

## A home from home

**11-year-old Nestor came to England in 1995 to escape the war in Burundi. Now he says London is home, but he still hopes to return to Africa one day**

*11-year-old Children's Express reporter Nestor Sayo left war-torn Burundi in 1995. Now, he says, he's making the most of his new life in the UK.*

Even though I've spent most of my life in England, I still think lots about Burundi in Africa, because it's where I was born. Every week hundreds of families come to England escaping war. I know what it feels like.

A lot of people think that I've forgotten about Burundi because I was only four-years-old when I left. But I always tell them, I may have been small but there's things I'll always remember.

Burundi was once a peaceful place but it turned into a battlefield - that's why we left.

I was very happy before war broke out between the Tutsi and Hutu people. I was part of a very big family with lots of aunts, uncles and cousins. But many of them, children and grown-ups were killed in the fighting.

When my mother and I left Burundi, we traveled on a bus for 8 hours to Uganda. It was so tiring and all we had to eat was two slices of bread. We were in Uganda for only a short time before moving onto Kenya, where we stayed for a few months.

It was when we were in Kenya that my mother took me to the airport and told me we were going to catch a plane. I didn't even know which country we'd end up in. It wasn't until we landed that I found out we were in England.

It was December, right in the middle of winter and coming from Africa where I'd never felt cold, I was freezing. I remember being excited when I tried on a pair of gloves because I'd never worn them before.

The first few weeks of my new life in England were spent in a hotel somewhere outside of London in a town I don't even know the name of. It wasn't until later on that we got sent to a hotel for refugee families in Finsbury Park, in London.

There were lots of people at the hotel from all over the world - people from China, India, Brazil and Africa.

I couldn't speak English but it didn't take me long to pick up things like how to say "Hello". My Mum knew only three words - "No English" and "Sorry".

Even though you hear stories about how horrible it is for some families living in hotels, my experiences were good ones. I liked the hotel in Finsbury Park because there were other children to play with and they shared their toys with me.

I was also happy that my Mum had met another woman from Burundi because it meant she had someone to talk to in our own language and she wouldn't be lonely.

I'm 11-years-old now and in some ways, I think of London as being "home". I've made loads of friends here and I'm just as proud to support the England football team as anyone born here.

Sometimes I miss Burundi but some of my family are still living there and I know when I grow up, I'll go back and visit them. Maybe one day I'll even be able to buy a house there.

Every week hundreds of families and children come to England because they're escaping war. Now and then you read bad things about them in the papers and sometimes people say they have no right to be in this country. But I was once in the same situation and I know what it feels like.

I also know that like me, they deserve to be here just as much as anyone!

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## About the team

This story was produced by Nestor Sayo, 11, and was published in [Community Care](#) magazine.

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