

Consequences of the genocide

Name: Uwayisenga

Cellule: Bisesero

Sector: Rwankuba

Commune: Gisovu/ Kibuye

Age: 10 years old

My suffering began in April 1994. It started when my father came home one day. He scolded us and said "Are you still at the house?" He told us to go to the hill at once where the others were. We ran over, taking the cows with us, although we had to leave all our other possessions at the house.

When we got to the hill, I heard people saying that Habyarimana was dead and that this was the reason why the Tutsis were now being hunted down. I asked my mother if we were Tutsis and she said that we were.

We remained on the hill, trembling with fear. No-one could sleep. The little children were crying a lot. There were many of us there.

For the first few days, our mother provided us with food. The men went to get provisions from the fields at night. As the days went on, great numbers of militiamen, policemen and soldiers came to kill us. People asked us to collect stones. We put all the stones together and the men used them to try and chase away the militiamen.

When the militiamen attacked us, we immediately scattered around the area, and the children were obliged to leave their mother's sides as they fled. One day the militia came to attack us and when I saw them, I ran. There was one militiaman who saw me running and he came up behind me to kill me. He was a strong man and he caught me. I no longer had the strength to run because I was hungry and tired. When the militiaman caught up with me, I was astonished because I realised that he was a friend. His name was Hazigama and he was from the sector of Rwankuba. Before the genocide began, Hazigama used to come to our house everyday. He farmed my father's fields and he received a salary.

Despite the fact that he worked for my father, I had a lot of respect for him. When he finished work, he used to come to the house and I often gave him water so that he could wash himself. My mother gave him food. We used to play with him and he was like a brother to us even though we were not from the same family. He received his salary on time and we never had any problems.

Hazigama was just about to kill me so I asked him why he wanted to do this when I had done nothing to hurt him. I begged him to take pity on me. He said nothing but just hit me on the head with a machete. He had bits of wood in his hand which he stuck into my face. When he thought I was dead, he left.

I lost a lot of blood. I was like a corpse because I was totally dehydrated. I had cuts all over my body as well.

I lay down in the grass. There were bodies next to me. I did not know what was happening. Thankfully my mother came with some water. She tried to wash my injuries with warm water although I don't know where she got it from. She put me in the bushes and I stayed there because I could'n't run anymore. I smelt horrible because of my untreated injuries. I no longer had the strength to get the flies and insects off my wounds. The militiamen did not take any notice of me because I was lying amongst the dead and they thought that I, too, was dead.

When the rain fell I felt refreshed again. I stayed there like a corpse until the French soldiers arrived. When they came, my mother took me in her arms and lay me

before the soldiers. I was very ill. They put me in a plane and took me to hospital in Goma (Zaire). My mother was with me. The soldiers looked after us and gave us food. When I was almost better, we were driven to Gitarama in Rwanda, where some other survivors were.

A few weeks later, my mother said that we would be going back to Bisesero. We went by car. When we got to the hill, we were lucky because we were able to find our paternal uncle whose name is Aaron Mukomeza.

We all stayed in the same little house which we tried to repair. I was lucky because I still had my mother, Xavérine, and my big sister, Mushimiyimana. My father, Ezéchias Nsengamihigo had died as well as his four other children. There had originally been six of us.

My mother remarried my uncle. He had also lost his wife and children. My mother had another baby, called Ndimurwango. I could not do anything anymore because of the injuries I had received from the machete during the genocide. I even had to leave school due to illness and not being able to study.

Before the genocide, I had been in the first year at primary school at the school centre of Gako. I followed the lessons very well. During the genocide, they destroyed all the classrooms in Gako. Nevertheless, I was happy to see my mother taking care of me and I looked after the baby.

However my happiness did not last very long because in February 1997 my mother died. My mother was a strong woman and she was never ill. We were shocked when she told us that she was ill. After she had told my uncle about her illness, he took her to the clinic of Gakuta in the commune of Gisovu so that she could be looked after there.

It was then that I heard her last words. She went to the clinic with my uncle and on her way home, she died. When I heard that she was dead, I wanted to kill myself but I didn't do it. They hadn't yet done the autopsy but many people said that she had been poisoned by militiamen who had returned from Zaire. I can no longer sleep now that my mother is dead.

When I go to bed, I immediately wonder how the genocide began in Bisesero. My head hurts all the time. Before the genocide, I used to eat and sleep without any problems. I did not have to think about my future because my parents looked after me, my brothers and my sisters. In the evenings, we used to sing and dance. We were really very joyful.

Now I am like an old mother. I wonder how my mother's baby will grow up. When he cries, I cry too. He gets his food from cows milk.

Other orphans from the genocide have been put in the orphanage of Nyamishaba in the commune of Gitesi. I cannot abandon my father's fields to go to an orphanage. All I want to do is to live here in Bisesero and to look after the cows and the baby. I do not want to go back to school because I can't see the point of studying.

I need to find someone who can help me find clothes and soap. I can't find any decent clothes for the baby. He always has to wear dirty and worn-out clothes.

When I farm or look after the cows on the hills, I shake from fear. Someone told me that the person, Hazigama, who hit me with the machete, is hiding in the area. I am scared that he will kill me. I do not feel comfortable. I do not play anymore because all the children of my age are dead.

NB. The little girl is so dirty that she has scabies all over her body.

The survivors of Bisesero helped us bury my mother.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 9 February 1997.