

THE PROCESS FOR HEALING, RESILIENCE AND RECONCILIATION

Testimonies of a **Genocide Survivor** and a **Genocide Perpetrator**

I am a Genocide Survivor, was born in 1969, Nyamata in the district of Bugesera. I was born in a family of seven children, we were four girls and three boys and I was the fourth child.

Before the genocide against Tutsi in 1994

Bugesera district is a well known district in the history of Rwanda, because it is where many Tutsis had been reallocated to, coming from different places, At first it was only a forest; so, they took there Tutsis so that they may get killed by the deadly Tsetse flies, which were so many there. That's where my parents were taken in



1959 bringing them from the district of Gikongoro. That is the time when many other Tutsis were forced to go to exile, including those who went to Uganda, Burundi, and many other countries. Bugesera, that's where my parents were killed from. The government by then had done nothing to develop that district like putting there different infrastructures like enough schools, roads, etc , this was because it was mostly occupied by Tutsis only. I did only my primary up to P.8 , as it had been said by the minister of education, Nsekarije who had said that no one was supposed to attend high school apart from children of leaders, we had accepted that because we had nothing to do about it.

In 1992, this is the district where they tried Genocide from, some Tutsis were killed, their houses were burnt, others went to exile, for me I went to Kigali. I had a Laisse-passe (an official written document that included your ethnic clan) in order for me to go to Kigali. Crossing the river of Nyabarongo from Nyamata to Kigali was not that easy because you had to cross three roadblocks, that time many Tutsis lost their lives, all of that took place and government did nothing about it because by then killing a Tutsi was not a crime.

Since 1959 up to 1994 in the Genocide, they were ongoing trainings of Intarahamwe Militias in the forest of Gako, where they were being taught how they will kill Tutsis, those who didn't know how to use guns were being taught how to craft and use local traditional weapons like Curbs which had nails in them, learning songs of hate which they would use while killing Tutsis like the one called " Tubatsembatsembe" (meaning, kill and finish them all). In 1992 that's when these teachings of hate became very popular everywhere, by then I was 22 years old, that really shows how Genocide was prepared. That's when we started being dehumanized everywhere, you could pass by a Hutu neighbor, the one who knows you very well, the one

whom you were born when he was there and calls you a Snake, a Cockroach and other bad names, that showed that killing a Tutsi was not a crime but instead simply meant killing a cockroach or a snake.

During the genocide against Tutsi in 1994

We heard about the death of the ex-president Habyarimana Juvenal who died on the 06th/04/1994 in the next morning at 5h:00 am, we started seeing our neighbors in different small groups, we started being afraid and we couldn't talk to them anymore, you could try to approach them but they would immediately reject you, since then, the Interahamwe militias started chasing us everywhere and we started hiding and spending night in sorghum plantations, that's when people started being killed everywhere as they were hiding themselves. I went to find refuge in the church of Gahanga.

In the church of Gahanga

We reached there on the 9th/04/1994, and we spent there a night, the next morning, we started being attacked by different groups of Interahamwe militias who had local weapons because there at the church there were many Tutsis who had come from different places like Kabeza, Nyamirambo and Kagarama, we were around four thousand Tutsis in that church of Gahanga; That day we tried to defend ourselves where women and children collected stones and supply them to men to fight, men also could use arrows and spears to defend us as much as they could, that day we defeated them and they retreated.

On 10th/04/1994, I remember it was on Sunday, that's when the government sent soldiers to help the Interahamwe because we had defeated them before, immediately after seeing soldiers with Interahamwe, we were so disappointed and discouraged because we had thought that the government may be would send soldiers to rescue us. We accepted death, even men who were protecting us told us that "It is over, our time has come", then we started saying goodbye to each other; then soldiers started shooting us since 9h:00 am up to 5h:00 pm, those who were not killed by bullets, they were killed by Interahamwe using Machetes, spears and others traditional weapons. They had surrounded us to the extent you couldn't find where to run to, then they sprayed chili on the bodies of the victims to check if they are survivors left, they killed children with axes, killing pregnant women by bursting their unborn babies. I can never ever forget what took place in Gahanga.

Of all soldiers who were there, I managed to hear two names of the soldiers who were killing us, one was called Gitamisi and Patrick, I couldn't recognize any Interahamwe because they were coming from different places to come and kill because for them as they used to call it, it

was a Job and then they could go back to their homes, the government played a huge role in this. A few of us managed to survive and started crawling from under the dead bodies which had fallen on us , and went into different bushes , sorghum plantations which really helped us to hide even if they were some who were being found there and they kill them but they are others who survived, the rain also helped us to survive.

