

Nigerian Women Interview Damaris Ishaya

Note: Ishaya is her husband's surname. Dmaris is involved with the Mashiah Foundation, which is a ministry to women who are HIV positive. The ministry teaches the women how to sew and then sells the quilting products that they make. She became involved with Mashiah in May of last year. She is the second of two wives with the same husband. "When I was tested positive, there was a lady who lived around said 'I am involved in your problem, I am positive too.' She encouraged me because she told me she is fine healthy and doing work and earning money.' She asked why didn't I sew. Since I already knew how to sew it would not be hard for me. I showed up [at Mashiah] and they gave me the form to fill out. On Thursday I come to class [at Mashiah] and learn the work." Ishaya stays in the village but comes to Jos to Mashiah and to get her medicine.

Demographics

1. Age: 29
2. Age at which married: 22
3. Age at which had first child: 22
4. Children: Meshack (8 years, boy) & Gift (2 years, girl)
5. Education: Completed Senior Secondary School
6. Husband's profession: Driver

Behavior

B1. Daily Schedule:

- A. *What is your daily schedule?* 4:30-5:00 wake up and pray. I go out and look for water or find firewood. I will come back and dress my bed, sweep my room, ask my kids to brush, warm the water, bath my children. Prepare my children, dress them to go to school. Prepare their breakfast. After the kids take their breakfast, they leave to school. I might have clothes to wash for Baby Gift. The next after the breakfast, I prepare for lunch. After I prepare the lunch, I come to Mashiah if I have work. If I come, I will bath and dress Gift to leave then we move. When I go home from Mashiah, I prepare the dinner. If I go home, I bath Baby Gift again.
- B. *What activities do you spend the **most time** on each day?* If I have a [sewing] project here [Mashiah], I always stay inside my room doing it.

B2. Non-Daily Routines

- A. *What are the activities that you regularly do, but not everyday?* Washing. Even food, I do not cook it everyday because we are two married to the man. The other one she will cook then I will be resting. We live in the village so my father has generator. At times we rent films so we on the gen and watch. If there is no film, I will tell my children stories, I will pray and go to bed.

B3. Responsibilities around the house

- A. *In your household, what duties are you responsible for?* Every Saturday I go around and clear the bathroom water passing through and I clear back behind my window. I sweep. Every day we always sweep inside the compound and outside the compound.

Around the compound I am the only person doing that cleaning, the other wife is not sharing it so it is the best for me and my head to keep the compound clean. I don't like if the compound is dirty for the daughter, it will invite mosquitoes. They tell me that I should not leave the environment so dirty like that. For the compound sweeping, when I cook one day then the next day in the morning I will be the person to sweep the compound. If I cook the dinner the next day morning I will wash the plates then sweep then prepare lunch after the lunch I still wash the plates again. I cook dinner, breakfast, lunch, then switch and the other wife will cook dinner, breakfast then lunch.

- B. *What duties are your husband responsible for?* If he sees something that is not good, he asks us to come and clean it: glass on the compound or dogs shit around. Or he will use his hand and clear it. For the cleaning I always do on Saturday he always helps me.
- C. *What duties are your girl children responsible for?* There is another girl who stays with me to help me. If I am sweeping she will be breaking the firewood and heating the water. At times she will make the lunch. She is 13 years. She is a daughter to my cousin.
- D. *What duties are your boy children responsible for? (siblings)* Meshack, his duty, what I ask him to do if he comes back from school he goes and fetch 1 gallon water that he will bath in the evening. I warm the water and he will bath before I sweep. He always switches the light out. That is his work. If it is getting dark, he will get the lantern and fetch the matches. If no matches, he goes inside the kitchen and uses the stick to put the fire [from the kitchen fire] in the lantern. That is his duty in the house.

B4. Holidays

- A. *How do you celebrate festivals?* We have hunting festival. They do it around April. It is on Saturday. All men and all these children that are grown up, the men will go to the bush go and hunt all over around the bush, all over inside the bush. When they come back, the women gather and welcome them. They are dancing. The people with horses, they take their horses inside bush. Then when they return, they run the horses from here to there for people to see. Others, they are dancing. Anything that you kill inside the bush, when dancing, there is a song they sing and they raise the thing they kill. The animals they kill they raise it like this [raises hand above head]. We women, we dance and we be happy. For that day in the evening we close and everybody comes home. Sunday they will cook all this rice, cook meat, it will just be like Christmas. They kill rabbit; buffalo; antelope; big, big birds; big, big, heavy snakes. They have bow and arrow and some have guns some have only stick and when see snake they rush and beat it with the stick.

B5. Money

- A. *How do you earn money?* Sew for Mashiah. I can sew clothes if I get clothes from other people in the village. [In other words, she also is a local tailor.]
- B. *What do you spend money on?* I spend the money at times if my husband has no money to buy some food ingredients. If there is any time he cannot buy these kerosene for us, I buy for myself. Soap, kerosene. For my children, I buy clothes. Anything I see is good for my kids and for myself I buy. I buy food for myself.

