



# Silent No More

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Laying gender based violence bare

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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SGBV	- Sexual and Gender Based Violence
RICH	- Rwanda Interfaith Council on Health
MIGEPROF	- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINISANTE	- Ministry of Health
HIV	- Human Immunodeficiency Virus
UN	- United Nations
RIB	- Rwanda Investigation Bureau
ID	- identity document
ES	- Executive Secretary, in charge of a sector
STI	- Sexually Transmitted Infection
NISR	- National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
FBO	- Faith Based Organization

## FOREWORD

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I am humbled to write this foreword. After having closely observed the progress that “Claiming Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Rwanda” project beneficiaries have been making, I believe their testimonies will inspire other victims and society as a whole.

This book is a compilation of testimonies from young girls who have been victims of one of the most painful atrocities in society today. It gives you an insight into some of humanity’s most heinous crimes. For those who have been victims of sexual violence, it is always painful to talk about what they have gone through and it is difficult to discuss their life, since the trauma persists long after the act. I am thankful to everyone who contributed to this work in producing a book that attempts to delve beyond testimonies. It is proof of long hours of counselling, and days of healing. It demonstrates that it is possible to rebuild a life shattered by sexual abuse.

As you flip through the pages of this book, not only will you realise the damage caused by sexual abuse; but you will also sojourn with the victims on their painful journey towards self-acceptance, healing and resilience.

It is my hope that this book provides a deep understanding of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and becomes a resource for our partners to improve their strategies in fighting SGBV.

This book is produced with the generous support of the government of Scotland, through Oxfam in Rwanda, to whom we owe deep gratitude.

May God heal all the victims of gender-based violence, and give us all the strength and compassion to make a difference.

**RICH Executive Secretary ,**

**Jean Marie Vianney GATETE**



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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Gender-based violence is as old as the bible. King David's son for example committed incest by raping his half-sister, Tamar, as told in the book of Kings. As powerful as he was, the King did little to reprimand his son or protect his daughter. Violence against women has transformed over time to become a systemic and widespread violation of the basic human rights of women and girls.

Society has barely changed since the days of David, if anything, sexual perversion has worsened. Hardly a week goes by without the media exposing heinous acts committed against girls by grown men, most of whom are their caregivers. Fathers are turning on their daughters and threatening to kill them if they tell someone. Some male cousins pose a similar threat. Girls are no longer safe, whether they are on the street after dark or at home in broad daylight. Sexual violence continues to push the prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases among children as perpetrators seem not to care that their actions destroy lives. Children born as a result of sexual violence have poor odds of being accepted by society.

Global UN statistics show that 35% of women (roughly 4 out of every 10 women) have experienced sexual violence at a point in their lives. This is tragic. NISR Statistics from 2015 show that 34% of GBV victims in Rwanda are preyed upon by an intimate partner.

There are common denominators that have come up in the process of gathering the stories published herein. The greatest factor that predisposes girls to sexual predators is poverty. In a context of poverty, girls seldom know their rights. Poverty also gives rise to vulnerability where the provider of basic rights can impose an unhealthy relationship. Another underlying factor is family dysfunction – most of the victims in this booklet are missing one or both parents or are lost in a polygamous setup where it is almost impossible to receive love and care.

In some cases, the dysfunction has given rise to incest, especially in cases where fathers are left in charge of their daughters.

Another troubling but hidden factor is that victims whose perpetrators have evaded the law are the responsibility of tracking them down and informing police of their whereabouts. This has resulted in many unresolved SGBV cases.

That said, there are a number of possible solutions that the Rwandan society can embrace in curtailing this vice and protecting girls. This list is by no means conclusive. One is to acknowledge that sexual violence is alive and well, and that it happens even in unlikely circumstances. Nothing is more heart-wrenching than a victim thrown out of her home because the family blames her for being assaulted. The Isange One Stop Centers are a brilliant example of acknowledgement. Next is to encourage dialogue around GBV. Speaking about it will not only bring to light a problem that has long been shrouded in secrecy and silence, it will also strengthen the judicial process of bringing sexual predators to justice. Thirdly, we can rid our society of sexual violence by creating awareness among women and girls.

A society where the women and girls know their rights is a society that is empowered. Awareness amongst society at large will also ward off the social stigma that prolongs suffering for victims. Fourth and most important is to anticipate and prevent rather than treat sexual violence. This is in terms of changing circumstances that sexual predation thrives in and ensuring that justice dealt to perpetrators inflicts fear in would-be perpetrators.

As a body of religious organisations, RICH must play its part in the entire chain from prevention to bringing healing – both psychological and physical – to our broken world.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This booklet was made possible by the tireless effort of RICH and by the generous support of the government of Scotland through OXFAM in Rwanda. In bringing SGBV victims together in support groups, they are able to draw strength from one another. The entrepreneurship training is supporting girls that have dropped out of school in facing the future with courage.

The identities of the girls featured in this booklet have been altered to protect them and their families, hence the asterix. However, the stories remain authentic. We salute each one of them for their courage to tell their story and expose the vice that has overwhelmed our society. We salute each one who is raising a child born out of sexual violence – it takes strength.

We would like to thank the Isange Once Stop Center staff across the country for the work they are doing in embracing these victims of sexual abuse and guiding them towards a more hopeful future. Your reward lies in the rehabilitation of these victims and their successful reintegration back into society.

We must also remember parents and guardians who have stood by their children after they have been violated and loved them back to health. We salute those who have taken their daughters back to school and are walking with them on the journey of healing.

This section would be incomplete without mentioning the role of the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) and the courts across the country. It is only through the arrest and arraignment of suspects that some of these girls have been able to move on. Justice brings closure to their anguish and fear and it is hoped that every victim - herein featured or otherwise represented - will find justice.

We must not forget to thank the government of Rwanda that has put in place policies and laws that support SGBV prevention and response, working through MIGEPROF, MINSANTE, Rwanda National Police, RIB and other stakeholders.





## I LIVE WITH A CONSTANT REMINDER

**M**y name is Claire\*. I am one of three children born to my mother. None of us share a father.

All my life I really wanted a father. I thought if I had a father I could continue going to school and have a better life. Mum later got married to a man who was hostile to my siblings and me and did not want to provide for us. Our step-dad would get home and instead of us running to meet him I would hide in the kitchen and cry. I left home to work in Kigali as a house-help. Towards the end of 2015 I came home after saving enough money for my mission. I told my mum I wanted her to show me my dad. She told me that nothing good could come from meeting him, but I insisted. She offered to direct me to the sector he was from but I told her she had to accompany me and show me the man who fathered me.

When we arrived in Ruyenzi sector, we asked around and people gave me my father's number. I went back to work and phoned the man whose number I had been given. He sounded like the man I had always dreamt of, and was eager to meet me. So, I went back after a week to meet him. I was shocked because he looked nothing like he sounded—he looked like a homeless man. I wanted to leave right away but he urged me to stay and take care of him since he had nobody else in his life. I took one look at him and decided he needed me.

So, I agreed to stay. I discovered he had a wife and five children and worked as a mechanic. The wife had left with three of the children and left him with the other two.

