

Testimony on the consequences of the genocide

Name: Ndayisaba
Cellule: Nyarutovu
Sector: Bisesero
Commune: Gishyita
Préfecture: Kibuye
Profession: Farmer/cattle breeder
Marital Status: -
Age: 33 years old

I was born in Bisesero. I grew up in a family of cattle breeders. During my youth, I used to look after my father's cows. I did not go to school so I do not know how to read nor write.

It was common knowledge that the Tutsis from the Bisesero region were great fighters and that it was impossible for any thief to steal our cows. In other areas the cows belonging to Tutsis were stolen practically every night.

There was a great solidarity between us. If anyone from Bisesero was attacked, everybody would help the victim and chase the attackers away immediately. Many people were afraid of us, especially during the dry season when there was not enough grass for our cows in our region. I would go with someone who I asked to accompany me, to other *préfectures* like Gikongoro with my cows to look for a grazing area. I would spend about one month in a place that I did not know, carrying a club and a machete. I would put my cows in pastures. People would ask me where I came from. I would tell them that I was from Bisesero. When they heard where I came from, they would immediately keep their distance. So we would stay there peacefully until I returned to Bisesero.

We were amazed when the militiamen attacked us, after Habyarimana's death, because we were people who were feared. The militiamen first attacked the sector of Musenyi. We staged a counterattack. When we set off, we thought that they were thieves who wanted to steal our cows. However, when we got to where the attackers were, we realised that all they wanted to do was to kill us because they said that their mission was to kill all the Tutsis. This occurred just a few days after the President's death. The militiamen had killed a few Tutsis that day with grenades and guns. Despite the fact that they had brought all these arms, we still managed to chase them away with stones, swords and clubs.

That evening, we decided to get together on one hill so as to reinforce our attack. There were many of us defending on that hill, but needless to say, the militiamen proceeded to launch their attacks daily. They threw grenades at us and we chased them with stones and clubs, killing many militiamen in the process.

At the end of April 1994, two weeks passed without any attacks from the militiamen. We thought that the genocide was therefore over. We began to farm our fields. However, at night, we still assembled together in the same place.

During the month of May, the militiamen frequently attacked us. I will never forget the attack of the 13 May 1994. A large number of militiamen and soldiers arrived in many trucks and buses. They surrounded us and then began to throw grenades at us. Then they made their advance. The soldiers shot bullets at us and the militiamen finished the Tutsi people off with machetes. They killed practically all the women and children that day. My family was also killed. They were:

- My mother, Everienne Nyirabukezi.
- My older brother: Francisco Ngendahimana and his wife and children.

- My younger sisters, Mukamuhirwa, who was a student, Uwankwera and Mukagatare, a student.
- My younger brothers, Cyriaque Rugwizangoga, who was at school, and Sibomana, a baby.

Not only did they kill all these people, but they also took our cows and food supplies. They gathered all our crops which were in the fields.

That day, 13 May 1994, we found that we were unable to defend ourselves against the attack. There were too many militiamen who were heavily armed. Everyone had to look for a way to escape. I ran away from the militiamen who were behind me. Unfortunately I ran up to where the bourgmestre, Charles Sikubwabo and Obed Ruzindana were, together with other important militiamen, whose names I do not know. They were shouting to the other militiamen to kill more people. They were wearing white clothes. When they saw me running up, they told them to kill me. The bourgmestre Sikubwabo was carrying a gun in his hand. He shot me in the right shoulder. I carried on running although I was bleeding profusely. I hid in the bush.

During the day I would hide in the bush and at night, I would leave to go and look for grass to help heal my wound. I remained where I was with no food to eat. All I could see were corpses and wounded people. Luckily, the French soldiers arrived at around the end of June 1994. They treated us and afterwards they took us to the commune of Kivumu where the RPF soldiers had arrived. Next we were driven to Kabgayi. Life was difficult there as well. There were many survivors in this place. All we were given to eat was cornflower.

A man called Martin Buhigiro, from Bisesero, came to see us. He saw how difficult life was and so he took us to Bugesera. When I and others got to this place, I fell ill. I had malaria. I had not acclimatised myself to the warm climate in Bugesera. It is very different to the climate in the Bisesero region and I was not able to find enough medicines.

We stayed in the militiamen's houses who gone to Zaire. We later heard that the survivors from Bisesero, who had stayed in Kabgayi, had returned home. We did the same and left Bugesera. When I got there, I regretted my decision to leave Bugesera. All that was left of my father's house was bushes. No-one else from my family was there. The other survivors helped me rebuild a small house. I moved in to a badly built house, all alone, without any materials. I had no plates, pans, chairs and food. I spent all day in bed without eating and just drinking water. I was ashamed of walking around because I had no clothes. The only ones I did have were torn and unwashed because I did not have any soap. I also did not have any money to buy any. I had to wash my clothes at night because I didn't have any others to wear.

Another reason why I couldn't farm was because of my right shoulder which still is not healed. I did not have any cows to look after. I realised that I could die very soon of loneliness and hunger.

My parents used to look after me before the genocide. When I went home my mother immediately used to give me food to eat. I also had brothers, sisters and friends and I always felt comfortable around them. When I was alone in the house, I used to think about all the people who were killed barbarically. Their bodies were still exposed on the hills and sometimes I would see the dogs scratching at someone's bone. When I saw this, I wondered why the State was not helping us to bury our people. All this increased my distress. I decided to look for a Hutu wife to help me with all my problems. I had to look for a Hutu wife because I couldn't find a Tutsi woman. They all died during the genocide.

I suffered even more after I had married this woman. Every time I see her, I think about my fiancée who is dead. Just before the genocide, I had finished building

my own house in preparation for my marriage. My father had also given me many cows as an inheritance. My fiancée loved me and I loved her. She came from the 'Abanyiginya' tribe as I did. I often used to go and see her. Her parents always warmly welcomed me and I could see that I had found another family who treated me as their child. Now with my present wife, I have lost all the will to live. Her family does not approach me. My wife does not console me. She has now given birth to a girl but I am afraid that she will turn out like her mother.

I have tried to be reconciled with the Hutus by marrying their daughter, but I realise now that I have wasted my time. My wife's family has done nothing to help me. They do not want to tell me which militiamen attacked me although they were around during the genocide. **(elle=family or wife?)** I am currently living in the bush since the return of the militiamen who fled the country. They have started threatening me again. When the militiamen came back, the NGO's and the government helped them a lot by giving them food supplies and all the necessary materials. They were also welcomed by their families who stayed behind. We felt ridiculed by them, when we saw how well they were received, despite the fact that they murdered people,. They want to kill us because they are afraid that we will bring them to justice.

Even if we hide in the bush, the Hutu wives will tell their brothers where we are hiding because in the morning, the women see us shivering from the cold. They can guess exactly where we spent the night.

Before telling us to be reconciled with the militiamen, they should make sure that we are safe. When they have killed us all, the militiamen will no longer have any problems because there will be no-one left to accuse them of the genocide. The State will then look after other things because it will not want to waste any more time talking about reconciliation when all the dissatisfied people have been killed. Instead of building houses which are apparently for us, they should first of all protect us. Otherwise the houses will be taken over by the militiamen.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 8 February 1997.