

**Title:** OUR NEIGHBOURS WERE OUR NEIGHBOURS. OUR NEIGHBOURS WERE **NOT** OUR STRANGERS

Dear Wabuya,

I want to remind you what our neighbours did when you were away or whenever you left home. I can only look back and pat you on your back for the heaviest duties you accomplished. There is no doubt you left your big mark in your world which is us, me.

Grandma, you remember you were carrying goods such as bananas, oranges, mangoes, kadosha, on your head, over 20Kilometres away from home to exchange for fish from fishermen or sell for little pennies. You would leave very early and come back in evening. And all days were not Sundays - sometimes you came home happier than other days.

It is these days when you were trying to find our bread and butter, to find our school fees, to find our clothes, that our neighbours were showing up for us. One would pass by to check if we have had a bath, another would come to check if we have eaten and what we have eaten or if we were going to eat. Someone to check if we needed to fetch more water.

Wabuya, I also want to tell you what happened when you were in hospital with one of your grandchildren khazy, who was admitted for having serious bouts of malaria. I was still little but could not forget this moment. Tiwonge, one of my older sisters also got sick from malaria while you were at hospital looking after khazy. I remember our neighbour carrying my sister to her house for close monitoring as she got worse and you could not be in two places. I still remember Tiwonge opening her eyes and shutting, she was convulsing and weak on the mat, on the veranda. Our neighbour tried home remedies to help her stop the convulsions but my sister was slow to respond, and the more she deteriorated.

I was playing under the closest tangerine tree with other children there and one of our male neighbours was trying to put Tiwonge on his back so he could cycle to hospital with her. My sister died at that moment, right on our neighbours back.

**Our neighbours were our neighbours. Our neighbours were NOT our strangers.** You trusted them and they trusted you.

Hope I can find another opportunity soon to remind you how you also stepped up for our neighbours.

Rest well Grandma,

Masiya.

**By Loraine Mponela**

