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## **Russell Simmons & New Yorkers Kick Off World Water Week by Walking-For-Water**

NEW YORK, March 15, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ -- In an effort to bring the global water crisis home to New Yorkers, hip hop mogul and entrepreneur Russell Simmons today joined the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, New York City Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development Dennis M. Walcott, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the Mayor's Volunteer Center of New York City and Children for Children, a local nonprofit, community organization and hundreds of young people and their families in the NYC TAP Project Water Walk -- an initiative where New Yorkers walk one mile carrying containers of water in a gesture of solidarity with those in the developing world who must collect and carry water on a daily basis.

"New York is a city that reflects the diversity of the world community," said Russell Simmons, native New Yorker and legendary music icon. "If any group really understands the effects of the world water crisis and the importance of conservation efforts ... it's New Yorkers."

The event aims to raise awareness and support for children worldwide who suffer from a lack of readily available clean water and to promote the importance of New York City's drinking water and efforts to conserve this precious commodity.

"New York City's children are great examples of global citizens," said New York City Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development Dennis M. Walcott who joined today's event. "And the Walk for Water project is a great opportunity for them to understand how children in other parts of the world live, and to learn about some of the challenges they face."

The Walk began at Manhattan's Riverside Park, West 83rd Street near the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial, up to West 95th street and back. Participants, primarily school-age children and their families, were encouraged to secure sponsors and carry up to a gallon of water in a symbolic illustration of how millions of children in the developing world spend their days collecting water from distant sources rather than going to school.

"We're excited because the TAP Water Walk kicks off World Water Week and the TAP Project in New York City," said Caryl Stern, president and CEO, U.S. Fund for UNICEF. "What better way to combat the effects the global water crisis has on children in the developing world than by educating children in this country."

At the end of the walk, participants enjoyed special educational activities. In addition, schools and after-school programs were given a curriculum in order to prepare students for the day. The curriculum focused on three main areas: the NYC water system, global issues surrounding clean water, and making a difference at the community level.

"This is a wonderful way for young people to learn about a global issue with significant local impact," said Nazli Parvizi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit. "The lack of clean water in many countries is a serious problem and by participating in today's Walk, young New Yorkers took action in addressing this problem."

The Walk kicks off World Water Week and the Tap Project nationwide. The Tap Project, now in its second year, is a grassroots initiative to provide clean water to children around the world. From Sunday, March 16 through Saturday, March 22, 2008 (World Water Day), the Tap Project will encourage Americans to visit participating restaurants and pay \$1 for a glass of tap water or donate online at [www.taproject.org](http://www.taproject.org).

"New York City is fortunate to have some of the best drinking water in the world and we are proud to be part of this effort to raise awareness about the need for clean water for children around the world and the importance of conservation," said DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd.

More than one billion people do not have access to clean water or adequate sanitation and one in five of them are children. Eighty percent of all illness and infant mortality is due to waterborne disease. Lack of clean water is the second largest killer of children under five. UNICEF works in more than 90 countries around the world to improve access to safe water and sanitation facilities in schools and communities, and to promote safe hygiene practices.

Over the past 15 years, more than a billion people gained access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities. UNICEF's goal is to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015. A little goes a long way - for example, with one dollar UNICEF can provide 40 liters of safe drinking water, which is enough to give one child safe drinking water for 40 days, or forty children safe drinking water for one day.

#### About UNICEF

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world's leading international children's organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying. UNICEF provides lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. While millions of children die every year of preventable causes like dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival. For more information about UNICEF, please visit [www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org).

#### About the Mayor's Volunteer Center of New York City

The Mayor's Volunteer Center of New York City, a program of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, brings together individuals, corporations, government agencies and nonprofit organizations to connect people and facilitate meaningful volunteer opportunities that improve the quality of life in New York City. Its goal is to make every New Yorker a volunteer. Throughout the year, the Mayor's Volunteer Center promotes and organizes thousands of volunteer opportunities in partnership with community organizations and nonprofits in all five boroughs.

#### About the New York City Department of Environmental Protection

DEP is responsible for operating and protecting the City's water supply system, one of the largest in the world, which serves nearly eight million residents of the City and one million people in Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster Counties, as well as the millions of tourists and commuters who visit the City every year. The watershed of the City's 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes includes parts of eight counties on both sides of the Hudson River -- Delaware, Greene, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster in the Catskill Region, and Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester Counties east of the Hudson.

#### About Children for Children

Children for Children, a non profit organization founded by parents in 1996, fosters community involvement and social responsibility in young people. CFC's wide range of programs encourage children to Grow Involved(R), beginning at an early age, helping children and others. CFC also provides resources to schools that allow them to incorporate service-learning into their programs. CFC engages more than 52,000 young people across the country each year. To learn more, visit: [www.childrenforchildren.org](http://www.childrenforchildren.org).