

The Bisesero Resistance

1.

Name: Sylver Gatwaza

Cellule: Ngabo

Sector: Bisesero

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: Farmer/cattle breeder

Marital Status: Married

Age: 27 years old

Before the start of the genocide, I lived with my father, Jean Ruhanamilindi. I was not married. My mother had died well before this time. Despite the fact that I had no mother, I was still happy. I did not have any problems. My father or older brothers used to help me. I was the youngest of eleven children. I spent all day looking after my father's cows which I found really interesting.

When President Habyarimana died, we had many problems. The military soldiers first went to the Musenyi sector. When we heard this, we immediately went to repel the attack. The whole day was spent fighting and in the evening, we all gathered on one hill. The next day, the bourgmestre from the commune of Gisovu, policemen and militiamen assembled on the hill of Nyakigugu. They began to shoot at us and they killed the wife of someone called Munyurangabo from our cellule. She was carrying a child on her back. We felt angry with the killers because we had followed them with the objective of killing them but they had run away. After this, we looked for stones, clubs, small hoes, swords and spears.

We asked the elderly and the young people to teach us how to fight. Every day the militiamen arrived in cars which belonged to Obed Ruzindana and the bourgmestres from Gisovu and Gishyita in order to kill us. Nevertheless, during the month of April 1994, they were disappointed because we killed a lot of militiamen.

I remember when we killed a lieutenant and his body guards (or escorts). One morning at the beginning of May 1994, a large number of militiamen, wearing white clothes, launched an attack with the use of grenades. We hid **or lay down** and the genocidal criminals advanced. The battle began immediately. One lieutenant threw a grenade and three Tutsis were instantly killed. A man called Ntagozera (a Tutsi), hit the lieutenant over the head with a small hoe. He fell and lost control of his bladder and his gun fell out of his hands. We surrounded him and hit him with machetes. He died along with four other soldiers who were guarding him. We killed many militiamen that day.

We looked in the lieutenant's pockets and checked his identity. He was from the commune of Gaseke, in the Gisenyi *préfecture*. We saw the sheet of paper which said in writing that he was going to receive five million francs and twenty-five cows after he had killed all the Tutsis from Bisesero. It did not say who actually signed this contract.

When the leaders of the militia realised that we had killed soldiers, they went to call other militiamen and soldiers for back-up to kill us. On 13 April 1994, a great many militiamen came in buses and trucks. They surrounded us and proceeded to kill many people especially women and children. We were really exhausted by then because we were suffering from hunger. The militiamen had gathered all our crops from our fields. They had also broken our utensils which we needed for cooking. That day, they managed to separate us in such a way that it made it easier for them to kill

us. The hills were covered with bodies. From that moment onwards, I decided to hide in the bush. All my brothers and sisters were dead.

I stayed in hiding until the French soldiers arrived. They rounded us up onto one hill and drove us to the RPF zone a few days later. When the RPF soldiers arrived in Bisesero, we went back there.

I had lost my whole family and all my possessions. I was forced to marry a survivor from Bisesero straight away so that someone would be there to help me. Before the genocide, I had a girlfriend. I loved her a lot. So much so that I had asked her to marry me. She accepted. In those days, when one got married, there were ceremonies, dancing, singing and the parents invited many people. The guests would give cows etc to the newly-wed couple.

I thought a lot about the day I was to get married with this girl but the genocide changed everything. She is dead now. My wife also lost her family during the genocide. There is no-one to help us. She recently gave birth. No woman came to help me make the gruel for her. Before the genocide, when a woman gave birth, the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law came to look after the baby and mother. The husband did not do anything. I am the one who now draws water from the well and who prepares the food because my wife is still weak.

The wives of the other survivors who could help me, are Hutu. Hutu wives cannot come to my home in case they poison us. I no longer visit the other survivors because of their Hutu wives. However, the survivors fo Bisesero have founded an association called 'Abadaharana of Bisesero'. This is so that all the survivors can meet together.

We now have cabbages, peas and potatoes growing. With the money that we will receive by selling these products, we are going to be able to do start a business. Someone called Clavet Buzizi, from Bisesero, and who works in Butare in a church, has built us a house for doing business. If any survivor has a problem, we will help him by giving him some money.

Another association (ARDEC) is in the process of building us one hundred houses on the hill of Gisoro, in the cellule of Gitwa in the Bisesero sector.

Perhaps by getting together, we will be able to do something.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 7 February 1997.

2.

Name: Efesto Habiyambere

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

Age: 28 years old

The people from the Bisesero region came from various tribes but we were united. I am from the *Umunyiginya* tribe and my wife, Nyirankumbuye, was from the *Umuhima* tribe. We had two children, one boy and one girl.

There were many young girls and boys in Bisesero. They would gather on the hill during the day and play sport. They also played when they were looking after the cows. None of the Tutsis from Bisesero studied. Their occupation was looking after the cows. Some of the young people wanted to join the FAR (*Forces Armées*

Rwandaises). They had passed all the relevant exams, for example running etc, but the military officers had prevented them from joining, the reason being that the Abasesero were Tutsis. They were very slender and were apparently unable to handle a gun. So we remained isolated in our region, and no-one could attack us.

After President Habyarimana's death, Tutsi houses were burned down in the commune of Gishyita in Mubuga. The Tutsi intellectuals were the first to be killed. On the 9 April 1994, the militiamen from this commune launched an attack on the sector of Musenyi, in the Bisesero region. These militiamen were accompanied by military soldiers who were carrying guns. We managed to resist this attack by throwing stones at them. Despite the fact that we were returning their attack, they still managed to kill several people from our group.

As soon as this happened, we gathered together on the hill. People were starting to panic. They couldn't eat from fear. Me and other young people like Nzigira (from the Umunyiginya tribe), Gatwaza (from the Umuhima tribe) and Habimana (from the Umuhima tribe) went up to the other young people who were afraid and tried to raise their spirits. Two old people, called Karamaga et Birara were giving encouragement to prepare the people for battle against the militiamen. The children and women started to look for stones to collect. We put them in our bags. For the first few days, everyone warmed themselves at night by the fire. Often, however, it rained and the people shivered in the cold.

The militiamen launched attacks every day. They arrived in Obed Ruzindana's cars which were in fact trucks used to transport tea from Gisovu. When they arrived they were singing. They were wearing white clothes and grass on their heads. When I saw them attacking, I would immediately take my spear and club and put the bag of stones around my neck and I would ask the others to follow me. Nzigira would take another group and we would follow the orders that the two old men gave us.

When the militiamen attacked, we would lie down at first. This was because they were throwing grenades. Afterwards, we would mingle with the attackers and fight. When they saw that about two militiamen were dead, they would immediately retreat. Someone would be looking to see if the stones were all gone and then they would ask the women and children to quickly get more. If anyone from our group retreated out of fear, Birara or Karamaga would immediately hit them with their clubs.

In the evening, when the militiamen had gone home, we would gather together again so that those who were still alive should know to carry on fighting until the very end. When my mother was still alive, she used to come and beg me not to go at the front of the others when a battle took place. She wanted to prevent me from doing this because I was the only boy in a family of girls. I was the only son she had. For the first time she was afraid that I would die. Not once did I listen to my mother's advice. I always went to the front. During the whole of the month of April, we were attacked but each time we were the victorious ones because we managed to kill many militiamen, police and soldiers. We also took their weapons, such as guns.

Two weeks prior to 13 May 1994, there was a moment of respite. We thought that peace had been reestablished and we started to farm our fields and to bury the dead.

On the 13 May 1994, at about 9:00 a.m., we saw a large number of cars arriving, such as lorries, buses and trucks. They were full of militiamen. When they arrived at a spot near to where we had gathered, they surrounded us and began to shoot us using different guns. In less than an hour, they had killed practically all the women and children.

There was no longer any point in throwing stones now. We had to create a path amongst the militiamen so as to avoid being caught. Our men all attacked one

particular group of militiamen who were consequently frightened and they opened up the path for us. We ran to hide in the bush. That day, they managed to break all the crockery and any other materials we had.

The next day, they came back to comb through everything. We could no longer see any grass. Instead, we saw corpses; women with children on their backs who were dead. The genocidal killers had undressed the bodies! It was a terrible sight.

As I was walking at night, I fell over my mother's body. I asked the survivors to help me bury her. I don't know where the bodies of my children and the other members of my family are exposed.

The militiamen continued their attacks although there were not as many of them as there were during the attack of 13 May 1994. Despite there being only a small group of us left, now that practically all the people were dead, we carried on fighting. Nzigira gave us much courage but unfortunately he was killed.

Nzigira and I were in an attack together, the day he was killed. The militiamen were throwing stones and saying 'These are the people who are preventing us from receiving our reward from Obed Ruzindana. We have to find a way to kill them.' Nzigira was then hit on the foot with a stone. He began to limp. I helped him withdraw because I could see that it was impossible to carry on the fight. As we were walking back, a soldier saw us and shot at us. Nzigira was hit and he fell. The militiamen came to finish him off with a machete. I was shot in the knee but I was still able to walk. I went and hid in a bush. The militiamen who saw me going to the bush, set light to it to kill me. I escaped from the smoke and went to hide elsewhere.

I remained in Bisesero, with all the bodies around me. I couldn't find anything to eat or drink. I was very thin and my hair was dirty. My skin was all scaly because I had not been able to wash myself for two months.

However, I was still alive when the French soldiers arrived to drive us to the RPF zone in Gitarama. When the genocide was over, I came back to the commune of Gisovu with another group of survivors. We inhabited the centre of Gakuta near the office of the commune. We were really poor there and many people were ill. The Hutus, who we had known before, would walk past us, look at us and make fun of us. They asked themselves if we were really the powerful Abasesero who were so well-reputed. When we heard what people were saying, we decided to go back to our hill. Three survivors got together and built a small house.

Now we live on our hill. We are just widowers who can't farm. We no longer have any cows to be able to drink milk. I am still young but I do not have the means to do business for example and I have not done any studies to be able to find myself a job. Before the genocide there were houses and cows around us; now there are only bushes.

When the genocide was over, I was happy because I saw that there were no more Tutsis being killed with machetes. Now survivors are again being killed with machetes.

We are always being asked on the radio and in meetings to be reconciled with the Hutu militiamen. I wonder how we can find the right moment to go and visit the militiamen so that we can all be reconciled. There are many of us who are disabled and cannot walk. At night, we stay in the bush because otherwise the militiamen can find us in our houses to kill us. Because of this, we can no longer sleep. During the day, we do not do anything because we are too weak and our spirits are so low. People should know that we do not have time to be reconciled with militiamen who killed our wives, mothers and children and who carry on killing us. They tell us that the prisons are full and that there is not enough room for the other militiamen who should be imprisoned.

We do not have room in our hearts for reconciliation. Our hearts are full of sadness and sorrow.

Interviewed in Gitaburo, 9 February 1997.

3.

Name: Esdras Havugimana (Hutu)
Cellule: Gitovu
Sector: Gishyita
Commune: Gishyita
Age: 40 years old
Marital Status: Married and father of five children
Profession: Teacher

The militiamen from Cyangugu, who were known as 'Yusufu's interahamwe' came, to the best of my knowledge, at the beginning of the month of May 1994. At the time I was a teacher at the primary school of Gishyita. They often went passed the school, at about 9:00 a.m., and they returned in the afternoon at around 3:00 p.m.

One day, they returned to Bisesero and arrived at the school. It was at a time when we were not in class. Everybody looked at the vehicules which were parked, and someone pointed Yusufu out to me, who was sitting in the passenger seat of a Daihatsu truck. I do not know what colour it was. He was, if I remember rightly, a chubby man who seemed to be fairly old because his hair was white in places. The militiamen were carrying bayonets. I was told that that day they had spent the night at Mika Muhimana's house which was not far from our primary school.

Apart from the killers from Cyangugu, there were other unknown killers in the area who took part in the killings of Kizenga. They were part of the Gisenyi and Rutsiro groups. Those from Gisenyi spent nights at the centre of Gishyita and they stayed (**leur réception**) at the councillor, Mika's, house.

Interviewed in Gitarama prison, 17 March 1997.

4. Name: Elizaphan Kajuga
Cellule: Kigarama
Sector: Bisesero
Commune: Gishyita
Préfecture: Kibuye
Profession: Farmer
Marital Status: Widower of Genocide
Age: 55 years old

The day after the president's death, they began to burn down the houses in the neighbouring sectors. We thought that they were perhaps bandits who were doing this. Two days later, we were attacked in the sector of Musenyi. We took our spears, machetes and sticks to chase the bandits away. When we got there, we noticed that the inhabitants of the sector of Mubuga were also there, together with the communal police. They were armed with spears, guns, grenades and hammers etc.

We fought a lot. The people on our side were killed on the battlefield but we did manage to chase them away. Other militiamen from Gisovu arrived but the other Abasesero group fought these attackers off.