A week later, I was asleep in the room he had given me. He came in and forced himself on me and raped me. I tried to grab a knife under the mattress but he broke it and threw it away. I was terrified, especially because he threatened to kill me if I told anyone what had happened. I decided to keep it quiet, because I figured if he could violate me, he could kill me with ease. I had nowhere to go. I had dropped out of school at P4 and I couldn't go back to my mum.

After a few weeks, he came back. He would enter the room and lock it in such a way that I couldn't get out no matter what I tried. When he raped me, I called the village leader on the phone and said, "Help me, my father wants to rape me (I did not want to tell them it had already happened)." The village leader did not come. I called my neighbour and asked if I could sleep at her house. Rumours that I was sleeping with my father started in the village and I just kept quiet.

Two months had passed and I realised I was pregnant. I went to the village leader and reported it. While this was happening, my father's wife returned. She had heard what had transpired. For about a week I would hear them arguing throughout the night and after a short time she left again. After some investigations, my father was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. I was left alone because the wife had taken her kids with her. When I had nothing to eat, I would go to the people who helped me find my father and ask for a cup of rice to cook. At times they gave me some money which I spent on some vegetables to hawk and make some money.

Later I gave birth at Remera-Rukoma hospital. The Isange One Stop Center staff came to see me, and tested me for infections. I was fortunate he had not infected me with any disease. As I was a child, I thought people just walked into hospital and gave birth and then left without paying a bill.

However, Isange cleared the hospital bill and I was able to go home. At home my stepmother came back and would taunt me saying that people don't sleep with their fathers. It really hurt me. My own mother never came to see me after I gave birth.

I realised my baby was not alright. He is blind and does not move like other babies. Even at two years old, he only drinks and is not able to eat. The government put me on Ubudehe 1 (the poorest in society) and gave me health insurance.

RICH is now training us on how to start small businesses with little capital. I am happy with the situation because I do not want to beg in order to take care of myself and my baby. Even my step-mother wonders where I get money from and has since stopped insulting me. I cook by myself and take care of my baby the best way I can.

Every time I look at my baby, he is a constant reminder of what my father did to me. When a child is healthy, you can leave him with a neighbour and go to work. Not my son. I have to walk with him on my back and bring a flask of porridge everywhere I go. It is difficult but I do my best. With the transport allowance they give us here, I buy flour for the baby's porridge and other things he needs.

When I come to these trainings, I feel like I'm not alone, and especially since the other girls and I have similar backgrounds, I feel like I have people who understand me. We call each other on the phone. My situation has taught me to fend for and keep to myself since initially nobody was willing to help me. Neighbours in the village do not bother me anymore. I have learnt to ignore their hurtful words.

In the future I want to run a vegetable kiosk so that I can support myself and my son financially.



## THEY SAY I SHOULD MARRY THE RAPIST

*Once a sexual violence perpetrator has been arrested and is behind bars, the victim is able to move on with her life. But what happens when he is walking free and lives in such close proximity to the victim that he continues to harm her? Beatrice\* is living the nightmare of being stalked by the man who raped her, infected her with a sexually transmitted disease and fathered her child. Unless he is caught, the chances of her being forced to marry him are high, as she narrates...*

**M**y name is Beatrice\*. I was born in 2002 but my mother died when I was born and my father followed later, leaving me with an adoptive family in Kigali. Later, relatives claimed that my adoptive parents wanted to sell me, so I was removed from the home and given to my stepmother. When I was in primary 4, in 2017, my step mum hired a young man from Gitarama - about 26 years old - to help tend to the cows.

After he had stayed with us for a year, one day he came into my room when my step mum was away and raped me then he ran away in the middle of the night. I was infected with an STD which was treated.

As time went by, I realised I was pregnant because my schoolmates would poke fun at my bulging tummy. I had to tell someone. The village leaders started looking for the man when they found out he was responsible.

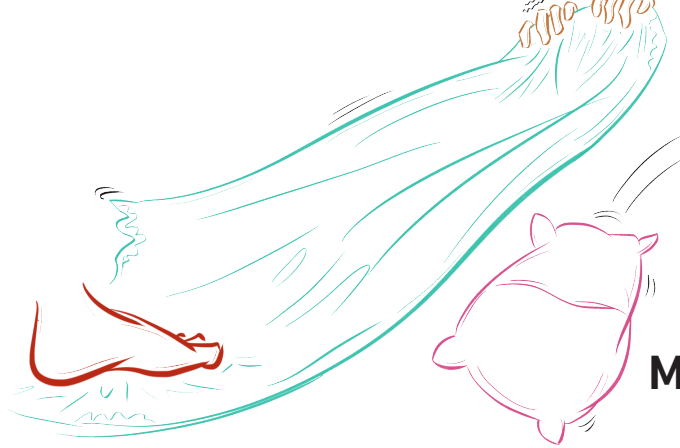
My step mum urged me to drop the charges against him because time had gone by. I dropped out of school when I was seven months along. The man eventually returned to our village but we did not pursue his arrest because he told the leader he had come to help me care for the baby. My step mum actually rehired the man. It hurt me but she was adamant it was best for us all.

My baby is now two years old. I never went back to school, although my teachers had said I could. I felt I must take care of myself and the baby, because my step mum says she cannot raise a baby that is not her own. When I earn some money from selling avocado or during these trainings, I go to buy food for my son and I. Lately my neighbours refuse to watch the baby so I have had to stop selling fruit. The man who raped me lives with us but has not shown any interest in supporting the child until recently, when he called me and told me that he would give me 1000Rwf if I slept with him. I declined.

My step mum has been pressuring me to marry the man but I don't want to. Neighbours also think I should marry the man. Things have escalated to the point that the man slaps me and sometimes strangles me when he sees me talking to another boy or a man. When I tell my step mum that he has beaten me, she says I am making things up. I have learnt to shut up so that she does not chase me and my baby away from home. He says he is my husband and I am his wife whether I like it or not and he will kill me if I marry someone else. When he last hit me, he sent me 1000Rwf on mobile money (I think it was hush money) and I used it to buy porridge flour because I had nothing else. He sometimes calls me and asks me to go to his room, I refuse. I try to make sure I am never near him.

I just want RICH to help me start a business, like dressmaking, so that I can take care of my son and get to a point where I don't need help from this man or my step mum.

*(Beatrice's case was taken up by the Rwanda Bureau of Investigations after the interview and an arrest warrant was issued for the perpetrator)*



## I WON'T GET MARRIED, EVER

*Tragic events register in the human mind and may cause the victim to continuously relive the incident despite their best efforts to move on. Trauma, as this condition is known, can last a lifetime if allowed to fester. Keza\* is a beautiful girl who says she is a shadow of the vivacious child she once was. Rape took much more than her innocence; it swept her dreams away and if she does not receive psychological support soon, the scars will only deepen. This is her story...*

**M**y name is Keza\*. I was born in 2003 and I belong to a loving family, the youngest of six children. In 2017, after I had completed P6, my neighbour asked me to house-sit for her as she went to give birth in hospital. I stayed there a week, cooking, cleaning and taking care of her six-year old nephew.

