

This is the testimony of Jean-Bosco, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

We were a large family at home; my extended family. When the genocide started, I was only six years old. The killers came and first killed my parents and an uncle. Another uncle of mine threw me over the hedge into the neighbour's yard and that is how I survived the first encounter with the killers. I heard my parents scream as they were hacked down with machetes and *udufuni* (small hoes). I escaped to relatives who hid me. I later learned that they had left my grandmother but came back later and killed her along with two aunts.

We hid for some time with neighbouring kids. The *interahamwe* chased us out of hiding – together we requested to pray before they killed us. In the middle of the prayer I ran for my life and the killers took off after me. Since I had a clear lead on them, I fell into a deep ditch that had been dug specifically to throw the bodies of the slain Tutsis - I was out of their sight. They did not know where I was so they decided to leave. One of my younger uncles had seen me falling into the pit and he came to my rescue; he had had his entire family killed. He told me that he had nowhere to take me since he was on the run himself and I decided to try seek sanctuary with a distant relative. I learned later my uncle was killed too.

I hid until the RPF invaded. One of the liberating soldiers looked after me, his family had been killed alongside mine. My maternal grandmother learnt I had survived and then looked after me. But in 1998 she died too. We had been living together just the two of us. She had no other family as they had all been killed in the genocide. I was the only surviving relative and upon her death, another distant uncle who had survived, took me in. We are still living together now.

While at my grandmother's, I did not have money to pay for school fees. When I moved in with my uncle, he had difficulty to pay my fees. I was always being chased for payment, which affected my marks. I was lucky though to get a place at secondary school with support from the Survivors Fund, who also helped pay for books and other materials.

They recently brought together young genocide survivors like myself, which helped me to open up and to talk about my past. I came home happier and more positive about things.



I know the people who killed my family; my parents, three brothers and a sister. I would forgive them because there is nothing I can do now to bring them back; but it also depends on the way they ask for this forgiveness.

We now live more at peace. Some of my friends who survived still have trauma problems; but together we help each other out when we can.

When I grow up I would like to be a construction engineer; my ultimate plan is to study hard and develop myself. I would also like to see a more stable Rwanda that is no threat to children; a Rwanda where there will be no more genocide.

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