In the evening we decided to stay together so that we could create a united self-defense block. The survivors from the other sectors and communes came to look for shelter in Bisesero. For a long time they had thought of us as strong and we deserved this reputation. In 1962, for example, when the Tutsis were being killed, we were attacked by Hutu inhabitants. We fought against them and they fled. They went to call the soldiers. Misigaro was the police superintendent but they failed. In the years following, we increased in number because no-one was killed.

In 1973, Tutsi killings took place again. The Tutsis were killed, their houses were destroyed, and their cows were killed as well. Yet in our region, no-one dared to do such a thing. The Hutus were afraid of us. This was why the Tutsis from Kibuye did not go into exile. Many stayed where they were because they knew how to fight.

We stayed in Bisesero and reared our cows. Our children only went as far as doing their primary school work and then they looked after the cows. This was because they did not have access to secondary school because they were Tutsis. There were very few educated Tutsis and anyway those who were educated became teachers. All the educated people were arrested in 1990, accused of being supporters of the RPF. For example, Charles Kayibanda who was a farmer, Vianney Ntagara, who was and still is the assistant bourgmestre of Gishyita, Basile Ruzibiza, a teacher, Edouard Muzindutsi, a teacher and Basile Mwanafunzi, also a teacher. They were released after six months.

During the genocide in April 1994, the educated Tutsis were the first to be hunted down and attacked. In the same vein, the rich Tutsi who came to Bisesero were killed savagely; for example Assiel Kabanda who was a shopkeeper in Gishyita. His head was cut off. Charles, the communal police officer in Gishyita, was killed. He was mutilated and his sex organs were hung on an electric pole in front of Kabanda's shop in Gishyita. They are still there now.

During the genocide in April 1994, we gathered together on the Muyira hill in the cellule of Bisesero, sector Rwankuba, commune Gisovu. We made piles of stones which we were going to use to defend ourselves. At the beginning, the attacks were everyday. We fought ferociously because at that stage we were still strong because we were eating. When the militiamen attacked us, they came with their wives and children who gathered the crops that were supposed to feed us. Since we no longer had any food, we had to eat our cows. The militiamen saw that we were still eating so when they launched attacks, they broke our cooking pots and saucepans. Our leader, Birara, his son Nzigira and Karamaga, who were all very strong, told us to be brave so that we would carry on fighting. They advised us to put strips of material round our waist to support us.

We killed policemen such as Ruhindura, as well as soldiers. We even took their guns although we did not know how they worked. The militiamen were heavily-armed. They would attack after they had eaten. However, despite the fact that they had back-up and were healthy, we fought them back with our spears. In the light of our defence, the militiamen did not attack us for some weeks. We thought that the war was over. However we were wrong; they were preparing to launch a large-scale attack.

In the middle of May 1994, a large number of buses, trucks, and vans filled with militiamen, arrived. It was on a Saturday at around 9:00 a.m. They parked their vehicles at a place called Ku Nama. Afterwards they surrounded us and began to throw grenades at us. They were also shooting their guns and fighting with their machetes. They neutralised us so much so that we could no longer put up a resistance.

Each person looked for a way to escape. The women and children, who no longer had the strength to run, were killed instantly. My wife, Adèle Mukangakwaya, and my two children, a baby and Gaspard Nsengimana who was studying in the fourth

year at primary school, died that day. All the hills of Bisesero were strewned with bodies.

I spent all day running and hiding in the bush. Everyday the militiamen came to attack us. My clothes were torn and my feet were swollen. I had nothing to eat. In the evening, when the militiamen went back home, I would go along the hills looking for water from the streams. What shocked me was that all the streams of Bisesero were filled with bodies. The water had become red. I became used to seeing the bodies the whole time so I no longer felt sick. I drank the water despite the fact that I saw bits of bodies of my own family members in the water. I could not do anything about it. There were only a few of us still alive. Many of us were ill and had been hit by machetes. Despite all the problems we had, the people, who still had some strength left, continued to fight. As we were fighting, we thought that the RPF soldiers would eventually arrive to free us. But it was towards the end of June that the French soldiers came. When they arrived they gave us treatment and food to eat. The people who were very sick were taken to Goma (Zaire).

A few days later, the French soldiers drove us to the RPF zone in the commune of Kivumu (Kibuye). Afterwards we went to Kabgayi (Gitarama) where there were other survivors.

After the country had been taken over by the soldiers of the RPF, we went back to Bisesero. We lived in houses which used to be bars. They were just next to the office of our commune. We were in the centre which was far away from our fields and no-one looked after us. We did not have any food. My two children had escaped the genocide as well as two of my brother's children. My brother had died during the genocide. I stayed with the four children. I realised that we could die of starvation so I thought it better to go back home. The children helped me to set up a tent.

We began to farm our fields and whilst we did this we ate the vegetables that we found in the fields. We later built a small house. My children made me feel a bit better. I knew that the genocidal criminals were far away from me. I was told that some of them had gone to Zaire and others had gone to Tanzania.

Recently all the genocidal criminals have come back to the country. They have come back with their guns and the authorities have received them well. They were helped a lot, for example they received foodstuffs etc. Because they were well received, they began to despise us and search for a way to kill us. Now I can't sleep anymore. I keep on seeing militiamen everywhere I go.

On 5 February 1997, I went to fetch some provisions such as soap, hoes, blankets etc, that Claver Buzizi had given to the Abasesero (the name for the people who live in the Bisesero region). I spent the whole day chatting with other survivors. Then I went home at around 6:00 p.m. At around 8:00 p.m., my children gave me some food to eat. We were sitting in the yard in front of our house, eating. Then I saw some people who were coming up towards us with torches. The attackers were saying 'We have to surround them first to be able to hit them with the machetes'. When we heard these words, we left our food and ran out of our house shouting to the people to come and help us. Many people came to our aid. They came beating their drums to frighten the attackers. The attackers ran off shooting although no-one from our group was hurt. Some of the attackers died, others went to hide in the forest between the Gisovu and Gishyita communes.

In January 1997, the attackers killed Martin Nkusi (a farmer from the sector of Gitabura in the commune of Gisovu) as well as his brother, Nsengiyumva. That same day, they killed Nzasabimana and his child. They were all survivors of the genocide. We were all together in Bisesero during the genocide.

We are not at ease. We are always panicking in case we will be killed. From 1959 up until now, the Hutus have wanted to kill us. I cannot therefore be reconciled with the genocidal criminals. They wanted to kill me and my family, so I had to give up all my possessions. I asked another survivor to put me up for a while. It is a small house and there are many of us there. I have to spend the night in the same bed as my children. Usually parents are supposed to have their own rooms. After all these problems that we have because of them, how can we be reconciled? After the genocide, some of the survivors married Hutu women because there were no Tutsi women left. The Hutu women's families have begun poisoning the survivors. For example, Madibongo, the survivor from the sector of Ngoma, was poisoned by his Hutu family-in-law. They admitted before the authorities, that it was they who killed him. So there is no question of reconciliation.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 7 February 1997.

5.

Name: Anastase Kalisa

Before the genocide

Cellule: Wingabo

Sector: Bisesero

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

After the genocide

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 24 years old

Profession: Agricultural **Animateur?**

Marital Status: Married

The day after President Habyarimana's death, we received Tutsi refugees from Gishyita to our region. They told us that they were fleeing their commune because the Hutus were killing the Tutsis. They said that the Hutus had burned a farmer with oil. We felt the need to prepare to fight against any attacks that might be launched on us. We all gathered up with all our weapons.

On Friday, 8 April 1994, the bourgmestre of the Gisovu commune came to Rwankuba, in the Bisesero cellule. He began to collect the weapons up. We didn't want to give our weapons away but we had to, because the police told us that they would shoot us otherwise. Some of us eventually handed them in. Our weapons were machetes, spears and clubs. It was at this point that the Tutsis from the Nyamtovu cellule (in the sector of Bisesero, commune of Gishyita) were attacked. We went to give them some extra support and during the attack we managed to force the interahamwe militiamen to retreat. The militiamen reorganized themselves. At about 2:00 p.m., they launched another attack with their guns and grenades. The battle went on for a short while and in the evening they went home.

Their routine was to attack us during the day. They were afraid of us because they knew that the Tutsis from Bisesero had, for a long time now, always put up an incredible resistance against any attacks that were launched on them. They thought that if they attacked at night the probability of them being killed was greater.

The next day we went to Muyira with our cattle in order to fully prepare ourselves for another attack. The bourgmestre Ndimbati arrived with a group of heavily-armed attackers. We fought against them and both sides lost people.

This carried on until 13 May (April) 1994, when the interahamwe militiamen and ex-FAR soldiers attacked us from all sides. They shot at us and a lot of people were massacred, the majority being women and children who did not have the strength to run. The others managed to save their lives by running. Each time we met an enemy group made up of relatively few people, we would fight against them. We managed to kill some of them. Their tactic was to surround us in order to block the routes which led to the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) zones and to prevent us from throwing ourselves in the river Kivu. Instead, they wanted us to die at the hands of the enemy with the use of machetes. When we succeeded in neutralising an attack from a small group of attackers, we would steal their weapons. We were at the end of our tether when the French soldiers came to our aid. This was at the end of June 1994. They rounded us up to so that we would be safe. Because they were worried about our safety, they evacuated us to zones which had been taken over by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (FPR) in Gitarama.

Soon afterwards, my brother-in-law took me to Kigali. He was a driver and was responsible for me. I went back home to rebuild our house. I used *sheetings* (corrugated iron??) which I had to buy.

Before the genocide, my family had been a large one. I lived with my parents, brothers, nieces and nephews. Now I am all alone. We used to live off the land but all our cattle was stolen and now the fields are barren due to the lack of manure from the animals.

I was hit with a stone and *massue* on the shoulder. As a result, when I work hard, I fall ill. It's very difficult to find money to look after myself when I'm ill. If I do fall seriously ill, I find it impossible to find anyone to take me to hospital because the only other person I live with is my wife. My wife is presently in hospital. I can't find anyone to look after her. I have to work so I am forced to pay someone to look after her. There's a risk that if I go and see her, I will be fired. My wife is unhappy when I don't go and see her because she thinks that I'm abandoning her.

We know that the families of the people who we have brought to justice, want to take revenge on us by killing us. Some of us have already become victims of acts of revenge. A man called Martin Nkusi, who used to be a policeman in the commune of Gisovu, and his son were recently killed simply because they had the courage to bring the genocidal criminals to justice.

I accept the way justice is being done at the moment. The only problem is that there is an insufficient number of witnesses who can testify against the genocidal criminals. A lot of witnesses are needed to create a dossier on a genocidal criminal.

Those in charge of the cellules and the councillors of the sectors, do not make it any easier for us to retrieve our belongings which were stolen during the genocide. They are not on our side. The Hutus were elected in positions of authority at the time when we were evacuated to Gitarama. Many of them participated in the genocide and those who elected them, did so because they wanted to be protected against being brought to justice.

The same thing happened in the sector of Twumba where the councillor Ngongo was in charge, and similarly in the sector of Gikarnaka, under the supervision of Rugaragara. However, presently they are all in prison on the charge of being genocidal criminals. Likewise, this happened in several cellules where certain people have authority. (?) In short, the fact that we have people who are in positions of

authority who participated in the genocide and who we did not elect, means that they do not understand our problems.

I used to be a follower of the Catholic Church before the genocide. Now, I am an adventist. I changed because the priests participated in the genocide themselves, instead of showing us the right way. One example is the priest Marcel who originally comes from the commune of Mwendo. He participated in the genocide. Each time he finished mass, he gave us a lot of propaganda about the political party MRND. This is why so many people have left the Catholic Church.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997.

6.

Name: Cathérine Kamayenge

Cellule: Rwabirembo

Sector: Musenyi

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 75 years old

Marital Status: Widow of the genocide

When the genocide began in our region, I was at home with my daughters who had come to see me. We were preparing the evening meal when a woman, who was a neighbour, called me to ask me why we were still at home. The other people had already gone to the hills because the militiamen had started to burn down the houses and kill the Tutsis.

I decided to gather together the valuable things so that I could hide them at a Hutu neighbours' house. His name was Joseph Rwamakuba and I hoped that he would keep them for us.

After I had done this, my husband, Marcel Gasamunyiga, my daughters, Belthilde Mukagasana and Ancilla Uwimana, their children and myself took the road to seek refuge on the mountain of Nyabitare and on the Muyira hill. It began to rain at the time and we were shivering a lot. The cows mooed and the children began to cry. From that day on, we spent the rest of our lives in the bush.

