

Refugee Children's Voices

Thoughts and Art by Children

Studying in UNHCR Settlements in Uganda



Compiled by UNHCR for FENU's Global Campaign Week

April 2004



FORWARD:

UNHCR is pleased to have been able to help coordinate the production of this booklet, *Refugee Children's Voices*. While it is a small compilation of poems and pictures, it presents a wide range of issues that refugee children face at school every day.

While some of the selections in this booklet herald triumphs, others depict failures, and not just with children, but with society as a whole. Of all the positive things in this booklet, one thing is for certain, it allows for children to speak and to be heard.

UNHCR supports FENU in its goal towards making education accessible to everyone, everywhere. One of the first steps in realizing this dream is to allow those who are in the most need of education, our children, let their voices to be heard. This booklet helps to do that.

Education!

Education! Education! Education!
Father I need education for my life

Life! Life! Life!
My parents, take me to school
I need education
Education is life

My father I am your girl
Buy me pens and clothes
I need education

It is important to get educated
I love to study and get educated
I am a clever girl at school
Please educate me

*Name: Vicky Yobu
School: Supiri Primary School, Primary 5*

I Love Education

*Education! Education! Education!
What is education?
Government believes in the importance of education*

*Education! Education! Education!
Education! Is my life!
I run to school always because education is my life
Education is very important to me*

*Education! Education! Education!
I love education
Education is key*

*Name: Joice Moriba Noel Duku, 15
School: Supiri Primary School, Primary 6*

An orphaned child

Oh! Oh! Oh!
Mother where are we?
My mind turned East, West, South and North
I could not believe
I looked all round; I could not get a sponsor

Oh! Oh! Oh!
Mother where is my father?
I cannot find my father
Who will pay my school fees?

Oh! Oh! Oh!
Mother why is there no free education for refugees?
Shall we ever go back to our country?

Oh! Oh! Oh!
Mother I wish I was in my country
I could continue with my education up to university
May god bring peace in our country Sudan?
Though I am an orphan
I would enjoy my sweet homeland

Name: Amoti Lillian, 15
School: Can-Rom Primary School, Primary 6

Refugee children's life

Oh refugee children!
Oh refugee children!
Refugee children are suffering
No good feeding
No proper education
No school fees

Oh children!
Oh children!
We are suffering
Our life is too dark
In the morning, before we go to school
First a child goes to fetch water
The sweep the house and compound
Refugee children are suffering

Oh government!
Why can't you sponsor the refugee children?
Oh my life is too dark
My parents are very poor.
Who will pay my school fees?
This causes me pain.

Name: Amujima Loice, 16
School: Supiri P.7 School, Primary 7

Life in the school

*Happiness! Happiness! Happiness!
Thanks to be UNHCR
Simply because of the feeding program
UNHCR provides for us indeed*

*There is a rapid change in our performance in class
We have the energy to do extracurricular activities
UNHCR provides for us indeed
Except school Uniform*

*Long live UNHCR
Long live the Government of Uganda*

*Name: Nyoka Mary, 15
School: Afeya Primary School*

Education for a child refugee

Educate a child refugee
Send him or her to school
They will become responsible citizens
They are the future leaders

Educate a child refugee
Education enriches not only the child
But the community as a whole
Education is the way forward
For a better future of our country

The forgotten child refugee
The orphaned refugee child
The responsibility of you, our leaders
We need your help

Check on our sanitation
Check on our hygiene
Our security and feeding
Are important matters too?

*Name: Kden Reida Mark, 14
School: Can-Rom Primary School, Primary 7*

School! School! School!

School, School, School
School is the most important thing in my life
I want to stay in the school.
When I was still young, I was forced to go to school
I refuse because I don't know the
Benefits of the school.

School, School, School
School is the safest thing in my life
When I stay in school, I will get more knowledge and
skills.
School is the safest place in my life.

School, School, School
When I drop out of school,
I will miss out on the chances
Of making myself a better person
And contributing to the country's.
So school is a better way in the world.

School, School, School
School will make you to be healthy
And care for your family
When you are not an educated person,
You cannot care for your family and life.

School, School, School
School will make you to know
All the things in the world.
I will not leave school.
The things, which make me drop out,
Is fees because my father was died.
When I complete my primary seven,
I will state to live at home.
Even my mother also died.

