

## FEZA LEAH – RUHANGO, RWANDA

Feza Leah is six years old. She's been attending a community-run Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centre in south-western Rwanda for the past two years. With the support of Save the Children, Feza's community is running a centre where children aged 3-6 can come for several hours each day; here, a specially-trained caregiver carries out fun activities which are designed to improve young children's developmental skills (cognitive, language, socio-behavioural, fine and gross-motor skills). This serves the dual purpose of preparing children for primary school, and providing a safe place for them to play whilst their parents work.

Feza's father, Jean-Baptiste, says there is a marked difference between children who have attended ECCD centres and those who have not. "When our ECCD children arrive in Primary 1, they are prepared to learn; the other children have huge difficulties in adapting from their previous lives of tending to animals or just hanging around". His older son, Louis, also attended an ECCD centre a few years ago – he is now 9 years old and is always among the top performers in Primary 3 – Jean Baptiste is convinced that the early exposure to learning is still paying off.



**"My favourite thing is counting" says Feza, and proceeds to count one to ten in both Kinyarwanda and English. In just a few months she will enroll at the local primary school. She is excited because she will go with her two best friends from the ECCD centre. "I can't wait to start school".**

"It is not only what they know – it is also their behaviour and attitude" Jean-Baptiste continues, "Feza's time at the ECCD centre has taught her to be organized. She even copies her elder brother when he is doing his homework, and she shows us the songs and dances she learned that day". Save the Children trains ECCD caregivers in facilitating activities to help children learn some of the building blocks of school – letters, numbers, colours, etc. – through a medium of playful songs and dances. By making learning fun, Save the Children hopes to encourage children and parents in the positive value of education.