The next day, the Interwahamwe started to attack us. They were led by our councillor Muhirwa and a policeman, Rwigimba. My husband was the first to die because he was the one who was guarding the cows when the militiamen came to steal them. My husband was hit on the head with a stone and he died immediately. We did not have too many problems burying him because it was still at the beginning of the genocide and things had not become too serious. They continued to kill the people, to steal the cows and to gather the crops so that we would die of hunger. It was done in such a way that to have some food we would had to buy it. What we did manage to buy, came from young people who risked their lives fetching it from the mountains at night. At the time, an ear of sorghum cost 30 francs, a stem of sorghum cost 20 francs. The people used it to quench their thirst.

Even though the *génocidaires* were attacking us, we still tried to organise ourselves. The Tutsi men carried spears and machetes to try and defend us. The women and girls had the responsibility of collecting stones and creating steres so that they could push back the attackers. We therefore had to spend the whole of each day collecting these stones. My old age did not exempt me from the agony of collecting

stones. We killed quite a lot of militiamen. They feared attacking us because of our resistance.

Due to such a resistance, the genocidal criminals went to fetch help from elsewhere. In the middle of May 1994, the most terrible attack came upon us. People, heavily-armed with guns and grenades, came on board buses and trucks and surrounded us. They began to loot.

We felt totally demoralised so much so that each person just looked for a way to save himself. That day the elderly, the women and the children were killed, unable to flee for their lives. We could see bodies on the hills. There were people who were almost dead and babies feeding from the breasts of their dead mothers. My son, my daughter's child and myself went to hide in the bush. Each evening we gathered together as usual to see if we were still all alive. That day we waited in vain for my daughters; my son helped me search for them among the corpses to check to see whether they were dead.

Two days after their death, we found them in a place called Runyangingo. We did not have any hoes to dig a grave so we just put them on the grass. Then we returned to the bush. I did not have any strength left and I could no longer eat. I had no more clothes. I was like an old animal. I saw the dogs devouring the corpses.

I hid in the bush until the French soldiers arrived. They took care of us and took us to the areas which were controlled by the RPF in the commune of Kivumu. Then we went to Kabgayi. It was only after the whole country had been taken over that I returned to Kibuye. My house had been completely destroyed so I lived in François Mvunabandi's house, who had taken refuge in Zaire. The house had two very narrow rooms and it had no facilities at all. It reminded me of the life I used to lead before the genocide.

Prior to the genocide, I had a husband who I lived with. He was very caring towards me. I also had seven children (boys and girls). Six of them died during the genocide along with their own families (i.e. their children, husbands and wives). They were

1. Thaddée Rutabendura, who died along with his four children;
2. Anastasie Mukamutesi, who died her three children;
3. Marie Mukandoli, who died with her six children;
4. Bernadette Nyiranjara, who died with her four children;
5. Belthilde Mukagansana, who died with her three children;
6. Ancilla Uwimana, who died along with her three children.

I used to live like a queen amongst my children. We had three large houses and several stables for the cows. We even had a place to put the goats. I did not work at all; I didn't even sow or reap the crops. My work just consisted of serving the food to my children and checking to see if the calves were being well-looked after. When the evening meal was over, we used to sing and dance, especially when a marriage took place. People would spend weeks and weeks drinking beer at our home. I had a happy heart.

Now I spend the days alone. My only son who I stay with, teaches in a school and only comes back home in the evening. The only child left of my daughter who was killed, comes home late in the evening as well from school. I have to try and prepare something to appease the hunger for my son and the young boy as they return from school completely shattered.

I am unable to draw water from the well so I have to go and beg here and there in the neighbourhood so that I can have some food to prepare. I find it difficult to sleep. At night, I often wake up to see if the day is dawning. I'm sure my insomnia is because of the terrible memories of the events. Another reason may be because I sleep

right next to the front door on mats, without a blanket and it gets cold. I can't even move the bed because there is not enough room. There isn't even any room to put the kitchen utensils and clothes. Before the genocide I had many bedrooms and beds with mattresses.

I still suffer from malaria and bronchitis. I do not have any medicines to treat myself with because my son's wage is used to buy food and to pay for the child's school fees. Nobody helps us. The refugees who have just returned, such as the militiamen, receive hoes, flour and oil at the office of the commune and they have other members of their families to help them. We have lost our families and no-one concerns themselves with us.

Despite the fact that they talk to us about reconciliation, I cannot be reconciled to anyone because of all the suffering that we have endured. My children died during the genocide and cannot come back so it is difficult and impossible for me to be reconciled.

I have a large wound deep in my heart. When I go back to Bisesero (*she lives in the centre of commerce in Gishyita*) to see peoples' bones who have not been buried, it immediately reminds me of my neighbours and my family with whom we lived peacefully. I feel disturbed at once when I see them. When I see where my house was as well, I feel like committing suicide. Yet my faith in God holds me back. Although the clergymen and other so-called Christians plunged themselves into killing, I cannot follow their example??. I know that God will punish them and that those who died in the genocide are close to God. This is why I am still a Christian.

Interviewed in Gitovu (Gishyita), 19 May 1997.

PS The owner of the house she is living in, has not yet returned. If he does come back, Catherine will be outside because she has no hope of finding her own house.

7.

Name: Siméon Karamaga

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: Breeder

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

Age: 53 years old

The people who live in the Bisesero region are known by the name of Abasesero. We were cattle breeders. There was not a single person who did not have a cow. There were three well-known tribes: the *Abanyiginya*, *Abakono* and *Abahima* tribes. Each tribe's great grandfather was still alive.

I am from the *Abanyiginya* tribe and our great grandfather is called Sebikara. He was the head of the tribe. Bijeri is the great grandfather and leader of the *Abahima* tribe. Rukwirangabo is the great-grandfather and the leader of the *Abakono* tribe. The three tribes formed a very close-knit community. Their children used to marry each other from the other tribes and anyone who wanted a husband or wife did not need to look further than the three tribes.

A sign and the river Ryimpundu separated the two Biseseros because there was Bisesero of Gisovu and Bisesero of Gishyita. Despite the fact that we live in two different communes, we are still close.

The genocide of the Tutsis began in 1959, when I was an adolescent. We made sure that we were able to defend ourselves in order to protect ourselves and our cows. Nobody could find a way of either stealing our cows or burning our houses. In 1962, the Tutsi massacres began again but needless to say we managed to chase the enemy away, even though they had guns. In 1973, the genocidal killers returned. They burned two of the Abasesero houses. We were furious and we took our spears and bows. We put the fires of the two houses out. The houses actually belonged to Seruhongore and to Muyubi. The genocidal killers were afraid of us and they left us alone. The Tutsis from other regions were killed and their houses were burnt down. The surviving Tutsis left the country but all of us, except for a few families who went to Zaire, remained in Bisesero. We later killed the thieves who had tried to steal our cows. People from other regions who saw how we managed against the slightest resistance, believed that we were very strong men who could not be defeated by anyone.

We remained in Bisesero and looked after our cows. Our weapons were clubs. Umusesero's characteristic is a club in one hand. Even a child cannot go out without a club. Just as guns have different names, so do our clubs. We have clubs which are called *intobo*, *ingongo*, *ingabe*, *isanzu* and *umushabarara*. The name of each club corresponds to the name of the tree which it comes from. There is a market at Nyarushishi in the commune of Gisovu, where we sell our good-quality clubs. We have specialists who choose good clubs for battle.

At the beginning of the genocide in April 1994, many Tutsis came to Bisesero from other regions because they thought that the area was safe. Everyone thought that the military would be unable to attack the Bisesero area because we were warriors. However, this was not so. The militia attacked us at the very beginning of the genocide.

On 7 April 1994, the militiamen came to the office of the commune of Gishyita and they proceeded to attack Bisesero of Gishyita. That morning we took our clubs, machetes and spears and we went to try and drive back the attack that the militiamen had launched on us. We succeeded in doing this only after having lost nine of our people. This was because the militia had guns. Despite this advantage, they ran away in retreat. After they had gone, we realised how serious things were becoming. We decided that we should all stay on just one hill so we left with our children and our goods, and most importantly our cows.

There were too many of us on this particular hill which was called Muyira. Everyone could do as they wished. We decided to choose some people who would be able to lead us especially when there was an militia attack. We wanted to choose someone who was not afraid and who would be able to spur us on, someone who also had experience when it came to battle. We therefore appointed Aminadabu Birara as commander. He was a wise man and as old as I. He lay out a plan for us to follow so that we would be able to repel the militia. Birara was amongst the Abasesero who had taken part in the battle of 1959. Unfortunately, he was killed towards the end of the genocide in Bisesero.

I was appointed his deputy and I was in charge of my own sections. The militia were always dressed in white when they launched an attack. When we saw them coming to attack us, I would go in front of everybody (the Tutsis) and ask them to lie down. The militia would approach us, shooting as they advanced. When they saw that we were all lying down, they would come up to us. I would ask the Abasesero to get up and go amongst the militia. In this way they would not be able to throw grenades nor could they shoot us with their guns because there was a risk that they would kill their own people.

Our commander Birara, would stay behind everyone to keep an eye out on those who were afraid. He would hit anyone who refused to advance. Women and children were also obliged to bring stones and clubs. Our commander would try and hide the Abasesero corpses during the fighting so that the others would not suddenly become frightened.

Often we managed to repel the enemy quite far back. I liked to be in front of the others. I would sometimes have to tell the Abasesero to retreat if I saw that we were becoming scattered or that we might fall into the enemy zone.

Each time we fought a battle with the enemy, we would meet on the Muyira hill to sum up the day's events. There were some young people amongst us who were there to help direct the others during the battles. The young people we chose to do this were Augustin Nzigira, Birara's son, who is now dead; Aron Gakoko, who is alive; Efasto Habiyambere, who is also still alive and Habimana, now dead.

In the evenings we would therefore gather together and allocate new tasks to one another. We needed a lot of strength to work, so we would slaughter the healthy cows, drink **la sauce chaude** and then eat the meat. This gave us back our strength.

One group was in charge of the cooking whilst another group would watch out for the enemy so that they could not creep up on us unawares. Other people were in charge of burying our people who had been killed. We also constantly restocked our supply of stones.

It rained all the time and we did not get a lot of sleep but we still managed to remain positive because we saw how well we were defending ourselves against the militia despite the fact that we had no guns. Instead we used our clubs. A militiamen who received a blow from this died immediately.

We went back to our properties before the 13 May 1994, and we began to farm. At night we would still meet on the same hill. We were hopeful that the militia would not be able to kill us. We had managed to kill policemen and soldiers and we took their guns although we did not know how to use them. The men who were in charge of the militia were Obed Ruzindana, the bourgmestre of Gisovu and the bourgmestre of Gishyita as well as many other militiamen. They would come in Obed's car and the cars of some of the shopkeepers.

On 13 May 1994, a large number of militiamen and soldiers from Gitarama, Gisenyi and practically the whole country arrived in buses and trucks. They surrounded us and shot at us persistently. Many women and children were killed that day especially since many were unable to run. My wife, Marthe Nyirahategeka and my seven children as well as my grandchildren were killed that day.

The militiamen were always dressed in white and they wore green plants on their heads. They were like madmen. That day they managed to kill many of us. The hills were covered in dead bodies. They returned the next day to comb through the bodies. The militiamen also took away our cows and they gathered everything we had grown from our fields.

A small number of us hid in a hole. It was difficult to organise ourselves and we were hungry since we had had nothing at all to eat. Even so, in the evening we all met on the hill to try and raise the young people's spirits so that they could carry on running and fighting. We had suffered a lot. At night we saw dogs and other animals who came to devour the bodies. During the day crows would come with the militiamen to come and eat the bodies as well.

No one took pity upon us. When the militia attacked us, they begged us not to run so far. If they killed us easily they would be rewarded by Obed Ruzindana.

Every single day the militiamen came back to kill us in Biseseo. Fortunately the French soldiers arrived at around the end of June 1994. They came in white cars. In

the hole, we had radios and we had heard that French soldiers had come to Rwanda, more specifically that they had arrived in Cyangugu, Kibuye and Gikongoro.

When we saw their cars arriving, the Abasesero, including Anastase, Amoni Nyakayiro and Bimenyimana (otherwise known as Kamenyi who was killed after the genocide by infiltrators) went to stop them. We all emerged from our hiding place. Eric, who could speak French, explained who we were. The French took photos of us. The militia were there with them, carrying their weapons. The soldiers then left and said that they would be returning. When the French had gone, the militia came back to kill. They killed a lot of us that day because many people had come out of their hiding places when they had seen the French soldiers.

Three days later, the French returned. They gathered us together on the hill. We sang religious songs in glory of God “Nyemerera Ngendana Na We Myami...”, which means “Lord, let me come to your side”. The people who were ill, were driven to the hospital in Goma (Zaire) by the soldiers. A few weeks later, we were put in cars and driven to the RPF zone in the commune of Kivumu (Kibuye). After this we went to Kabgayi.

