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main feature

# 12 Kenyan children among 109 nominees for the 2018 Global Peace Prize

BY WINNIE ATIENO

Some 12 Kenyan children are among 109 across the world who have been nominated for this year's global International Children's Peace Prize.

International children's rights organisation and the KidsRights Foundation announced the 109 nominees from 45 countries ahead of the Peace Prize to be awarded on Tuesday November 20 in South Africa.

The prestigious international peace prize is awarded annually to a child who fights courageously to promote the rights of children. It is awarded annually.

Nominees were picked for defending the rights of children on various issues and challenges.

Among the nominees is a 14-year-old girl who escaped Female Genital Mutilation.

Mercellina Chebet 14, schools at Ortum Girls Boarding school in West Pokot. She escaped FGM at the age of ten.

"I ran away before I could be circumcised because I also did not want to be married off. I had my own ambitions and dreams," the girl who sat her Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam told Juniorspot.

She was later reconciled with her parents. Her parents are excited about her nomination.

Mercellina was index one in the KCPE exams at her school. Mathematics is her best subject.

Mercellina is the governor of the county's children's assembly. She plans to train a group of girls to continue creating awareness when she graduates from school. So far, she has taken part in forums and organised children's discussions, highlighting the dangers and consequences.

"I am happy, and I expect to win the international award," she said ahead of the award ceremony tomorrow.

"I want to be a doctor or engineer. As the children's governor in my county, we have been able to empower more girls and teach them about education,



**Mercelina, 14, is an anti-FGM champion who has helped reduce the practise in her community. As the Deputy Speaker of the West Pokot Children Assembly, she has used her position to fight against sexual violence against children and early marriages.** WINNIE ATIENO | NATION

although there are challenges," said the young girl.

In a special tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate and the official patron of the International Children's Peace Prize, this year's ceremony will be held in Cape Town, South Africa. The archbishop will present the prize to the winner in a ceremony attended by dignitaries and the world press.

"Seeing her fellow students drop out of school due to early pregnancies and forced marriages triggered Marcellina's fight against FGM and child marriage. She has created awareness about these issues by distributing information, encouraging girls to think about the value of their education," World Vision Protection and Education manager Moses Chepkonga said.

The 12 children from Kenya are all aged between 12 and 17 years old.

They were nominated by World Vision Kenya, African Alliance for Health Research Economic Development (AAHRED) among other non-governmental organisations. (See the nominees profiles on Pg6 and 7).

Each of the nominees has done an extraordinary job in standing up for children's rights. They are fighting for better healthcare, better education, or against poverty, child abuse and violence.

The youngest Kenyan nominee is Eugene Kagari, 12, who lives in a slum in Nairobi with his unemployed parents and siblings. He was nominated for fighting for vulnerable children in the slum since he was nine.

Kagari saved ten children during a fire, and sought police



**Moses, 13, believes in education and encourages parents in West Pokot to allow children to enrol and complete school. He reaches out to dropouts and convinces them to return to class.**

reinforcement to save a little girl who was raped.

He also raises awareness in his community about substance abuse, telling children not to take bhang or alcohol. He persuades people to help those less privileged than themselves. In the future, he wants to build a resource centre and a school for slum children.

The youngest girl is Rose Ngali 13, who desires to see every child go to school and be able to fight for their rights. Rose is the vice president in her school, where she engages children in

forums about their rights.

She encourages her teachers to find out why when fellow students don't turn up. She acts as mediator in conflicts at school and beyond, and teaches other children about their rights and how to defend them.

See the rest of the nominees profiles on Page 6 and Page 7.

KidsRights' founder Marc Dullaert says every year, the International Children's Peace Prize celebrates children's rights and the abilities of young change makers who move the world.



**Rose Ngali, 13, monitors school attendance and tracks absent children so as to help or link them to people and institutions that can assist them.**