The lady's husband would come home, eat what I had prepared and retire to bed in the main house, while I slept in the other rooms with the little boy. The night before his wife was to be discharged, the man came home from the hospital, I opened the door and served him food which he pushed away and refused to eat. I used to keep the keys with me and would lock up when he went to sleep. This time he took the house keys and put them in his pocket. I got suspicious and asked him for the key to go outside to the bathroom but he refused (I was hoping to run away).

I retreated to the room I shared with the little boy and slept. The man came into the room and stood above me. I got up from the bed really angry and stood on the other side of the room. He realised I was angry and hit me. We struggled and fought for a while, and finally he produced a knife. I asked him to spare me but he said he wouldn't. I asked the little boy to scream but he said he would kill us both. Finally, he knocked me against the wall and I fell unconscious and he raped me.

I regained consciousness at about 5am, my face and head were swollen and I had a terrible headache because of the injuries. I found the man beside me wanting to rape me again. He strangled me when I attempted to scream. I asked him for keys to go outside but he wouldn't give them to me. I managed to grab the key from his trousers and escape from the room and ran to his brother's house. I thought to knock on the brother's door but changed my mind because he could easily catch up with me as they were next door neighbours. I ran farther to another neighbour's home and knocked frantically. She let me in and I told her what the man had done. She went to the man's home and asked him if I was telling the truth and he admitted that he had raped me.

The woman called the village leaders and my mum, then they told me to shower so that we could go to hospital. When we arrived at the Isange One Stop Center they tested me and gave me prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection and pregnancy.

Later I got home and I couldn't eat or sleep. I was constantly crying and did not want to see anyone. I heard that the man had run off and the police were unable to arrest him.

My mum was traumatised when it happened. She still is but she has since accepted it and tries to comfort me about it when I'm down. It was so bad that if a person greeted me on the street, I would burst out crying. The support of my family has been crucial in the recovery process. They understand me and calm me down when I get depressed.

However, since I started coming to RICH trainings, I have met girls in similar situations and my problems have seemed to reduce in comparison to theirs. The group sessions have mostly helped me to accept what happened to me to a large extent, about 60%. Not a day goes by that I don't think about it though.

Some friends and neighbours have said cruel words to me that have hurt my feelings. Whenever my mother sends me to visit the wife of my assailant, I am hesitant and I'm even unable to speak with her because she is covering her husband's whereabouts.

Lately I have heard that the man comes home to see his wife once in a while and then disappears again. I wish the police would arrest him. I feel like life will not go back to normal. I never want to leave the house or be in a group of people, I just want to stay home. If a man talks to me, I always think he wants to violate me, even if his intentions are pure.

Because we are poor, I cannot continue with school. I used to dream of becoming a nurse but now I think that dream is impossible to achieve. My parents sold everything for an older sister of mine to study but she never got past S3. We have nothing left to sell.

Now I have started buying small livestock and keeping them at home. It's what I want to do for now. I know for sure I will never get married.

*(Keza is severely traumatised two years after the rape incident. She never received sufficient counselling which is crucial for a return to normalcy and acceptance. After the interview it was recommended that she receive intensive counselling).*







## TOO ASHAMED TO SEEK HELP

*A stitch in time saves nine. Seeking help immediately after the rape incident is literally the difference between the victim recovering and living with the incident's aftershocks for a lifetime. This is a lesson Diane\* learnt only too late. She wishes she could turn back the hand of time and hopes her testimony will encourage other girls to seek help in time...*

**L**et me begin by urging girls to go straight to the Isange One Stop Center if they fall victim to sexual abuse. But I digress. My name is Diane\*, I was attacked by a workmate of mine after we left work.

He had tried to get me to date him for a long while but I resisted. That fateful day he and two friends followed me after we left work. Pacing close behind me, he tripped me and I fell, the other two ran away and he raped me. I got home and my greatest worry at the time was getting pregnant. But I had no idea that I should have gone to Isange One Stop Center. In retrospect I wish I had, but I was too ashamed. The next day I reported the incident to my boss and he advised me to go to the police. The man didn't come to work that day so the police did not really have any leads on his whereabouts.

After some weeks I realised I was pregnant. I went to the hospital to make sure. I was tested and they found that not only had he impregnated me, he also infected me with HIV. I was devastated and wanted to procure an abortion but I changed my mind and decided to keep the baby. I'm not sure who told the perpetrator about the pregnancy because I received a phone call from him telling me that I should take good care of his baby. After that conversation he disconnected the line.

On my boss's advice, I went back to the police. We tried calling him but did not get through. The police asked me to find out where he lived in Kigali so that they could arrest him. I was at a loss and I let it go until I gave birth.

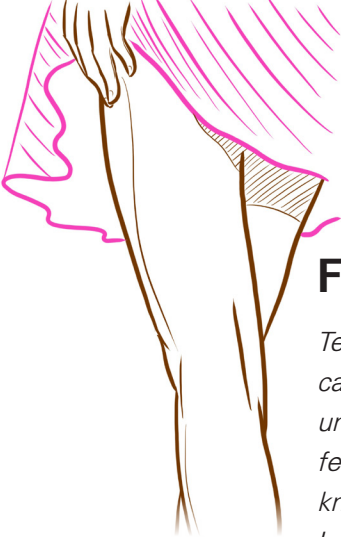
When my baby was six months old, she fell sick one day mysteriously and passed away the same evening. I was now childless and HIV infected. Somehow, he found out and called me to ask me why I had killed his baby. It was as if he assaulted me a second time and threw me away with a disease. The pain was too much. I left home and went to live with my brother for a while after we buried her. I came to find out that the assailant has a wife who lives in Kigali.

I thank God for Isange, they helped me from the moment I sought help, through the time my baby died and later in HIV care. They've also really supported me in accepting my HIV status. When I come here, I meet other girls in a worse situation than mine and I appreciate that I am not alone in this.

My family has been mostly supportive. Mum and Dad have been kind and understanding despite neighbours telling them to throw me out because of the shame I have brought upon the family. I have a brother who really insults me and he won't even share a plate with me and has turned his wife against me. But I have learnt to live with the stigma.

Going forward, I want to buy a sewing machine and become a tailor for my village. I reached P6 and my parents took me to do an apprenticeship with a tailor so I know the job well. I have also bought some goats and they are breeding so I will have something of my own thanks to RICH. My only plea is that the police arrest the man who did this to me. If I met him, I think I would hurt him the same way he hurt me.

*(After the interview it was evident that she wanted revenge, RICH and Isange staff committed to follow her up and continue to counsel her to deal with these thoughts)*



## FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION

*Teta\* is a posterchild for the ripple effects that rape can have on a girl. Having had nobody to talk to and understand when it first happened, and being unable to fend for herself, she resorted to the oldest profession known to man. Was it the only way? Could she have behaved differently? This is her story, be the judge...*

I was born in 2000 and was the only child my mother and father had in common. She had three other children from other men and my father had his own three. They stayed married for a short while then split up. Then I had to grow up and take care of myself.