After the RPF took over the whole country, we returned to our hill in Bisesero. For the first few days, we stayed at the office of the commune. We then built huts on our hills and tried with great difficulty to start life over again. We had no materials so we were obliged to fetch them. On our way to fetch wood, we could see our own children’s skulls. We have tried to accept that our life will be difficult without our children or wives, but what hurts us deeply, is that the militiamen still want to kill us, even now. We are unable to sleep. They attack us all the time. At the beginning of February 1997 the militiamen killed some survivors. They had been with us during the genocide, in the sector of Gitabura in the commune of Gisovu. They were hit over the head by machetes, just like in April 1994. We lost all faith in life.

Before the mass influx of returning militiamen from Zaire and Tanzania, we felt safe. Some of the militiamen’s families who had stayed behind on the hills, were given money so that they could farm for the survivors. We were unable to do it ourselves because we no longer had the strength and many of us are now disabled because of the genocide. Many of the survivors also began to marry Hutu women.

When the militiamen came back, no one continued to farm for us. The families were very happy to see their brothers coming back and looking so healthy. The militiamen did not lose a thing during the genocide but they are the ones who receive all the help. Everyone who has returned from Zaire or Tanzania, must go to the office in the relevant sector to collect goods and materials such as plates, blankets, cups etc...Some white people even came along to check that everyone had received the necessary utensils. As for us, no one came to check on us.

Prior to the genocide, Abasesero was full of strong men. The few men who remain today will die of sorrow. We cannot foresee the future of Bisesero. We are beginning to rebuild houses but if the houses are finished, we will need wives to have children with so that we can carry on the name of “Abasesero”. We need this so that we will be able be protected.

When talking about reconciliation, we do not feel that we can be reconciled with people who have killed members of our families and who persist in trying to kill us. All we want to hear is the officials say that they have finished punishing the genocidal criminals. We stay on our hill and we do not prevent anyone from living their lives the way they want to. Someone has to tell us exactly what we have to do to be reconciled. Do we have to offer beer to the militia to show that we are reconciled or do we give our cows, which is a sign of friendship, to the genocidal killers? They are

the ones who cannot bear the fact that we are still alive. Ultimately we need justice. I have put all my trust in God because I am still a Christian.

Interviewed in Musenyi (in the sector of Musenyi), 8 February 1997.

8.

Name: Jean Baptiste Kayihura

Cellule: Bugina

Sector: Gishyita

Commune: Gishyita

Age: 42 years old

Marital Status: Married and father of seven children

Profession: Veterinary nurse

I was arrested 18 November 1994 and transferred to Gitarama on 10 December 1994.

The killers from Gisenyi who had come to our region during the genocide, did not stay at Mika's home. Many people think that they stayed there at night because they saw them, drinking beer at Mika's shop and home, on their return from Bisesero. There is no doubt that Mika's shop and home was their meeting place. However, they slept in the all-purpose room of the commune. They travelled in a bus and a Toyota. They spent a whole week in Gishyita and everyday they carried out killings in Bisesero.

One day, the killers from Gisenyi took my cow for food. On 22 April at about 12:00 p.m., I was with my child who was taking the cows to the pastures. I was just coming up to the primary school of Gishyita, when the bourgmestre drove up and stopped next to me. He was in Rulinda's green Toyota. He said 'I've been told that you are not helping the others at Bisesero and I have noticed myself.' He then ordered one of his policemen, Sylvestre Rwigimba, to shoot one of my three cows. He pointed to the one he should shoot. He shot the brown one. It ran off in agony and fell just next to the bourgmestre's house. It was slaughtered in front of the district courts of the commune and the meat was then distributed to the Gisenyi killers.

The militiamen from Cyangugu arrived before the Gisenyi militiamen. They lived in Mugonero and collaborated closely with Obed Ruzindana who must have invited them. The ones I saw passing through Gishyita towards Bisesero, were in Obed's two Toyotas, one of which was white and the other was a clear blue colour. I was told that the leader of the Cyangugu killers was someone called Yusufu, although I did not see him myself. I did, however, see them one day, at the councillor, Mika's home. They were drinking beer at a reception that the bourgmestre had organised. The killers were either from Cyangugu, Gisenyi or were Obed's men. The militiamen from Cyangugu had the most firearms such as guns.

The money which the bourgmestre used to buy beer with for the militiamen, came from the people and more specifically, those who were not participating in the killings. I went to a meeting one day which the bourgmestre held. He explained that the donations from the people who were presently not helping the others, would be used to buy drinks (**consommations**) for the 'first-aid workers' from Gisenyi, Cyangugu and elsewhere.

Interviewed in Gitarama, 17 March 1997.

9.

Justin Mudacumura - translated by Rakiya.

10.

Name: Pascal Mudenge

Cellule: Karama

Sector: Musenyi

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 30 years old

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

On the 8 April 1994, we heard a news bulletin on the radio which announced that President Habyarimana was dead. We were then attacked by a group of locals who were armed with *massues*, bayonets, spears and machetes. They came from Gishyita. We thought that they were thieves who wanted to steal our cows, so we all gathered together ready for a counterattack. We managed to get them to retreat. They went back to the office of the commune in Gishyita to get some more manpower. When they returned, they brought soldiers with them. They rounded us up and called a meeting where they took all our weapons (machetes, spears and clubs) away from us and told us that we were **had been/going to be** attacked by gang of thieves and that they had come to protect us. Because we thought we would be attacked by thieves, our Hutu neighbours and even people from the neighbouring sectors (**de le nôtre comme Biseseero?**) became our allies.

However on Sunday, 10 April 1994, there was no attack.

On Monday, 11 April 1994, another attack took place. We all gathered on Rurebero hill. A great battle took place. We were able to overpower the enemy, who ultimately had to retreat right back to the office of the commune of Gishyita. When they returned, they had soldiers with them who were armed with guns and grenades. We went over to the mountain of Muyira in the Biseseero sector to try and get further assistance from other Tutsis who had taken refuge there, in order to strengthen our forces.

The next day, Charles Sikubwabo, the bourgmestre of the commune of Gishyita, led a great massacre. We resisted this attack and the enemy retreated back to the hill of Gitwa. We only had stones, which the women and children had collected, clubs and very few machetes to use for the attack. We fought without respite. We had no other choice but to fight. The bourgmestre went to ask the *préfet* of Kibuye for further reinforcements. He told him that Biseseero, the area between Gisevu and Gishyita, had been taken over by the *Inyenzi* and that they had put up their flag.

Three days later, Obède Ruzindana, the leader of the *Interahamwe* militia came with three busloads and three Daihatsu vehicules of *Interahamwe* and ex-FAR soldiers. They carried out their slaughter from the moment they arrived, until Saturday. On Saturday they told the neighbouring locals that they were the only ones left, so now they could leave. The number of victims of this massacre was enormous.

Afterwards, soldiers and locals from the communes of Gishyita, Gisovu, and Gitesi attacked us. We realised that there were really very few people left from our area so we decided to head towards the bush to find refuge. However, the hunt for us continued and when they discovered our refuge, all we could do was to run to save ourselves whilst they chased us.

One day, we decided to head for Gitarama. We had heard that this *préfecture* had fallen into the hands of the RPF. When we arrived in Karongi, in the commune of Gitesi, we ran into further attacks and were forced to return to Biseseero.

I can't remember the exact date, but one day, Obède Ruzindana, the President of the *Interahamwe* in Mugonero and the son of Murakaza, came one day and said to us that he had come to see how many wounded people there were so that they could be brought medicines. He also told us that he wanted to see how many Tutsi refugees were there, in order to account for the right number of **sheetings** for us to rebuild our houses.

He introduced himself as the delegate of the ministry of the interior and development of the commune. He was with the councillor of the sector of Gishyita who was called Mika. Mika asked us what our present situation was. We replied that it was because of him that we were in this catastrophic situation because it was he who had given out the orders to the killers. Mika replied that on that occasion, the problem had been with a gang of thieves and that he had tried to defend us but we had refused.

Ruzindana told us that we would be receiving some supplies(**subsidies?**) the next day so we should all stay together. He went on to say that there had been a cease-fire and that there would be no more attacks. He was in Claude's car. Claude had been a shopkeeper in Mubuga and had been killed by Ruzindana. Ruzindana had also stolen Rurinda's car, who was also a shopkeeper in Mubuga. These two cars were used to transport the *Interahamwe* militia.

The next day, Ruzindana returned with the *Interahamwe* militia and other locals. We did not have enough strength to repel their attack. Those who were able to avoid being killed were the ones who had sought refuge in the bush.

Despite the fact that we had lost a large number of people, we did not once give up. In fact, quite the opposite because we defended ourselves until we had used every ounce of strength that we had. However, there were too many heavily-armed enemies. Nevertheless, we managed to kill one soldier and seven policemen and we took their weapons and gave them to the French soldiers.

We fought in a very systematic way. Some would attack at the front whilst others would appear behind the enemy and hit them over the head with a machete without them knowing from where they came from. The commanders of the troop were Birara, Kabanda, Etienne Nzigira, Habimana ...They all died as a result of the genocide. Some of the fighters were old hands in battle such as Birara from Bisesero who had taken part in the 1962 and 1973 defensive against the Hutus. We had heard from our parents and relations that the people from Bisesero were people who really knew how to defend themselves.

At about the end of June 1994, the French soldiers came to our aid. They put us all together for our own protection. They fed us and gave us clothes. The wounded were taken to hospital and others who were ill were looked after.

A month later, we were taken to the RPF zone. We had survived but we were still unhappy. The death of the members of our families was preoccupying us and we were suffering various illnesses. The food was insufficient as well.

After a while, we were able to return. We went to the office of the commune of Gishyita. There, we received food once a month. Because we had insufficient help, we had to live near properties to be able to farm our fields.

There is a humanitarian organisation which deals with rebuilding our houses but until now I have not visited this place because I am afraid of being killed by infiltrators who are particularly common nowadays. Also, my house is isolated from the other survivors' houses, so attacks would be easier.

I preferred to stay at the centre where a lot of other survivors of the genocide were staying. I am all alone. My wife and I were married for only two months and now she is dead because of the genocide. My mother is also dead, as well as her nine children. There are so many other victims of the genocide, who are from my family.

I was hit on the head and shoulder with a *massue* and now I have difficulty in carrying heavy objects on my head and I also have trouble carrying out tasks which require a lot of strength.

The problem of insecurity is one which weighs us down more and more each day. Before the massive influx of refugees, we felt safe. Now that they have returned, we spend nights in our houses after having been attacked by infiltrators who hide in the bushes and who are fed and even housed by their families. This would indicate that there is some sort of solidarity that exists between the two. Our authorities tell us that we should protect ourselves but we don't have the means to do this. What we need are soldiers who could go and find the infiltrators who are hiding in the forests and bushes.

If the genocidal criminals continue their plans and do not ask forgiveness from the innocent Rwandese people, reconciliation is impossible.

Interviewed in Karama, 8 February 1997.

11.

Although some of them did not wish to give any details, the prisoners from the commune of Gishyita who were arrested in Gitarama, all acknowledged and confirmed the important role of the militiamen in Cyangugu who were led, according to them, by a certain Yusufu.

Gérard Muhayimana, comes from the Rusebeya cellule, in the sector of Kilimbi (in the commune of Rwamatamu). During the genocide, he was at the centre of Ngoma in the commune of Gishyita. When he finished his studies at the Musical Academy of Tanzania, he became a teacher of music at the school of 'Sciences Infirmières' in Ngoma. He is married without children. He is 33 years old. The following is his testimony.

On the 7 April 1994, four soldiers came to our centre. One was a lieutenant and the other three were corporals. They arrived in a military truck. From that moment onwards, they lived at the centre. They began to terrorise the Tutsis, who then fled to the Mugonero hospital, which was not far from where I lived. Five other soldiers came from Kibuye. They had been invited by the doctor Gérard Ntakirutimana. They were positioned at the hospital where they maintained they were looking after the refugees.

On 16 April 1994, a massacre at the hospital took place. It was launched by the militiamen from Mugonero and others including Gikeri. They all came from Gisenyi. The killings began at 6:30 a.m. Although a great number of Tutsis died, a Hutu also lost his life. His name was Abia Uzarama and he was from the sector of Ngoma.

About a week later, I saw three bus-loads of militiamen. It was at around 4:00 p.m. and they were coming from Biseseo and were going back to Mugonero. They stopped at our centre. When I heard people saying that they were militiamen from Cyangugu who were led by someone called Yusufu, I was curious to see such a well-known man.

I wanted to know which of the men was Yusufu. My neighbour, Ngabonziza, who was Rwamacumu's son and whose sister, Mukarukaka, was married and lived in Bugarama, pointed out the man whom he had known before in Bugarama. This man was **noirâtre** although I don't remember his physical features. He was standing near a bus, and was surrounded by a lot of militiamen who were dressed in MRND uniform. The militiamen were carrying daggers, guns and grenades. They were drinking in Samuel's (alias Nyiramagemwa) and Mugemana's bar. Yusufu was not drinking.

