

# Gabriel Kassayie, 10, heads a Millennium campaign.

*Gabriel wrote to Tony Blair, asking the British government to return the looted treasures of Ethiopia back to his country. Great Britain is in possession of a great many artefacts that were taken away from Ethiopia during the Magdala expedition of 1868. In Gabriel's opinion, they should be returned now.*

**Promota:** How did you get to know about the Ethiopian treasures kept in various UK museums?

**Gabriel:** When I was on the internet, I found an article by Dr Richard Pankhurst telling the story of Magdala, when Emperor Tewodros II was embroiled with Great Britain. After the Emperor committed suicide, the British took all the treasures and brought them back to the UK to be put in museums. There was also a lady called Valerie Meux collecting these Ethiopian treasures over here. As she was dying, she asked for her collection to go back to Ethiopia after her death. But it did not happen.

**Promota:** Do you feel it is more important for these artefacts to be on Ethiopian soil?

**Gabriel:** Yes, I would like to see them going back. In the British Museum, they've got tabots, which they are not even putting up. Why do they need them if they are not even putting them on show?

**Promota:** How important are they to the Ethiopian culture?

**Gabriel:** Really important. It is something that makes them remember Emperor Tewodros when he had a war with Britain. All these

artefacts were there at that time. If they are returned to Ethiopia, the people can go and visit them and remember Tewodros.

**Promota:** What do you feel about the British taking these treasures with them?

**Gabriel:** Angry. Really angry, because it is unlawful. It is basically stealing something because there is no owner.

**Promota:** Do you think it would be a good idea if you asked some of them to join their voice to yours? It could become like a national Ethiopian campaign, solely led by school children, asking for their heritage to be brought back home.

**Gabriel:** (his face lit up) ...Inspired by me and spread all around Ethiopia... During my next visit to Ethiopia for the Millennium, I would like to meet the Pope, the President and the Prime Minister. They could then broadcast my campaign on TV.

**Promota:** What prompted you to write to Tony Blair asking him to return these Ethiopian artefacts to Ethiopia?

**Gabriel:** One, it is like the only way to bring them back. It is one good way. And two, it would spread in the newspapers. And I thought it might go on TV.

**Promota:** You did a petition at your school prior to writing to Tony Blair. What exactly did you do?

**Gabriel:** I had a form to sign for the children from Year 3 to Year 6. I got really nervous when I got to Year 6 to explain what I was doing. But I went in and I did it. The teacher asked afterwards what they needed to do. I

told her that they needed to sign the form. They passed it around the class and it took a really long time. Downstairs, I had also set up a board on which I had put pictures of the crowns, of the shields and the manuscripts. I displayed also the forms to sign and the leaflet I made about the Ark of The Covenant and about the Tewodros story.

**Promota:** Were the teachers and children supportive?

**Gabriel:** Yes, I told my head teacher who was the first one to sign the petition. She then told my teacher who told all the other teachers. Everyone really knew what was going to happen. The teachers had to read out my petition to the bottom class and then explain about it. It took so long. The children asked me so many questions...if I was really doing this...and really doing that...! I had to say that I had no time as I still had to see other classes!

**Promota:** What was the reaction of the older children?

**Gabriel:** They clapped.

**Promota:** I believe that you have not yet received a response from the Department of Culture, Sports and Media, to whom Tony Blair forwarded your letter.

**Gabriel:** No. I've been sitting there, and waiting...just like this (Gabriel demonstrates by sitting very still) A month later, I am still sitting there, and they haven't replied! So I wrote a letter to the new Minister asking him why I haven't got a reply. And I haven't got an answer to that either.

**continues on next page**



A tabot being processed at Timket in Addis Ababa

**Promota:** What will you do next to make sure that they do not ignore your request?

**Gabriel:** Well, if they wrote to me asking why we have to do this (giving the artefacts back to Ethiopia), I will try to find a way around it. I'll keep on sending letters to them. Eventually they'll get tired and they'll send me an answer. I thought that we would easily convince them to return the treasures back. We had over 900 signatures, both from here and Australia where a relative gathered more signatures for me.

