

THANKSGIVING SPEECH

WINNER OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S PEACE PRIZE: 2009

Honorable Guest of honor,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I start by thanking God for enabling me and my minders for traveling safely all the way from Tanzania to Netherlands.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all who participated in enabling this occasion and would like to explain what has been happening to me up to date as am standing before you.

My name is Baruani Eustache Ndume, an orphaned child. My father died in an unknown environment. My mother died during the war in Congo (DRC). It was one day that soldiers came in our village arresting and collecting people in a concentrated house, closed the houses and then set fire. My mother and I were also enclosed in certain house together with other people but I managed to escape through under the door before the house was burnt. I left my mother in the house. She was probably burnt there. I also remember my very young brother called Obedi lost while running away from soldiers.

As I was escaping I was picked by one old woman namely Ms Sungura, then we flew to Tanzania in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp where we stayed for six months. Later we shifted to Lugufu camp following the old woman's request to be closer to her daughter who was in Lugufu camp. Upon arrival in this camp she handed me to her daughter namely Kiza Masudi. The life in Lugufu was very difficult. I was being mistreated by my caretaker including being denied food, clothing, being beaten, and domestic chores like carrying heavy batch of firewood and sometimes discriminated. All these affected my school attendance and my health as well. However I tolerated the situation until a day when I voiced out all my concerns to World Vision social workers as I explained above who were conducting campaign at our school on children's rights. As a result, my caretaker was counseled by those social workers and following this I noticed a big change. Since then I am living peacefully with my caregiver.

I will never forget the 12th day of February 2008 as it was when I was elected a Member of the Children's Parliament and Committee. The objective of this group is to fight for the rights of our fellow children especially those who live in hardships. I was elected a Speaker to the Parliament.

On 10th April 2008, I and other children from the parliament established a Child Radio Programming known as "**Sisi kwa sisi**" meaning children to children. That is, everything including topic preparation, assigning roles and radio presentation should be done by children ourselves. The program promotes children's rights and fights against child abuse. In this program I was appointed by Radio Kwizera staff to be the program's radio presenter.

The program is being funded by UNICEF, is being aired out on every Sunday from 5.00-5.45 PM. I thank God the program has pulled attention of many people, as I normally see most of people in groups as well as individuals listening during the program time. Through the program I'm observing most of people are now respecting children's rights compared to previous days. I'm also happy with the feedback I get that even the host community in some regions in Tanzania, some areas of DRC, Burundi and Rwanda are enjoying listening to the program. I'm also happy that the program has managed to facilitate in reunifying separated children with their parents.

Apart from the radio program, I'm also happy to have facilitated change of behavior to five children who were involved in substance abuse. When I saw them being engaged in that behavior I liaised with a volunteer from Youth behavior change.

After being fully involved in radio program, my fellow children including adults are nowadays calling me nick names of prominent journalists from big media such as Tanzania Broadcasting Cooperation, BBC, DeutcheWelle, Radio Television National Congolese and Radio Free Africa. Following this I wish to become a big Television Journalist advocating for children's rights.

As I finish my remarks, I would like to thank the following;

I would like to thank KidsRights International for awarding me this International Children's Peace Prize in this year. This prize will encourage not only me but also my fellow children in continuing to fight for children's rights. When we got this news, my care giver, my fellow children and I were happy. I also thank KidsRights for establishing this program as this is one of good methods which promote children's rights and talents.

We would not have fought for children's rights up to this level without support from various organizations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, World Vision Tanzania, Radio Kwizera and the Government of Tanzania for without their support I would not have obtained this prize.

Once more I thank you for nominating me the winner of the International Children's Peace Prize for 2009.

Thank you for listening to me and may God bless you.

Baruani Eustache Ndume