For the next five days, they went backwards and forwards from Bisesero to Mugonero. I do not know which day the large massacre took place. However, I do think that Yusufu was still in this place around the 8 April 1994.

Interviewed in Gitarama prison, 17 March 1997.

12.

Immaculée Mukamuzima- translated by Trevor.

13.

Name: Alphonsine Mukandirima

Cellule: Jurwe

Sector: Bisesero

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 14 years old

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Single

I was living in Gishyita with my aunt when the war broke out in April 1994. We were just next to the office of the commune. There was also a small centre of commerce nearby. The day after President Habyarimana's death, soldiers went into the shops and threw all the goods on the floor. They told the shopkeepers that they should be in mourning for president Habyarimana, instead of doing business. They hit them with clubs and said that they were going to put them in prison. My aunt had a shop which she had closed that day, so we stayed at home.

We were obliged to seek refuge at my other aunt's house in Rwabirembo because we were being threatened. When we got there, we heard shouting coming from the office of the commune, although we had no idea what was going on. The following day, we found out that there was a war going on between the Hutus and the Tutsis. We fled to Bisesero to the cellule of Jurwe where many Tutsis were. At the time the war had already broken out in Musenyi.

On Saturday 9 April 1994, the people from Kazirandimwe were attacked at about 11:30 a.m. We heard people shouting for help. At home we gathered our cattle together and hid our goods such as our clothes, hoes, kitchen utensils etc. It was then that an armed attack was launched against us. We were forced to go towards Gititi. Our men responded well to the attack and managed to force the attackers to retreat.

Another day a bloody massacre took place. We were attacked from all sides. The attackers shot at us and those who could not run, such as the women, children and elderly, were all killed. My mother died in this massacre. We others were able to disperse and find refuge in the bush. In the evening we went back to Gititi. I ran with my brothers. On this particular day, we came across my mother's body. We buried her.

We were repeatedly being attacked so we decided to join the other Tutsi refugees who were on the Muyira hill in Bisesero. A week passed without a single attack. We thought that the war was over and so sometimes we would go home.

When the week was over, the military soldiers from the former army and the interahamwe soldiers launched a terrible attack. We ran with the others towards Gitesi and we gathered on the hill of Gitwa. The interahamwe soldiers surrounded the hill to kill us. When the interahamwe had gone home, we went back to Muyira. In the evenings, we went to fetch any remaining food that the interahamwe had left after they

had taken most the crops from our fields. We used our broken mugs for cooking and grains of sorghum which were not yet ripe to make drinks. We ground them with stones and made gruel.

I discovered that I had ganglion on my foot. I could no longer run. Since my brothers had been killed, I had to hide in the bush all alone. I bandaged my leg and ran behind the old people during the attacks.

We were also persecuted by the Batwa (the third Rwandese ethnic group) who hunted us down in the bush with their dogs. They used machetes and spears which they would throw in the bush to see if we were there.

At around the end of June, the French army came to save us. They gathered us all together to ensure our safety and from that moment on, there were no more attacks. The French soldiers then evacuated us to the RPF zone in Kivumu and then we carried on towards Gitarama. Some people were fortunate in finding a means of travel but I had to go from Kivumu to Gitarama on foot. Three days after I had arrived in Gitarama, my cousin came to see me and he took me to Kigali where he lived. I was happy in Kigali with him.

One day, I went to visit my uncle who had gone back home after having rebuilt his house. He had remarried. When I got there, I realised that no-one was looking after our property. I decided to stay there. My cousin accepted my decision and told me that he would continue to help me. Today I live with my uncle and another cousin who is also an orphan from the genocide. I also left Kigali to stay with my cousin so that he would not be all alone.

I lived with my parents and brothers before the genocide. Every one in the family was happy. I felt good when I chatted with my brothers and my parents gave me everything I needed. Now I am alone and no-one cares about me. My uncle has remarried a Hutu woman and she does not like me. When my uncle gives me something, she is jealous and says that I do not work and therefore do not deserve to receive anything from the family. She says this because there is work to do which I am incapable of carrying out. I was hit on the shoulder with a stone so I cannot, for example, lift or carry a heavy object on my head. Nothing happened to her during the genocide because she is Hutu. She cannot understand our problems. She just says that I am lazy and she can't stand it. Despite my efforts to carry out tasks which I can do, she is still dissatisfied.

Because of all this, I remember the life I used to lead before the genocide and I feel great sorrow. I think about all the members of my family who are now dead. To ease my distress, I usually find a place where I can be alone to cry.

Previous to the genocide, I gave up school to look after my mother who was ill. After the genocide, I wanted to go back to school but my uncle refused to let me. He said that I was becoming undisciplined now that I was no longer with my parents. As a result I do not know how to laugh or write.

I am disabled and have become ill. I do not have any money to care for myself. The other orphans find money because they are part of cooperatives. They are able to benefit from various benefactors. The state of my health prevents me from taking part so ultimately I am all alone.

Moreover, our safety is being jeopardized. There are infiltrators who attack us at night and they are trying to kill us. We have to go and hide in the bush all night.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997

14.

Name: Aloys Murekezi

Cellule: Bisesero
Sector: Rwankuba
Commune: Gisovu
Préfecture: Kibuye
Age: 28 years old
Profession: Farmer
Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

We had no problems regarding security in our region and amongst our families before the death of President Habyarimana. After 7 April 1994, we were no longer safe. It began in the commune of Gishyita, which borders our commune. At the beginning we saw smoke coming from the sectors of Mpembe, Ngoma and Musenyi. This was because Tutsi houses had been set alight and were on fire. People were running and shouting for help because they were being chased and killed. We thought that thieves were on the attack but then we were told that it was the Hutus who were killing the Tutsis after they had taken flight towards our own commune. They told us that the Hutus had attacked them. The Hutus had been saying that the *Inyenzi* who were also Tutsi, had killed Habyarimana which was why all the Tutsis were going to be killed. They had seized Tutsi cows and burned down Tutsi houses. We welcomed the fleeing Tutsis on 8 April 1994 and we shared everything we had. We were afraid of what had happened in Gishyita and we went to seek refuge in Muyira, in the cellule of Bisesero (which is in the Rwankuba sector). Together with the Tutsis from Gishyita who had sought refuge in our region, we defended ourselves against the attacks from Gishyita. We were trying to get them to retreat so that our own region would not be under attack.

A few days later, we were subject to a terrible attack lead by the police, the watchmen (**surveillants**) from the commune of Gisovu as well as other interahamwe militiamen. We fought against them and we managed to take four guns away from them. They withdrew and organised another, this time very violent, attack. It was launched by the police, the communal watchmen (**surveillants**) and soldiers. There was a lieutenant amongst the soldiers who came from Gisenyi. He had killed Gérard Ruhanga, who was Rugombamishari's son. He had also killed Gatsimbanyi. We were so angry by this time that we pounced on our enemies and succeeded in killing the lieutenant. We first kidnapped him and took away his gun. We checked his pockets and found a piece of paper. There was a message which said that he had been assigned to kill all the Tutsis from Gishyita, Gisovu and Rwamatamu and that in return he would receive 145,000 Rwandese francs as a reward once he had completed this task. We then killed two policemen from the commune of Gisovu one of whom was called Sebahire and the other was called Rukazamyambi. We tore their weapons off them (two guns). The other person we managed to kill was Nsabimana who was the driver for an organisation, although I do not know his name. He was also in the attack and we took his gun off him as well. He had just killed Martin Ntamakemwa, who was Bugingo's son.

After we had neutralised this attack, our attackers fled. It was calm for many days after this. We thought that the war was over and we went home. However, the opposite was in store for us. They had gone to get more militiamen as back-up from other *préfectures*, namely Gisenyi, Ruhengeli, Gikongoro and Cyangugu.

As a result, we were attacked on 13 May 1994, by militiamen from Gisenyi, and soldiers and other locals from Gishyita, Gisovu and Rwamatamu. We returned to Muyira which is a very high hill in our area. From there we could see all around.

During the 1962 and 1973 massacres, our parents also fled to this hill and from there they succeeded in defending themselves.

In the attack of 13 May 1994, there were two communal policemen called Rwigimba and Ruhindura, who shot our people. We retreated when we realised that they had guns. The next day, the bourgmestres from the communes of Gishyita and Gisovu met together. The bourgmestre from Gishyita told Ndimbati from Gisovu that they had taken too long in killing the Tutsis. After this meeting, Ndimbati came and collected our weapons such as machetes and spears. We had been using these weapons to defend ourselves. He asked us what we needed them for and we replied that we used them to defend ourselves against attacks that the thieves from Gishyita launched upon us. He calmed us down and told us that no thief would come into the commune. He collected all our weapons and went off with them. A communal policeman, called Ngirabahinyuza and an interahamwe militiaman called Kwitonda who was a farmer from Nyabubare (in the Gikaranka sector) accompanied him.

When they got to Mutiti (an Adventist church), Ndimbati, the bourgmestre, sent Ngirabahinyuza, a corporal from the commune of Gisovu, to ask us why we were all gathered together. We replied that we were afraid of the war which was about to break out. He told us that there was no such war and that we should go back to our homes. He talked with Musominari who was a friend of his who later died in the genocide. We did not comply with his wishes because we suspected that we had been told many lies. He joined the bourgmestre in Mutiti. Shortly afterwards, he returned to Nyakigugu with Nkengeyabahizi. He began to shoot us. He shot Munyurangabo's wife, who was carrying a child on her back and who consequently died too. He also killed a child called Mazuru.

It was at this point that we realised how serious the war was. We used the weapons that the refugees from Gishyita had and we managed to confront an attack which was led by Ngirabahinyuza. There were not many attackers and we succeeded in making them retreat by using our spears, stones and machetes. The following day, Ndimbati came back with a group of attackers. They set themselves up at Sengabo's and shot at us. Someone called Butufiye, who was Kajongi's son, died in this massacre.

When we got to this hill, our attackers shot us and killed many people with machetes. There were very many of them and we did not even try to repel this attack. We fled towards the bush. Many people died in this massacre and our cows were also stolen from us. I ran with the other survivors of this massacre towards the bush.

In the evening, we returned to the ruins of our houses. We cooked with bits of broken crockery. The day after this massacre which was on the 13 May 1994, there was another attack. We fled towards Gitesi, battling against the interahamwe attackers who kept on stopping us. I was hit on the arm with a stone. We did not return to Muyira because the whole hill was covered in corpses. Interahamwe vehicles followed us all the way to Gitesi, near Karongi and they shot at us. They made us go back to Biseseero. There were very few survivors from this massacre. All the women, children, young girls and old people died as a result of this massacre. We carried on running like this until the end of June 1994, when the French army came to our aid. The French soldiers gathered us up and protected us. They gave us various provisions, such as clothes, beans, biscuits etc.

Shortly afterwards, they evacuated us to Kivumu (Kibuye) in the RPF zone. The RPF soldiers welcomed us and two weeks later they evacuated us towards Gitarama in Kabgayi. We finally settled in Bugesera in Greater Kigali. There were a lot of sick people in Bugesera and many died. We therefore decided that it would be better to go back home. We went to a small commercial centre which was near where we had

previously lived. A month later, I had already rebuilt my house with the use of metal sheets. I lived in this house alone. I had no wife or children. They were all victims of the genocide.

Today we all have the same problem as regards safety. As soon as we returned, the interahamwe militiamen who had taken refuge in the bushes and ditches, started to attack us every night. Sometimes they succeeded in killing people. The situation suddenly worsened with the massive influx of refugees.

On **30 April 1997 ??**, the infiltrators attacked Martin Nkusi who ultimately died as well as his brother. Similarly, the Nsabimana family was attacked and he and his child were killed. On 5 February 1997, attackers armed with guns, machetes and bayonets attacked the Kajuga family. They shouted for help and we ran to their aid.

We need soldiers to ensure our safety. The other problem that we have, concerns how poor we are. All our goods were stolen. Our cattle was stolen and now when we farm without any manure to make the soil fertile, we harvest very mediocre crops.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 7 February 1997.

15.

Claver Mushimiyimana - translated by Trevor

16.

Name: Athanase Namuhoranye

Cellule: Ryaruhanga

Sector: Mubuga

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 37 years old

Marital Status: Married and father of three children

Previous Profession: Head of Management for the Ministry of Secondary Teaching

During the genocide, I arrived in the sector of Mubuga, which is in the same commune as Bisesero. This was on 25 April 1994 and I had come from Kigali. Bisesero was the only place left where the killings had to be carried out. **(les tueries ne restaient donc qu'à Bisesero??)**

When I got there, I saw the Rutsiro killers at the centre of Mubuga. Some of them were in a blue Daihatsu and others were on foot, carrying sharpened bamboo sticks and various knives. The killers from Gisenyi were better armed than those from Rutsiro or the local people, because they had firearms. During this time, Obed Ruzindana often passed through the centre in one of the two vehicles that he had taken. One was a greenish-coloured Toyota truck belonging to Zéphanie Ntakiyimana (Hutu) and the other was a white Toyota truck which was Antoine Nzamurambaho's. He was a survivor of the genocide.