Later on, I found myself in Kagarama on a certain woman who knew me from Kagarama because I had been there for a few months before the Genocide had started, but for me I couldn't recognize her;so,she took me and she gave me food but her husband was not yet home because he had gone to kill in a different place, so when the husband came back, he was going to kill me and his wife refused and saved me and then she told me in her own words "Just go, God will help you and you will survive", I went but I can never forget her. Later on, we were rescued by the RPA soldiers just a few days before we take ourselves to Interahamwe to be killed just because of pain and sorrow we had, hunger, and I was also pregnant.

I was rescued by Inkotanyi

Inkotanyi found us where we were hiding and told us in humble voices that "don't worry, you are not going to die, you are rescued ", they rescued us, to us, being alive again was a dream , we can't find the right words to explain it. To us, Inkotanyi means life, we really thank them. We thank the government of the unity of Rwandese and H.E Paul Kagame, the one who saved Rwanda again and helped Rwandese to live in peace again, may God give him a long life.

My life after the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994

After the Genocide, I went through a lot because that's when I had a death wish and found out that God also hated me. I went through a lot of pain because Genocide ended when I was six months pregnant. I used to sleep in sorghum plantations, very hungry and as you know someone who is pregnant must be given special care. I ended up having Kwashiorkor and Malaria to the extent I couldn't ever think that I would give birth to a normal child because of those bad health conditions I was in.

Right after that Rwanda had become a little bit secure, the hospital of CHUK was reopened and they started treating me, by giving me medication and trying to talk to me so that I could regain my thoughts. Later on, on 28th/10/1994, I gave birth but I didn't have any hope that my baby would grow up or continue being alive because I had no idea about what to do with children. I had no husband, I had no parents, I had no relatives, it was only pain, sorrow and a lot of tears. I spent lots of days without naming my baby because the name I would have given him during that period, would have affected him in the future, that's what I thought. So, I became quiet for a long time because by then I used not to talk to anybody because of the pain I had. I may say

that right after the Genocide, to me; it seemed as if it had started because during Genocide, I didn't have time to think because I had already accepted death.

The healing process

"I am not going to die, i have to live",

I got this idea after seeing that I gave birth and I have to help other orphans of my family who were looking up to me as the only grown up of the family which I had to take care of. I took a decision of being alive, be it in a good or bad way but alive, I kept quiet for long because I even had none to tell it. I started looking for a job which was on my level of education because by then people who were educated were not that many. Frankly speaking I wasn't getting a lot of money but also we couldn't sleep on an empty stomach, we lived in a bad life but still we managed to live.

Later on, on the other job I had, they asked us for high school degree, and I thought to myself that if I go back to school full time, I won't be able to take care of my family, so I decided to study in the evening catch up program which was called in French "Candidat Libre " I went there for two years, after that , I did a national high school leaving examination and then I got my A2 degree. It helped me to continue my job without being chased away; I even started gaining self confidence that I also have something I could do.

The story of Success

I built my house which I live in, later on I also built another one for renting which gives me 120.000 Rwf per month, it helps me to pay the school fees of my child. My child grew up, now he graduated university. Now we have hope for a good life. The others orphans also grew up some even got married, they have husbands, women and children, in other words I have sons and daughters in law, God gave me another family and I really do love them so much and they also love me, I even have grand-children. In brief, I have a family and we have a good life.

The program of reconciliation

This program of reconciliation came helping the Rwandansociety, even if understanding it in the first place wasn't that easy but it was the right solution for Rwandese. It started with the local courts of "Gacaca" and I worked with them, and with the help of other Rwandese we managed to finish different cases which were there, but we had been trained about the way of finding our own solutions. I was in the commission which was encouraging Genocide prisoners to accept their crimes and ask for forgiveness.

“As one of the survivor of the Genocide against Tutsi, we are ready to forgive anytime they ask for forgiveness , and show us where they threw the rest of the bodies of our families so that we may burry them with dignity.”

We created an association which is called “Femme en Dialogue” which is made up by the Widows of the Genocide and women whose husbands are in prison because of the Genocide. Our main purpose is to know what the parents of today are giving/ teaching their children as a way of preparing them for the future ; because the Genocide ideology is taught from home where the government doesn’t reach directly. We always take time to discuss about what happened, accepting the role of everyone who played a part in what happened, we share information and it really gave a nice outcome. Every parent shared her own testimony and we started being open then everyone started saying how they were feeling and at the end we were all healed.

