

The Root of Life! (Cassava)

This series of short dramas on cassava was originally produced in May 2012 for the *Farmer First* initiative by Youth for Development Association in Agriculture (Y4DAA) Cameroon.

Each episode, begins on a new page, and has notes on characters and location. The transcript has all the elements needed to facilitate audio production.

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EPISODE

1

TITLE

INTRODUCING THE ROOT OF LIFE

CAST

KUMDIDIMO AND MESOZI

LOCATION

IN THE MARKET SQUARE. OUTSIDE. EVENING.

NARRATOR:

Welcome, friends, to The Root of Life ... a drama about people just like us, men and women trying to make a living and raise their children in the villages of Cameroon. My name is Akili, and I'm a farmer. I used to be an extension officer before I retired to my village. Many people think that cassava is an old-fashioned crop, and that it has nothing to offer a modern farmer. Nothing could be further from the truth! I've seen cassava since I was a girl sixty years ago. And I've seen all sorts of interesting people with extraordinary but common human stories. And many of them grew cassava! But enough about me. Without further ado, I now invite you to come with me to a village market somewhere in Cameroon. Come with me and meet Kumdidimo and Mesozi and their family and friends ...

1. KUMDIDIMO:

Oh, why is everything and everyone against me? Was that the rain I felt? Just a drop please ... to save my maize crop. 'because my little girl has to eat.

2. MESOZI:

Hello, Kumdidimo, my neighbour. Where is your wife today? I haven't seen her for a long time.

3. KUMDIDIMO:

Hello, Mesozi. Oh, my wife went to visit her sick parents last month. And now everything is wrong ... Why does everything hate me? You see, even the rain won't knock on my door. What have I done wrong? Do *you* know? I am a good father ... I am a good husband ...

- 4. MESOZI:** I am sorry. I didn't hear that your wife went to her parents. And the rains are very late, it's true. I know what it's like to be alone in the house.
- 5. KUMDIDIMO:** Ah yes, with your husband dying ... sorry ... *You* know that even my chickens don't like me? One pecked my hand and drew blood this morning. Did you know that?
- 6. MESOZI:** No. Sorry for your hand ... How is your farm?
- 7. KUMDIDIMO:** Didn't I just tell you that my maize is failing!! Don't you listen, woman?
- 8. MESOZI:** Oh sorry ... Ok, I will leave you alone.
- 9. KUMDIDIMO:** No no, please come and talk to me.
- 10. MESOZI:** Ok ... Ok, I am sitting down now. So your maize is failing?
- 11. KUMDIDIMO:** Yes, my maize is failing me ...
- 12. MESOZI:** Hmm ... if your maize is failing you, I have a good story for you ... But perhaps you don't want to hear?
- 13. KUMDIDIMO:** No!! Please ... sit down. Please tell me your story.
- 14. NARRATOR:** AND SO WE BEGIN THE STORY OF KUMDIDIMO AND MESOZI, A TALE OF JOY AND SORROW, OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE, BUT MOST OF ALL – A TALE OF CASSAVA!! A TALE THAT GIVES FARMERS THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO HAVE A LUCRATIVE CASSAVA BUSINESS – YES, LUCRATIVE! BUT THIS CASSAVA INFORMATION COMES WITH AN EXTRA HELPING OF ENTERTAINMENT AND HUMOUR! TUNE IN FOR EPISODE 2

EPISODE**2**

TITLE

MESOZI'S STORY

CAST

MESOZI AND KUMDIDIMO

LOCATION

IN THE MARKET SQUARE. OUTSIDE. EVENING
(SAME SETTING AS EPISODE 1).**NARRATOR:**

WELCOME BACK TO OUR STORY, THE ROOT OF LIFE. I AM YOUR HUMBLE NARRATOR, AKILI. KUMDIDIMO MET MESOZI IN THE MARKET YESTERDAY AND COMPLAINED LOUDLY ABOUT THE BAD LUCK HIS LIFE HAS BROUGHT HIM. MESOZI MENTIONED THAT SHE HAD A STORY TO TELL HIM. KUMDIDIMO SEEMED EAGER TO LISTEN. LET'S LISTEN TOO.

1. MESOZI:

You might remember that three years ago the rains were late too ...

2. KUMDIDIMO:

Hah! We all remember that ...

3. MESOZI:

My husband died three years ago, just before planting. My husband's family took almost everything, and I was left to work a small piece of land by myself, with my daughters. I worked hard to get my fields ready to plant maize. I hoed the fields by hand. I planted the maize seeds we had saved from the year before, plus some that I bought at the ag shop.

4. KUMDIDIMO:

But then it didn't rain!

5. MESOZI:

Right. I waited and waited and waited ... I didn't know what to do! But then my sister came to visit me one day and she said something curious ...

6. KUMDIDIMO:

What? What did she say?

7. MESOZI:

She said I should stop worrying and plant cassava, because cassava would never let me down if I treated it well. She even took me to a farm where we bought the cuttings. And she introduced me to the cassava expert who gives me good advice to this day!