Name: Angua Christine Maseo
School: Mongula West Primary School, Primary 7

Examinations

*The time table is up on the notice board
The teachers are either tired or hungry
It takes dedication to educate a nation*

*The busy time is here
Teachers are testing candidates
On what they have acquired
Candidates panic and sweat
As they prepare and hope to excel*

*Hard work is the key to success
When the going gets tough and rough
The tough and rough get going*

*Though as the examination may prove to be
My brothers do not get discouraged
My sisters when you pass, you deserve a cake
Success is indeed worth celebrating*

Name: Jedo Khamis, 16
School: Bidong Primary School, Primary 7

Most Enjoyable Subject

I started my school right from nursery or pre-primary that was when I was 5 years old
The school I went to was called Robidire nursery school

I developed both physically and mentally and was promoted to primary one in Robidire primary school.

In primary one our teachers were good singers and because of that, we the children mastered singing. The teachers are also well qualified. This made us pass the rest of the classes with ease except primary six which seems to be an obstacle to me.

My most enjoyable subject in Mathematics, Science and SST this is so because I appreciate the subject the rest of the pupils complain about mathematics science and social studies are the most difficult subjects.

The subject that I found uninteresting and difficult is English because of lack of practice. As a certain proverb states that “practice makes perfect” I also understand that the rest of my colleagues are facing the same problem that I am facing. When we have certain misunderstanding among ourselves, as the pupils we in a group try to sit down to make consultation of the issue. When we fail to reconcile the issue, we shall forward it to the prefects when all procedures fail then we direct to the teacher on duty.

In future I want to become a doctor.

I will stand firm in my conclusion that the above points are my assessment of my life in the school in primary seven.

Name: Mandela Nelson

School: Robidire Primary School, Primary 7

The Best School

I have joined Robidire because Robidire is the best school in the district. It has educated many people, others are now working, others are still in University and others are still in colleges to mention but a few.

Robidire has got good teachers on other subjects but others are not okay like English teaching is not okay and yet English is the key subject. The teachers are irregular in the school and also the changing of teachers from time to time contributed to pupils failing in school.

Name: Yangi Grace

School: Robidire Primary School, Primary 5

Postpone marriage

Once upon a time, there lived a young girl by the name Nekesa. Nekesa was barely fifteen years of age. She became the talk of Busaakwa village from sunrise to sunset because of her stunning beauty.

The men wanted to marry her right away. The boys knew the dream was far away. 'She is still too young' her parent said, they paid her school fees and sent her to school.

Two years later the young girl had grown big, humble and more beautiful. 'Marry the girl off', Nekesa's parents were urged, most of the people in Nekesa's village thought marrying of Nekesa was fruitful. Many men proposed Nekesa's parents still opposed. 'No, Nekesa is still young' the parents said again, let her complete her studies after that we can bargain.

Years went by, Nekesa turned twenty. The men could hardly wait. The parents insisted that educating their girl came first.

'The whole village cannot marry me' Nekesa retorted,
'Men who can keep their promise and be patient are few' she added
I will first complete my education then I can get married.

Name: Kabahinda Aida, 13

School: Bidong Primary School, Primary 6

Education for a child refugee

Education! Education! Education!
Where are you education?
We long to see you Education
For how long will you hide from us?
You are our best friend
Come! Come! And lead us to a better future

You are the only one
The one that can wipe out violence
The one that can eradicate illiteracy
The one that can drive away poverty
You lead us to success
Come to our rescue

You create confidence in us
You tell us about our culture

You teach us about our surroundings
You impart in us skills and knowledge
Draw near to us

Name: Taban Josef Anduga, 14

School: Can-Rom Primary School, Primary 6

No class rooms

Wind! Wind!
Why wind?
You are strong wind
You leave me with nowhere to live
You blow away my roof
And blow away my books

Rain! Rain! But why rain?
Do you disturb me?
Who wets my books? It is you rain
Who stops my teacher from teaching? It is you rain

I have got a very good tree shade
From sunshine but not from you rain and wind
When shall I be comfortable?

*Name: Akech Hilly, 13
School: Ariwa Primary, Primary 6*

We live in fear

*We live in fear
Rebels attack at any time
Any loud 'BANG' sets me running for your life
Very little to eat, sometimes nothing at all*

*Water is a big problem
Hygiene is poor
Bushes are used for latrines
At night we retire to the cold grass in the forests*

*My parents and brother died at the hands of the rebels
And the other siblings are nowhere to be found*

*I have not been in school for three years
I wish the war could end so I could go back home.*

*Name: Oryem Richard, 14
School: Ariwa Primary School, Primary 7*

Importance of Education

My name is Dichiru Esther Natalia, I live in Kobo village, I am a girl in primary seven and I am 13 years old, I am Sudanese by nationality.

