



I am hope

Poems by refugees



THE
LUTHERAN
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FEDERATION

LWF World Service

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Being a refugee does not mean you are dead.
If you have peace, you can have anything.

...

Life is possible when you have peace.
You can live anywhere else.

...

I am peace. I am hope.

Nzeyimana Gaudiose

Often when we collect testimonies from refugees, we focus on the ordeals they went through, their efforts to build a new life, their challenges and their hopes. In the few workshops that I facilitated with refugees living in Nairobi and Kakuma in May 2019, my intent was of a completely different nature: that individuals reach deep inside themselves and define who they are poetically, celebrating the gifts that they offer to their community.

In cultures where modesty is a tacit rule, daring to speak in "I am" is not an easy thing, but poetry allows it with its magic and delicate touch, which precisely marry our singularity to the universal. Naming our own qualities in front of a group of peers is a real process of empowerment, which also deepens the bond and respect in the group. These texts were crafted in just a few minutes, but their scope is timeless and revives ancient oral traditions of self-celebration present in many countries of Africa. This booklet is a compilation of the poems that were joyfully and spontaneously created by refugees on this occasion.

And these wonderful human beings offer a powerful message: "I am hope", and beyond: "I am light". In their poems, the image of light returns constantly with a radiant and obvious strength. Each of them, in their own way, works in dark places of violence, injustice or suffering. Each of them is an artisan of light, developing solidarity, peaceful coexistence, respect for human rights in an amazing patchwork setting of cultures and languages.

Perhaps by reading these lines you will slip into these multiple "I" and resonate in our common humanity.

*Ophélie Schnoebelen,
Rights-Based Approach Program Support Officer*

I am the morning sun

I am the morning sun.

I wonder:

What are my abilities?

Who am I?

What is society expecting of me?

I am an advocate,

My role is to enlighten part of the world
each morning for a period of 12 hours.

To avoid being unfair, I illuminate
another part of the world that was once in the dark.

I can change my environment,

I have the ability to turn black into light.

What the world expects from me is light.

I am the morning sun.

I wonder.

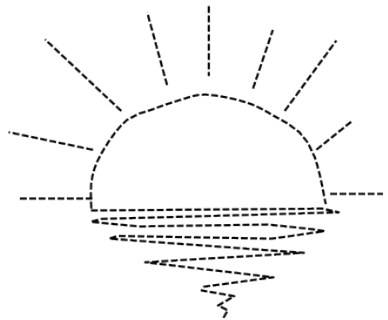
What are my abilities?

Who am I?

What is society expecting of me?

I enlighten all those who have just crossed the night.
Without injustice, I enlighten everyone.

Julien Tundwa



I am a woman of the world

I am a woman of the world.

I am the inspiration bringing women
together in decision-making.

I am a world changer.

Sahara Khalif Jamo



I am self-made

I am a dad and a mum.

I listen, raise and
look out to my community.

I provide accommodation
and food to the most needy
and vulnerable.

I guide, counsel and protect.
I do not condemn, I encourage
and give hope to my community.

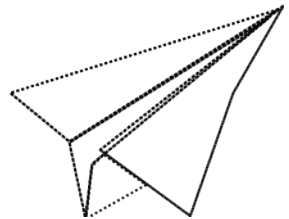
I am a self-reliant king.

I train and equip my community
with guidelines to self-reliance.

Because it is the way to go
given the little funding.

No one can destroy me, because I am self-made.

Remi Lutwama



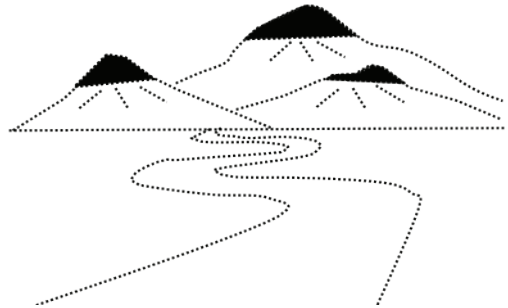
I am the lady from the Nile

I am the black lady from the Nile.

We were displaced and experienced misfortune.

We are all meant to live in harmony
and embrace each other.

Agnès Filberto



I am a bus

I consider myself a matatu,
a bus with no fuel.

