

FRIENDS OF TUBEHO
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Elise



I am a student at the Université Libre de Kigali where I study business administration. I am an orphan who has lost both my parents during the genocide of 1994. I grew up in Kwamagana in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. We were five children in my family, but I am the only one who survived. Today, I live with my cousins who are also orphans and we form a reconstituted family within the Association Tubeho.

I lost all my family during the genocide. Before April 1994, I lived with my dad, my mother et my four brothers and sisters. Even if I survived, I have been tortured despite my young age at the time. The Interhamwe beat me in the back with a club and put hot pepper in my wounds, my eyes, my ears, and elsewhere. When I asked to drink after having witness killings, a militia men offered me blood from someone they had just killed.

It is difficult for me to negotiate this trauma... It is almost not possible not to be traumatized when you have suffered such things! I just try to fight each day and work hard to overcome moments of crisis. Still today, thirteen years after the genocide, I dream about things I saw and I can't forget my older sister. How to manage all these remembrance and traumatic thoughts? First, I try to understand myself, to be rational telling myself that it is normal to be traumatized after what I went through. I ask myself a lot of questions regarding my past, my present life and my future. This helps me to tell myself that I shouldn't be prisoner of my past. My past has been dictated by the perpetrators of the genocide, and even my present is largely defined by the lasting consequences of their actions. But my future is not! I am responsible for my future! When I embrace this responsibility, I am no longer prisoners of the tears of my past. This is my way to deal with my traumatic past that can be sometime invasive and overwhelming.

To succeed in my studies, to be together with friends, to talk about my pain with some friends who I can trust are my great pleasures in life. Regarding my future, my biggest hope is to find people who can listen to me, believe in me, and support me in my studies. My dearest dream is to get an M.A. in business administration and it's a huge dream

since it requires a lot of will and also financial help. To have the opportunity to get a diploma is key to my future for me who has nothing else. The obstacles are numerous, but I have a strong will to succeed. I tried to find some little jobs to pay for my education, but the high unemployment rate in Rwanda makes it difficult to be hired without a diploma or work experience. Thus, any financial aide to sponsor my education and offer the same opportunity to other orphans from Tubeho is not only welcome, it key to give us a chance to make our dream come true.

Q : How will the creation of a library and mini computer room change the opportunity to study and integrate into professional life for the members of Tubeho?

To create a library and a computer center for the members of « Tubeho » would be priceless. To be able to work on the internet would allow all of us to find information, new perspectives and gather knowledge. Moreover, to be able to work and communicate through the internet makes me focus on the present, the future and I forget for a while my past and all the sad memories of the genocide. When I am on the internet, my thoughts are focused on the future and this helps me to overcome my fears and thoughts that prevent me to move forward. In brief, the creation of a library and computer center would not only allow us to become more knowledgeable and master a key tool to find jobs, it would also help us to open windows on the word that would free us from the fear and trauma in which we are too often trapped.