

# Everyone's rights!

One of the girls that Kim, 13, has met as a WCP Child Rights Ambassador is Rutendo. Kim taught her that children's rights and equal rights for girls are for everyone. But Rutendo has had several of her rights seriously violated.

"When I was seven years old and in grade one, my father died. Our life became very difficult. We often went whole days with no food.

"Other children at school bullied me and called me poor. We could not pay my school fees and the teacher sent me home. This was repeated every year. I cried every morning when I saw my friends going to school."

## **We cried together**

"At the age of ten I moved to my aunt's place. I had to sweep, wash, cook and fetch water and firewood. But I wasn't allowed to go to school.

"When I was twelve I came to understand that the husband of my aunt had told my mother that he wanted to marry me as his second wife and that my mother had agreed.

"When the man had gone to pay 300 Zimbabwean dollars to my mother, my aunt told me: 'From now on you have to do what your uncle tells you.'

"It was so painful. I cried every day and thought about committing suicide.

"When I asked mother why she let this happen, she also cried. She said that it was not possible for her to say no, as the uncle paid the school fees for my three younger siblings.

"My best friend Precious told me to run away and report my uncle to the police, but I did not dare."

## **So painful**

"When I was thirteen my uncle forced himself on me, and by the time I was fifteen I was already pregnant with my second child.

"My life became very bad, and when my uncle married a third wife, my grandmother came to fetch me. I now live at her and my grandfather's place.

"It is so painful when I see my friends going to school, while I have to take care of my two sons and do piecework in other peoples' homes. I get three Zimbabwean dollars a day. This is only enough to buy a packet of salt.

"My dream is to start school again and one day become a lawyer because I want to other children who have been subjected to violations as I have. But I would also love to become a dressmaker."

"I often meet girls who have been forced into child marriage or experienced other violations of their rights. I teach them about their rights and try to empower them. Their lives are often very sad and not easy to change."

Kim