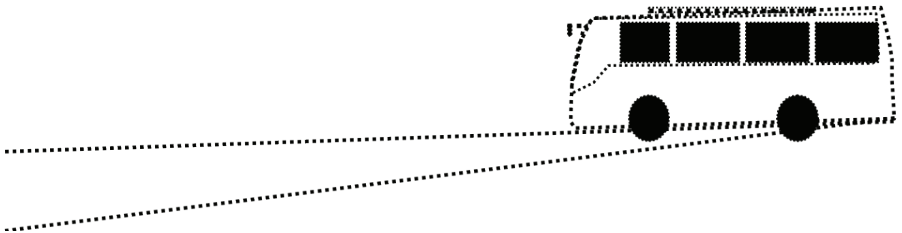
I have a lot of passengers in my bus.

I am young and full of potential.
I have many people behind my back,
who are expecting something from me.

I have a big problem stopping me
from taking them where they want
me to take them.

As Kadana, we need a petrol station
for opportunities.

Boris Ngenga Chebeya



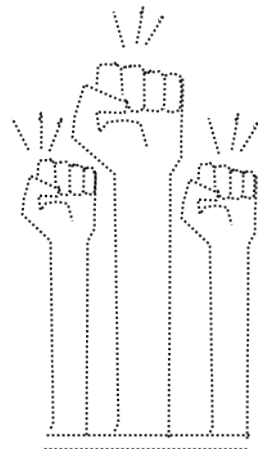
I am a human rights advocate

I am the courage to protect
vulnerable people.

I am a human rights advocate.

I am opening paths for refugees.

Dirirsa Kejela



I am the eagle

I am an eagle, I can see
no matter the situation.

I can go without security.

I rescue people out of danger
and take them to another level.

We are trained to see our future.

We are refugees, but found no space
to express ourselves as human beings.

We are advocating.

I am the eagle not giving up,
I speak up and raise up alone
when people are in danger.

James Birindwa Makanda



I am God's refuge

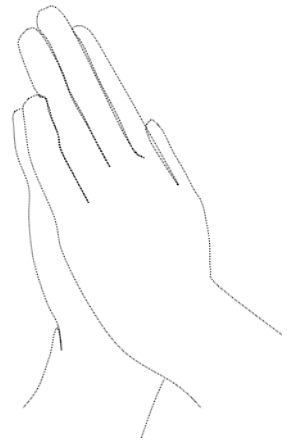
I am a pastor, a man of God.
I am preaching to the nations.

God started the human rights
in the garden.

Being a refugee is not the end of life
when you know your rights.

I am God's refuge.

Bizimana Jean-Claude



I am a gazelle

I am a gazelle with beautiful skin
I am only at an eyesight of the enemy.

What can I do?

Rkwanga Godefrey



I am peace. I am hope.

I am peace, hope for the hopeless.
God can raise you anywhere.
Being a refugee does not mean you are dead.
If you have peace, you can have anything.
You can work and start a new life.

I am peace, but in my country,
there was so much violence.
My husband and parents got killed.

I am peace.

Life is possible when you have peace.
You can live anywhere else.
I have lived 11 years here in Kenya
and my children are grown-up.

I have helped many widows to make a living,
even if now some have left the country and
forgotten about me.

I help young women when they get married.

I am a counsellor;
I help marriages so spouses come back together.

I am peace. I am hope.

Nzeyimana Gaudiose
(Translated from
the original poem in Swahili)



I am the help

When I arrived, I did not know
I was to be the father of security,
which has given me a lot of hope.

I was trained to protect a block.
My comfort is that when I wear my uniform,
I am the help of the community.

When I pass, criminals run away
before I say a word.

I am the help of the community.

Seth Kalama

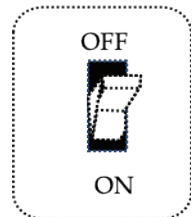


I am the light

I am the light of my hope,
I am curious and I want to learn.

I am joking and playing.
I want to protect my whole family.

Agnès

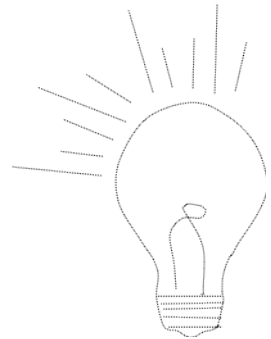


When there is darkness,
I appear

I am the light
that shines in the night.

When there is darkness, I appear,
and darkness disappears.

Ibrahim Ibiniyamin



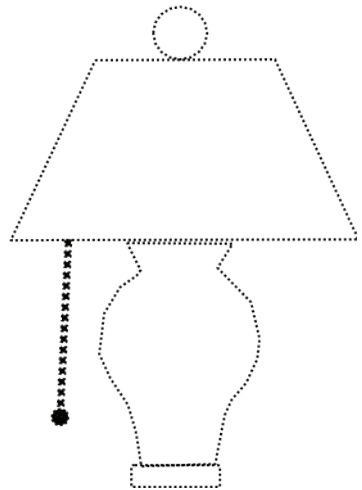
I am the lamp

I am the lamp in the community
for the women.

