



INNOCENT - NYAMAGABE, RWANDA

Save the Children is working in Rwanda in partnership with large tea estates in order to prevent child labour. At the beginning of the programme nearly three hundred children were working on the estates. As part of our programme we encourage families of the younger child workers to send them back to school, and we support the older children with vocational training opportunities to help them find a skill which will ensure their livelihood in the future.

At 15 years of age, Innocent was in his second year of secondary school when he dropped out to help his family earn enough money to survive. He is the second born of four children, and felt he had a responsibility to support his parents and younger siblings. He worked illegally on a tea estate plucking tea for ten hours each day over five months. "It was really hard, the conditions were tough, especially as it rained all the time" he says. "But it was the only way I could earn money, so I had to keep going. I used to spend everything I earned on the same day – I would earn just enough to eat".

Innocent has been attending the vocational training centre supported by Save the Children for one month and four days. If all goes well, he will finish in eleven months time, and be able to start a small business in tailoring. He is one of twenty-five children aged 15-18 who are learning a professional skill. Others choose cooking or carpentry, but Innocent thinks tailoring is the most promising for the future.

Nyamagabe is one of the poorest areas of Rwanda with a harsh and changeable climate, and soil which is arid if it is not treated with expensive fertilisers. Levels of malnutrition and stunting are the highest in the country here. Often whole families work on the tea estates, since there are few other options for jobs.

With a skill in tailoring Innocent hopes to be able to set up a small business in his village. He is sure there is a gap in the market, and feels confident that a year's training will make him really good. "My family are so pleased. Almost everyone here works on the tea plantations, so they have big hopes for me to do something different in the future". He hopes to finish secondary school one day too, though his first dream is to earn enough to support himself and his family.

Children who are unfortunate enough to have fallen into working in hazardous jobs at a young age deserve another chance to complete their education, or learn a skill which will allow them to work safely and for reasonable money in the future.

Innocent with a tailor's measuring tape at the training centre

