

The Abasesero Resistance during the Genocide and the subsequent consequences to this day.

Name: Innocent Ndahimana
Cellule: Rwingabo
Sector: Bisesero
Commune: Gishyita
Age: 20 years old
Profession: Farmer
Marital Status: Single

When the war began, I was living in Gitesi, in the Ruragwe sector. The interahamwe militia from Rutsiro launched an attack on Gitesi. The Hutus and Tutsis formed a unified front to resist these attacks. The next day, everyone realised that this was about ethnicity. As a result, the Hutus distanced themselves from the Tutsis. Tutsi houses were burned down and their cows were stolen. The following day, the Tutsis were killed over two consecutive days.

I used to be a servant for a Hutu family. The head of this family wanted to kill me but I managed to escape. I fled to Bisesero where my family were. The Tutsis there had always resisted previous attacks launched upon them. Needless to say, my mother, sister and her children were killed. The others from my family, my four brothers and my father, went back home, believing that the war was over. Shortly afterwards, some very bloody attacks took place.

On 13 May 1994, the interahamwe militia surrounded us in preparation for another attack. We were unable to retaliate. We gathered together at Muyira. We decided that our tactic would be to run and hide in the bush. I fled towards a bush in the pond. That evening, I felt ill and I went back home. I hid in a tree. Three groups of attackers passed right next to the tree without seeing me. It was only when the fourth group passed by, that they found me. They told me to get down but I refused. I was hit on the head and shoulder with a stone so I got down and ran to the forest. They could not find me. My father and brothers were already dead by this time.

I stayed in the forest until the French army arrived to help us. The army protected us and took us to Kivumu and then to Kabgayi in Gitarama to the RPF zones. We decided to leave Bisesero because some interahamwe militiamen were still threatening to kill us.

In September 1994, I went back to Kibuye. We stayed at the office of the commune of Gishyita where we received help. My older brother was able to restore his house and the two of us stayed there. Soon afterwards, I rebuilt my own house and I left my brother to live there. I live alone in this house. Before the genocide, I had a large family.

At night, all alone in the house, I find it impossible to sleep. When I do managed to get to sleep, I just dream about the members of my family who died during the genocide. After such dreams I can't get back to sleep. I need to get married but unfortunately I can't find a Tutsi wife to share my problems with. All the Tutsi women died during the genocide. My cows and all my possessions were stolen and now as a result I am poor. I have no way of buying any others.

Insecurity has been prevalent from the beginning of the war up until now. We frequently have to spend nights outside our houses because infiltrators are attacking Tutsi families. This is due to the fact that some people, who participated in the genocide, have not been arrested. When we attempt to bring them to justice, we are told that the prisons are full and can't take any more prisoners. These are the people

who leave their homes at night and try and kill us in the forests so that we will not be a witness against them. They know very well that we are the ones who will testify against them.

We need soldiers near us to make sure that we are safe.

Interviewed in Bisesero, 12 February 1997.