The militiamen from Cyangugu did not come to the centre of Mubuga. They were apparently better trained as they were the only ones who were called the interahamwe. You had to go to the battle field to be able to see them. I, myself, never went there. Alternatively, one could find them at the centre of Gishyita or Mugonero, were they came from. However, they did come to Cyangugu in two buses and stayed the night in Gishyita. I know that Ruzindana, who had become the leading authority in the region, went to ask the bourgmestre for money. This was for food for the militiamen from Cyangugu. I then saw the bourgmestre, Charles, coming to the centre.

He not only made the shopkeepers give money but also anyone who was not taking part in the killings. I later heard that the bourgmestre had managed to collect 150 000 francs. Obed Ruzindana would have also demanded the same contributions from the commune of Gisovu. Anatole Singuranura is one of the shopkeepers from Mubuga who had to give the bourgmestre money.

I'm not sure if the terrible massacre you speak of, took place on 13 May. But I have no doubts that a large-scale massacre did take place during the month of May. That day, the bourgmestre came to our centre in a blue Toyota which belonged to Louis Rulinda (Tutsi). All the local people had gathered at the centre before taking part in the large-scale attack. He told them to put grass on their ears or head and if not to put matches in their hair to avoid any possible confusion between the enemy and the ally on the battle field. After this attack, I remember that it was said that many Tutsis had been killed. I think that the militiamen from Cyangugu were still in the area.

During the genocide, the bourgmestre often used Rulinda's vehicle when his was being used by the councillor of the sector of Gishyita, Mika Muhimana or Mushimiyimana (I cannot remember his name).

The prisoners who were at the battle field are ideal witnesses and they are in this prison. But I can't tell you their names because if I do, someone will find out that it was me and the consequences would be disastrous. Even so, things were bad the moment I set foot in this prison. The scar that you can see on my eyelids is where prisoners from my region hit me. (*He is crying*).

Interviewed in Gitarama prison, 17 March 1997.

17. Name: Innocent Ndahimana

Cellule: Rwingabo

Sector: Bisesero

Commune: Gishyita

Age: 20 years old

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Single

When the war began, I was living in Gitesi, in the Ruragwe sector. The interahamwe militia from Rutsiro launched an attack on Gitesi. The Hutus and Tutsis formed a unified front to resist these attacks. The next day, everyone realised that this was about ethnicity. As a result, the Hutus distanced themselves from the Tutsis. Tutsi houses were burned down and their cows were stolen. The following day, the Tutsis were killed over two consecutive days.

I used to be a servant for a Hutu family. The head of this family wanted to kill me but I managed to escape. I fled to Bisesero where my family were. The Tutsis there had always resisted previous attacks launched upon them. Needless to say, my mother, sister and her children were killed. The others from my family, my four brothers and my father, went back home, believing that the war was over. Shortly afterwards, some very bloody attacks took place.

On 13 May 1994, the interahamwe militia surrounded us in preparation for another attack. We were unable to retaliate. We gathered together at Muyira. We decided that our tactic would be to run and hide in the bush. I fled towards a bush in the pond. That evening, I felt ill and I went back home. I hid in a tree. Three groups of attackers passed right next to the tree without seeing me. It was only when the fourth group passed by, that they found me. They told me to get down but I refused. I was hit

on the head and shoulder with a stone so I got down and ran to the forest. They could not find me. My father and brothers were already dead by this time.

I stayed in the forest until the French army arrived to help us. The army protected us and took us to Kivumu and then to Kabgayi in Gitarama to the RPF zones. We decided to leave Bisesero because some interahamwe militiamen were still threatening to kill us.

In September 1994, I went back to Kibuye. We stayed at the office of the commune of Gishyita where we received help. My older brother was able to restore his house and the two of us stayed there. Soon afterwards, I rebuilt my own house and I left my brother to live there. I live alone in this house. Before the genocide, I had a large family.

At night, all alone in the house, I find it impossible to sleep. When I do managed to get to sleep, I just dream about the members of my family who died during the genocide. After such dreams I can't get back to sleep. I need to get married but unfortunately I can't find a Tutsi wife to share my problems with. All the Tutsi women died during the genocide. My cows and all my possessions were stolen and now as a result I am poor. I have no way of buying any others.

Insecurity has been prevalent from the beginning of the war up until now. We frequently have to spend nights outside our houses because infiltrators are attacking Tutsi families. This is due to the fact that some people, who participated in the genocide, have not been arrested. When we attempt to bring them to justice, we are told that the prisons are full and can't take any more prisoners. These are the people who leave their homes at night and try and kill us in the forests so that we will not be a witness against them. They know very well that we are the ones who will testify against them.

We need soldiers near us to make sure that we are safe.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997.

18.

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 Sikubmabo 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.

19.

Name: Nassou Ngoga

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Age: 43 years old

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

Since the 1990 war, the Tutsis, and in particular the intellectual Tutsis, have been mistreated by the Hutus. However, even though I am Tutsi, I did not experience any problems because I was a farmer. Nevertheless, in April 1994, things changed. The Hutus decided to exterminate all the Tutsis. It began in Gishyita. We heard that the people from Gishyita were calling for help **cris d'alarme** and we saw smoke coming from all the burned down houses.

At the beginning we thought that thieves were carrying out the attacks. When we went to their aid, the Tutsis from Gishyita told us that the Hutus were killing the Tutsis. When the Hutus heard that it was a problem about ethnicity, they withdrew. We got together with the Tutsi refugees from Gishyita so that we could build up a defence. We were armed with machetes, spears and clubs. We gathered in Bisesero. There, the bourgmestre Ndimbati, from the commune of Gisovu came and took all our weapons away from us, saying that these weapons were useless because he had forced the thieves, who wanted to attack us, to retreat. He took our arms to the office of the commune. When he was a few metres away from us, he shot somebody who had come to seek refuge in Bisesero. When we saw this, we went to the Muyira hill and there we were the object of two attacks. One of them was from Gishyita and the other from Gisovu. We realised that there was no other way to escape the attacks except by responding. We fought against them and managed to neutralise the enemy despite the fact that the bourgmestre had taken our weapons.

Once our attackers realised that we had a strong defence, they went to get back-up from elsewhere. On the 13 May 1994, a very bloody attack took place. There were a great number of attackers this time who were also heavily armed. We were unable to put up any defence. The remaining survivors after the attack, fled towards the forest and to the bush.

During the days which followed, the interahamwe and locals tried to find us in the forest to kill us. Sometimes, when there were only a few attackers, we defended ourselves and managed to force them to retreat. This went on until the end of June when the French soldiers came to our aid. They gathered us together in Bisesero where they protected us and gave us food to eat. Those who were ill, were taken care of.

There were very few women and children there because they had all been killed. They had not had the strength to escape the attacks. After a few days, we were

evacuated by the French soldiers to Gitarama in the RPF zone. This is what we chose to do. The RPF soldiers welcomed us warmly.

I then left Gitarama to return to Gisovu. I stayed right next to the office of the commune and four months later, I rebuilt my house which had been destroyed by the interahamwe militiamen. I couldn't find any *sheetings* so I used old metal sheets to cover the house. Nevertheless the roof leaks when it rains.

I live alone in this house because my wife and children were all victims of the massacres. I have an adopted child who is in the fourth year at secondary school. All my cows and goods were looted so I find it hard to pay the school fees and to buy the necessary school materials that he needs.

When talking about reconciliation, I think it depends on the way in which those who committed the genocide, behave. At the moment, it is inconceivable to reconcile with people who killed our families, stole all our possessions, destroyed our houses and then instead of asking our forgiveness just want to kill all the survivors of the genocide, regardless of who they are.

Reconciliation would only be possible if the accused genocidal criminals were all brought to justice. Then we could be reconciled with those who are left, and only then, if they ask for forgiveness.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997.

20.

Uzziel Ngoga - translated by Trevor

21.

Name: Narcisse Nkusi

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: Farmer

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide

Age: 37 years old

I used to live in the cellule of Munini, in the sector of Rwankuba. I had three children. They were Evariste Hakizimana, 7 years old, Uwitonze, 4 years old and Uwimana who was 2 years old. I also had a wife and we were extremely happy. However after the president's death, everything changed.

When I realised that the militiamen had already started to kill and to burn the houses, I looked for a way out for my children and a way to remove some of my belongings. I drove my sons to my neighbours' homes. They were very close friends of mine. I drove my son, Hakizimana, to Bernardin Birara's home in the cellule of Minini. He was also a very close friend of mine and we shared everything. He had also offered me a cow.

Then I drove Uwitonze to Paul Munyandekwe's home. He was a good friend of the family's too. My father had given him a plot of land so that he could build his house.

My wife, my youngest son and myself went to seek refuge in the mountains with the others. When the fighting started during the month of April, we managed to kill some of the militiamen, even when the soldiers came along with them. I remember in April when we were attacked by the militiamen and soldiers. We were in Nkilyaho's

banana plantation. We had planned to fight the attack because we did not think that we should die when we had done nothing wrong.

That day, I was carrying a spear and machete. A soldier came up beside me. I thought that he was going to shoot me so I immediately hit him with my machete. He fell to the ground at once. The militiamen who were with him, began to hit me on the head and on the right jaw with their machetes. My people came to my aid. They finished off the soldier and chased the militiamen away. I fell unconscious and they took me to the bush on the Muyira hill. My wife, Nathalie Mukasharangabo, and my mother were still alive and they put healing plants on my wounds. From then on, I no longer fought. Instead I stayed alone in the bush.

On 13 May 1994, I saw a lot of heavily-armed soldiers and militiamen arriving. They killed all the women and children who were there, amongst whom were my own wife and mother. The entire hill was strewn with unclothed corpses. When the genocidal criminals had gone, I started to look amongst the bodies with the belief that I would be able to recognise my family. However, it was impossible because of all the blood covering the bodies. I stayed in the bush alone. There was nothing but corpses surrounding me and there was a terrible odour. Dogs, crows and insects came to devour the decomposing bodies.

I realised that I was going to die so I went to a Hutu friend's house. His name was Zéphanie Munyakayanza and he was from Muyira. He welcomed me into his home and made me some food to eat. He heated up some water so that he could treat my wounds. I realised that I could create a lot of problems for him because they were already starting to search the Hutu houses. I chose to go back to the same bush and stay there. The militiamen were combing [*the bushes*] constantly but God kept me from their grasp. The French arrived and I was still alive. They gave us food to eat and treated us. Afterwards we were driven to the RPF zone in Gitarama.

With the take-over of the country, we went back to the centre of Gakuta. We stayed in bars and shops because all the houses had been destroyed. We were dying of hunger because there were no fields near the centre.

We decided to go back to the fields with the other survivors. Someone had given me some beef which I sold for 30,000 francs. I was able to buy some metal sheets with this money and the survivors helped me to build a house in the plot of land which had belonged to my paternal uncle (Ntagozera). I feel saddened by the bones on the various hills that were gathered just five metres from my house.

Prior to the genocide, each time I left my house, I would see many cows on the hills, and children playing on the hills too. Now all I see are bushes which shelter wild animals and bones in practically every corner of the village.

My house is remote from other places. There is no-one with whom I can talk to. I am also afraid that there are infiltrators in the neighbouring bush. As a result of all this and equally because I would spend days and days without eating, I was forced to marry a Hutu woman. All the Tutsi women in my area were killed on 13 May 1994.

My marriage with this woman has not made me happy. My surviving brothers have disowned me as they say that I have betrayed them by marrying a Hutu woman. My family-in-law do not consider me as one of them either. I am therefore alone in the world. I am losing my head. I do not know what kind of punishment I am paying for at the moment.

I do not know how to feel good about life because I can see that for the whole of my future life I will be unhappy. My children could have been a comfort for me but the ones I took to my so-called friends were all killed. They had extended families, and I do not understand why they could not hide the younger children who were the same age as their own children. They readily agreed to hide objects rather than people.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 19 May 1997.

22.

Valence Nsengiyumvu- possibly translated by Trevor.

23.

Caritas Nyirakanyana-translated by Rakiya

24.

Léoncie Nyiramugwera-on Yusufu disc

25.

Name: Stanislas Ruhamiliza

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: -

Marital Status: Married

Age: 58 years old

The Tutsi tribes who lived in the Bisesero region were all different from each other. There were the *Abanyiginya*, *Abakono*, *Abahima* and the *Abasita* tribes and they lived on the Maraba hill. The first three tribes were very united and we all intermarried. However our grandparents forbade us to look for a husband or wife from the *Abasita* tribe. I do not know why.