My name is Teta\*. I worked as a domestic worker in Kigali after my parents' marriage broke down. A young man who was a houseboy at a neighbouring house cornered me and raped me. Soon I fell pregnant and when I told him he turned on me saying he could not be sure he was the father of the child, unless we had a DNA test done.

I was left in a difficult position, soon to be a mother, with no job and needing money for food and a place to sleep. I tried to appeal to the local leaders to help me but their hands were tied because neither of us had the money for a DNA test. The man promised the leaders to take care of the baby after I gave birth, so we left it at that. In order to earn some money, I got into prostitution.

When I was about seven months pregnant, I left the streets of Kigali and decided to come home. I went to live with my mum and found that she had just split up with her second husband. She left me her house and went to the city. Once she settled, she called me and told me she was not coming back because she had found another husband.

The baby's father called me and told me to make sure to get medication so that I could protect my unborn child. I had no way of knowing what he meant.

I knew I was about to give birth and I would need an ID and health insurance. The only person who could help me get those documents was my father so I went to his home where he lived with his second wife. He got me what I needed. When I got the insurance, I went for a test and was found to be HIV infected (I remembered what the father of my child had told me and realised he must have infected me). I disclosed my status to my father and stayed on at the home waiting to deliver. My stepmother even encouraged him to sell one of his two cows in preparation for my delivery but he did not heed her advice. I would hear them fighting and I felt like I was breaking up their home.

One day my stepmother was away praying in the mountains and I had been left with my father in the homestead, I was sleeping in a room they had given me. He came into the room wearing a condom. I was confused. He then raped me in spite of my pregnancy and then took the condom with him when he left.

I asked him whether I had become his wife and he boldly told me his wife had left him for a long time and he needed sexual release. I was distraught that my father could do this to me. From then on, I was solemn and did not talk much. When my stepmother came back, she noticed a change in me but I did not say a word.

A while later she announced that she was going back to pray in the mountains. I made it clear that I would accompany her but she insisted I stay home because I was nearly due. I refused. On our way to the mountain, I told her what my father had done and reminded her that I was HIV positive. Let's just say we never reached where we were going. She was really heartbroken and cried all the way back home. She also started to treat me badly.

I was forced to go back to my mother's empty house. Before I left, I went to the executive secretary (ES) of our sector and told him what had happened. He brought me back home and we had a sit-down. My father denied any wrongdoing and told the ES that I was crazy, even after I told him the exact date it happened, my father called me a liar and a prostitute. The ES noted that since I did not report the rape immediately after it happened, there was no way of proving that I was speaking the truth. That was the day my father ceased to be my father. We no longer talk.

I was left with no choice but to leave. I later gave birth and since I had insurance it was ok. I tried to reach out to the baby's father but he was not willing to help as he had promised. I was by myself. I take care of my baby and so far, he has tested negative for HIV. I make sure to take my medication and to breastfeed him. To this day his father has never seen the baby.

Isange One Stop Center staff came to visit me at home after I gave birth. They had been instructed to follow up with me by the Sector office. They invited me to join a group of girls that had been assaulted. It helped me come out of isolation and be able to share what I'm going through. Now as I attend the trainings offered by RICH, I can see a future beyond the rejection of my parents and the father of my baby.

My only hope is that the Isange staff can help me find my baby's father so that he can provide child support. In the meantime, I have learnt to survive on the money we get from these trainings. But there are times we have nothing and men come and ask to have sex with me. I sell my body for my baby's sake but always use protection.

I would like to leave this life and become a beautician. I have no land to dig so working in a salon would occupy me and help me provide for my baby.



## MY DAD, MY PREDATOR

*Society is broken in a lot of different ways. Often when parents split up, a child is left to fill the position of the missing parent. That child ceases to be a child and assumes the responsibilities within the home, as Christine\* did. Merely a child herself, Christine had to take care of her brothers and father from a tender age. She was doing a good job until something started going terribly wrong. Read her story to see how trapped a girl can be in the absence of a mother....*

**M**y name is Christine\*, I was born in 2003. I am the oldest of four children. My mother gave birth to us and left us with my dad. I became the mother of the family, taking care of my younger brothers.

We were living in a small rental house. When I was in primary 6, my father came into my room and raped me. I did not say anything to a soul because I did not want us to be evicted from our house. It happened several times while I was in P6. Eventually, we ran into some money problems and were evicted from our house. My dad had left us and gone to Kigali. We moved to live with a family friend for about a month. My father later came and found us another house and moved us there. He raped me again.

I decided to tell a female neighbour. By this time, I was in senior 1. The woman advised me to report the next time it happened. She told me if it happened again, I should not shower or change my clothing but rather grab my things and rush to her house. I did so and she called the local leaders to follow it up.

The police took on the case, filed a comprehensive report and referred me to Isange One Stop Center where they tested me and found I was neither pregnant nor infected with HIV or STIs. When my dad heard that I had reported him to the police, he tried to defend himself, telling them that I had been a prostitute since I was young and they should not believe a word I said. The police weighed the evidence, questioned our neighbours and my brothers and arrested my father. He was given a life sentence.

That neighbour took me in and began paying my school fees for about a year. She stopped because she had no means to pay any more. I went to Isange and told them I had no way of continuing with my studies. Isange staff took me to the sector office and I was able to be classified as a needy student living with a Good Samaritan. Now the state pays my fees and buys my school equipment. I no longer worry about my school. Isange has really helped me.

They invite me to these training sessions with RICH and I have learnt things I had never heard about, like what to expect during my monthly cycle, how to handle myself as a girl and my rights as a girl. From these trainings I also get some pocket money which helps me buy what I need while in boarding school.

My future looks bright. I dream of taking up a course in culinary arts when I finish my studies.





## MY LIFE STOPPED

*Just as pathogens thrive in dark, moist places, so does sexual abuse in silence. Many girls will not report an incident of sexual violence for fear of being reprimanded and ostracized. It is time that Rwandan households and society at large created a safe space where a girl can run to when she encounters sexual violence. Only then will victims know that rape is not their fault and that they were the victim not the cause of the rape. Kayitesi\* spoke up too little, too late...*

**M**y name is Kayitesi\*. I was born in 1999. By the time my dad died, we were two children but mum remarried and had one child before her second husband died. She married again and had three more children. The first two children were taken in by our grandmother whilst my first stepbrother went off to Kigali to look for work.

In 2015, I was heading home from church one evening as a P5 pupil, a young man who was seated by the roadside called me over and asked me to sit with him. I don't know why I accepted to go near him since I did not know him. He was a stranger to me and was about 18 years old. After asking me some general questions, I excused myself to go but he said I could not leave before giving him something (sex). I declined but he overpowered me and raped me right there on the side of the road.

I went home and kept it to myself. It wasn't until I started suffering from chronic vomiting that I went to the hospital. They tested me and found that I was pregnant. I couldn't tell my mother the news because it would cause trouble in her marriage.



One day a community health worker came to the village looking for minors who were victims of sexual assault to invite them to a meeting at Isange. I was afraid I would be found out but I went. The meeting at Isange went well, they asked what happened to me and I was able to tell my story for the first time. The police followed up on the assailant according to my description but he heard about it and ran off.

