Long before the #MeToo movement exposed the pain and prevalence of abuse, Tabitha Mpamira was deeply aware. At the age of 11, she had been a victim herself while living as a Rwandan refugee in neighboring Uganda. It was a traumatic experience that she kept buried until a return visit to Uganda many years later reopened the wound. Everywhere she went, she heard stories of children being repeatedly targeted for abuse.

“Young girls are assaulted frequently and justice is rarely served. Seeing a young girl being resilient, going to school, even with the knowledge that her assailant infected her with the HIV virus...I was enraged. These children need more than another person lamenting angrily at their plight. They need someone to stand up for them in their lives. They need a voice. They deserve a voice.”

In 2015, Tabitha became a voice for these children by founding the **Edja Foundation**, named to honor two inspiring women in her life.

“My mother, Edith, dedicated her life to being a voice for the voiceless and standing up for what is right; and my mother-in-law, Janet, has survived a life of poverty and domestic violence. Through prayer and strength of will, she has managed to care for and nurture everyone around her.”

Tabitha says she started the EDJA foundation to combat child abuse, assault, and domestic violence in sub Saharan Africa, but also to tell the community, the legal system, and the abusers that “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!”

Edja provides victims of assault, whom Tabitha calls “fighters,” with medical attention and mental health counseling. It also economically empowers the victim’s guardians and educates the community, the police, and health providers about eradicating abuse and the stigma that attaches to the victims.

“If it weren’t for [my own] horrendous experience, I wouldn’t have the zeal and passion for trauma healing that I do now. The day I decided to start this work officially, it was that still voice that whispered ‘Why do you get the luxury to wait, when they are hurting now?’ Tabitha credits her husband with making her feel safe enough to pursue her own healing, while pushing her to use her pain for good.
“When going through this life-long process of “getting over” trauma...the emotional toll is rather burdensome. It is my name on EDJA, but these [girls and women] are doing the work each day, just by waking up, and facing the pain, fear, anxiety, and depression that comes with the trauma.” And, she adds, “These young fighters, had the courage to tell someone and I did not.”

Today, Tabitha is a wife, a mother of 4, and a doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology, specializing in trauma. She envisions a society where every woman and child is safe and protected from abuse. She hopes that the work of the Edja Foundation will move sub-Saharan Africa closer to the goal.

“It’s my responsibility and obligation to be part of social change; to bring healing and create space for light in every individual I meet.”

Tabitha Mpamira-Kaguri Tabitha is a Rwandan who grew up in Uganda as a refugee. She is the founder and Executive Director of the non-profit Edja Foundation which provides healing services in Uganda for young victims of sexual assault, like herself, who are forced to suffer the trauma in silence. She moved to the United States when she was 14-years-old and considers all three countries home but holds a special place for East Africa. She is a wife, a mother of 4, and a doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology specializing in sexual trauma. For her work, Tabitha and Edja were awarded the 2018 Waislitz Global Citizen Award.