We were able to achieve all of these things with the support of the National Commission of Unity and Reconciliation with their partner GER and **CFOR (Global Initiative for Environment and Reconciliation)**, especially for me personally, they helped me to meet Patrick, the other soldier who killed people in the church of Gahanga; where I was hiding. He asked me for forgiveness and I forgave him and he also asks forgiveness in different places in the country and now we live and work together in peace and harmony.

Utanze ubuhamya: Kamayirese Caline

TESTAMONIES FROM A GENOCIDE PEPERTRATOR

TEACHINGS OF HATE THAT THEY USED TO TEACH US



In schools, there was discrimination and not giving any value to the Tutsi. They used to tell us that the regime of the Tutsi was very bad, by telling us how they used to use the Hutu as shooting targets. They used to teach us that, Queen Kanjogera used to stand up by the support of her spear, where she could punch that spear on a Hutu while standing up. They used to teach us that the Tutsi were very bad people and considered poisonous snakes.

They used to teach us that the Tutsi would visit you without loving you, that, they would talk to you even when they don't love you, Tutsi were like the cockroaches that hide in someone's clothes; they taught us that they

know how to hide, they are like witches.

MY ROLE DURING THE GENOCIDE IN 1994

I joined an attack that killed the Tutsi where they had gone to hide. According to the orders we had been given by the government officials (The military, Police, and the church leaders), they were showing us that the Tutsi with the help of Inyenzi soldiers, were the ones who had killed President Habyarimana.

They told us that, the Tutsi were going to bring back their bad regime and overthrow us on power.

They convinced us that, some of the Tutsi refugees had guns; but later on, after meeting those refugees, I came to find out that what they were telling us was all lies and a way of killing the Tutsi.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

I accepted the crime of Genocide that I committed, I rendered myself to justice, I said the bad things that I did, what I saw, what I heard, I even asked for forgiveness. Starting from people who survived from where we had attacked; To people who knew me and saw me; I asked for forgiveness from all Rwandans in general. I was forgiven by Rwandans in general and some of the survivors forgave me publically. Asking for forgiveness doesn't stop because as the crime of the Genocide does not get old, up to now we still ask for forgiveness, whenever we meet someone who saw us while committing that crime or a Genocide survivor. I like to give my testimony in different places, I always consider it as a chance that I get to ask for forgiveness

from everyone who had been affected by the Genocide, especially the youth because I also committed the crime of Genocide while I was still young.

The pain of the crime which I committed do not end; Because, when I see the orphans, widows, I always blame myself, I live with that shame of having played a role in all of that; that is why I ask for forgiveness and tell the truth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY AND RECONCILIATION ON MY SIDE

I wanted Unity and reconciliation more than anyone else because; I had destroyed the unity of innocent Rwandans. I needed it so that it may reconcile me with the people whom I killed their families; so that it may also reconcile me with the Rwandan society and the world.

THE SIDE OF MY FAMILY

It wasn't hard for me to tell it to my family members who were grownups because I spent two years giving my testimony in the phase of collecting information on the Genocide against the Tutsi up to my trial in court, they were there. Another thing is that I had committed those crimes where I live now.

The first hard thing for me was telling the truth to my wife because I committed that crime while I was still a youth, but because of the goal that I have of being free in my heart, I first told it to her while I was still in Prison. It was hard for her to accept it, but because the Genocide took place while she was my fiance, we had been dating for 5 years, I even saved her with her family while they were in trouble in 1994, she was even listening to the testimonies of people which I helped so that they may not be killed; that helped her to be patient throughout the 10 years and 8 months that I was imprisoned.

LIVING WITH MY FAMILY

First, I started teaching them how discrimination is a bad thing. I prohibited them from listening to words of hate. I started showing them that I was imprisoned because of the bad teachings which we were taught and the discrimination based on ethnicity. I started showing them Genocide films. They started asking me questions, like, who were those that were killing? Who were those that were being killed? Why were they being killed? I taught them to forgive anyone who will be offending them.

I told them that I committed the crimes but I was forgiven and I gave birth to them and now we are developing, they try to understand it but it is hard.

WHAT I DO NOW

Since I was in prison I was a campaigner, encouraging my friends who committed the crime of Genocide, so that they may come and join me and tell the truth on the crimes they committed, and ask for forgiveness to God, and write letters of what we did to the authority. I started it before the court of Gacaca had started, even before people started forgiving others. I was showing them that we betrayed people, I showed them that whenever you tell the truth; first, it is saving your heart. Another thing is that whenever you give true information, it's a relief to people's hearts which are still in confusion.

But, it was not easy during that time, from 1997 up to 2000. Luckily enough the president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, gave us a chance and released us from prison, people who had rendered themselves to justice, and accepted to ask for forgiveness.

