



NEWS RELEASE

Canadian groups launch civilian protection training in eastern DRC

Trainings will contribute to protecting women and children from sexual violence and child soldiering

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. (July 26, 2011)—World Vision, the Child Soldiers Initiative and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre have launched training programs in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to aid in the protection of children and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. The training of DRC's national army and the United Nations staff is generously funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT).

“Through this training, children, women and communities will be better protected by their country’s security forces.” said Dave Toycen, president and CEO of World Vision Canada. “Decades of war in eastern DRC have put many children and women at risk. Children are recruited as fighters, forced into hard labour and sexual slavery. Women and girls, even boys and men, are used as weapons of war, raped and subjected to horrific violence—physically and psychologically.”

Unfortunately, the first line of protection for the region’s people is an army and police force that are underfunded and lack the proper training to address these issues. Although the DRC has the world’s largest UN peacekeeping mission, it lacks critical equipment and resources for the job of protecting civilians.

BACKGROUND

World Vision’s role:

World Vision has been working with children, families and communities in the DRC for more than 30 years. After identifying the need to better protect children, World Vision launched its first child protection training with the Congolese army in 2007. The training was reported to be a major success by children and families who felt safer in their own communities. To maintain this momentum, World Vision initiated a new training coalition with the Child Soldiers Initiative and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in eastern DRC to increase protection capacities and the accountability of the Congolese army and police. It’s World Vision’s hope that the initiative will increase the safety and protection of children, women and communities.

Child Soldiers Initiative’s role:

The Child Soldiers Initiative, based at Dalhousie University in Halifax, will provide training to prevent and address the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the DRC. They will provide training to participants from the national army and the United Nations during two training missions over the course of the project—one in Bukavu this month, and the second in Goma in the fall. These sessions will explore what a child soldier is; the roles of child soldiers; girls’ experiences and roles within child soldiering; and the international norms prohibiting the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. The training will also examine options for security forces in response to potential interactions with child soldiers including their role in preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, monitoring and reporting and support for demobilization.

Pearson Peacekeeping Centre's role:

The PPC will conduct three five-day sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) training courses for the military, UN and local police and aid agencies. The courses will strengthen interviewing skills for victims, witnesses and suspects, and reinforce report writing, community-based policing skills, problem-solving techniques, and strategies for working with local and international groups to ensure proper follow-up and access to resources for survivors and perpetrators. Participants include the security sector and judicial institutions, as well as health care workers providing medical and survivor support in eastern DRC who will develop effective training and mentoring competencies to support local capacity to prevent and respond to SGBV.

Spokespeople available:

Dave Toycon, World Vision Canada President and CEO

Dr. Shelly Whitman, Director of the Child Soldiers Initiative

Dr. Ann Livingstone, the VP of Research, Education and Learning Design at Pearson Peacekeeping Centre

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Notes to Editors:

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. Visit our News Centre www.worldvision.ca

Child Soldiers Initiative is a project founded by Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire (retired) operating out of Dalhousie University since January 2010. The project aims to eradicate the recruitment and use of child soldiers through capacity building (training and revisions to a field guide); research on the security dimensions of the child soldier issue; and advocacy. Visit www.childsoldiersinitiative.org

Pearson Peacekeeping Centre connects civilians, military and police through research-led capacity building programs and functions that strengthen their ability to recruit, train and deploy qualified individuals in complex peace operations. Visit www.peaceoperations.org