

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

I have only one child. He is a permanent reminder of the 1994 genocide.

On 6th April 1994, I was visiting my sister. The next morning as I tried to return home, I was stopped at a roadblock. The only thought I had, was that if the killings had started, which I doubted, then I wished to die with my parents.

My sister had a Hutu husband. He went to hide her with his relatives and this is when the situation became worse for me. I was chased away from his house, and he took me to hide in another place. Being away from my sister, he took the opportunity to rape me. Wherever he took me I was chased away, so he brought me back to his home. He made me his wife, and I fell pregnant.

The man told me that my sister had been killed. I was sad but I thought he was lying to me. After the war, I found that she had really died. I learnt that she had been killed by her in-laws; the very people who were supposed to protect her. When I confronted my captor after the genocide about the death of my sister he denied everything. Fearing that I may implicate him in court, because his relatives had killed my sister, he disappeared.

I was rescued in July 1994. I was taken to an orphanage where I stayed until I gave birth in December 1994. The orphanage asked to leave, and to take the child to its father. I was only 15 years old. I went to my cousin instead, but he chased me away as well saying he couldn't look after a child of an *interahamwe*.

The Government gave me a house. I now live with my son and four other orphans from my family. I decided to have an AIDS test, and I found that I am HIV positive. I discovered this organisation that brings people like me together with one another in order to comfort us and help us where possible in our daily lives.



I don't have love to give to my son because he is a bad reminder of what happened to me during the genocide. Since I began attending meetings of this organisation, I have learnt to stop insulting him. Before, I hated him so much. I used to tell him he was his father's child when he did something wrong. I'm now slowly learning to love him. I also know what it means to be alone and isolated. I try to compensate for all the time I have mistreated him. He is now 9 years old and helps me when I am not well. Being HIV positive, he is the only carer I have. Sometimes I worry that when I die, people will shut him out like I once did.

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