When time came to give birth, I went to the hospital, Isange bought me the baby clothes I needed. They also moved me and my baby out of home to another home. That was the end of studies for me and I was sure my life was over. My friends that were the same age as me also teased me and told me that my life was over.

Isange continued to follow up with me and linked me with a peer support group. I have started to see a brighter future. I have been able to accept what happened to me. Now I know life can go on. I am now focused on raising my baby and I no longer pay attention to the people who insult me, or boys who want to have sex with me.

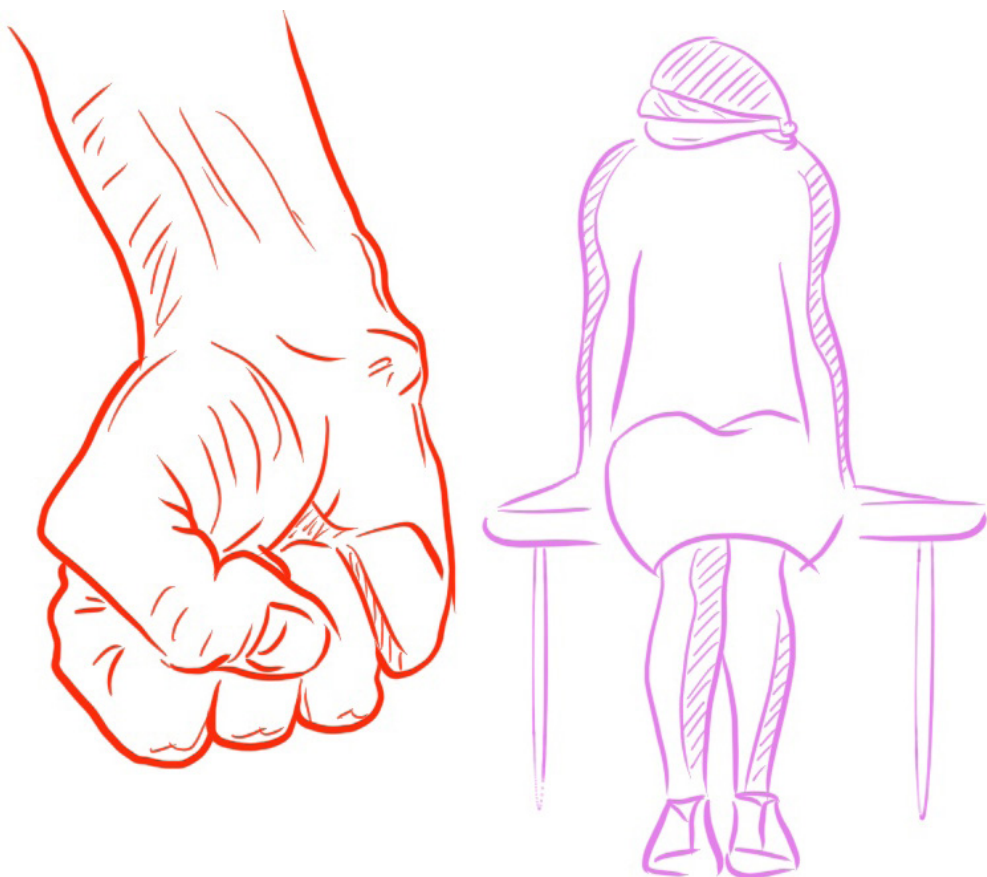
I found out that the man who raped me is from a neighbouring village but he ran off to Uganda to avoid arrest. When he found out that I had a son, he began calling me and telling me he loves me and he would take care of the child. To this day he has never given me a penny to help with the baby. When I mentioned he should come speak to my parents, he changed his number. My family did not want to follow up with his family for child support.

My 3-year old son has started school and I am able to pay the 5,550Rwf annual school fees. I want to encourage him to study so that one day he can get a good job. I want him to do better than me because I cannot even write my name, I have forgotten what I learnt in school.

I would advise other girls not to accept gifts from men or boys because they come at a cost. Let them focus on education and wait for their parents to buy them what they need instead of accepting gifts from men.

I am confident my future is bright. When I receive the travel allowance from these training sessions, I take some and buy rabbits. I am also part of the Gikuriro program that has given us chickens and pigs. When they give birth to young, I sell them and get some money for food and clothes. I dream of buying land of my own. I also farm vegetables on my grandma's land.

During the RICH trainings, I have learned about my rights as a woman and to also think about business ideas I can implement. My desire now is to shift from farming and to have a business where I can sell some vegetables.





## ENSNARED BY CHILDLESS COUPLE

*While childlessness is frowned upon in African society, little is said about ways in which a couple going through it can legally have children, albeit not biologically. Some couples resort to adopting a child from within the family, an initiative that enables orphans to have a home. But what happens when the couple decides to take matters into their own hands and obtain a child through devious means?*

*Harriette\* was only 14 when she befriended a man, who, unbeknownst to her, had ulterior motives. Her life would change forever.....*

**M**y name is Harriette\*. I was born in 2003. I am the only girl in a family of eight boys. My story began when a boy came to me and proposed that we become friends. That was in 2017. After we had been friends for a while, he invited me to visit him at his house. When I got there, I found out that he was actually a man, 25 years of age with a wife. It was a shock but I couldn't leave.

You see his wife locked the man and me in the house and disappeared. The man raped me when we were left alone.

The following morning my family realised I was missing and came looking for me. When they got to the man's home, he was immediately arrested. My family took me to Isange One Stop Center where I was tested and found to be four months pregnant. This was not the first time we had sexual relations but I had no idea I was pregnant.

My family received the news better than I expected. It was hard for me to go back to school. I would isolate myself to avoid other children teasing me.

I was sure people would notice the pregnancy, however none of my schoolmates knew. I was not sleepy either so school went on as usual. Eventually I gave birth.

Incidentally, my mum gave birth a month after I did. She told me to go back to school and leave my new-born with her. That's what I did. My baby became like a twin brother to my youngest brother and mum breastfed them both. Now my baby calls me by my name and does not know I'm his mum.

The man who did this to me was taken to court and given a 25-year sentence. Isange called for a meeting with parents of girls like me who had been victims of sexual violence and my mum and dad both came. They have accepted what happened to me and want me to go on to finish school. I have an older brother who keeps trying to convince them to kick me out but they are determined to let me continue to be a child like my brothers. I am really grateful for that. They treat me just as they used to before. Now I am in senior 1 and none of my new schoolmates know I'm a mum.

I am saving the money I get from these trainings with RICH. It will benefit me when I complete school. Right now, I'm focusing on becoming a policewoman when I finish school. I want to be in a position to help other girls who have been abused and invest in projects that can help such girls. It will also be my turn to bless my parents for being a support system to me when I needed them.

The wife of the assailant has on occasion sent people to kidnap my baby. She has no child. Each time she has done so, my parents have gone to get him back. The last time they warned her that she would be liable to the law if she took him again. It appears the rape was a plan between the couple to get a child.



