

World Refugee Day 2007
Saturday, 23rd June 2007
Good Hope Centre
Cape Town,
South Africa

The Plight of Refugee Child

My name is King Kadende from Rwanda, a refugee child of age of 15 currently living in Cape Town.

I was asked to speak on the plight of Refugee child on behalf of refugee children at this occasion when the whole World celebrating the World Refugee Day.

Before I start my speech, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our parents (Mum & Dad, we love you), the High Commissioner for Refugees Affairs, South Africa Government (Particularly the City of Cape Town) who made this day possible, a platform given to us – children - to be heard and understood. And the last but not the least Tutumike (Network for Refugee service providers) for their tremendous work they are doing in their respective individual organization.

Dads, Mums, Representative of UNHCR, Government, Tutumikiens and friends;

The numbers of issues or challenges us refugee children encounter are numerous; we are double victims of every situation faced by our parents and Guardians. Humiliation, discrimination and Xenophobia are not only meaningful for adult but also and even more experienced by us in our daily day, in schools, markets, playgrounds etc.

Allow me to list some of the issues that alienate a refugee child, which if not address now or soon will compromise our integration in to the local community.

- **Documentation:** Our parents are deprived from having a genuine documentation, ID. The 22 & 24 section A4 paper give them a serious problem to open account at bank, to save a little they earn to secure the future of their children. We witness this humiliation whenever we accompany our parents to any public institution.

- **Equality:** Children who were born here in South Africa, whose parents were refugees, are not recognized by South Africans. They are regarded as foreigners, and refugees. They are denied opportunities (Valid South African Identity Cards and other documents) hence experiencing inequality. Most of those who experience this kind of discrimination are my closest friends.

- **Childcare:** We are very grateful for what South African government has done for us. However, we find it very hard to experience and enjoy our childhood due to tough conditions; we don't access easily to public education facilities. This in most cases leads to illiteracy amongst refugee children and child abuse cases.

- **Social Services:** We are aware of the challenges faced by South African, for instance, poverty. We have to come together to fight our common enemies: Malnourishment, abuse and poverty. Instead of fighting each other, let us work together and strengthen our bonds as Africans. We are brothers and Sisters.

- **Culture Value:** As refugees, we find ourselves in hard situations of learning new languages. This cost us a lot. As much as we strive to learn new cultures, we would also like to know and preserve our own culture; having a linguistic/cultural course in our school as extra curriculum at least twice a week. This will be a great achievement for us in reducing the victimization, and embrace the true identity of who we are.

May God bless us all.

THANK YOU!