

Nigerian Women Interview

Dorcus Syimnom Bahago

Note: Dorcus is her given English name, Syimnom is her given tribal name which means God's love. Bahago is her clan name. Her mother is a lecturer at UniJos in the Faculty of Education and is in progress of completing her PhD. Her father works in the Ministry of Education. Dorcus owns a tailor shop with one staff and is in the 300 level of coursework at the University of Jos in Science Laboratory Technology specializing in pharmacology. This degree will enable her to get a research position in pharmacology. Dorcus lives with her mother and father in Jos. She was raised in Jos but spends considerable time in the village.

Demographics

1. Age: 29
2. Age at which married: n/a
3. Age at which had first child: n/a
4. Children: n/a
5. Number of grandchildren: n/a
6. Range of grandchildren's ages: na/
7. Education: Completed secondary school then began a diploma programme in Science Laboratory. After she completed her diploma, there were some problems internal to the University that prevented her from entering the degree program so she had to spend 2 years at home waiting for admission. Then university strikes have set her further back in her studies. She should have completed her degree in 2004.
8. Husband's profession: n/a

Behavior

B1. Daily Schedule:

- A. *What is your daily schedule?* When I wake up I say my morning devotion and make breakfast, take bath, head to school. If I have, I go to lectures or practical [laboratory]. Then I go to library to look for materials. If I have materials, take textbook go thru and compile, compile sit down and compile the reports for my practicals. After lectures for the day, I come back take my rest. I go to library to read in evening. Around 5 or 6 o'clock I have fellowship, maybe from 6 to 8. After fellowship, I come back and rest for an hour, go back and read 2 to 4 hours depending on my strength. Then I rest for the day.
Dorcus then describes live in her village: The wife, she wakes up and goes to the river to get water and carries it back on her head. She fixes breakfast and takes care of the children. If there is one husband and one wife, after husband go to farm, she will go to fetch water come back to make tuo or kulo. Prepare lunch, carries it on head 4 to 5 km to the husband on farm. The land he has may be 2 to 4 hecta-acres [or hectors – I am not sure of this measurement]. He makes ridges. She will carry maize to plant. She must follow husband 8 to 9 am. When she arrives, she will help her husband in the farm, she will plant the seeds. She returns home 6 to 7 in the evening. Then she has to go to river fetch water to wash plates. Comes back evening and cook. That's her day. In a polygamous family, there is a lot of poverty because the women don't have anybody assisting. Woman wakes up as early as 5 to prepare breakfast. She will be the person to farm for her own. The man, he may have 3 to 4 wives. The one he loves best is the one

he farms for. The others, you are on your own. After cooking, she has to go down herself to start to farm. You can see the problem between a polygamous and nuclear family. If the wife has money she can invite others to farm for him. She will be harvesting the crops, ginger, then bring it home. After you bring the ginger home, you bring your knife and be slicing it, slicing it. When it is the dry season like now, you package it in bags. In dry season there is no rain, so you take the bags to market to sell. The little money she gets she sends to school for her children who are farming or use it for the next season farming. [Use it to purchase seeds.] That is their major business.

B. *What activities do you spend the **most time** on each day?* School

B2. Non-Daily Routines

A. *What are the activities that you regularly do, but not everyday?* During holidays I am at the house with my parents, when I wake up in morning I keep everywhere clean, go looking for water if there is no water. Prepare breakfast, go on errands. Because of the nature of mom's work, I prepare most of the soup and put it in freezer for the week. Then cook, go to market for shortening, prepare most of the things. Most of my relaxing, I love listening to gospel music.

B3. Responsibilities around the house

- A. *In your household, what duties are you responsible for?* Cooking, go to the market for shortening, keep house clean. Get water from dam around or well when we have water problems like now.
- B. *In your household, what duties are your mother responsible for?* Mom works, she has to support for family, make sure if there is a need for discipline. She provides what we need.
- C. *What duties are your father responsible for?* He works, works in Ministry of Education.
- D. *What duties are your sisters children responsible for?* My sisters help with same tasks.
- E. *What duties are your brothers responsible for?* He is schooling, when he home he assists with the same things.

B4. Holidays

- A. *How do you celebrate festivals?* We have Cultural day called Tuk-ham. We remember the culture, people gather from all walks of life come and gather. There is a contest like Miss Universe that girls are in called Miss-Ham. Questions, they ask her about the ancestors, where we came from, our culture, the kind of food we eat, how we dress, talk, relate. Purely about the culture. That day, everybody the way they appear, dress, hair, way you plait, everything looks natural and form of typical Jaba [the tribe] lady. They have lot of contestants. The girl who wins, that person is given a scholarship to school or other things.
- B. *For major holiday celebrations, what role do you have in the ceremonies?* Go watching, see what is happening, get to know people through that. Because of civilization, we are not always at home because we are scattered across country. This is the only time we have with cousins, sisters. We may not have seen them for 2 or 3 years so only opportunity to see.

