



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

I was raped when I was just a child of 14. My nightmare began when I captured in a house where I was hiding with several other women in Cyangugu to escape the genocide.

I was raped often, so many times that the exact number remains a blur. Sometimes they disguised themselves, their bodies covered with banana leaves and their faces with masks. Amongst the men were definitely some that I knew, but I couldn't identify them.

Towards the end of the genocide, single men picked out women from the group to be their "wives." The rest were killed or driven to Kamarampaka stadium. I was selected by a widower, who took me with him into exile in Congo. There, the effects of my experience and the terrible conditions we were living in, took their toll on me.

When the man was killed in Rwanda, I was two months pregnant. The child was born in Congo in the refugee camp. With a baby, I couldn't tolerate the conditions in the camp. And the remorse I felt for being with a militiaman weighed heavy on my heart. So I escaped and I came back to Rwanda.

Since the end of the genocide, I've been very unwell. I had treatment, but I didn't think for one minute that I could have caught AIDS. But on returning to Cyangugu, I got engaged and when preparing for the civil marriage, we had to provide certain certificates, one of which was to say that we hadn't contracted the HIV virus.

We went to Kigali to be tested and my results came back positive. I hadn't told my fiancé that I'd been raped during the genocide, but I told him everything once I'd got my results. He was really shocked. The news rekindled my bad memories of the genocide. I had real difficulty in coming to terms with the results. I still can't accept what's happened to me today. I avoid thinking about it but it is impossible. I cannot forget because I am so often sick.



We now have a house, but it's not solid. We live off crops from our fields we don't have any other source of income. I'm very weak. I've not taken any medication to prevent the illnesses that come with HIV. I don't even know where they distribute these. If it were possible to receive help, I would like priority to be given to my medical needs and to making our house a bit more solid.

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