

This is the testimony of Tabithe, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

At 17, I was the eldest child in my family. We lived in Cyangugu. My two brothers and I lost each other when the threat of violence forced us to flee from the village in April. I initially went to stay with family friends who lived by Lave Kivu.

I'd been there only a week, when our neighbour found out who I was. He came and took me to his house. He was the *responsable* of the *cellule*, and the people living there held him in fairly high esteem. He was married with children.

As I was still young, I didn't think that he would ask me to be his second wife. He set me up in a maisonette, which was very close to his home, and told his wife that it was so he could hide me. But nearly every day, he came and raped me. This carried on from April until August, when he fled to Congo.

By then, I was pregnant. This was a huge load on my mind. I wondered what I was going to do with this unwanted child, worse still the unwanted child of an *interahamwe*.

This man who raped me, and whose child I was carrying, also dispossessed me of my family's land. He claimed that because I was "a burden" to him during the genocide. My family sold him their land. He is still in exile, but his first wife and children have continued to use the land, leaving me to seek help from others.

As I no longer had my parents' family land, as soon as I found out I was pregnant, I left his wife to go and live with a widow, a neighbour of ours.

Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Tabithe.