B5. Money

- A. *How do you earn money?* Tailor.
- B. *What do you spend money on?* Assist myself in little ways. Anytime I need for transport, use for personal needs. Innerwear, clothing, materials for school – handout, photocopying. I save some for myself so if I have any person in need I use it. At the end of the year pay the rent for landlord for rent.

Values

V1. General Societal Views

- A. *What makes a good woman?* Woman that fears God because I discover that without God you cannot accomplish even an inch. You may think you doing it on own but you are not doing on own. I look at economic situation of country and I think I cannot do it. Child, parent, woman, God makes them exist. That I think is the whole summary. If you have God with you, if he is assisting you and stay with you then the sky is the beginning, not the limit. If any day you go out and come back in evening and see at what you achieve, I marvel. When you look at income and expenditures on a daily basis...Look at transportation. Just transportation every day is N200 to and from school then times 6 [days a wee], then times 4 [weeks in a month] then the amount, textbooks and handbook and end of the day, it is just God that has been faithful.
- B. *What makes a good man?* Man of responsibility and integrity and a man that fears God has good life conscious. Sometimes you know he may not be Christian but if he has a good conscious...If I take this [indicates my sunglasses], it doesn't belong to me. If man has conscious then conscious always guides him.
- C. *Think of differences between men and women. What are things that women should do that men shouldn't?* She situation here makes it a woman is the life-wire of the world. Most people, what we are is by our mom. That is it. What a woman should do and not do, some of them have gone to school. They receive a small salary so if their husband cannot send their child to school, the mom can help. If man has all the responsibility, we will go nowhere.
- D. *What are things that men should do but women shouldn't?* I can't see that because if you look it...They used to say that a woman should not preach, but these days there are many women who have expanded the kingdom of God more than men. They say women should not stand on the altar and be quiet before men. But these days there are people who have affected my lives positively – they are not men, they are women. Women have a ministry and they have a balance between work and home. They are women of integrity. They balance between home and ministry. The most important thing is to know the purpose of living. If you discover your thing, you can be a champion. We women, we can make it. The women are performing better than the men. In Nigeria, men will push women and mold them and when you want to please them you end up messing up. Integrity matters if refuse to compromise. It is the legacy you leave behind. People will remember you. Your future will tell.
- E. *Do you think it is better to be a man or a woman?* God knows why he has created me as a woman. I didn't create myself. If God knows that I would be best as a man, he would have made me a man. I appreciate myself as a woman.

V2. Rites of Passage

- A. *Are you considered a woman or an adult woman?* Adult woman because of my age.
- B. *How did your life change once you became an adult?* Gradually a little bit, mostly by the responsibilities I take. I no longer rely on my parents.

V3. Marriage

- A. *Did you look forward to marriage?* Yes. By God's grace. For now I can't say [why I look forward to marriage].

V4. Children

- A. *What are things you want to teach your girl children?* I will teach them to be civilized. I will give them western, formal education. The way the country is going, give them a handiwork that they can do while they are in school. They can do baking, hair stylist. They need a handiwork that they can do between secondary school and university and on holidays. Be civilized, be disciplined, save the little money and use that little money for the things you need.
- B. *What are things you want to teach your boy children?* If a boy child, it is the housekeeping. They say only female should be the only one to keep. Teach them to sweep and dust, even cook, clean the house, fetching water. You don't know where you find yourself. They used to have cafeteria but now they do not have. If they are going to school you have to know how to cook. My younger brother knows how to cook. They need to know how to go to market, shop, budget whether girl or boy. "How can I get it?" Go into action.
- C. *How much school do you want your boy children to have?* As long as they desire but as a mother, the best thing is to get them their first degree but if they want to go further, I will encourage them. At least first degree. But if they want to go to masters, PhD I will encourage them. You can only encourage but cannot force.
- D. *How much school do you want your girl children to have?* Both. [Same as boy.] Education is necessary.

V5. Community

- A. *What activities do you do with other women?* Like my friends sometimes in my office where I work, living, they come for juice and talk about issues of life, relationships, politics, church activities, friends, activities.
- B. *How did you meet your women friends?* Some, most through [church] fellowship. Those have been models and help me to mold my life.