



# NEWS RELEASE

## Protect children's rights when disaster strikes, says World Vision Canada CEO

**MISSISSAUGA, Ont. (Oct. 13, 2011)** — On International Day for Disaster Reduction, World Vision Canada President and CEO Dave Toycen is calling on governments, aid agencies and community leaders to give children a bigger voice in disaster planning. The United Nations estimates that 66 million children around the world are affected every year by disasters such as floods, earthquakes and drought.

"Children are among the most vulnerable when disaster strikes and too often their voices are unheard and their right to have a say in decisions that affect them is ignored," Toycen says. "This must change to help us encourage future generations to be better prepared to deal with disasters, whether they're caused by natural or man-made factors."

### Toyce and Canadian rapper visit Horn of Africa

Mr. Toycen and Canadian musician Kardinal Offishall are currently in the Horn of Africa, where they are meeting children and families affected by the ongoing drought. They are also visiting communities where World Vision is working with families to reduce their vulnerability to drought by providing access to clean and stable water and more drought-resistant seeds, and by teaching local residents more effective farming techniques.

World Vision has been active in the Horn of Africa for several decades. In addition to providing relief supplies during disaster situations, the agency has long-term development projects in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda to give communities the tools they need to become self-sufficient. World Vision works to ensure children have better access to health care and education so they can get the best possible start in life.

### Children's Charter

World Vision is among a number of international humanitarian agencies urging support for a Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Charter highlights five key priorities that children throughout the world have identified as critical to efforts to reduce the effects of disasters and climate change on their communities:

- Schools must be safe - education must be uninterrupted when a disaster strikes.
- Child protection must be a priority, before, during and after a disaster.
- Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and to access the information they need.
- Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future disaster risk.
- Disaster risk reduction must reach the most vulnerable.

"Children have a right to information and education about disaster planning," Toycen adds. "But more than that, we need to give them a chance to contribute to decision-making. Involving children in disaster planning and making sure we respect their rights to information and education will go a long way towards building resilient communities that can cope effectively when disasters occur and rebuild as quickly as possible."

Both Dave Toycen and Kardinal Offishall are available for media interviews during their current trip to the Horn of Africa. To arrange interviews, please use the contact information below.

### MEDIA CONTACTS:

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