Values

V1. General Societal Views

- A. *What makes a good woman?* Supposed to be active, doing her duties at home, she will have a low voice at least with talking with her husband and other people around. She will be neat at least. She will keep herself neat, her children and her room even where she is staying neat. And she will try and cook very good, nice food. A good woman to me she will not ...she can visit but too much. At times it will make you talk, talk, talk. You can even invite gossip. At times I don't like staying with much women around. At the village, if I see women around together like 3, 4 I do not like staying in their mix.
- B. *What makes a good man?* [Laugh.] Man have to at least do his duties like bring food to the house. About the children, if the children lack anything like school fees and books, he has to communicate, cooperate and give to buy for them. A good man is supposed to, he should not be harsh, he should be loving and caring for his wife and children. At times a man is supposed to be staying with his family at least once for an hour or some minutes and play with his wife and his children so they can feel him. Like there are some men who do not laugh at all. You see the children be scared of him. Some children they don't know their parents. It is not proper. Man is supposed to leave work and come back earlier so the children see him before they go to bed. Some go out and drink and come back midnight and leave early morning. The children not see him. It is not good. A good man comes back earlier for his children and keep his wife company and play with his children.
- C. *Think of differences between men and women. What are things that women should do that men shouldn't?* To me, if there is love, nothing I will do that my husband will not help me. Like if I am ok, I am well, I can do all things. But if he feels like helping me he can. If I am ill or down, he can cook, bath the kids, wash the clothes, he can do. Nothing that my husband cannot do for me because he loves and cares. So only what to me what he cannot do is conceive. [We joke about also not being able to breast feed.] But he can feed the baby with milk.
- D. *What are things that men should do but women shouldn't?* What men should do...If there is love there is nothing that a man can do but woman cannot. If I have money and my husband does not, I can bring food, I can pay the school fees. If he has the money and but I have twice, I can pay the school fees. I once paid my senior boy's school fees. He thanked me very well and he always mention this. I am happy whenever he says that.
- E. *What things would you like to do but can't because you are a woman?*
- F. *Do you think it is better to be a man or a woman?* To me, there is not any better. But as I am, I love as I am a woman. It is better for me to be a woman because a woman always has that care. You see children always be with their mothers.

V3. Marriage

- A. *Did you look forward to marriage?* I was not excited because I don't love him that time before I got married and he was anxious that we should get married. His love was greater than mine. I didn't ever think I would be his wife and even give birth to

- children with him. He was my only boyfriend that wants us to get married. My parents starting asking me why shouldn't I marry him. So I just married him and go.
- B. *How did you find your husband?* We went out with my friends so he was a friend to one of my friends. My friend does not speaking the same [tribal] language. I spoke hers but she doesn't speak mine. He is my own language. Whenever we were together with her he always played with her and ask why doesn't she [the friend] give me [the husband] her friend [Damaris]. He will buy us some things – like minerals, he buy it for us. I thought he was a friend to her. As time goes, he asked me what [tribal] language I spoke. And he found out we were same tribe and he start asking me for love. By that time, if he comes I say “This man, he disturbing me. I don't like. He is asking me that I should marry him. What should I do with?” We spend 6 years like this.
- C. *How much was your bride price?* Like us, our tradition, it is after he married you before he can go back and ask for your bride price.

V4. Children

- A. *What are things you want to teach your girl children?* What I want to teach Gift is like these people give me a sewing machine and my husband buys one for me and I bought one myself when I was learning sewing and I want her to learn to sew. That's what I want Gift to do. So that she can inherit those machines.
- B. *What are things you want to teach your boy children?* I want him to...his hands are, he touch this he touch it. If I keep my phone he put his hands on it and I see different, different things. What I want Meshack to do is to do these things with his hands. He can carry a radio and remove everything and scatter it but he cannot fix it back so it is as if he wants to do something like that so I will take him to do hand work.
- C. *Are your children in school?* Meshack is in pre-primary school.
- D. *How much school do you want your boy children to have?* Up to university level.
- E. *How much school do you want your girl children to have?* As she being a woman, I don't know. But I also want her to go further. Even in tailoring, without school you cannot do because with taking people's measurements and writing their name, you have to go to school. If she can go to secondary school so she can read and write.

V5. Community

- A. *How did you meet your women friends?* There is one woman where we are staying the same area. I go visit her early morning like the day I don't have to be in kitchen. After praying and bath children and send them to school, I will move to her house and tell her I just come to see her. She will invite me inside, I ask her about her husband, children, if anything we can discuss. If she tells me about problem, if I have any help, I can help her solve the problem. If I don't have means to help, I will just let us put it in prayer.