



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

My name is Alphonsine Mukayitesi. I was born in 1983 in Cyangugu Prefecture, in Murambi Commune, and was in primary 4 when the genocide began. I had three siblings, one sister and two brothers.

My name Mukayitesi translates to 'one who deserves spoiling'; I grew up believing I was a princess until the genocide shattered my dreams.

My childhood was normal and happy before the genocide. My father's job provided for the family. My mother had enough food for the family and sold some for money. We lived close to my father's relatives; we lived in harmony with our neighbours.

The only exception was at school where my teacher used to separate Tutsis and send them out of class while the rest of the students went on with their work. I didn't really understand the implications of being a Tutsi. My parents never discussed it with me so when the teacher filled the registration form and put me down as a Tutsi, I didn't mind.

During the genocide I learned what it meant to be a Tutsi. I saw too much during that time. I saw my father killed. I saw my mother raped. I saw my mother killed too. Thankfully, my siblings survived.

Though I was raped too, countless times. I was beaten and slashed with machetes when I was found in hiding. Though I survived, sometimes I think myself less fortunate for having done so.

After the genocide, when I managed to return to Rwanda, I began getting severe headaches. I am disabled; sometimes I can't think straight, I get dizzy and I continue to get headaches and blackouts all the time. On many occasions I have been admitted in hospital and have had no one come to check on me.



As the days pass my health is getting worse. I am anxious about getting a job to enable me to get a house and bring my siblings to live with me. Before the genocide life was good for my family and me. I always told my mother everything. She was there for me. Now I am on my own, I can't even look after my siblings. Life is very hard and unpredictable and I worry about the future.

Most of the people who killed my family crossed to Congo, but the man who killed my father, known as Concorde, is still living in the community. He confessed in gacaca courts to killing my father. He still has a life and a family. What justice is there for my family? They continue to live with the legacy of the genocide.

I am supported by Solace Ministries who try to help me cope with my daily ordeal. Recently when I was feeling unwell, I was tested and found that I was HIV positive. The only way this could have happened is through rape. I was a child, only 11 years old when the killers struck.

I am now 25 years old. I am still suffering because of the cuts on my face and neck and I am HIV positive. What hope or future do I have?

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