

Canadian walks for kids in Mindanao war zones

by **RJ Rosalado, ABS-CBN Zamboanga** | 05/20/2009 10:06 PM

A Canadian children's rights advocate who has started on a worldwide walking tour finally set foot on Philippine soil, opting to visit one of the more troubled areas in the Philippines--Mindanao--to spread his message of peace.

Jean Beliveau, 53, has been on a mission to make a difference in the world simply by visiting each country and taking on the ambitious task of walking around the globe for a cause. Borne out of a mid-life crisis, Beliveau said his journey began in 2000 back in his Canadian hometown.

Beliveau visited a number of provinces and cities in Mindanao, starting with Surigao, then Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga City.

Beliveau said the continuous conflict and clashes between rebels and government troops have made life hard for children living in the war-torn areas. Despite various factors that have stalled peace talks, Beliveau believes there is still a chance to achieve peace and change the lives of children in the war zones.

In his 9-year journey, Beliveau has visited 56 countries across various continents, walking roughly 60,000 kilometres all over the world. In his experience visiting different countries, Beliveau said raising people's awareness about abuses against children is no walk in the park. He said he has witnessed many abuses against children, even in some developed nations.

He said each family and individual needs to foster a culture of love for the children, and in the process, realize the importance of advocating children's rights.

The Canadian national also appealed to the Philippine government to foster peace in the south by continuing its dialogues with rebel groups in Mindanao.

After his journey in the Philippines, Beliveau will immediately proceed to Malaysia, which will be the 57th country he shall have visited, a few steps closer to completing his 11-year walking tour around the world.

as of 05/20/2009 10:13 PM