



Photo: Riccardo Gangale

# SILAS Ntamfurigirishyari

“When the genocide began I was in the military camp. On 6th April 1994, and in the following days, there was a tense atmosphere. Soldiers running up and down, making phone calls to their families, asking how things were evolving. There was news that killings were taking place. There was a sense of uncertainty in the camp, people were unsure of what was going to follow.

When we analyzed the scale of the killings and the pace at which they were being carried out, we realized that they were not going to stop soon. Another soldier and I wondered what we could possibly do about it. There were people that we knew and used to visit in their homes and in churches, so we did not quite understand how these innocent people could be killed with no apparent reason.

So we decided to find a way of helping people flee to Burundi. At least some of these people could be helped. We were very much aware if we were discovered we could be killed as well.

We usually evacuated people during the night and used very complicated routes. One of us would go in front and lead the group while the other closed the line. We told people to hold on to the next to form a chain to avoid losing track in the darkness. We

resorted to this after one incident when we were helping a group of people in the night through the forest. I remember that I was in front and at a certain point I felt that there were only a few people behind me so I stopped and asked my friend in the back and we realized that we had lost some people. Fortunately, we managed to reconstitute the group and from there onward we decided to stick together by holding the next person in the line until we crossed to Burundi.

One day on the way back to the camp after visiting a friend's family, I saw a truck full of soldiers heading back to the camp, so I stopped them for a ride. On our way we met a group of people with an old woman and a kid. They were going to kill them so I stopped the militias and told them not to waste their time on the old woman, that I would kill her myself. They left the woman and the kid with me after I convinced them. There was a dense forest close to the road. We went in the bushes and after I made sure that there was no one around, I explained the plan to the old woman and why I had brought her there. I told her not to wander in the forest but to wait for me. That night I went back and took her to Burundi with the child she was carrying on her back. I safely returned to the camp without any incident.”

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