

Name: Thamari Nyiranturo
Secteur: Ngoma
Commune: Gishyita
Préfecture: Kibuye
Age: 60
Marital status: Widow

I was brought up by my paternal uncle because I lost my parents and my brothers and sisters when I was still a small child (I did not see them).

When I became a young woman I married Aminadabou Rwanyabugigira who worked with the white missionaries of the Adventist Church in Ngoma.

After my marriage I was very happy because I had found a husband who loved me very much. He had replaced my parents and the members of my family I had lost. I had rediscovered happiness. Later I had two children (Charles Gahigiro and Louise Mukamuzoni) and I was happy to be called "mother".

I no longer remember which year it was that the missionaries appointed my husband pastor at Idjui (Zaire). At the time Esdras Mpamo was préfet of Kibuye and had begun **driving out intellectual Tutsi (he imprisoned them)**. My husband managed to escape because he was living at Idjui at the time (a large Zairean island in lake Kivu).

When we went to Idjui we left our two children in Ngoma since they had begun attending the Ngoma school. In the evening the children stayed with friendly families. At the end of the month my husband would return to Ngoma to give his report to the white missionaries there. That way he could also visit the children.

One day he went to Ngoma at the end of the month but did not return to Idjui, even though he usually spent only one day in Ngoma. I waited for him in vain. Later a messenger came to tell me that my husband had been imprisoned by Esdras Mpamo and died in prison.

I did not know what to say. I could not stay in Idjui with my husband dead. I could not go back to living in the pastors accommodation. So I went looking for a boatman to take me back to Ngoma where my children were (the pastor who replaced my husband helped me find a boatman).

When I arrived in Ngoma I was shocked to find only one of my children. My son Charles Gahigiro was afraid that Mpamo would kill him too and had immediately left the country for Zaire and then Burundi (He was still young but made all these journeys alone through countries he did not know).

To be sure my husband was dead I went to Gitesi to ask. The people welcomed me and showed me where his body had been thrown. I cried and returned to Ngoma (The Kibuye central prison was in Gitesi).

The Church helped me to build my own house and I stayed with my daughter Louise. The Church kept on giving me help. All the time I wondered why Mpamo (préfet) had killed my husband and had kept me from living with my son. I was always sad. I was lucky, my daughter grew up, married, and had four children. The children grew up and often came to visit me. When I began to feel happy, and thought that my son in Burundi was perhaps also happy, I heard that he (Charles) had died in an accident.

I fainted again; I was always ill.

In April 1994 President Habyarimana died and the interahamwe began to kill all the Tutsi and burn their houses. We went and took refuge in our church. There were too many of us; we were praying with the Tutsi pastors.

One Saturday morning, at about 9:00am, many militiamen attacked. They threw grenades into the church and also fired their guns. Many died immediately. I received a **blow to the head from a gun**. I was lying among the corpses. When they killed us no-one screamed, even the children stayed calm.

Though I was very weak and had lost a lot of blood I tried to get out. Through the strength of God I managed to leave the church. Outside I was behaving like a madwoman. The militiamen refused to kill me. I was with another old lady who died shortly afterwards. I took the path to Biseseo (I would walk and then fall down).

By luck I reached Biseseo, where many Tutsi had gathered. The militiamen came to kill in Biseseo too. As I did not have the strength to run and also **pick up stones ???** I went into the bush. I stayed there since I could no longer walk, the wound in my head was infected. For **three months???** of the genocide I was in the bush without moving, without eating. Flies came and sucked my wounds and I did not have the strength to drive them away. The rain fell on me.

When the French soldiers arrived I was led to Goma to be cared for. I returned to Rwanda when the interahamwe left the country for Goma.

I immediately went to Kigali city where someone originally from Kibuye, Mabanza commune, gave me a house (their own house).

I am with an orphan and a woman from my family.

I do not know what I am still doing in this world. I have never seen my parents, I became a widow when I was still young, my son is dead, my daughter Louise and her children died during the genocide. I have done no wrong in this world, people were being killed simply for being Tutsi.

I do not know if there will be someone left to bury me the day I die. Otherwise I will be like my children and my husband, whom I never buried. Their bones are left exposed in the street. I have a **shock** at the bottom of my heart.

N.B.: She gave her testimony whilst crying a lot, like a child. She was in bed, ill.

She has forgotten the events of 1959..

She also does not know what Ntakirutimana (pastor) did during the genocide.

Interviewed in Kicukiro, 12 June 1997.