That gave us the strength of continuing that campaign because people whom I had taught were released and went home, but for me, I stayed in prison. Some people could discourage others, telling proverbs like *"Amasakayezembereinyonizirayarya"*, they wanted to mean that, those who were released from prison first, were the ones who will be killed immediately.

They were ashamed after seeing that nothing happened to those people, those people who had been released even started to come to visit us and teaching us in prison. The government helped me to go and teach people who refused to tell the truth outside the prison publically, telling them to tell the truth, after teaching them, I could go back to prison.

The time came and I was also tried in Gacaca court and I was sentenced to 10 years, but it was like a way of forgiving me compared to the crimes I committed. They found out that I had already served those years, they completed what was needed and I was released and came back in the large community of Rwandans.

THE ACTIVITIES THAT I'VE DONE AFTER BEING RELEASED AND WHAT I AM CURRENTLY DOING

Getting close to my friends so that I may not be lonely. Getting close to the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi, even if it was not easy. I joined a group of unity and reconciliation of development and helping one another, called UKURI KUGANZE. That group is made up of the Genocide survivors, Genocide perpetrators, people who came back from refuge in 1994 and 1995, families who have some of their members who are imprisoned because of the Genocide. We tried to search for the bodies of people who were killed but never received a proper burial; Building houses of Genocide survivors, with the support from the government of unity of Rwandans and other foreign NGOs.

We tracked people who refused to render themselves to justice and those who accepted their crimes partially. We met CNN, so that we may show the international community that Genocide took place, whereas they are some people in their countries who deny it.

We talked to a German group on unity and reconciliation, telling them that to achieve it, was because the perpetrators accepted the crimes that they committed, ask for forgiveness, and telling the truth because that is what heals the hearts of the survivors. We talked to people from Cote d'Ivoire about the problems they have.

We were given training from the commission of unity and reconciliation. We received training from GERand CFOR. After receiving those training, I decided to come close to the youths who

were ashamed of their parents' crimes; I taught them and asked them not to listen to the bad things that they are taught by their parents.

I request the youths to be free and talk to their parents while showing them the truths basing on what the government of unity of Rwandans taught them at school, telling them to take them in "ITORERO RY'IGIHUGU" so that they may teach their parents what they've acquired from there, because, that is what will help many parents. I ask the youths not to be owned by the bad history of their parents, and the shame of where they were born from.

They should strive for what may help them to develop, considering the good that the government of unity has done for them, which do not discriminate, striving for having knowledge, loving to work, always remembering the values of Rwandans. Refusing what would cause shame to them today, tomorrow, and in the future, taking an example to the heroes of our country, especially on Inkotanyi, who liberated the country while most of them were still young. We shot a movie with some Israelis, showing how the Genocide was committed and how the government helped us to unite.

We shot a movie with IBUKA, showing how the Genocide was done until it was stopped, Unity and reconciliation in 25 years since FPR stopped the Genocide. We encouraged people who had debts of properties which they destroyed during the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 to pay them, a lot of them understood it and paid.

We had talks in the Senate of Rwanda, showing our bad role during the Genocide, the steps we took so that we may come back from sorrow, and got the courage of having the hope of being a good Rwandan. I asked for forgiveness, especially because that I had gone there with one of the people who forgave me.

I expressed the use and happiness that I have because I was forgiven. That helped me to be free in my mind, in my development, and living in harmony with other Rwandans. I am a partner with the campaigners of unity and reconciliation, from the village up to the national level. We did a ceremony and we invited people from all levels, I also invited the NGO of GER. I showed people who are still ashamed of what they did; that whenever they free themselves and tell the truth, it can help them. Survivors also had the time of expressing themselves during that ceremony, the leader of GER also had time and showed the good things about telling the truth. That day I spent the amount of money which is not less than Rwf350.000.; my purpose was to sustain unity and reconciliation.

WHAT I THANK THE GOVERNMENT

The government didn't revenge the way it helped Rwandans without discrimination .The way it strived to develop all Rwandans without discrimination. The way it helped Rwandans to go into small saving groups with the support of the government was by giving them training and means; social health system, supporting the poor.The way everyone goes to school, even those who do not have means are helped by the government.It helped me to rise from the dead, I now live happily. It gave me forgiveness which I have no right words of explaining them but long live the government of the unity of Rwandans. Long live FPR Inkotanyi that restored life within Rwandans.Long live our President KAGAME Paul and the Rwandans that he is leading.

CPL EX-FAR HAKIZIMANA Patrick