## MY SISTER, MY DAUGHTER

*Incest is defined as a human sexual activity between family members or close relatives. Despite some cultures attempting to lace it otherwise, it is taboo. Sarah\* knew this, and was sure her assailant knew it too. So why did he go ahead and commit this heinous crime? Find out why she could not say a word...*

I'm Sarah\*. I was born in 2002, in a family of three siblings from different mothers. My mother and father are no longer married so I now live with my maternal grandmother.

Saturday June 25, 2016, will forever be etched in my memory. At the time I was living with my dad and a stepmother. My stepmother travelled to visit her family during the Liberation Day celebration. I was left at home with my dad. That evening when Dad was going out, he told me to sleep in his bed and close the door so that when he came back, I would hear him knock. He then went with the key. I did not think anything of this request. He was my dad after all, so I obeyed.

At about 1am, he came back and I felt him touching me. At that time, I was not worried because I trusted my dad. He told me that he wanted me to have sex with him, to which I responded, am I your wife? I honestly thought he was joking. You see he was a drug addict but that night he did not smell like he was under the influence of any drugs.

I slipped out of the room and ran to my room but he followed me. I was wearing a nightdress with buttons on the front. He tore it up and struck me with a fist so hard I hit my head on the wall.

I tried to fight him off as hard as I could. My greatest fear was that he was HIV positive; I did not want to get infected. He overpowered me and raped me. When he was done, he told me that if I told anyone, he would kill me; after all he gave me life. Shortly afterwards, he left the house.

I was paralysed with fear. I couldn't tell anyone what had happened to me. I was afraid he had infected me with TB and HIV and the shame of being violated by my father was overwhelming. I continued living at home. At the time I was doing my P6 exams. My father told me that if I discovered I was pregnant he would give me money to procure an abortion. I had no idea how abortions were procured and it had not even crossed my mind that I was pregnant. So, when he gave me some money for an abortion, I used it on other things. Later on, my father pressured me, wanting to know why I had not aborted the foetus and reminded me not to tell a soul. That made me cry because I was suffering in silence. I decided to commit suicide to be rid of all these problems.

People found me trying to hang myself near my home and stopped me. I assured them I was fine. I continued living in fear, crying all the time. My friends and neighbours noticed a difference in me. But I would not confide in them because my dad had told me if anyone noticed I should say that an unidentified person found me in the bathroom outside and raped me. Although I agreed to go along with the lie, I told him that I would tell my mother. The whole time I was pregnant I never attended prenatal clinic.

When I went to give birth, he warned me not to name him as the father of the child. So, I registered my child as fatherless. My heart was heavy and I was depressed. I attempted suicide a second time and yet again neighbours rescued me. That was when I decided to tell a female neighbour.

Following the suicide attempt, I was taken to the police and they referred me to Isange One Stop Center,

where they tested me and found that I was fortunately not HIV infected. The police got involved and they arrested my dad and jailed him. I was now left with my stepmother who said she could not live with me since I had snatched her husband – first sleeping with him and then getting him jailed.

I went to live with my maternal grandmother because my mum remarried and could not take in her child from a previous marriage. When my mum heard what happened to me, she was really bitter and afraid that I had been infected, because she was also infected during her marriage with my father. She was relieved that I had not been infected. She cries when I share my problems with her, so I have learnt not to seek help from her.

When I first came for these trainings with RICH, I had lost all hope. I thought life was over. But I have regained hope over time, made friends and received support from girls who have been in the same situation as mine. And I have been able to buy my baby clothes and food using the money they give us.

Isange called a meeting for parents and only my stepmother came. After that meeting, she apologised for having misunderstood me. There was also a neighbour who used to stare at me so much that I told my grandma. When my grandma asked her why, she said she was trying to reconcile the evil my father did to me. My former schoolmates are cordial with me.

My father has never apologised to me in person but he writes me letters saying he is sorry. I have never replied. Now I look at my baby and although I'm sad that I'm not able to provide everything she needs; I do not look at her and remember what I went through. All I feel is love. I thank God she is perfectly normal.

My future looks bright now thanks to RICH. I would like to go back to school and become a nurse. If that does not work out, I could do something else.



## MUM PAID THE PRICE FOR MY RAPE

*Helene\* wants to be a policewoman. Her life took a turn when she was attacked on her way home from school. Her mother had a difficult time putting the rape incident behind her due to the social stigma. Relief for the family came in the form of meetings for victims and their parents/guardians organised by RICH and Isange. That was where her mother realised, she was not alone. Only then was the family able to move on. This is Helene's story...*

I come from a family of four children and we live with my mum. She works as a community health advisor. In 2018, I was a P6 student about to sit my exams to go to secondary school. One evening as I walked home, I passed through a banana plantation that forms a canopy over my regular path home. I saw a figure lurking among the banana plants but thought that it was an animal. I continued walking home but the person came up behind me. I turned and caught his hand before he could get to me but he was stronger than me and was quick to put a handkerchief over my mouth to prevent me from screaming. Once I was subdued, he tore off my uniform and proceeded to rape me. I still remember his face even in the faint light although he managed to get away.



I gathered courage, went home and told my mum what had happened. She rushed me to the Isange One Stop Center where they tested me and counselled me on how to accept what had happened to me. We were able to avoid infection and pregnancy. Soon after I returned to school whilst coming to terms with the incident.

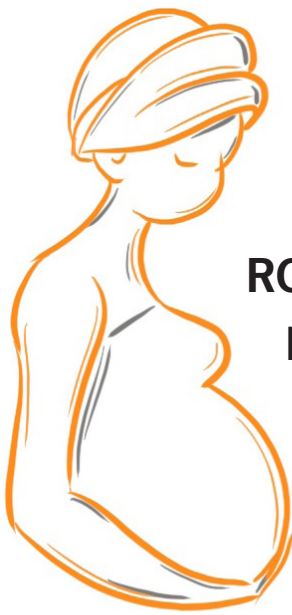
I suddenly felt like I had become a woman too early but the Isange counsellors assured me I was still a young girl with my whole life ahead of me. The police were not able to proceed with an arrest with my description of the assailant.

Recovery was made more difficult by people like my brother who blamed me for having delayed in arriving home. He said he was sure I was with some boys and therefore brought the rape on myself. Mum was able to explain to him that such things, although unfortunate, do happen.

The neighbours got wind of what happened and like my brother, said I had brought the rape on myself. It really affected my mum so much that she stopped going to village meetings or church and would keep to herself. Help came when we attended the parents' meeting prepared by Isange and she realised that I was not the only one that had been a victim of sexual abuse. She also stopped blaming herself and started going to village meetings.

This year I went to S1. I came for RICH training and immediately bought a pig. I used the money to buy school equipment that I needed. The girls I have met during training make my problems seem small, because some of the girls that are the same age as me are mothers as a result of rape. I have made many friends and have also learnt to accept what happened to me.

When I finish school, I want to become a soldier. I want to be rich and start a school for orphans. I think I will get married when the time comes. In case I'm not able to get a job right after school, I will use my entrepreneurship training from RICH to start a business.



