

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

My testimony is very long because I experienced many terrible moments and I have seen horrible things.

The genocide started when I was still young, thirteen years old. I saw my siblings killed and I saw people looting other people's property. Because I was the youngest, I fled with my mother.

We fled to my aunt but they turned against us and refused to hide us so we went to the forest. There, we met an interahamwe named Cyprien. I tried to escape but he caught me and brought us to a roadblock. I was beaten and the killers asked my mother which one of us would die and which one would be safe. She replied that they should kill her and let me be safe. I refused and I asked them to kill me. Finally, they said that they were going to kill both of us.

God saved us. One of them said, "What have we gained since we started to kill? Let them go; others will kill them." They beat me so severely that I still have to go to the hospital for my arm.

After that, we walked and reached a river. I found my siblings there and that is where I saw my siblings killed. There were about three hundred people and many of them were killed there. My mother was among them, my father was already dead, and my uncle was thrown in the river. After seeing what had happened, I ran away with a young boy named Aloys and went towards the town. We met a group of killers and they brought us to a Twa called Rwabarinda. He was a bad man and killed many people. He burned a big place and said, "If you jump through this fire you'll be safe." There was no possibility of this because the fire was strong and had taken over a big place. There was no hope.



Eventually we were taken to the stadium to be killed. They started to kill people. Fortunately, we were so young that we were able to escape unseen and walked among people from the market.

We became street kids until we were put in an orphanage; it was in June. Priests were hiding in the orphanage. The *interahamwe* came and asked who was a Tutsi and who was a Hutu. They saw the priest and they told him to bring the priests he was hiding or they would kill everyone who was in the orphanage. The priest was afraid and he answered that there were no priests there but he was beaten and he handed the priests over to the killers. Some were killed with machetes and others were shot. Afterwards, the children were scattered. Some ran into the bush and others hid in bags of beans. Fortunately, the RPF came and we were brought to Nyamata. We stayed there until the war ended, at which point we returned to Nyanza.

This is my testimony. God protected me. I am alive but I live in bad conditions because I do not have anywhere to stay.

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