in this present society?) Inflation (Mho-ho-) Please, can you explain it a little for us?) It is crisis (Mm) Now everything is expensive, and the civilization is going up (Mm) you see? Everything, even the food we are eating, it has reduced you see? So everything is going up, so everything; if civilization is coming, and things are going up, automatically, there is an inflation (And you)

said, civilization has cause the high cost of prices, how?) Mm, if you become too wise, let me take it like, Eeh, even, this dress that I am wearing, tomorrow, if I go out and see that somebody is wearing something different, I want to go for that, you see? (Yes) Yes, so we will go in for that. (Yes) But at first, if somebody have her one cloth, she would use it continuously, she would never mind, but now (yes) unless the person see it, (Thank you. Please, this is a bit difficult you see? But I have to ask. What are your regrets in life? Your regrets, something you wanted to do in your past life, but couldn't?) Well actually, my self, through-out my life, I have no regrets. But the time I got married, it was at that time that I had a little problem between me and my husband, but apart from that, I think that, in my life, I think that there is nothing I feel ~~that~~, it is my regrets. (Thank you) Because this thing is natural (Mm) yes. (Please, what has been your happiest moment in life? There was a time in your life, that something happened and you became very very happy. Since from your infancy up to this time, something happened ~~and~~ in your life that you were became very happy) Ah, the day I completed my factory (mm) I became very very happy, because, if I stand up and look at the building and look at the machines in it and look at the workers around, in fact I became very very happy that I have been able to achieve

that aim. (Thank you. Please, who has influenced you most in your life? Maybe, somebody gave you some advice or encouragement or something like that?) Oh, well, I mean I usually attend a lot of courses like Empretech Ghana limited, they teach us many ways that you would go through, so that you would be very successful, even, they gave us two weeks intensive course, and through that... Since that course, a lot of improvement has come into my life, into my business. (Thank you. Please, let's put that aside. Maybe in your life, since from your childhood, during your school time, maybe somebody gave you some advice or some encouragement before you were able to reach that this position is there something like that?) About this, I mean, about this, nobody has never sit with me and gave me any advice. I mean anytime, I sit down and plan to move forward myself. (Thank you. Do you feel fulfilled in life?) Yes, even, now, we have and an association like Eeh, Professional women's association, which are trying to pick up the young girls who are roaming about in the streets (mm) and set up some vocations.

(Thank you very much. Please, how has the current economic situation affected your life?) Automatically, because, if you buy something today, let me take it like, maybe Eeh, maybe some institution have given a contract, ~~you~~ they have prepared F P 2 and everything for you, and you have prepared your course structure

and have sent it to them, you have gone to see the material, then, when you went to the store the following morning, the price of the material has gone up (Yes) You cannot go back again to tell them that, they should prepare it again for you, it means you are running out a loss, now, every blessed day, and the goods also, if you look that, they maybe they would increase the prices of the goods so you are also raising your goods, it would always be on tender, you would not get the customers, so, this is the whole problem that we are facing now. (Thank you) (Where did you find the tender?) Well, from ^{the} company that will give you the contract, (Yes) They collect tender from so many places people then they sit down and decide upon the prices, then they choose what will be suitable for them (yes) so, if you raise yours too high, yours will be tender (So, most of your production is from contract?) Yes Contract, and I saw uniforms also for schools. (Thank you very much. Please, in our country or in our District, maybe Kumasi or in all the general society, what has changed most in the community and the general society/country for the past 10 years?) It is as the same the inflation that I said at first. Now the living has become too hard At first for instant, you can eat about three times daily (yes) but now, you cant even eat twice daily (yes) formerly, you can feed them three times, but now, you

can't (mm) even, if you can feed the children, the grown ups should fast (Yes, thank you. Please, how have women's and men's views in the African context on marriage changed over the years? Which changes have been positive? What changes still need to take place?)

At first, the men used the women too much, the women did not do their own business you see? If she needs ~~everything~~ ^{some} things, she have to go and ask from the man, if he 'likes' or willing he will give it to her, if he is not willing, he will not give it to her, but this time the women try as hard as they can to get their own business and get their own money and do what-ever they like.