I resolve issues related to water,
people look for me.

I am a peace-maker and a problem-solver.

Jackline Irankunda



I am heaven

I am the heaven,
I am a peace-maker,
I unite people.

I train them to be one people,
so there is no war or conflict
and people help each other.

I am an elder in my church,
I am a preacher.

I tell people to love each other.

I am heaven.

Thomas Riek



I am the unknown soldier

I am the child,
who has a message.
I wonder, I cry.
Do you know why?

A civil war broke
because we needed democracy and justice.
But what happened was that civilians were killed,
our girls were raped and our buildings destroyed.

Then we crossed the border and came to Kenya.
I believe the Kenyan people
are the best people in the world
because they have beautiful souls.

We are all brothers and sisters,
yet as refugees we are aliens for the system.

Therefore, I am the child,
I am the unknown soldier
who still tries to pass a message
but my message is yet to reach the world.

Saïd Abukar



I am a candle

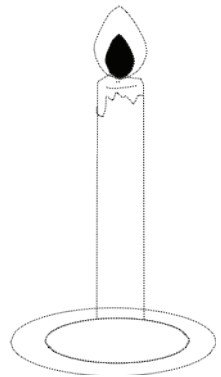
I am a candle.

I light people so they can pass
from darkness to the light.

I make sure their needs are fulfilled
and I do not care whether I get finished.

I am a candle.

Edmond Baraka



I am the moon

I am the moon,
people say that my light is not hot
but I believe in myself.

My light will count
until the end of the world.

Daud Abass Kafi

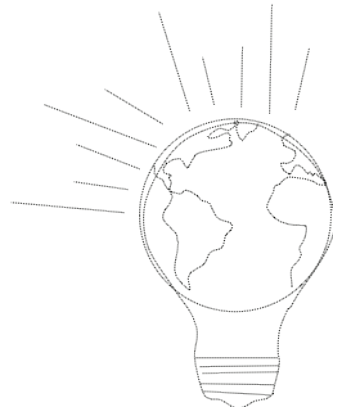


I am the mother of the shepherd

I am the light of the world
and the mother of the shepherd.

I know my sheep and my sheep know me
and no one will take them out of my hand.

Elisabeth Issa



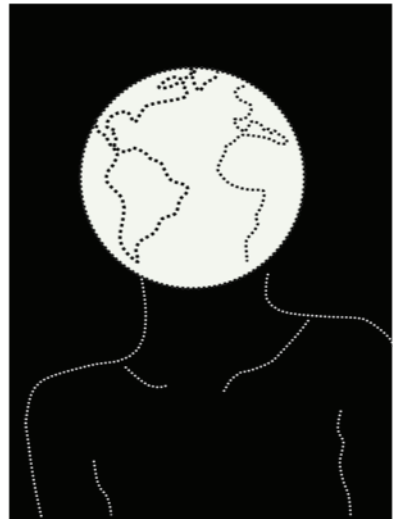
I am the world

I am the world like my name.
I do not forget anyone in the world.
I love everyone.

I am the world, everything is in me.

I keep the badness and the goodness,
the lightness and the darkness.

David Dunia



For God has created me without problem

I am the light of my family.

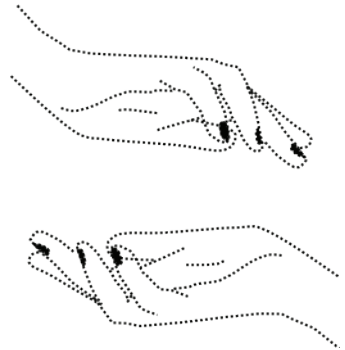
Even through valleys and mountains,
I remain. standing still, like a woman.
Nothing will defeat me.

For God has created me without problem.

Even when there is a problem, I do not give up
because there is a reason why I am going through.
this.

I remain the light.

Scovia

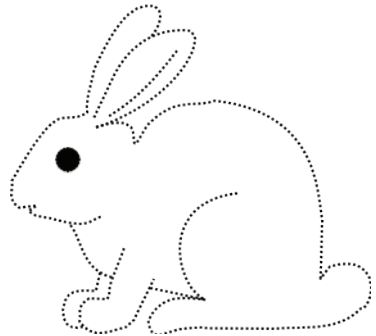


I am a rabbit

I am a rabbit looking for something
that will never be found,
but I will make sure to find it.