**Promota:** How are you going to celebrate the Ethiopian Millennium?

**Gabriel:** Well, once the Millennium starts, I am going to eat a lot of Ethiopian food, because I normally do not have that much Ethiopian food!

**Promota:** How do you see yourself contributing to the progress of your country later in life?

**Gabriel:** If, for example, I become a teacher, (I am only saying if) I would tell the children about what happened and they could then start to do the same as I am doing now.

*If you would like to join Gabriel's campaign, please email: Gail Warden at The Ethiopian Embassy gail@ethioembassy.org.uk*

The Ark of the Covenant is described in the Hebrew Bible as a sacred container, wherein rested the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, as well as other sacred Israelite objects.

Tabot refers to a replica of the Tablets of Law, onto which the Biblical Ten Commandments were inscribed, used in the practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Tabot can also refer to a replica of the Ark of the Covenant.

A tabot is usually six inches (15 cm) square, and may be made from alabaster, marble, or wood from an acacia tree -- although the maximum length of 40 cm is more common. It is always kept in ornate coverings to hide it from public view. In an elaborate procession, the tabot is carried around the church courtyard on the feast day of that particular church's namesake, and also on the great Feast of Timket (known as Epiphany in Europe).

*Promota would like once again, to thank Gabriel for accepting to be interviewed and for his enthusiastic contribution to the magazine. P*

## World Bank Approves US\$12 Million Additional Financing for Agricultural Research in Uganda

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved a \$12 million International Development Association (IDA) credit\* to provide additional financing to the Second Agricultural Research and Training Project in Uganda.

The objectives of the Second Agricultural Research and Training Project (ARTP II) are to generate new knowledge, strategies and technologies in support of the Government of Uganda's Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture (PMA); design and implement improved procedures and capacities for scaling-up the application of new technologies; and capacity building of the reformed National Agricultural Research System (NARS).

"IDA financing will help ensure the continuity of a stream of new practices and innovations that will be of crucial importance to improve agricultural productivity and better utilize crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry resources for enhanced food security, improved livelihoods and increased incomes for large numbers of Uganda's smallholders," said Madhur Gautam, the project's Task Team Leader.

The ARTP-II has progressed well over the last seven years with Public Agricultural Research Institutes (PARIs) continuing to conduct high quality research, as well as to maintain a steady flow of relevant research outputs, many of which are being adopted by Ugandan farmers.

The additional credit will enable the World Bank to meet its long-term commitment to the institutional development and strengthening of the Uganda National Agricultural Research System. "It will allow adequate time for the preparation of a

new single program to jointly cater for agricultural advisory services and agricultural research, preferably through a broader sector-wide approach, beginning July 1, 2009," said Grace Yabrudy, World Bank Uganda Country Manager.

The ARTP-II is part of the Bank's long-term assistance program to agricultural research in Uganda, which supports technology development and dissemination, consistent with the Government of Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture (PMA). The project was initially financed with a \$26 million credit, which was approved by the Bank Board's Executive Directors on May 6, 1999.

"The Government of Uganda and the World Bank place high priority on agriculture and agricultural research. Raising agricultural productivity is a key results area for the Government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan and a "flagship" operational area for the Bank's Africa Action Plan. The importance of agricultural productivity for broad-based economic growth cannot be over-emphasized," said John McIntire, Country Director for Tanzania and Uganda.

\*The credit is provided on standard International Development Association (IDA) terms, with a commitment fee of 0.35 percent, a service charge of 0.75 percent over a 40 year period of maturity which includes a 10-year grace period.

**For more information on the World Bank's work in Uganda, please visit [www.worldbank.org/uganda](http://www.worldbank.org/uganda) P**