

Children in Conflict

Eduardo Chiwila's Story

John Keane was inspired to paint Arsenal after visiting an area in Angola called Mavinga. While he was there he met children, like Eduardo, who told him that he hadn't been able to go to school for many years because of the war.

This is the story told by Eduardo Chiwila, aged 12:

"My school meets outdoors under a tree and we study maths and Portuguese, the national language of Angola. The sun makes my eyes hurt and when it rains we either run home or wait under the branches for it to stop. It's not very good when you and all your notebooks get wet. I'd prefer to study inside. Thankfully all the people in my village are working together to build a school because we really need a roof and some shade."



Eduardo

"I'm involved in the building work and I'm really enjoying it. It's great when everyone joins in because it speeds up the work. I've been helping to carry sticks and grass for the roof and when the time comes I'll help to put mud into the walls. I'm proud to be involved in building my school. My parents are working on it too, mum is helping to clean the area and take out the grass and dad is going to put on the roof."



Eduardo's new house

"It's not the first time I've been involved in building work - I've already built my own house near to my parents. I started off by cutting down some branches in the forest, then I dug small holes, put the branches into them and built the roof with small sticks. Once that was done I mixed the mud and packed it together to make the walls. It took me a month to in total."

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I love having my own house because I can sleep freely and I have my own blanket. Only three kids in this village have their own house.

“Before we moved to Munhena village I lived in the forest with my family. We were always running and trying to escape from the war. We didn’t have any food, shelter, blankets, tents – nothing. We lived like that for one or two years and soldiers would chase us. One time we hid in the river to escape. I didn’t like living like that because I was always afraid I was going to die and I was always hungry. We had to scavenge for food and whenever we heard there was any cassava (a bit like sweet potato) nearby we would start walking to that place and digging for the roots to eat. I was so happy when the war finished because we could leave the forest.”



Building Eduardo’s house

“The first time I came to school was when we moved to this village two years ago. I hope to continue with my studies and eventually go to the grown up school in Mavinga, a nearby town. When I finish school I’d like to be a teacher or a driver. I’d love to be able to drive my parents back to their home village.”

After visiting the area in Angola called Mavinga where Eduorda lives, John Keane was inspired to paint Arsenal.

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Arsenal by John Keane, 154 x 195, oil and inkjet transfer on jute.
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