I promise to work hard for better performance, success and prosperity for my education.

I am really interested in school because when one is educated, there are many changes in one's life, it makes me especially self reliant. It will be easy for me to care for my life.

School life leads to better life caring for children in future, education wise and about their health will be easy when education, there will be job opportunity anytime and makes one known, recognized and popular in the community.

Education makes one different because it enlarges one's reasoning ability and skills of doing something or works; for example a carpenter.

Education also makes one's mind change in terms of thinking, understanding facts and knowing many things happening in the world through reading newspapers and listening to radios.

I wanted to be in school so that I will be education because when traveling to Mulago hospital in Kampala, one will not get lost because one is able to read

When one is educated you will see many places because after achieving the goal of education, one will be able to go and visit many countries, she will make many friends and know many people. For these reasons I say I will never and never leave studying because it is good than everything in this world.

School life to a certain extent is not good to me because many people after finishing school they become wasted to the community that is by involving themselves to drink alcohol, disturbing the people in the community.

School life has also become uneasy because I am unable to get for myself a school uniform, books and pens.

I am really interested in studying because when one is education, it makes one self reliant, it will be easy for one to care for one's life.

I promise to be a doctor.

Name: Dichiru Esther Natalia, 13

School: Kobo Primary School, Primary 7

Difficulties at School

I am alive but not studying well
My reason for not studying well is,
I am learning outside, under a tree
If it rains, the teachers run away
That affects my studying well

We lack teachers in this school
Only two bore holes¹ in this camp
We face water scarcity in this school
Going to fetch water means coming home late
I cannot get enough time to read my books
That affects my studying well.

Being an orphan is yet another reason
For my not studying well
My father was killed by rebels and
Mother has been abducted
That really affects my studying well.

Name: Ochola Jimmy

School: Ariwa Primary School, Primary 7

My difficult life in school

Whenever I cross by the school compound and not only do they call me grandmother but also dull girl in the class because I do fail to understand the teacher as fast as the young girls and boys use to pick.

Then too much fear makes me go late to school every day, because I don't feel fully member of the school or part of the rest of the pupils, as results of such.

I am subjected to punishment daily.

Not only the pupils making my life hard, the teachers also harass...me when I fail a number, even they pack-bite me that I will not complete my school, I would get married. When the teachers are talking about the dull girls they glare their eyes on me always, this gives me hard time to think that I am unable to do what others are doing in the school.

Adding on my parent's poverty in supporting me in school, my life becomes very difficult to conline.

Therefore my dear government I wish you to protect the education of the big girls like me by doing enough, so that they can get educated like any other person.

Name: Poni Regina Simaya, 19

School: Mongula West Primary School, Primary 6

¹ Bore holes are water wells

Thank you

Thank you very much for choosing our school to write essay about my school life. I live in Kobo village. I am by nationality Sudanese refugee.

I am 14 years old I am learning in Kobo primary school

I am in primary six class this year 2004. I start me education in 1998.

I joined my primary one to primary 2 in Oligi settlement. When I joined my primary one, at that time I don't know how to write well and read by now I know how to read and write well. I repeat primary four in 2001, because during the time of my exams I was sick. So I promise to pass well to the next class. For me education is the key of my life.

The good things that I get in school life are as follows:

- School makes me to be smart in my appearance, language and behavior,
 - Our teacher teach us how to sing the school anthem and school prayer,
 - Our teacher teach us how to stay safe from dangers like HIV/AIDS,
 - Our teacher teach us cleanliness or sanitation
 - Our teacher teach us how to respect our parents also our teachers teach us how to write and read.
- These are the good that I get in my school life. I am working hard for better performance so that I will be educated. If I complete my senior six in future I want to become a doctor.

However the bad things that I faced in my school life are as follows:

- I have more interest in my education by my father don't want to paying my school fees and the feeding program
- I don't have money for buying my school uniform.
- Our home is not near so coming from home to school is very far
- I am the only boy in the family so there are many work, which need to be done by me. So I don't get time for reading my exercise book.
- There are the bad things that I faced in my school life.

Name: Kenyi Stephen, 14

School: Kobo Primary School, Primary 6