

# Losing both legs was gift from God

## Plane crash survivor's contract with the Lord

By Robert Cumber

**THE sole survivor of a terrible plane crash has fulfilled a promise to God by launching a charity for fellow amputees.**

For 10 days after the aircraft Rosebell Kirungi was travelling on crashed in the explored mountains of Congo she battled freezing temperatures, sweeping snow and unforgiving terrain.

One by one, the other nine survivors of the plane crash succumbed to exhaustion, starvation or infection and perished, leaving her alone in the remote forest. Each night she would pray to God, promising to commit herself to helping others in return for her life.

"It snowed or rained 24-hours-a-day and the forest was so dense you couldn't tell whether it was day or night most of the time," said the 39-year-old.

"We had to hold on to the trees to avoid being swept away by the water and I was hardly wearing anything because I gave my top to another passenger who was badly injured."

When a rescue team finally found

her, she was exhausted and covered in bloody wounds from the dense brambles.

She was airlifted to hospital but medics were unable to save her gangrene-riddled legs, both of which had to be cut off.

Eight years after the crash, Miss Kirungi has just set up the charity Rock Rehabilitation, which she hopes will ease the plight of thousands of amputees in her native Uganda.

The mother-of-one, who lives in Temple Road, Richmond, aims to raise £1million for a centre providing treatment, counselling and training for future work.

Thousands of Ugandans had limbs blown apart by landmines or hacked off under dictator Idi Amin's brutal regime, yet there remains little treatment available for such victims in the African country.

Miss Kirungi made her 'contract' with God after seeing a vision of a white house while wandering through the forest.

"I see losing my legs as a gift from God," she said.

"He wanted me to help people in Uganda who never had the chances I had."

Miss Kirungi, who spent nearly two decades in Kingston Hill before moving to Richmond four years ago, was travelling from Entebbe in Uganda to Kisangani in Congo

on business when her plane nose-dived into the dense Congolese forest on September 25, 1998.

Her legs were amputated four days after her rescue, but by Christmas she was able to walk using her prosthetic limbs and the following June she was 'dancing until morning' at her birthday party.

**'The forest was so dense you couldn't tell it was day'**

Determined not to let the crash ruin her life, she completed a degree in welfare studies at Kingston University and set up the disabled charity Richmond User Independent Living Scheme (RUILS).

She also volunteered for charities including Richmond Advice & Information on Disability (AID) and Kingston Centre for Independent Living (KCIL), before turning her attention to her new charity.

■ The official launch of Rock Rehabilitation is at the Antoinette Hotel in Beaufort Road, Kingston, on February 7.

The event, featuring music from the group ConChordance, begins at 7.30pm.

For tickets, costing £10, or for more about the charity, email [info@limbworld.com](mailto:info@limbworld.com) or call Miss Kirungi on 020 8948 0942.

**BRAVE:**  
Rosebell

