

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

I don't remember the exact date, but it was sometime in April 1994. When attackers came to our home, I ran away to a hill to hide in the forest. There were many people seeking refuge there. The killers came with reinforcements. They arrived in large numbers, surrounded us, then herded us into a compound. They selected the women they wanted, and took us back to the forest to rape us.

The killers selected the older women first, raped them and killed them. I was only 18 years old. They separated me, and friends of my age, from the others, and sold us to another group of killers. They would bid against each other, and the one who paid the most would win the right to have you.

A killer paid 1,000 Rwandese Francs to have me. He kept me for two weeks and raped me every day. When he was tired of me he sold me again for 1,000 Rwandese Francs to another killer. I knew all of these men. They were our neighbours. The second man also kept me for two weeks then sold me for 500 Rwandese Francs to a killer who had been nicknamed 'the butcher'. I knew he was going to kill me. By this time, I was so tired with my circumstances that I wanted nothing better than a quick death.

The butcher took me to a house where he was keeping other women. There we were about 20 in all. I didn't know any of these women. He raped us and would bring some his friend's home to rape us too. They would drink and then they would rape us in turns. Different men came every night. The butcher did not rape us, but he enjoyed seeing these men rape us. We must have been kept there for weeks. Sometimes we passed out and did not even know what day it was.



One night a killer known as Aaron visited the house, I knew him well, he recognised me. He asked that I be given to him for a wife. I was then passed on again to Aaron. He was also a prominent killer. He stayed at home. People were picked and brought to his house for him to kill with his machete.

I could not take any more. I planned an escape with other girls. At 1:00am I pretended to go to toilet and just disappeared, I met up with the other girls and we ran all night until we arrived at Rwamagana centre. We were finally rescued.

I still have nightmares each night about what happened. I was lucky not to get pregnant but I have AIDS. It is difficult to think positively about life.

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