

BELTIN AND FILBERT – GICUMBI DISTRICT

Save the Children has been working in partnership with World Vision in Gicumbi District, Rwanda, training adults and children about child protection and child rights. Some of these children have gone on to represent their peers at different levels. For example, in early January 2013, an annual national children's summit was held in Kigali with the Prime Minister. This summit gives children an opportunity to voice issues that affect them and a forum to meet with their peers from across Rwanda. Some of the children that Save the Children trained attended the summit as representatives for their sector or district.

Beltin and Filbert are brothers who live just outside Byumba. In late 2012, Save the Children trained both of them on child rights and protection as part of a project that aims to set up mechanisms to ensure children are safe and protected. Filbert, 14, represents their Sector (a geographical sub-division, smaller than a District), and attended the national children's summit; while Beltin, 10, is a Village representative. Since the Save the Children training, Filbert and Beltin have been teaching other children and their own family about the practicalities of child rights in their lives.



“Our Parents were not aware that we needed things from them. After we explained about what we needed, they now give us everything they can, and we make sure we help them as well.”

Save the Children's work in child protection and child rights has been aided by the steps Rwanda has taken in this area. Rwanda has ratified the international conventions and protocols on children's rights, and has established a National Commission for the Child, and a Child Right's Observatory. Also, in June 2012, a new law was passed *relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child*, which is meant to be, in effect, a “Bill of Rights” for Rwandan children.

Alongside the training sessions for children such as Beltin and Filbert, Save the Children has also been training adult volunteers, and these adults have formed committees to oversee child protection in their areas. Schools have also founded child rights clubs where pupils use theatre, song, and art to learn about and advocate for child rights. Adults and children alike have been learning about issues such as child labour, corporal punishment, and gender equality.

Beltin and Filbert say they also do “advocacy for other children, such as the local children who are made to fetch clay to make bricks”. Children are sometimes forced into working due to poverty, and miss out on their right to education. Through child networks, children like Beltin and Filbert are given a time in which to negotiate with the community. “We made sure that these children go back to school and now some of them are doing best in their class”, they say proudly.

All the children who attended the Save the Children training received a small cash stipend to cover their transport. But instead of using it to pay their bus fare, Filbert and Beltin saw an entrepreneurial opportunity in their stipend. They took the initiative to put this money aside, combine it with their savings, and buy a pig for their family. They have been looking after the pig and soon she will give birth. They hope to sell the litter, and use the profit to buy their school supplies. They and their family can look forward to a securer future as a result of their hard work and ingenuity.

Their mother is very proud of all that they have done “they told me what they have been taught and showed me the results (the pig) and now I know something about child rights. I was very happy when I saw that my children were gaining something”



Whilst things are still difficult for Filbert and Beltin - they have a severely disabled brother to look after – their training in child rights and work representing other children has given them confidence in their own voice. It has also inspired them to help other children and given them some sustainable income in the shape of the pig.