

This is the testimony of Agnes, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

On the 7th April, the morning after Habyarimana's death, the deadly began killing Tutsis and destroying their houses. My husband was forced to run away but I decided to stay with our baby in the village. When the militia arrived, I managed to escape, though I had to leave my baby behind. Whilst I was running I fell into a pit latrine still under construction. A Hutu dragged me out, but then raped me. As did his friends. When they finally left me, it was morning. I went back to check on my child who I found dead. While one militia was helping me bury my baby, his collaborator picked up the corpse and threw it away. He then forced me to his home and raped me, all along claiming that we would have another baby. My private parts were in tatters but it did not bother him at all. When I developed boils in my private parts, he went on raping me even when I complained that it hurt. I stayed in that house until the Rwandan Patriotic Front soldiers arrived in the area, when he ran away to Zaire.

I stayed with some pupils who came from Butare. I had a baby girl as a result of the rape. I went for an HIV test after realising that the boils in my private parts were reappearing very often. I learnt that I was HIV positive in 1995. I found it hard to accept and tried to commit suicide several times and almost went mad when I learnt that my daughter was infected too. In fact I returned to be tested another three times, but the result was always the same: positive.

With the help of a charity, I repaired my Aunt's home and I now live there with my daughter and some other orphans that I take care of.

I am a voluntary worker at a project, which advises and helps HIV victims and encourages others to go for HIV tests. But my new family does not know about my status. I avoid discussing it with them. Though I wonder always how they will survive when I die.

Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Agnes.