All the Abasesero were cattle breeders. In our region there was good breeding ground. However there were too many of us. We also had so many cows that we did not have enough pastures. I had a little plot of land that I was going to share with my children who wanted to build up their homes. We had begun to plant tea in the same place where I kept the cows.

I could see that I was not going to have enough land so I began to look for a place where I could take my cows and children. A member of my family, called Mutarambirwa, lived in Zaire. He came to see us and when he left I went with him. This was in 1990. When I arrived in Zaire, I found that there were other Rwandese people there. The area was good for cattle breeding as well. I liked the place a lot so I went back to Bisesero to bring my family over. When I returned to Bisesero, I sold all my cows in order to be able to have enough money to pay for land in Zaire. When I had gathered all the money together, I said goodbye to the other members of my family and I left together with my wife, three daughters and son.

I left three sons and one daughter behind in Bisesero. They were:

1. Kazungu (he died in Bisesero with his three children).
2. Charles Ntampuhwe (he died together with his three children).
3. Bugunzu (he was young and died)
4. Bonifride Mukabucyana (she died together with her two children).

When I arrived in Zaire, I bought some fields and built a house. Other Rwandese people who lived in this area helped me do this.

After I had settled down a bit, the Zairean soldiers came and told me that I would have to give them my cows in order to be able to have a citizenship card. I did not have any cows to give them so they put me in prison. There were four other

Rwandese people there with me in prison. I stayed there for a month and I was very unhappy.

When I was released from prison, I went and bought myself some cows and goats with the money I had earned in Bisesero. I became richer and richer and I lived in the Uvira area, in the South Kivu region (in the Bafurero *collectivité*). This was also a region which was good for breeding.

The genocide began just as I was preparing to fetch my children who I had left behind in Bisesero. I was afraid because I thought that my whole family was going to be killed. After the genocide, I decided to resell all my cows and fields to king Ntare who governed the area. I hurried back to Bisesero.

When I got there, I wondered whether this was really the Bisesero I had known. It used to be full of cows and was the home of many Tutsis. All I could see were skulls and the debris from the houses which had been destroyed. By chance I met the Tutsi survivors. They all looked stunned and were very badly dressed. In short they looked impoverished compared to how they had looked before. I felt as though I were dreaming.

These poor survivors began to explain the tragedy which had taken place in Rwanda. They told me about the death of my children and of the other members of my family.

From that moment onwards, I stayed with the survivors. I later built myself a small house. My wife and children who had been with me in Zaire came as well. It is terrible living in Bisesero after the genocide. However, I cannot go back to Zaire as I have sold everything.

Everything I saw around me made me feel anxious. Whenever I saw a skull I began to cry because I imagined that it was perhaps the skull of one of my children. The Hutu neighbours bluntly refused to tell me who did such a thing. The Tutsis from Bisesero cannot sleep now because the militiamen are always trying to kill us. We are not even survivors since they are trying to kill us. Instead of finding a way to protect us, they talk about reconciliation.

How is it possible to be reconciled with someone whom you have not offended? We have done nothing to harm the militiamen. They were the ones who killed the Tutsis. Do you think we could run behind them??? What could we say to these militiamen who do not want to listen to us? When they talk about reconciliation, do they want us to forget our children and brothers, who were all killed during the genocide.

How can I forget how much I worked for the survival of my children before the genocide? I had to leave so that they would have a future but now they have killed them and my children have not fulfilled my aims.

I bitterly regret having left my children. They were killed and we did not see them again. But thank Heavens and I thank God that he helped me get my wife and daughters out and bring them back safe and sound.

I have now seen the way in which the militiamen destroyed the houses I had left in Bisesero and how they killed the Tutsis. Their bones are still exposed on the hills. The State does nothing to help the survivors bury their people. I am in shock and because of this, the idea of reconciliation disgusts me. In my opinion, reconciliation is impossible.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997.

26.

Name: Alexandre Rwihimba

Cellule: Nyabumera
Sector: Muramba
Commune: Gisovu
Préfecture: Kibuye
Profession: None
Age: 34 years old
Marital Status: Married

I used to be a shopkeeper at the centre of commerce in Gatare (commune of Gisovu) before the start of the genocide. I was someone who committed acts of fraud so I often used to go to Bugarama and Kamembe to go and fetch goods. I often used to see Yusufu in Bugarama. I also used to see him when he went to Gatare in Gisovu. He used to go and see Rachel who was a relation of his. Rachel's husband was Jonathan Ruremesha. He was the private tutor in the commune of Gisovu. This man was a friend of mine and we often drank a beer together.

When I went to Jonathan's house, I would see Yusufu doing the tour of the centre of Gatare where my shop was. So I know Yusufu very well.

A few days after the president's death, we saw militiamen burning Tutsi houses in the commune of Rwamatamu in the surrounding sectors.

We, the Tutsis, had brought with us our machetes and spears to be able to protect ourselves. The Hutus lied to us and came to us saying that they were going to help us. This was on the 11 April 1994. However, just a few minutes later, Tutsi houses in Muramba (Gisovu) were being burned down by militiamen. The Hutus who had been with us suddenly left, shouting. The whole commune launched an attack on us. They began to burn houses and kill the Tutsis. We were frightened and took flight and ran to the forests. We were all dispersed around. I spent about a week alone in the forest.

In the middle of the night one night, I went to Thomas Sibomana's home. He was a Hutu and a great friend of mine. I was carrying a machete because I thought he might kill me. When I got there I knocked on his door. Thomas came out. He was carrying his wife's loincloth. He greeted me and invited me in. He gave me food and milk to drink. He told me that the miliciamen had looted our house and that many of my family were dead. He also said that the Tutsis who managed to escape had gone to Bisesero. He said that during the night he took food to the people there.

When I had finished eating, I too went to Bisesero. I made my way through the forests and had difficulty in not falling because it was night time. When I arrived there, I stayed amongst with the people from Gisovu. We fought against the attacks against our commune.

Every day, the bourgmestre came with his policemen and numerous militiamen who had grenades. Despite the fact that they were heavily armed, we fought them well and even managed to take away their guns. The militiamen would always go home at 4:00 p.m.

At around 8:00 p.m., we would return to Gisovu to look for food in the fields. I used to go to Thomas Sibomana's house to ask him for food and I used to give him money to buy soya from the market, beans and salt etc. Then I would come back to collect the items of food. Sibomana was really a very good friend of mine. He told me which people had stolen my goods.

Towards the end of April 1994, I went to his house and talked a lot with him. He had taken part in the meetings held by the authorities and he also listened to the news on the radio. Looking for something to raise my spirits, I asked him whether he had heard if peace was on the horizon. Sibomana looked very sad and said 'Don't even

think about peace. Aloys Ndimbati, the bourgmestre of the commune of Gisovu, has given his car from the office of the commune, to Jonathan Ruremesha so that he can go and call his brother-in-law, Yusufu, in Cyangugu. The object is to bring Yusufu and his militiamen to Kibuye to help exterminate the Tutsis from Bisesero who have a very strong defence. So now you see that you are going to be killed'. In fact, Faustin Mugenga who was a teacher at Gisovu, confirmed this after the genocide. He said 'If the bourgmestre had not told Ruremesha to go and call Yusufu and his militiamen from Cyangugu, not many of you would have been killed because you were very strong and the militiamen from Kibuye were worn out.'

When Sibomana had told me that, I was afraid. I went back to Bisesero. For a few days we were not the object of any attacks. Previously, we had been attacked every day. After this, at the beginning of May 1994, we saw many cars and a lot of militiamen and soldiers. They encircled us and began to shoot at us. The Tutsis who were at Muyira were killed outright. We were near this hill and we tried to get the militiamen from Gisovu to retreat. Some militiamen and soldiers threw grenades at us, others used their machetes. The massacre went on for six hours. It was impossible to fight them and each person was looking for a way to escape. Fortunately I managed to find a bush and I hid there.

In the evening, all the survivors of this massacre gathered together and we went round to look at all the bodies that were lying around. We began to put them in a large pit which was already there. This pit had been dug to make brick for the construction of a primary school in Bisesero.

We wept as we collected the corpses. There were more than two hundred bodies. Some of them were women who had died with their children on their backs. With some we only saw their head or legs. Some of the dead no longer had any eyes. As we were suffering as we put the bodies into the pit, the Hutus were drinking, singing and eating our provisions which they had stolen from our houses.

When we had finished putting all the bodies into the grave, we put earth over the top. We realised that we would not survive if we stayed in Bisesero, so I and a few others decided to leave for Burundi. We went to the fields to look for provisions and we found manioc and bananas. I took my spear and a young boy who I was with took a gun that we had taken from a militiaman. The gun only had five bullets in it. Twenty-nine of us in all left, each holding a machete or a spear. Some girls and children accompanied us too. I was also with my younger brother who had just finished **le grand seminaire?**

Six days later they find that they are back where they started so they decide to return to Bisesero.

We decided to go back to Bisesero. We were still in the month of May 1994. All our clothes were torn and we looked half dead.

Many people had now died in Bisesero. We could see bodies everywhere. All the survivors gathered together on just one hill. At night I went back to Gisovu to fetch some food. One time I lay down in the bush just behind a military roadblock so that I could follow their conversation. They were saying 'Yusufu's militia have killed a lot of people in Bisesero'. Others added 'they also ate a lot of meat in Mugonero. Any Hutu from Kibuye who finds a cow must give it to Yusufu's militiamen as a reward.' I went back to Bisesero so that the militiamen would not find me.

There was another day, which was a Wednesday morning at the end of May, when an attack was launched by Obed Ruzindana (I knew him because he frequently

came to Gisovu), Dan Ngerageze and about five hundred militiamen. We were not afraid in the face of this attack because there were very few of them in relation to other attacks.

My older brother Ignace Kayinamura went to hide with his three children in the bush. The bush was near the road. When the militiamen attacked, they searched through the bush. They discovered my older brother and took him and his three children to Obed and Dan. I could see them because I was near to them.

A Tutsi called Assiel Kabanda fled near to where Obed was. He heard Obed telling his militiamen not to kill Ignace but to drive him to the Mugonero market to torture him. Dan said that it would be better to kill him straight away so he was killed together with his children. When the killers had left, Assiel buried their bodies. He told me about this before his own death. I stayed in Bisesero until the French soldiers arrived.

27.

Name: Maurice Sakufe

Cellule: Gitwa

Sector: Bisesero

Commune: Gishyita

Préfecture: Kibuye

Profession: Driver

Marital Status: Widower of the genocide, now remarried

Age: 37 years old

....

That evening, we all withdrew to the higher mountains of Bisesero, no one from the local authority, civil or military was prepared to help us,. We were attacked daily by military soldiers from all sides. We stayed on the hill which was called 'Muyira' where there were many of us. We had to battle against the cold and the attacks on a daily basis.

Around the end of April 1994, I began to see Obed Ruzindana. He used to come in a white van full of genocidal military soldiers who were armed with guns. Obed had one too. Each time they attacked they would surround us and we would have to find a way to escape by breaking out of their circle. Each time we passed next to Obed, he would fire at us.

During this period, we fought against an ex-FAR lieutenant. We were surrounded in the usual way and we tried to get out of the circle. This took place in Bibande in a banana plantation which belonged to a Hutu called Nkiryaho. The battle lasted a long time. There was a lieutenant soldier with a pistol who was shooting a lot. One of our people called Ntagozera, hit him on the head with a hoe. The soldier lost consciousness and immediately lost control of his bladder. His pistol fell to the ground. We thought he was dead. However, this was not the case as he managed to kick Jean Rutabana (Tutsi). We immediately finished him off with machetes. Nzigira, our colleague, was dealing with the other four accomplices and we eventually killed them. We found the lieutenant's identity card. He was from Gisenyi in the commune of Gaseke.

There were bee hives in this banana plantation. The owner was a beekeeper. We used the hives to chase away the attackers by tipping them over so that the bees would sting them.

Afterwards, we had two weeks of respite. We began to bury the bodies. We also started to go back to our activities as survivors, like working on the fields. We thought that the genocide was over.

However there was another terrible attack on 13 May 1994. More than eight buses arrived, along with lorries and vans full of military soldiers, and other soldiers in uniform. They parked in places known by the name of Ku Nama and Ku Kamina. The whole of the Hutu population had come to kill us.

They overwhelmed us by showering us with bullets and grenades etc. We could no longer put up a fight. We didn't even see who was attacking us. That day, practically all the women and children were killed. My mother Mukabaziga was unable to escape.

We could see that the attackers had some weaknesses. We tried to search for a way to get away. We managed to escape by hiding in the bush. There, the bodies were piled up. All the hills were covered in bodies.

That evening, when the criminals had gone, we tried to bury our people, especially the older ones. As we were carrying this out, we came across the bodies of our attackers. We took out their identity cards. One of them was evidently from Bugarama (Cyangugu). I remember how we cried out 'Even militiamen from Cyangugu came to kill us'.