Secondary, also, about marriage, at first, let me take it like this, maybe if your husband die's, the family would come and drive you and all your children out and collect the property, but the law that the Government has passed, this time, the property, I think that, if you didn't ^{even} prepare a "will" they divide it into three, two percent goes to the woman and her children so that the family members go ----- even some places, ~~the~~ all the belonging of the husband goes to the woman, so I feel that (yes) It means that greater part of the property goes to the woman, so I feel that, because of this, even, if you are staying with your husband, and you are serving him with all your strength, this time, it is not painful like at first. (Thank you. Please)

now, do you believe that we should add something to it again to get some improvement after all these, maybe there is something we should add to it again to complete? Mm, well as at now, Eeh, even though the law is there but still, there are some of the families, if the husband dies, they will struggle with the woman, (Mm) and send the case to court, before the lawyer explain to them that, this is the law. So, we must make it Positive and announce it that, now, this is the law, so that everybody should understand, and the woman, if your son get married, while he is still alive and you want something from him, that is the time, but if he die's the woman he have married and have struggled with her, she is the one who will get the greater part of the property' (Thank you Please, is polygamy a necessary evil?) Well, even the Bible has said that, if we can, we should take one wife, because, in the first place, if you marry two women, it is going to bring ~~some~~ hatred between the two women, so everybody is going to find some way, so that you should love her more, these bring that practicing of Jujū and that evil things and so forth. (In other to conjure the man and that evil evil things) Ehee, these brings it, so, myself, if it is in my power, every man, if you have one wife, you will have peace. And any man who has two wives, also, he is not faithful. Anytime, he want to please both of them)

So, there is always confusion (Thank you. Please what are your views on Family Planning?)

Well family Planning is good, in a sense that at least, it give the woman gets enough strength, and the children also gets strength and Eeh, what I feel it is good is that if you space the children, then it is good, and because they have said that, they should give birth to one or two, normally, myself, I am not happy about it, because, if you are not lucky and suddenly there is an accident and you lost one, or something like that, then, where do you stand? Now, also, every body knows her own child, and nobody can take care of yours, so in your old age or some time to come, at least, if nothing happens and if they are as many as four or five, one of them will get love for you, but if he she is only one, and you are not lucky, and he/she go crazy, then where do you stand? But the spacing is Eeh, it is good. So at least, I feel that, four is OK. (Thank you.

Please Mama, you said that you have six children now, if you were to be given another chance, would you have the same number of children as you have now?/AO, I feel that the same six is alright. (Ehe- Please why?) Eeh, I have four girls (mm) and two boys, these four girls, only three of them, they have given birth to fifteen, eei, two, this one; two, Eeh the first born have seven, the second born have five and the third born have four (eei, then you have many grand children) Eeh,

now only the girls, the grand children, they are about seventeen (mm) Eei, so, there is no need for me to add more to it, even, I have told them that, they should try as much as they can to put an end to it. (This means, if God help and maybe, you receive - - - - -) I have about seventeen grand children, even the last one have not even get married and even get children Oh, (yes) she is the one that I said about her that, she is learning textile designing (Yes) and the three girls. And the other boy also, have one child (yes) and the other boy also has not get married, so, till the time they would get married and brought forth children, then Eeh, (the world would become full) (Ehe-he-ha-ha) (So, if you were able to give birth again, maybe, six would be good for you?) Yes. Thank you very much. Please, What are your views on the current laws on intestate succession and the registration of marriages?) What kind of intestate? Your husband or your family? (Intestate, intestate, intersession) Well, Eeh, excuse me to say, if everybody understands, he/she knows the person who would take over after his/her death. Somebody; maybe your own son, but he/she is your greatest enemy. (Yes) You see? And there is somebody also, excuse me to say he feels that, if she did not do something for you, even, he cant-; so, every parent have the person, that he feels that, excuse me to say, if ~~he~~ he dies, he can leave everything

