



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

I am currently in school. I live with my two sisters and brother. My eldest sister is 20 years old and is the head of the family. Both my parents, and our other brothers and sister died during the genocide of 1994.

I had no idea about the President's death, although genocide in our area started a long time ago when people were taken to prison and beaten. One of the leaders in the area came telling us that we were going to be killed. There were huts burning in another place, so the local leader asked us to allow them to burn one of our houses so that the killers would think that the killing has already taken place in our area. Later on, we found out that it was a sign to show them where to kill.

The day after the burning they started the killing. My mother was killed on that first day, dying from a machete wound to her head. With her, was the baby she was carrying on her back. My big sister picked up the baby since my mother was already dead. But as we ran away, a man threw a spade at her, which caught her leg. My big sister removed the spade and went on running, not knowing where we were going.

Meanwhile, we had left my elder brother at home. He was in a lot of pain as his legs and hands had been cut off. He had been left to die due to loss of blood. My father died soon after my mother. He was cut all over his body and they threw him into a river near our home. My other brother was also cut into pieces as he was trying to escape in a boat. Another brother was shot and thrown in the water. I saw many people die and be thrown into water as we were running away.

The four that survived in our family stayed together and went knocking from door to door trying to find someone to help and hide us. We did this until we met a man who knew my father. He helped us cross to the other side of the river. He had a small boat for only four people, meaning that my big sister had to swim across the river.

The man took us to an orphanage. We stayed there for some time. But during the stay, *interahamwe* came and took my sister away along with other people. We were all in pain at seeing our sister go.

The orphanage people were good to us until the end of the war when the World Vision people came and took us to our aunt's place. My aunt was very sick and she did not last the month. She was suffering from the wounds caused by the genocide. She was also badly raped and sexually mutilated. She couldn't have survived.

Then a neighbour took us in because we did not have a home. This man was good to us until life also became difficult for him and he asked us to try find our own place. That is when my big sister started looking for a small loan to enable her to start a small business.

She did this and she got us our own house. We have a kind of life that is difficult because of paying rent, looking for food and the like. One day we eat and another day we do not and life goes on.

I sometimes do not want to talk about this because all the memories come racing back. I miss home a lot, but we cannot return there because the people who killed my family are still there. When I feel terrible about all this, I go and visit my friends. When I do this I feel like I have seen my family again.

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