The next day the same persecutors came to attack us. They said that it was better to hit the head around the ear to damage to cerebellum. We scattered around to find a place to hide. That night Birara tried to reorganise us so that we would be able to continue our resistance until the end.

At night we looked for water to drink and went through the fields to look for potatoes or bananas. However, the wives of the militiamen, who came with their husbands at the time of the attacks, had already gathered all the food. The role of these women was to gather crops from the fields and to take off the clothes from the dead bodies.

Around the 20 May 1994, militiamen in Toyota vans launched an attack on us. We were exhausted by this time and we had no energy left to run. The people who were caught were hit with machetes by the militiamen. We decided to run over to where the leaders of the militiamen were want to stay (Ku Nama) so that we would be shot rather than be killed by a machete.

That day all of us ran towards Ku Nama. The militiamen increased their fire because they realised that we wanted to attack their leaders. About eighty people died instantly. I ran with my machete in my hand until I got to Ku Nama. I saw Yusufu in the shooting position. He was wearing a hat that muslims wear and a 'Boubou'. He was standing in front of a yellow truck and beside him were other militiamen including Obed and Mika. Yusufu was carrying a gun.

Just at that point, I heard Birara's voice telling us to retreat. He saw that many of us were being killed. I retreated and hid in the bush. I was very fortunate not to die that day because I had been surrounded by bullets.

Another attack that I can't forget was the one which took place in the middle of June 1994. I could hardly walk at the time and I had been hit. It was around the end of May 1994 that I was wounded. The militiamen had ran after four of us (Tutsis), two of whom died. However after having killed one of the militiamen I was hit with a stone on my foot. This is why I could hardly walk. That day in June, the militiamen searched through practically all the bushes. At the time, my wife and children were still alive. They were hiding a short distance from where I was. A militiaman called Sebikoba from our commune discovered my wife. She was carrying our child on her back.

The militiaman hit my wife with a machete and then he put a wide bamboo stick into her vagina. He pushed it in so far that it went right to her stomach. The child that she was carrying on her back fell to the ground. The child wandered off saying ‘mummy, daddy’. He had not yet learned to speak properly. The militiamen saw the child and killed him, saying ‘We mustn’t let a child of Sakufi’s live’.

That evening, when the militiamen had gone home, I went to see my wife’s and child’s bodies. When I arrived at the place where she lay, I found myself trembling. She was still breathing. I removed the bamboo stick from her body. When I had taken it out, my wife’s neck cracked and she died instantly.

I went to fetch a hoe and I buried her there and then. I didn’t have anything to remind me of her. She didn’t have any clothes left and I had no photos of her. Fortunately, I saw the traditional sling my wife used to use for carrying our child on her back. It was next to their bodies. I picked up the sling and I still have it now.

In June 1994, I saw Yusufu. He had a cap and was wearing trousers and a shirt. He was with Doctor Gérard Ntakirutimana. I knew the doctor because his father was a friend of ours and he had given my father a cow. The doctor was looking after the wounded militiamen. Yusufu had a gun at the time. This was in Kamina and I saw them as I was going to hide in a bush.

We remained where we were, suffering. Our two main people (Nzigira and Birara) had been killed. They were the ones who had organised us.

Now I live in Gikondo in the commune of Kicukiro. I have remarried and I rent a house. I often go back to Bisesero to visit the other survivors and to see the things I lost during the genocide. Although I am still alive, I cannot sleep. When I remember how the people were killed at Bisesero, I lose consciousness.

When I left Kigali in 1986, I went to Bisesero. I had some money so I began breeding modern cows. I bought 35 cows off someone called Dalio Kasiku Wa Ngeyo in Zaire. I could get 21 litres of milk from each cow a day. I then distributed the milk around Mugonero and Mubuga etc. Practically everyone from our commune came to buy milk from me. I was happy and I built a beautiful house in my farm.

Now I even drink the milk which is for my child. (*This child is from his second marriage*). Before the genocide, milk was in abundance.

When I go back to Bisesero, I have nowhere to stay. There is no-one to help me repair my house.

It shocks me to see all the bones lying on the hills when I return to Bisesero. Why doesn’t the State help us bury them? We can’t do it. Instead of helping us they just talk about reconciliation. I wonder if the people who talk about reconciliation really know what the word means.

One reconciles with someone who comes to ask forgiveness. How is it possible to reconcile with someone who wants to carry on with the genocide. Last Friday, 21 March 1997, four militiamen hit a survivor from the Gitabura sector (Bisesero) with machetes. Now the survivor is in hospital in Ngoma. How can a survivor reconcile with a militiaman after something like that?

Interviewed in Nyarugenge, 28 March 1997.

28.

Name: Michel Serumondo

Cellule: Karama

Sector: Musenyi

Commune: Gishyita

Profession: Farmer
Marital Status: Married
Age: 50 years old

The Hutus had been killing the Tutsis ever since 1959. However, the Bisesero region was renowned because we had always chased away the Hutus who dared to attack us. The Tutsis from the other regions left the country but we stayed in Bisesero. There were too many of us there and we also had a lot of cows with us.

There was a great solidarity between us and if anyone ever had a problem, we would immediately help them. What I liked most was to be surrounded by a lot of people. This was the reason why I married two women. My first wife was Rachel Nyirampeta and she had seven children. My second wife is Agnès Mukamuligo and she had six children.

I was happy in Bisesero. I had children, wives, brothers and sisters. I also had a lot of friends, including some Hutus who lived in Bisesero and who were very good friends of mine. For example, I was a good friend of Rwigimba, who was in charge of our cellule and who was a policeman in the commune of Gishyita. His father, Jean Mbonnyubwabo, was also a friend. Before the genocide, I gave Rwigimba a cow. To show somebody how much you like them, you give them a cow. The day of my offering there was a great ceremony. He invited his friends to partake in the ceremony for the cow. He also went to fetch some beers. In the evening, when we went home, we carried on celebrating. The same festivities took place when I gave a cow to Muhirwa, who was the councillor of the sector.

Muhirwa and Rwigimba, were my two great friends. Their children used to visit my children and we were really close. When President Habyarimana died, everything changed. A few days after his death, heavily-armed people launched an attack on us. We organised our defence in the customary way. We managed to fight against the people with our spears and stones. Despite the fact that we fought against them, we were still frightened because we had heard that the militiamen had already killed the intellectual Tutsis, including Mulindahabi and Nkundiye, who were both agronomists. They had also burned someone called Léonard Nshunguyinka, who was an old Tutsi man from Gishyita.

We were panicking a lot so we decided to leave our houses and gather on one hill. We went with our cows and weapons which were clubs, machetes and spears. No-one could approach us if we had our machetes and clubs. However the bourgmestre, Charles Sikubwabo decided to collect all our weapons. He arrived on Sunday, 10 April 1994, with policemen, a few militiamen and the councillor of Musenyi, whose name was Ezéchiel Muhirwa. We all assembled in the same place. The bourgmestre fooled us by saying that thieves were trying to steal from us. He told us that as a person of authority he was going to stop the thieves attacking us. He told us to return to our properties. Once he had told us all this, he asked us to give up our machetes, spears and swords etc.

A few of us gave our weapons up. I handed over the spear and machete that I was carrying. Rwigimba collected them up. Two militiamen, one of whom was a neighbour called Assiel Neretse, took them away in the bourgmestre's car. After this, they left. When they had gone, the militiamen began to attack us again. They looted houses and tried to steal our cows.

The evening of 10 April 1994, I went to Rwigimba's house to ask him why they wanted to kill us. I also wanted to ask him to hide my six children because he was a friend of mine. My wife, Rachel Nyirampeta preferred to go to her parents house in

Ngoma, Gishyita and she left with her seven children. They all died with her during the genocide.

When I got there, he told me that it was the thieves who were trying to sabotage the Tutsis. I asked him to hide my children but he replied, laughing, that he could not hide any child but that he could, however, hide my cows and valuable objects. I felt angry when he told me that he could hide objects instead of my children. He could see very well that I was hungry but he gave me nothing to eat nor drink. Before the genocide, when I went to his house, he would welcome me with open arms, and even if he had no beer, he would go out and buy some straight away.

I was disappointed that evening. I left the house and went to hide in the bush near to where I lived. I could see Rwigimba's children stealing things like chairs and clothes from my house. When I saw this I was frightened. I realised that our first friends had become our first enemies. I was afraid to stay alone in the bush so I went to the hill with the others. All the Tutsis had come to that same hill.

The militiamen came everyday to kill us. We managed to make them retreat by throwing stones at them, even though they had guns and grenades. During the whole of the month of April 1994, the militiamen only killed a few people. We had also succeeded in killing some policemen and soldiers. This was the reason why they went to get back-up from other militiamen so that they would be able to kill us.

On 25 April 1994, militiamen arrived in cars. They were dressed in white. They shot at us and we ran away. They hit the children and women who could not run with their machetes. I was running with a group and behind a militiaman was chasing us. He threw a grenade at us. Five people died outright. Their limbs, such as their legs, arms and head, came off their bodies. The shrapnel from the grenade explosion hit my right leg and I fell down immediately. The militiamen who were coming up behind us, took no notice of me, thinking that I was dead, because I was covered in blood. From where I was lying, I could hear militiamen complaining and asking why Obed Ruzindana was so late in giving the order to go back to receive the reward that he had promised for them. They were congratulating themselves for having killed so many Tutsis.

In the evening, when the militiamen had gone home, the Tutsis started to bury the bodies. My wife came to see me and she tried to heal my wounds with cow's butter. I could not run so I stayed in the bush. I could see everything from there.

During the month of May, the attacks from militiamen and soldiers were frequent, so much so that we had to stop burying the bodies because it was becoming impossible. In the same month during the attacks, my children stayed next to me in the bush. However, they took fright and ran off and left me. I saw Rwigimba, the policeman, shooting at them. He killed my children. They were:

- Gatwa, 12 years old
- Nzabahimana, 7 years old
- Nyirabasinga, 4 years old
- Nahayo, 2 years old

He knew who my children were because he had often seen them when he had visited me. My children would also go and see his children at his house. But he had refused to hide them for me.

After he had killed my children, I regretted the fact that I had given him a cow and I wondered why he had ever been a friend. Distressed, I stayed in the bush. I could see the bodies around me. My wounds were not being treated and I had not eaten for a while. It rained and I had no change of clothes. Sometimes I wondered if I was still a person.

Fortunately, I was still alive when the French soldiers arrived. They looked after us and the survivors who were seriously ill, were driven to Goma, in Zaire. A few

days later, we were also driven to the commune of Kivumu in the RPF zone. Afterwards we went to Kabgayi. When the RPF soldiers got to our commune, we left Kabgayi and went back to Gishyita. I was lucky because my wife, Agnès, was still alive, but all our children were dead.

Shortly after the genocide, we went to a camp together with other survivors. Life was very difficult in the camp. There was no food and it was very dirty. We decided to go back to our fields to try and start life over again. I planted trees in the ground and I put a tent above. We inhabited this hut straight away. We had nothing except a small pan and a blanket. We used the pan to cook with as well as for drawing water from the well. It was used for various other things as well. Prior to the genocide, I had had everything that I needed; bowls, pans, plates, forks, etc. My wife is old. She was hit with clubs during the genocide so now she is disabled. Nevertheless, she is the one who draws the water from the well, who fetches the wood from the forests and who completes various household tasks. I have to farm and look after the cows I found after the genocide. It used to be my children who looked after the cows during the genocide. Now I have to run behind the cows. This causes me a lot of pain since my right leg isn't totally healed.

Prior to the genocide, I was a happy man, with my two wives and thirteen children. My two sons were planning to get married. When we come home and don't see the children next to us, we cry. We have both lost our appetites. A dead body was something which was greatly respected before the genocide. When they were buried, people came to say goodbye for the last time. Afterwards, the neighbours and friends came to visit the bereaved family. Now we see the skulls of Tutsis everywhere we go. We do not have the means to pick them all up and bury them. What I find shocking, is that the militiamen crush any bones that are in their way, which shows how little they respect the person. These are the militiamen who have not yet been arrested.

With the massive influx of returning militiamen from Zaire and Tanzania, we could no longer stay in our houses at night. The militiamen have come back unfulfilled. When they see us in the road, they refuse to greet us and just grind their teeth. When we heard of the killings of survivors, we decided to spend the whole night in the bush. At night we would put the women survivors in the one house and then the men would hide in the bush, watching over the house where the women were. We shivered from the cold and the falling rain when we were in the bush.

I wonder when exactly the genocide of the Tutsis will end. It is impossible that we be reconciled with people who still want to kill us.

Interviewed in Musenyi, 8 February 1997

NB He is still a Christian

He will find all the necessary equipment when he sells his cow. ????

29.

Anathalie Usabyimbabazi-translated by Trevor.