

**This is the testimony of Jacqueline, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide**

My parents, the late Mugorewera and Gakwaya, had nine children but now only I am left and I live without anybody to turn to.

My older sister was living in Kigali with an Uncle. In March 1994, during the early insecurities that preceded genocide, my sister was kidnapped on her way to school. The Hutu man who kidnapped her then forced her to marry him.

My parents sent me to see her but when I got there, my sister's husband stopped me from leaving. He made me his second wife and took us to his home in Gisenyi. Because I was a virgin, I was very hurt the first time he raped me. He would sleep with my sister and then come to me in the middle of the night after beating us both. My sister and I decided to commit suicide in a big deep pond where unknown bodies were being dumped. But unfortunately some neighbours spotted us, and saved us. When he learnt of what we had tried to do, my brother in law invited other Hutu men to rape us and two of them took us up to Zaire.

Several times we tried to escape and return to Rwanda, since we knew that the war had ended. One time I carried a Jerrycan and pretended that I was going to fetch water but the Hutu man learnt of my plan and brought me back and told me never to walk away again. From that moment he made sure that he locked me up each time he had to go away. I finally managed to escape, walking all the way to Gisenyi where I travelled in a refugee truck back to my home in Butare.

I moved to Kigali to live with an Aunt but she died soon after from the cuts she had sustained on her body during the genocide. I was pregnant although I didn't know it as I was raped before I had started my periods. I thought that I was just gaining a lot of weight. I finally gave birth in May 1995 but I didn't love the child, once taking her and throwing her in a bush. Though I returned later and took her back. Everybody hated me for nurturing a militia's child and my Uncle used it as an excuse to throw me out of his house where I was staying.

The village authority got me a small house. A distant male relative visited me often but he too raped me. When he learnt I was pregnant, he abandoned me also.

I have two kids who can only survive if I get a part time casual job. I look after people's gardens and wash their clothes to get money for rent and to feed my two children.



I hardly have anybody left to turn to for help. I have a strong feeling that I might have contracted HIV because my captor raped many Tutsi women during the genocide, but there is no reason for me to take a test yet. Its better to not find out, after all I can't afford medication anyway.

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