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Hey you guys,

How are you all doing? I really hope that you are doing well! Hey, not long now until the end of the year and those loooooooooong summer holidays! I hope that you have some fun things planned for them!

Yesterday was a big event in Yei town where I live! A special day every year is set aside to celebrate children in Africa. SO, in the big square in town, we held a big celebration. It was very different to how

Immanuel Nursery School children walking to the celebration in Freedom Square



a celebration at home would be held with children, but I enjoyed it anyway! We had invited children from four schools, and they arrived singing – all marching together down the road, waving flags and banners.

When the programme started, all the children did a slow march around the area where we were meeting, all saluting when they reached where the 'big' people were sitting (people from the government and other organisations around). I couldn't help but think how different this would be at home – you guys wouldn't want to march I am sure! But for the children here, it is a way to honour people and they are proud to do so.

The schools contributed with songs, poems, and a drama which showed some of the difficult issues that children in South Sudan

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Drama from one of the schools



Here are my friends Mbaraza, Samuel and Gismala dancing with the children

face, and when some of the adults gave their speeches they commented on this drama, as well as some of the other things said.

Speeches are something very important here in any event. Because this was an event celebrating children, we also wanted a child to give a speech. One was asked from the local primary school; he was 11 years old. He did very well also, because his speech was in English – and this will be the 3rd language that he knows! I wonder if any of you could stand and give a speech in a language that is not English!

From a very early age, he would have known Kakwa; he then would have learnt local Arabic as he grew more and then, when he reached school age, would have started learning English – which he would have to learn because all the lessons are also in English. If he didn't learn it, he wouldn't understand what was going on!

If you were to give a speech that some people of the Government in England would be listening to – what things would you say? What would you want the government in England to know about being a child in 2011? What do you see as the good things? What do you see as the things which make being a child hard? Sometimes adults are not very good at listening to

children, and that can sometimes mean that what really upsets you isn't seen as something important. For some children here, life is difficult, and children can often be very misunderstood. The child who gave his speech wanted to share some things that are very real in the lives of many children here. These are the points he made:

1. We children are used for trade in the market selling clothes, eggs, mandazi (food), maize and many other things by our parents/guardian instead of going to school.
2. Children are moving in the street begging for self survival.
3. There are no proper Vocational schools established by the government for the street children to help them become self reliant (survive alone).
4. Street children are arrested and some put to prisons.
5. As a guest of honor the future of our country South-Sudan depends on the children. The government should help us to become responsible citizen by responding to our challenges.

I think that many of the things this child wrote about are different to what you would write about; they are different experiences! I know sometimes we can complain at having to go to school every day but really, we are so lucky to be able to do that. It means when we are older, we will be able to get a job to provide for us, and for our family. But for children here, they only go to school if their parents think it is a good thing to do, and if there is enough money to pay for it. That means that for some children, life will always be a struggle as they can't get a good job.

There are lots of children living on the streets here as well, and not many things to help them. I know that this also happens in England sadly, but often there are many more things in place to help these children. Sometimes children are made to work all day to earn money, which means that they can't go to school and will never earn very much money at all.

Children all around the world face different challenges, enjoy eating different foods (here we eat flying ants...) speak different languages and know different games, but they are all made in the image of God! You too! Imagine

that, how special you must be!

It is good to remember to also pray for the many problems that children face – you and your friends, and also children around the world. Remember – you are precious and important, and your prayers are powerful!

You can use the space overleaf to think about what you would want to share, if you had a similar opportunity. You can draw pictures to show the things that you would want to share, or you can write a speech! Or why don't you pretend you are going to give a speech to the government, and write it, or draw things that you would want to share?

