

## African Saying for the Month September, 2010

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*Rigita thi wega; ndwaheiruo ni aciari; ni ngombo uhetwo ni ciana ciaku.* (Kikuyu)

*Itunze arthi vyema; hukupewa na wazazi; bali umekopeshwa na wazao wako.* (Swahili)

*Il faut bien traiter la terre. Ce n'est pas vos parents qui vous l'ont donnée. Mais, elle vous est prêtée par vos enfants.* (French)

*You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children.* (English)

Kikuyu ( [Kenya](#) ) Saying  
Background, Explanation, Meaning and Everyday Use

This Kikuyu saying comes from Nyahururu, a part of the Rift Valley Province in Kenya. According to Kikuyu culture every member of the family must take care of the earth, cultivate it, and also make sure that the whole environment is taken care of. It was known from the beginning that God give the Kikuyu people a very good earth near Mount Kenya, the second highest mountain in Africa. The Kikuyu name for Mount Kenya is *Kĩrĩ Nyaga* (Kirinyaga) that literally translates as "God's Resting Place." It is considered a sacred mountain. The Kikuyu people believe that God ( *Ngai or Mwene Nyaga* ) lived on Mount Kenya when he came down from the sky and that he gave a guarantee that the Kikuyu people would take care of the earth for the generations to come after their death. The Kikuyu knew very well that the earth was given to them by God for their children. The earth is more important to the Kikuyu than many other things. It is a shameful that any Kikuyu children are lazy and don't care for the earth. He or she is like a person who is cursed. So this proverb is very important and should be maintained forever more.

Our research shows that this is an ancient proverb in different parts of the world. In North America among the Native American Indians the Oglala Sioux people say: "*Treat the earth well. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children.*"

" Examples can be found by using the "Search" Feature on the [African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories](#)

Website at:

<http://www.afriprov.org>

### Biblical Parallels

This proverb of treating of earth well can be compared to the verse in the Old Testament. *Genesis* 2:

15 says: "The Lord God then, took the man, and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it." That means in our Christian life the earth that we are living in is a gift for us to maintain. As the children of God we have the obligation to care for our environment as God's

gift to use where the seeds of life are planted. Every good environment of the earth and also our hearts is the earth of Word of God. We shouldn't forget to care of our heart. As we do on earth our heart is a very golden garden like Eden when God plants his word and we are a family of God. We become children of God when we follow Jesus Christ his son and our redeemer. God makes us heirs of his Kingdom.

We have been called to proclaim the Good News from the housetops and start by sharing it with all especially those of our own household. When we believe in him we are always in our [Small Christian Communities](#) (SCCs) to proclaim good news. Now we are light to shine to our brothers and sisters. As the Lord said, 'let your light shine before all.'

### **Contemporary Use and Religious Application**

This Kikuyu saying is being used in many ways to promote ecology and care of the environment. It is used on a poster at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It is used as the text of greeting cards on Earth Day (23 April) and World Environment Day (5 June). See the "Samofa" cards on the [Quiet Thoughts](#) Website.

I belong to St. Anthony SCC in Christ the King Sub-parish in St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Kangemi, Nairobi, Kenya. We discovered that the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign is a very good time for planting trees. For example, members of St. Kizito SCC planted a variety of seedlings of indigenous trees in Waruku in March, 2010. This is described on the [Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative](#)

Website at:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

and on the "Small Christian Communities"

[Facebook](#)

Page at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Nairobi-Kenya/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

It is everybody's duty to care for the earth as it was loaned to us by our children. It is better to plant many trees and to make the earth look better since it was given to us by God our creator. Following our Kikuyu culture before we hand over to our children everyone should take care of the earth for the generations to come.

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