



FREE THE CHILDREN
children helping children through education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPEAKING OUT THROUGH SILENCE
Youth take the 'vow of silence' for children's rights

On March 1, school halls across Canada will fall silent as students kick off a 24-hour Vow of Silence campaign in recognition of youth around the world who do not have a voice.

"Each year on March 1, hundreds of students involved in Free The Children's Youth in Action Groups stay quiet to raise awareness and money for children's rights issues," says Jessica Bentley-Jacobs, Free The Children's youth programming director. "On this day, young people use the power of silence to protest against the child rights abuses that take place around the world every day." The campaign is also meant to encourage dialogue about our collective responsibility to uphold the rights of all children.



As part of the Vow of Silence campaign, participating students refuse to use all sorts of communication, including cell phones, e-mail, text messages and even hand gestures.

This campaign is a way to collect pledges and raise funds while also raising awareness about millions of children throughout the world who do not have a voice and suffer because of poverty, lack of education, child labor, armed conflict and more. It is estimated that 121 million children around the world between ages 6 to 11 are denied the opportunity to go to school. Two-thirds of these children are girls. There is also an estimated 218 million children around the world who are engaged in child labour. Of those, almost three-quarters work in hazardous conditions, such as working in mines, with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture, or with dangerous machinery.

All funds raised from the Vow of Silence campaign will support long-term development programs in Kenya, Sri Lanka, China and Sierra Leone. These programs provide marginalized communities with access to quality education, a real solution to exploitation, poverty and child labor.

Free The Children is the world's largest network of children helping children through education. Through our organization's unique youth-driven approach, more than one million young people have been involved in our innovative programs in more than 45 countries. Founded by international child rights activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children has an established track-record of success, with three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize and partnerships with the United Nations and Oprah's Angel Network. For more information please visit www.freethechildren.com.

Interviews with youth participants in your area or with Jessica Bentley-Jacobs, director of youth programming are available upon request. Please contact Melissa Yaw at 416.925.5894, ext 248 or melissa@freethechildren.com to schedule an interview.