8. KUMDIDIMO:

Cassava? That's hard to believe. Still, I wish I had a sister like that.

9. MESOZI:

I talked to the farmer where we bought the cuttings, and he told me which cutting varieties were right for this area. And he told me all about the right spacing and everything. I listened very carefully. And then I followed everything he said.

- 10. KUMDIDIMO:** And what happened?
- 11. MESOZI:** I got a decent yield of cassava! I had planted late so I didn't get a bumper crop. But my cassava was strong and healthy and it kept us alive through the lean season. My God, if we wouldn't have had that cassava ... we wouldn't have made it!
- 12. KUMDIDIMO:** Cassava! That old woman's crop??? And now you're happy and everything's perfect, right?? Nice story ... but you expect me to believe it??
- 13. MESOZI:** I ... I ...
- 14. KUMDIDIMO:** I mean, maybe I will plant just a few cuttings ... Just to prove you wrong! It will be a waste of time, but ... Ok, got to go ... Bye ... mmmh..mmh
- 15. NARRATOR:** DO YOU THINK KUMDIDIMO WILL PLANT CASSAVA? DO YOU THINK HE IS THE KIND OF MAN WHO DOES WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL? AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE DISRESPECTFUL WAY HE THANKED MESOZI FOR TELLING HIM HER HONEST AND HEARTBREAKING STORY? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS GUY? HE'S SOMETHING, ISN'T HE? I WONDER WHAT HE'LL DO NEXT! SORRY, CAN'T TELL YOU. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT, YOU'LL JUST HAVE WASHOUT FOR EPISODE 3

EPISODE**3**

TITLE

INTRODUCING CASSAVA

CAST

MESOZI AND KUMDIDIMO

LOCATION

AT A TEASHOP. OUTSIDE. EVENING.

NARRATOR:

WELCOME BACK TO OUR STORY. MY NAME IS AKILI AND I'M YOUR NARRATOR AND GUIDE FOR THIS DRAMA. IN OUR LAST EPISODE, MESOZI TOLD KUMDIDIMO THAT GROWING CASSAVA HAD SAVED HER LIFE. KUMDIDIMO SCOFFED AT GROWING CASSAVA, BUT SAID HE'D GROW SOME JUST TO PROVE HER WRONG. DO YOU THINK HE WOULD REALLY PLANT SOME CASSAVA JUST TO PROVE HER WRONG? KEEP LISTENING TO FIND OUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN.

NOTE:

KUMDIDIMO HAS HAD A DRINK OR TWO, BUT IS NOT DRUNK.

1. MESOZI:

Mr. Kumdidimo ... I see you're back at the market this week. Why do you look so thoughtful?

2. KUMDIDIMO... Aaa, don't worry about me! Sit down and have a drink!**3. MESOZI:**

No, thank you, I'll stand. I just came to buy some tea leaves. Tell me, have you planted this season?

4. KUMDIDIMO:

Aaah, I don't know what to do. I was expecting maize to support us, but everything went against me.

5. MESOZI:

Have you planted cassava?

6. KUMDIDIMO:

If I planted maize and got nothing, why should I think about cassava? It's a crop for old people. To be honest, I never even considered that cassava could help me.

7. MESOZI:

Mmmh! Why do you say that?

8. KUMDIDIMO:

If you want people to understand you, you better talk about planting maize. Only maize can save me. You know, this season, everything I tried went against me.

9. MESOZI:

No. You shouldn't believe that. There are other crops that can help you.

- 10. KUMDIDIMO:** Don't talk to me again about planting cassava ... I told you ... I don't have any hopes for it.
- 11. MESOZI:** Kumdidimo, do you remember my story?
- 12. KUMDIDIMO:** Yes ...
- 13. MESOZI:** I owe what I am today to planting cassava.... Do you understand?
- 14. KUMDIDIMO:** I do! It means that the money you are using to take your children to school is from cassava?
- 15. MESOZI:** Not only that! Even the house I live in was paid for by growing and processing cassava. It's not a big house but it's very comfortable for us. Cassava can really pay off.
- 16. KUMDIDIMO:** Mmmh! Hold on! Don't you want to tell me that somebody in town married you and is paying school fees for your children and paying for your house?
- 17. MESOZI:** I am not married and I don't have a man to waste my time.... Believe me ... all my success is from planting cassava! Good-bye!
- 18. NARRATOR:** WELL, HOW ABOUT THAT? WHAT CASSAVA HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER, MAY NO-ONE BREAK APART! CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BRIDES AND GROOMS! AND DON'T FORGET! IF YOU WANT A GOOD MARKET, MAKE SURE YOU HAVE GOOD PACKAGING AND LABEL YOUR PACKAGE WELL! WE SAW HOW KUMDIDIMO AND MESOZI BENEFITED THROUGH CASSAVA ... WHAT ABOUT YOU? ...

THE END.