

JOLIE AND UWASE - NKAMIRA TRANSIT CAMP

Save the Children has been working in partnership with Unicef and UNHCR in Nkamira Transit Centre and Kigeme Refugee Camp. Refugees have been fleeing fighting and civil unrest in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since April 2012 and Save the Children is working in Nkamira to create Child Friendly Spaces within the camp. Volunteers from the camp have been trained to carry out fun and educational activities within these spaces. These provide young children with a sense of normalcy after being uprooted from their homes, and gives parents piece of mind for a few hours each day, knowing their children are engaged in safe, stimulating activities. Save the Children also works with the Nkamira camp management committees to ensure that child protection mechanisms are in place to respond to any issues of child abuse or exploitation.

Jolie, 10 and Uwase, 8 came to Nkamira Transit Centre from DRC with their mother, father, and two other siblings one month ago. They have been taking part in the Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) activities, and Jolie has just returned from performing a dance in a weekly talent show. These activities are organised by volunteers from the refugee community who have been trained on child rights and protection and are part of a wider programme by Save the Children that is establishing and strengthening child protection mechanisms within the camp.

Jolie says that before Save the Children began co-ordinating activities and establishing CFSs “I used to stay to help my mother with family work and I would carry my baby brother around.”

Uwase explains that she likes the activities because now she can meet other children. Her favourite thing to do is skipping, while Jolie likes traditional dancing. While the CFSs offer an enjoyable diversion to children in the camp, they also serve a more important purpose. Nkamira Transit Centre is home to several thousand refugees, living in a very transient setting. It is a very chaotic environment and before the CFSs there was little supervision for children, meaning that they spent their time playing in hazardous places, with no structure or guidance to their days, and were at a high risk of being abused. Now hundreds of children have access to supervised, entertaining and educational activities, many of which include important lessons about hygiene and child protection.

Uwase and Jolie would like to be able to go to school. However, until that is possible the CFSs offer a safe and supervised place for them to escape the stresses and dangers of the camp.



Their mother says that she has seen a big change in her daughters “now they are open and happy, while before they were depressed and stressed.”