## ROBBED OF MY INNOCENCE



*Meet Peace\*, the only girl in a family of two children. She grew up witnessing physical abuse before her mum left the marriage. But sexual abuse wasn't personal until a robbery turned violent and changed her life.*

I was born in 1998 in a foreign land. My mother and father separated after he beat her up several times and my brother and I were left to grow up with my father. He was a loving man to his children so I never felt unsafe with him. The unfortunate thing with not having a mother, I had nobody to teach me how to behave as a woman and what I could expect as I grew up.

I don't really remember my mother, but I have been told she was from Tanzania and she and my father met in exile. We left her behind in Tanzania after the marriage fell apart and we came back with my father. I've grown up to become the woman of the house, taking care of the house needs, cooking and cleaning for both my father and brother. My father swore never to get married until I had left home. I had just completed P6 in 2017 when my life changed.

One night, at about 3am, three men broke into our house in what seemed like a routine robbery. They found me asleep in my room while my father slept across the hall in his own room.

My brother had recently moved to his own house some distance away so it was just the two of us at home and I suspect that was why we were targeted. The men wore masks and seemed to want only one thing, money. Unfortunately, we had none. When I told them as much, they hit me and injured my arm, I screamed and they hit me and insulted me.

They proceeded to take our food, and my father's and my clothes whilst handing them to the rest of the gang outside. I could hear my father telling them to take whatever they wanted but spare his life. Once they had taken everything in sight that was valuable, the leader ordered the rest to leave and was left with one other man in the house.

All this time my father was in his room and I was in mine. He had no idea that two robbers were still there. They proceeded to push me down on to my bed and one came over me and strangled me so I could not make a sound. He asked me if I was hiding any money and I told him I had no job. He got angry and tore my clothes and attempted to penetrate me. I was still a virgin so he was unable. He got up and let his mate try. Once the second man had succeeded, his friend came back and raped me again. My father was oblivious to what was happening to me.

Once they left, I went to my neighbour's house and I was lucky they let me in. I told them what had just happened and they gave me a bed to sleep in. Later my father started looking for me and I could hear my brother asking him how he did not know my whereabouts. My father thought the robbers had taken me with them. He looked for me for a while until I told my neighbour's son to tell him I was in their house but I could not speak with them just yet.

My father came to see me and all I could do was cry when he asked what had happened to me. After a few hours I sent the boy to tell my father to come and take me to hospital. I did not want to get infected with disease.

Once we got to the Isange One Stop Center, they tested me and gave me first aid. They counselled me as well. A case was opened with the police but they were unable to find the assailants because they wore disguises throughout the robbery. I still wish they could be caught so that I can know who they were.

When we got home my father could not come to terms with what had happened. He took a while to even look me in the face. It seemed he blamed himself for not being able to protect me. But with the help of Isange and RICH, my father has come to terms with what happened and accepted that I was not the only girl that this has happened to. He was unable to take me back to school but he allows me to come for the trainings that RICH offers girls like me.

Through RICH I have been able to meet girls, like myself, who were abused and still bear the brunt of the crime. The money I get after the trainings has enabled me to buy a few chickens and rabbits and start saving with a group. I also farm on my father's piece of land.

With the help of Isange, I have accepted what happened and am trying to move on. I want to start a business selling vegetables wholesale. I am confident the RICH training will help me to become profitable. I tell every girl I know to never keep silent when such a thing happens but to rush to Isange because they really helped me.





## **RICH DAD, POOR ME**

*Tessa\* is from a well-off family but her father believes that once a girl gets pregnant then she no longer deserves to be treated like his child. That was where her troubles began as she tearfully narrates....*

I was born in 2001 to a household of seven children. My father had three wives, my mother was the first and had three children but she left him and remarried. Although he is well-off, life, for my siblings and I, has not been easy. Trouble started when I was in P4. My father pulled me out of school and chased me from home. My brothers remained at my stepmother's home while I went to Kigali to look for a job as a maid.

I did not last in the first job I got, so I moved to another home. A young man from the neighbourhood came into the home and found me alone. He forced himself on me and left.

A few weeks later I realised I was pregnant so I went to his home and told him that I was carrying his child. He had the audacity to ask me if he was the only man who could be the father in Kigali. Hurt and confused, I let him be. I decided to come home.

My father realised I was pregnant and did not want to know how it happened. He sent me to live in the house where my mother used to live with my brothers. The house was empty. He would beat me daily and made sure I had nothing to eat. Since I was pregnant, I would beg for food scraps from neighbours and share them with my two brothers.

When I would go to his house to ask for something to cook, my father would beat me senseless. He can afford to feed us but he simply won't. My youngest brother who is 14 couldn't take it. He ran off to find work in Kigali and I envy him. I am glad he is safe from my father. My child and I have lived a life of starvation and being tormented by my father for the last two and half years. He makes sure not to provide for us.

I came to Isange One Stop Center when I arrived home and they counselled me on how to adjust to my life with a child. They visit me at home and counsel me through my problems. They even called us for the parents' meeting but once it was over my father said they are conmen who were wasting time with us (rape victims). It hurt me deeply when he called me a prostitute despite having met other parents whose children had been violated.

After the meeting, he decided to cut my brother off as well. My youngest brother was in S2 and my father had been paying his school fees. All of a sudden, he decided to stop and transfer that responsibility to me. Now I have to dig other people's farms for money to pay for his school needs. I fear he will have to drop out like me, yet I had such hope for his future. My father paid for our health insurance but cut out my baby, so I have to find money when he gets sick.

Two years ago, when I gave birth, I looked for a way to bring my mother back home so that she could help me with my brothers and my baby. I needed a parent. She was living in Burera where she had remarried. I got her to come back and she reclaimed her land and began farming. My father would send people to come and threaten her in the house and she had no peace. Frustrated and fearing for her life, mum went back to her other family and left us.

Isange staff have tried to intervene in my relationship with my father in vain. Also, because of his standing in society even the village leaders fear to reprimand him.

Since I started coming to RICH trainings, I found a place where I could make friends, my hope has been restored. When they give us pocket money, I plan to buy a goat and two chickens.

I was working for a hairdresser in Kigali so I picked up a few skills. I hope to get an apprenticeship and become a hairdresser in the future.



## NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

*Rape only happens to the poor and vulnerable, or so we think. Noella\* is unlike other girls caught in the sexual violence rhetoric. Her parents are wealthy and educated. Her story sheds light on the effects of family dysfunction for a child...*

I'm Noella. I am an S6 graduate who should be at the university but I am currently homeless, living with a Good Samaritan and uncertain of what tomorrow holds.

I was born in 1999 to a mother who was a teacher and a father who was an engineer by profession. For the first 16 years of my life, I lived with my father. He took care of me and paid for me until S3. My mother, who I later realised was related to my father, was remarried and had another family.

Just after I completed S3, a man came to visit us at home. He told my father that he was my real father and that he would like to take me with him. My father ensured that I was not part of their discussions but I heard enough to have doubts about my heritage.

Following this visit, my father grew angry and sent me away to live with my mother and her family. Her husband made it clear that I could only stay until I completed S6 and then would have to move out.

