Children in Zimbabwe will take part in the decision

Betty Makoni from Zimbabwe could be Decade Child Rights Hero for 22 million children

22 million children in 50,000 schools in 94 countries are behind the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child (WCPRC), 750,000 of them in Zimbabwe. This year the prize will be awarded for the tenth time. The 13 prize candidates include Betty Makoni from Zimbabwe, Nelson Mandela, murdered carpet factory slave Iqbal Masih and saviour of child sex slaves Somaly Mam. Millions of children will participate in this year's Global Vote to decide who will be the Decade Child Rights Hero. On the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November, the children will reveal their chosen prize laureate.

Since the year 2000, the World's Children's Prize has awarded children's prestigious prizes for outstanding efforts for the rights of the child. The prize money has contributed to giving tens of thousands of the world's most vulnerable children a better life. So far, 27 prize laureates have received prizes and have become role models for children all over the world. Thirteen of these are candidates in the children's next Global Vote, which will determine their Decade Child Rights Hero. *(see list below)*.

World's largest rights-based educational programme
The WCPRC is the world's largest educational programme for young people on the rights of the child, democracy, the environment and global friendship. The WCRPC programme empowers children, giving them hope for the future and the chance to demand respect for their rights. It is carried out in cooperation with more than 50,000 teachers, as well as almost 500 organisations, departments of education and youth media projects.

Millions of vulnerable children participate
Millions of children learn about their rights and democracy through the World's Children's Prize. They include former child soldiers, debt slaves and street children. Children who have lost their parents to AIDS, genocide or in the Asian tsunami, and children who live in dictatorships, have also found out about their rights through the World's Children's Prize. The prize magazine, The Globe, and the website, www.worldschildrensprize.org, is produced in 11 languages, including Arabic and Farsi (Persian). The magazine is smuggled into villages in Burma and is read by former child soldiers in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, like 15-year-old Furaha: "When I was twelve years old and a soldier, all I knew was death, violence and war. Now I have participated in the World's Children's Prize and in the Global Vote for our rights. Before I read The Globe I had no idea that we children had the right to protection and a good life."
Furaha was one of the 6.6 million children who took part in the Global Vote in 2008.

Mandela and the Queen of Sweden
The patrons of the World's Children's Prize include Nelson Mandela, Queen Silvia of Sweden, Nobel Prize laureates José Ramos Horta and Joseph Stiglitz, former Executive Director of Unicef Carol Bellamy, former UN Under-Secretary-General Olara Otunnu, and supermodel and refugee Alek Wek.

The World's Children's Prize is supported by Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), Save the Children Sweden, the Swedish Postcode Lottery, the Surve Family Foundation, Radiohjälpen, Altor, AstraZeneca, eWork, Banco Fonder and the Folke Bernadotte Academy.

In June 2008, the World's Children's Prize was called *'the most important communication initiative on the planet'* by the International Association of Business Communicators, with 16,000 members in 65 countries.

The Decade Child Rights Hero will receive one million Swedish kronor (125,000 USD) for use in his/her work for the rights of the child.

High-res pictures under PRESS at www.worldschildrensprize.org. Video footage available on request.

Contact: **Magnus Bergmar, +46 (0)159-129 00, +46 (0)70-515 58 39 magnus.bergmar@worldschildrensprize.org**
WCPRC Zimbabwe: Girl Child Network, tel 91 22 88 251, 70 31132, e-mail: gcn@zol.co.zw, bettymakoni@yahoo.com

The 13 candidates for Decade Child Rights Hero

Iqbal Masih, Pakistan (posthumously)
Iqbal was a debt slave in a carpet factory. When he was set free he fought for the rights of debt slave children. He was killed on 16 April 1995.

Asfaw Yemiru, Ethiopia
Asfaw was a street child at the age of 9. At 14, he opened his first school for street children underneath an oak tree. Since then he has devoted over 50 years to giving underprivileged children the chance to go to school.

Nkosi Johnson, South Africa (posthumously)
Nkosi fought for the rights of children with HIV and AIDS up until his death at the age of 12.

Maiti Nepal
Maiti fights the trafficking of poor girls from Nepal to India, where they are forced to work as slaves in brothels. Maiti also helps girls who have been affected by trafficking.

Maggy Barankitse, Burundi
Maggy has, over 15 years, saved tens of thousands of orphaned children in war-torn Burundi and given them a home, love, schooling and a hospital.

James Aguer, Sudan
James has, over 20 years, freed thousands of kidnapped children from slave work in Sudan. James has been imprisoned 33 times and four of his colleagues have been murdered.

Prateep Ungsongtham Hata, Thailand
Prateep was a child worker at the age of ten. Since starting her first school at the age of 16, she has spent 40 years fighting to give the neediest children the chance to go to school.

Dunga Mothers, Kenya
Twenty mothers in Kenya, who for the past 12 years, have been fighting to enable AIDS orphans in their village to go to school, have a home, food, love, and have their own rights respected.

Nelson Mandela, South Africa and Graça Machel, Mozambique
Mandela for his life-long struggle for equal rights for all children in South Africa and his work to defend their rights. Machel for her 25-year-long fight for the rights of vulnerable children in Mozambique, in particular girls' rights.

Craig Kielburger, Canada
At the age of 12, Craig founded Free The Children. He fights for young people's right to make their voices heard and to liberate children from poverty and violations of their rights.

AOCM, Rwanda
AOCM consists of 6000 people orphaned by the genocide in Rwanda, who help each other to survive by sharing food, clothes, schooling, homes, healthcare and love.

Betty Makoni, Zimbabwe
Betty started working when she was five years old and was subjected to abuse at the age of six. Through the Girl Child Network, she empowers girls to demand respect for their rights. She supports girls who are subjected to abuse and protects others from assault, forced marriage and trafficking.

Somaly Mam, Cambodia
After being a sex slave as a child, Somaly has spent the last 13 years liberating girls from sex slavery and giving them rehabilitation and education. She was punished for her work when her 14-year-old daughter was kidnapped, drugged, raped, and sold to a brothel.