I am Jacqueline,
I was able to pass through.

Jacqueline



I am a savior

I am a savior,
I went through a lot.
I was always supported by my Church.
I take care of my siblings.

Winnie

I am happy

I am happy,
the child of the lion.
I am help,
but not only for the those I know.
I help street children
and it makes me happy.
I love being happy
and making people happy.
When people see me,
I make them happy.

Agnes

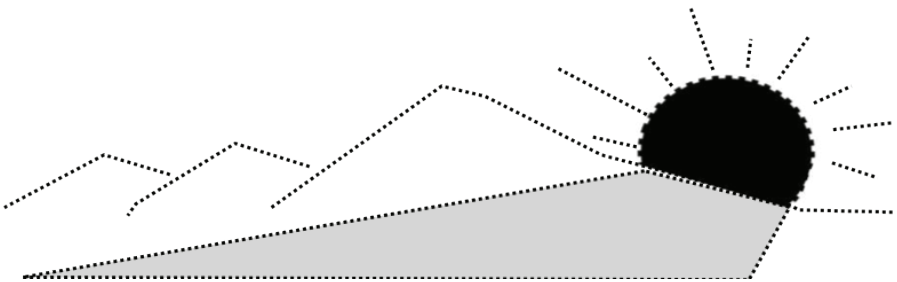


I am the shadow

I am the shadow that can protect many people.
When the sun sets, people come to me.

I am a peace-maker.

Obang Omot



I am hope for my whole family.

Dalia

I am the father of the nations.

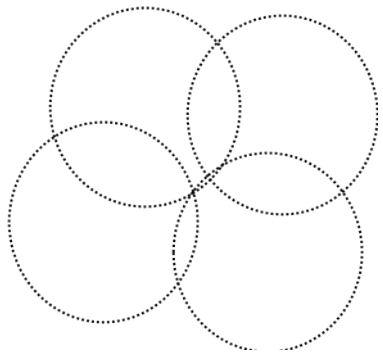
James Kujien

I am the health man,
I prevent diseases.

Simon Gatwech

I am the one giving care to everyone
and the whole of humanity.

Ngeria



About the KADANA UPR refugee association

Established in December 2018, this nascent yet vibrant organization for refugees by refugees is motivated by a firm belief that the refugee community needs a platform to showcase their unique interplay between challenge and strength, dreams shattered and hope for a future restored.

KADANA was created by a group of refugees and asylum seekers trained on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism by the LWF. Its name derives from Kakuma, Dadaab and Nairobi, where its constituency stems from, and which are the locations that accommodate the majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya.

The association aims to amplify the individual voices and participation of refugees in debates and decision-making platforms and this way enhance their access to services by government and other relevant institutions. KADANA envisions an environment that safeguards the enjoyment of human rights and socio-economic development of refugees and asylum seekers as well as peaceful coexistence with host communities.

"For us, KADANA can be our voice to reach decision-makers at national and international level. It is a dream of 25 years, something we have tried to do before but failed at because we were alone. Now we are connected with each other throughout the country. This network is like our newborn and we are very excited. All of us here are leaders or volunteers and have a lot of experience to share"

*Said Abukar,
Chairperson, KADANA*

The poems of this booklet were mostly written by KADANA members. When only the first name appears, the poem was written by a member of a young mothers' group in Kakuma refugee camp.



About LWF World Service

LWF World Service is the humanitarian and development arm of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a global communion which unites 148 Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition in 99 countries worldwide. These churches have mandated World Service to assist those in need without discrimination.

As an international faith-based humanitarian organization, LWF World Service works in 25 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, serving more than 2.25 million people in need.

The LWF Kenya Djibouti Somalia Program works primarily with displacement-affected communities (refugees, IDPs and host communities) in the three countries. The work of the program is motivated by the hope and resilience of the people it serves when seeing them improve their quality of life, individually and collectively.

This is done through supporting people to meet their basic needs and achieve their full potential in an environment that supports justice, peace, dignity, diversity and respect for everyone, refugees and host communities alike, and enables the people to claim their universal human rights.

This booklet of poems is an initiative stemming from a rights-based approach project in Kenya, which links advocacy at local, national and international levels to practical actions for change. Refugees were trained in human rights and participated in the Universal Periodic Review among other human rights mechanisms, which led to the creation of the KADANA association. Publishing their beautiful poems is a way of amplifying the voice of communities, so it may be heard at the global level.

Our partners



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