to him/her, so that ~~she~~ ^{he/she} can look after the rest. And about the marriage, I think that the registration is good, because if you did not register, because of our tradition, if you say anything, they will not understand, but if you register, then, ~~book talk~~ ^{you talk} no lie (yes) Because there is a ~~note~~ ^{will}, so what the laws of the will is saying, it is exactly what they would do... (Thank you. Please, I think we have many women's groups in Kumasi, Do you belong to any women's group in Kumasi or elsewhere?) Ah, that was what I was saying that, (mm) I belong to Eeh, Professional EEm, business and professional Women's Association. And again, also, Church fellowship, (yes) and Empreteach, Ghana Fellowship (yes) forum, but that one, even there are men's who are members (yes) And association of Ghana Industries (and I T E) I T W (yes) (Thank you very much. Please, what are some of the ways in which women's groups like yours are helping to nurture, teach, support and train young females to help them face and be prepared for the 21st Century?) Well, the Women's Fellowships normally, sometimes, they teach ^{the} children, the young women, how to cook, how to keep the house/room tidy and if you get married, ~~how~~ ^{what} you would do to your husband, and the profession Women's Organization also, they are trying, that Eeh, the girls, the street girls, those who have no work to do, and train them some vocational and dress making)

or hair dressing. That is what they have planned (Thank you very much. Please, what do you think ~~are the~~ most important current ~~problems of women~~ women's groups should do to improve conditions of life for women and the family?) Mm. (I think that, if you are able to help ~~the~~ the families or young women, their lives would improve.) That was what I was saying that, there are some women in some families who are not working and if you have the potential, you can help them to; from, maybe you can send some of them learn hair dressing or seamstress or, if you, if you asked them what they are ~~the~~ what they want to do (what they need) Yes, then you can assist (Thank you very much. ~~the~~ Please, now, what do you think are the most important current problems of women?) I feel that, the most important current problems of women is marriage (mho-ho-ho) this is their only problems (yes) Because if the person is not married, and she is working, and gets her money, I feel that, she is the happiest person. If she get married, the problems at home; even, if she gets the money, the man wants to collect the money from her hand, if she did not gives it to him, then it will turn to quarell. (And this problems which you are talking about, what are the causes and what are the remedies?) Well, all that you have to do is that, you must be like a fool (mho-ho) Yes, other than that, there is nothing you can do, if you)

are not lucky and you get married to a man, if you get married to your evil person, or to a lazy man, if you put it there, he would take it away, if you wake up in the morning, even, he would not look after the children, he would not ^{do} anything, everything is upon you. If you open your mouth and say something there will be a blow, so the only thing you have to do is ignore him and do everything your self, because if you say anything, there will no peace, maybe, you love your husband (so every time, you must suffer) (who-ho) and if you did not suffer, you alone will be on crisis, because some men are born, they don't want to work, you see? The little you would get, anytime, he want to squeeze it from you, it is a problem (Yes. Thank you very much. Please, must a woman choose between a family, if I mention a family, maybe the real family or your marriage, your husband and your child, which is your family, and your career, can you choose between these? Can you be successful at both?) of course, it's all upon the person, as I was saying just now, if you are not lucky, and you get married to a man who have no job, and if he ask and you would quarrel with him every time, it would not be well with you so, if you don't exercise patience, you see? but you are more seriously with your business, and also get involve with the family it is all money problems, so, if you, the woman if you work hard, all these problems, it would not be something (That means,)

you can...) Yes, marriage and the career, you can choose between both and be successful)

Mm, (Thank you very much. Please, what are the tensions for a woman involved in juggling in a career and a family?) That was what I was saying in the beginning that (yes) you have to exercise patience, if you have patience, you will get everything, ~~because~~ because if you are more serious with your business, and you get the money, and you get married to a lazy man, all you have to do is, if you are coming, you buy your food-stuffs (mho-ho) and prepare your meals early, so if he return, he would chop some of it, and you feed your children, and then you rest, if your family come and you have some, then you give it to them, if you don't have some, you can fix another time, so all you have to do is, exercise patience. (Please, now, your "work," business, it is somehow big, you meet with people