Lots of love

Ruta xxx

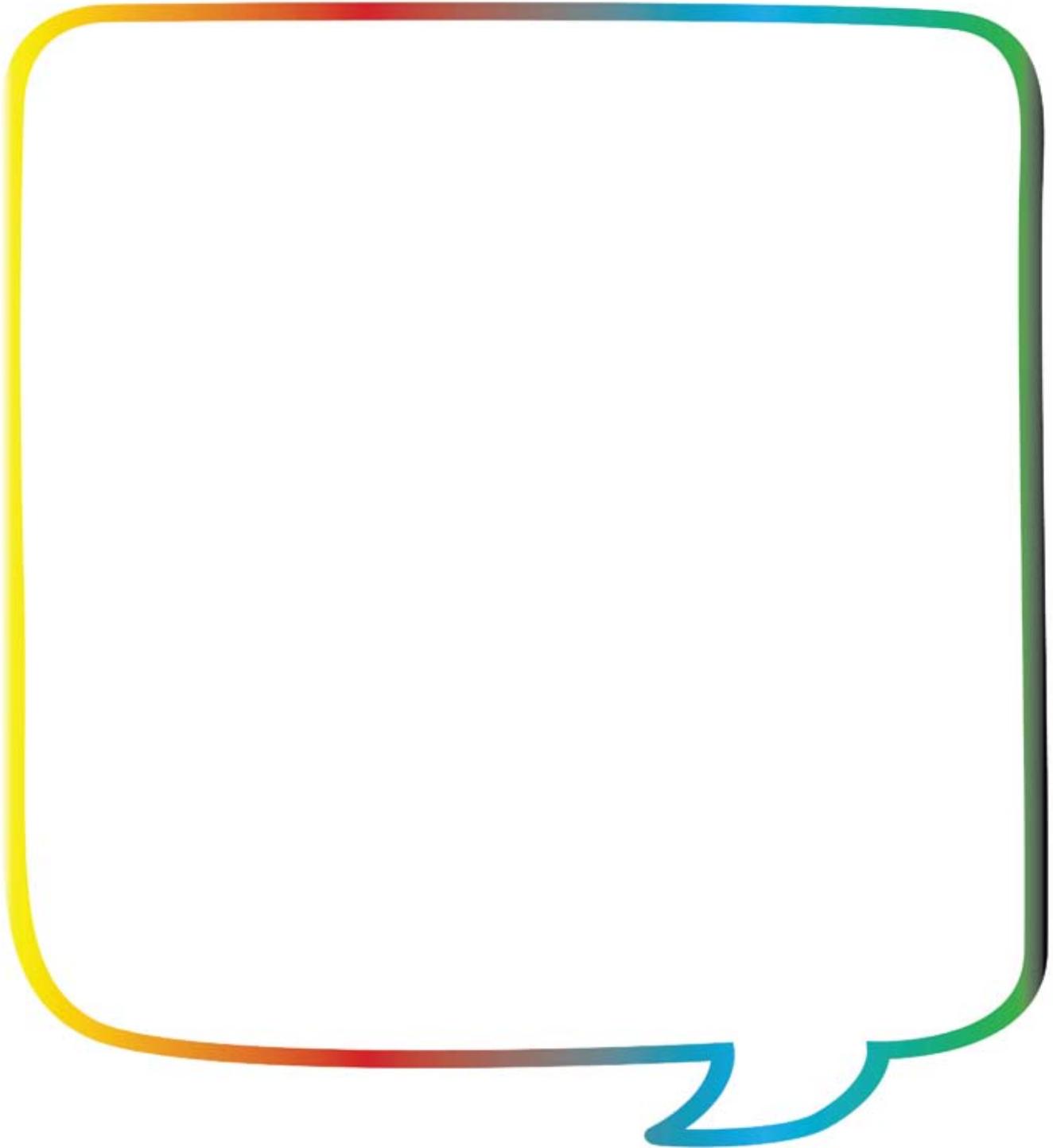
Some of the children doing a slow march in front of the adult guests



Children who had gathered to see what was happening



Using the speech bubble below, think about what you would want to share, if you had a similar opportunity. You could draw a picture to show the things that you would want to share, or you could write a speech! Or why don't you pretend you are going to give a speech to the government, and write it, or draw things that you would want to share?



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