

## **This is the testimony of Bazire, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide**

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1994, my mother came back from Kigali having returned from buying stock for her shop. She told us to pray. That the end for us had arrived. She told us that the former president had died. The next day *interahamwe*, some of them our neighbours, came to steal our belongings. On neighbouring hills, people were being killed. On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April the killings reached our home area. We heard a whistle for the killings to start. Immediately we ran towards the bush and stayed there until nightfall. We went to ask a man we knew in the village for refuge, but he refused. Though he relented when my mother gave him money. We hid in his house. At around 3am, my mother and my grandmother left the house asking us to stay. We were to never see them again. Several days later, we learned that our uncles and our grandfathers had been killed.

I hoped that this man would not harm us children. But one time, when the man was drunk, he brought a group of *interahamwe* round to the house, informing them that we were hiding there. They beat us badly. I remember some of the people among them. These men raped my sister and me the whole night, and I was continually beaten. They then took us to another man. We continued to be tortured and continually raped by these *interahamwe*.

It was the 24<sup>th</sup> April when the rescue army reached our region. One man was frightened and took us with him by force. My sister was weak and frail; she told me that she had to find a way of hiding me because she felt that she was close to dying. When the man left us for a few minutes, she made me sneak into a van. The van drove off, and when it finally stopped I sneaked out and walked off. It was a roadblock. There were many people there, and I managed to mingle with the crowd. By God's mercy I survived. I learnt that that my sister had just been killed. I was in despair because I thought that she was the last of my family.



Fortunately, a man took pity on me and agreed to help me try find family members who had survived. I found that my uncle, my mother and my grandmother were still alive. Both my mother and grandmother had both been gang raped. When I told my mother about the ordeal that my sister and I had been put through, she decided that we all should take an HIV test. My result came back negative. But my mother and grandmother were found to be HIV positive.

The result cast over us a shadow of grief and despair. But we are slowly learning to talk about our fears. I now study and the Government funds my education. I have to work hard and get a good degree, so that I can get a well paying job. I need one, as I have to take care of my mother and grandmother.

I pray every day that God will give me intelligence, in order to finish my studies well.

**Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Bazire.**