What do you imagine or know are the disadvantages of being the only woman in a profession or office eg. law, medicine, engineering and military which are dominated by men?) Well, they will hate you, because in "92" I stood as a Parliamentary candidate (yes) the whole Ashanti Region (yes) I was the only woman among them (mm) for the thirty three constituency, I was the only woman (yes) but what I discovered was that there were some of the men, it was painful to them (yes) you see? and I also, I am

troublesome, so, what ever they said, I dont mind (that means, they were tried to oppressed you?) Yes, (they were oppressing you) they were oppressing me, but I did not gave them a chance, because of this, this year also, even they have brought a man to compete in my constituency, (yes) but this is something which I dont fear at all, (mho-ho - this means if it comes to a time like this, and you are not serious,) yes, (you will be in tension) yes, you have to determined (yes) (Thank you very much. Please, what examples in history can you think of where women's contributions have been overshadowed? - . . . Many of them, they never mentioned, many of them were not rewarded) - . . . Discussion - . . . :
 Those I cannot remember somebody, who have done something and ~~they~~ have been overshadowed, ~~except~~ except themselves (Mm) (in history, most of the women, who were very very high, we didnt heard their names properly) Mm, that is why I am saying that, if you go into history (yes) all those people, who did something, like Yaa Asantewaa and so forth, they are the only people, whom we hear about them, but * those * who were overshadowed, maybe, she was in a family (yes) so, they can know. But, about this, I cannot tell (Have you got one in your family?) Well, in my family, no, mho-ho - (Thank you. Please, this one is the same, but I have to ask you by all means, what do you think are the oppressive structures that ~~keep~~)

women in positions of of powerless? Like you was saying, maybe, you have powers else where, but they are oppressing you, so you come down, because of this, you come down a bit) Yes, they feel that you are a woman, and a woman, you have to sell garden eggs you should not sell gun-powder (ehe) so, if they see that you are very hard working, they try to intimidate you, you see? They would say stories, different stories and so on It means, you become (confused) you see? and all is boiled up to hard work and determination, if you are well determined, nobody can throw you out. (Thank you, now what I was coming to say, that Nothing only woman) Yes. (Hawa - who is among them (yes) she was very serious) yes (but -) any - time, they want to suppress her (so, if she is careful, they would) yes, so, if are not hard determined, by all means you will give up. (Yes) Because, I remember that, there was a time, even at Parliament, if she want to raise up her hand and speak, they shouted at her (mm) (It is because of these, that brings our spirits down) Yes (true) Thank you very much) And at times also, complex also is include, - there are some woman, if you speak roughly to her once, she becomes very bad, she cannot ----- (Truely, we usually feels shy) Yes (Thank you --- I think we have had a lot of conversation with you, we thank you very much. Is there any question you)

think we have left out or more to be added?) Eeh, whom I want to add to it is that, we will try as hard as we can, to educate a lot of women to take part in Eeh, social----- activities. And politics (mm) because, everybody who lives in the world, and you say you dont like politics, then you dont want improvement in your life, because if you are a worker, and you ~~dont~~ like politics, and you have a good Government, your business also will be good but if you are not intrested in it, and you you stay home everyday, excuse me to say oh, if the foolish men go and make foolish laws, everyday, you will be in crisis (you will obey it) you see? So, you also the little knowledge that God have given to you, you must come out with it, you see? that means ----- so the women must try as hard and get involved with all social activities and politics and everything (Now, I think that, I must thank you very much. I think that, all my questions is finished, so I thank you in the name of God. Akua, will you add something to it?)(AO, no)(Ah)(it is very good)(Mm) he-he-he (Thank you very much. Please, I think you have talk with Mrs Prempeh, so you will come to Cultural Center, if God permits, it would be Wednesday coming) Mm (9 a.m. So I think you are among some people whom we would ask them some questions) Mm (So, I have am sure you have under stand) Mm. (Thank you. She is!)

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my teacher oh) (so?) (Mm)

END OF WIREDU