My mother and her husband were both teachers at my secondary school. I broached the subject of the other man who had visited the man I called father and asked my mother if it was possible that I had a different father.





She was displeased that I questioned where I came from so I let go of asking about it.

While in S6 in 2018, I would leave school about 6pm and walk home by myself down a road dotted with banana plantations. One evening as I walked home, I found a group of men on the road. They called out to me but I walked on, ignoring them. One of them followed me and grabbed me, pinned me to the ground and tore my clothes off. He went on to rape me. I could not see his face in the poor light.

When the assailant was done, he ran off and I ran straight home where my mum – thanks to her education – took me to Isange One Stop Center for first aid. They tested me and gave me tablets to prevent disease. I also received counselling to help with accepting my situation and moving on.

I did not want to go back to school because the rape had happened near my home and I felt like everyone knew. The counselling helped me to understand that life had to go on. I leaned on my mum for support. Her husband distanced himself, I guess because I'm not his biological child. Neighbours who heard about the rape were empathetic and sensitive towards me.

After three months I went back to school to sit my exams. I thank God I passed. Afterwards I moved out of my mum's home since my three years were up. Although I had hoped to proceed to university, and my parents are able to pay for me, they have both disowned me and I cannot live with either of them. They blamed me for having questioned whether the man who raised me is truly my father.

I gave up on applying for bursary to help pay for University because my family is known not to be needy.

I went to look for a job as a house-help in Kigali but it did not last. A girl I met there told me to look for her grandmother when I got home and ask to live with her while I figured things out.

This poor, old woman took me in and treats me as one of her grandkids. Before I found her, I had no roof over my head and I was starving for almost a week. I would like to thank Isange staff for all their support because it has brought me this far. They helped me find peers who have been through worse situations than mine, and I feel like I should be grateful for my lot. The money I get from RICH trainings helps me give back to my adoptive household because the old woman is not wealthy at all.

*(Noella's desire is to go to University. She however cannot access financial support from the government because the man who is registered as her father is an Engineer and is known to be wealthy. Isange staff have organised for her to meet the public prosecutor who can take the matter of her paternity to court and seek DNA testing to verify her paternity and persuade the real father to provide for her).*



## OSTRACIZED AND CAST AWAY



*Odette\* was born into a polygamous family. Her father had three wives. Her mother left him and went to Uganda to start life afresh, leaving Odette with her two brothers at the stepmother's home. Her story echoes the adverse effects of polygamy in today's society...*

I was born in 2002. I have two brothers with whom I share a mother but there are many children in the family. My mother, the youngest wife, found another husband and moved to Uganda, leaving my siblings and I. I was the only child at home when the rape happened.

I was living at my stepmother's home. My father is disabled and 86 years old, so he also lived with us at home but was not much of a decision maker. A nephew of my stepmother, who is about 22-years old, came to visit us and stayed a few days. He would come to eat with the family. He started making passes at me, telling me that he was crazy about me and that one day I will cook for just him. I reported him to my father but I could see my father did not want trouble with my stepmother since this was her nephew, so he took no action. That was in 2018, and I was in P6. One evening the boy found me in my room. He came in holding a knife and ordered me to shut my mouth or he would kill me. I obeyed and he went on to rape me whilst holding the knife to my neck. He then disappeared.

I went and told my father that I had been raped, he shared the news with my stepmother, with whom I was not on good terms. She turned on me and said I was a prostitute and no longer deserved to live in her house. The extended family held a meeting and agreed that I was no longer fit to be a child of the home. My father told me to get my things and shift to the house that used to belong to my mum. My stepmother's son started beating me so I obeyed and moved out. It was clear nobody wanted me. That was the end of school for me.

I discovered in October, about two months after I had been raped, that I was pregnant. I live by myself with no way of earning a living save for farming on what used to be my mother's land. I often go to wash my father's clothes since my stepmother will not wash them and while there, I ask him for money to buy food.

While I was still adjusting to living in solitary, a young man came and broke into my house and attempted to rape me. We struggled and I screamed for help, and he took off with my mobile phone but did not manage to rape me.

Neighbours came to my aid and took me to Isange One Stop Center. They tested me and found that I had not contracted a disease from the first rape. They have been following up with me and have linked me to the prenatal program. I'm now waiting to give birth. I gave up on finding the assailant since the police were asking for my help to trace him.

I have no way of contacting my mother to let her know the terrible situation I am in. A few months ago, I tried to take my life but I did not succeed. I cannot see beyond my current situation and my brothers don't really care what happens to me. I do not know what will happen to me when I give birth but I have a neighbour whom I have asked to help me get to the hospital when I go into labour. I plan to love my child.

My plan had been to become a policewoman but I don't think that will happen since I cannot go back to school after giving birth. I'm now banking on the training RICH gives us. I want to get a sewing machine and become a tailor. For now, I'm using the money they give us to buy a few clothes and small things that the baby will need.

*(Odette sounds like a 9-year old in a 17-year-old's body. She clutches herself when she speaks and is barely audible. Following the interview, RICH and Isange staff committed to follow up Odette and continue counselling her to help her overcome the suicidal tendencies for her and her baby's safety)*







## SHORT SUMMARY ON RICH

Rwanda Interfaith Council on Health (RICH) was established in 2003 under the former name of “Rwanda Network of religious organization against HIV&AIDS”. Although, this network was initiated for HIV&AIDS, it is now involved in other health issues such as family planning, SGBV, maternal and infant health, malaria, tuberculosis, nutrition, sanitation and non-communicable diseases.

RICH is made up of religious organizations which are grouped into six confessional groups including The Catholic Church represented by the Episcopal Conference of Rwanda; the Province of the Anglican Church in Rwanda; the Protestant Council of Rwanda; the Evangelical Alliance of Rwanda; the Rwanda Muslim Community and the Fédération des Eglises Protestantes Reformées au Rwanda (FEPR).

RICH is an umbrella of FBOs ensuring an effective coordination of faith-based actions to promote health in Rwanda, promote partnership among members and other health promotion stakeholders, advocate for policies that promote community health, and capacity building of members to effectively fulfil their responsibilities with regards to health promotion.

In this regard, Rwanda Interfaith Council on Health is conducting a project “Claiming Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Rwanda” in six districts (Muhanga, Huye, Ruhango, Kamonyi, Nyabihu, Rubavu). The project is funded by the government of Scotland through OXFAM in Rwanda.

Under this project, RICH as the implementing organization collaborates with key stakeholders that include MIGEPROF, MINISANTE, RIB, Rwanda National Police, local authorities and district hospitals to address the gaps related to the attitudinal change, institutional capacity building and the empowerment of women to ensure that women in targeted districts can enjoy equal rights and live free from discrimination and any kind violence.

This will be achieved through the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); but also, we are aiming to build the capacity of Isange One stop centers in order to provide support to SGBV victims and empowering SGBV victims in their socio-economic reintegration.

This book is part of our efforts to tackle SGBV as one of the main sexual and reproductive health rights abuses; but also, to highlight the consequences of SGBV for the victims and the society as whole.



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