**Australia advancing disability-inclusive development in Rwanda**

**Media Release**

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An Australian-funded scheme is saving and transforming lives in Rwanda’s Gicumbi district.

With funding from the Australian Government, World Vision has improved the health of more than 1,000 women and children through providing modern family planning methods, child vaccinations and safe and clean baby delivery services.

H.E. Mr Geoff Tooth, Australia’s High Commissioner to Rwanda, was delighted to hear of the findings of the Report. ‘I have visited AACES projects in my time as High Commissioner and it is inspiring to see how this report reflects our efforts to reach the poorest and most marginalised people in these communities.’

The Annual Report for the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) shows how Australian Government support to NGOs is improving peoples’ lives and delivering more opportunities to the most vulnerable and poor, including people with a disability.

The program has been transformational for marginalised communities in Rwanda. For instance, World Vision’s work with communities in rural and remote areas of Gicumbi district resulted in greater use of health services by women and children. Prior to community sensitisation, women would hide their use of modern family planning methods from their husbands. Now more men are discussing family planning with their wives and more couples are using it with a variety of methods available within the community.

In addition, World Vision is promoting the integration of nutrition programs in primary health care services by supporting 20 village child nutrition centres. The centres are having a positive impact on children’s nutrition through tackling malnutriton and helping families, and mothers in particular, to learn about good nutrition and safe hygiene practices. Children are benefiting from vitamin A and immunisation campaigns, which are occasionally run at the centres, and monthly growth checks are helping parents monitor their children’s development. Children are benefiting from a stimulating environment while their mothers are freed up to concentrate on income-generating activities and daily chores.

The AACES program is being implemented in Rwanda by World Vision Rwanda.

The AACES Annual Report is available at [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

**Notes to Editors**

**About AACES**

AACES is a partnership of the Australian Government, ten Australian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their Africa-based partners. The $90 million program is funded by the Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The program focuses on marginalised communities, with particular attention to women, children, people with disability and people vulnerable to disaster. It is being implemented in 11 African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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