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Students come to the aid of children affected by disaster

Children in Peel are pooling their resources to help disaster victims on the other side of the world.

Havenwood Public School in east Mississauga was the venue for the kick-off yesterday of the Peel District School Board's Toonie Tuesday fundraiser in support of UNICEF.



Alan Ely

Money raised by students will help supply victims of the recent cyclone in Myanmar with crucial items such as bed nets, school supplies and water bottles.

More than 100 grades 4 and 5 students at the Dixie Rd./Bloor St. area school listened attentively as Bilaal Rajan, 11, a UNICEF Canada ambassador, explained how children in Myanmar have no access to food or water.

"We can do this for the children of Myanmar," he said. "We have to just walk down the hall to get drinking water, whereas children in some countries have to walk for kilometres for water that may or may not be clean.

"How can you fill an ocean?" Rajan asked his young audience. "We can fill the ocean one drop at a time.

And you can be that drop for the children of Myanmar..."

Alan Ely, chair of UNICEF Canada, said the need is great.

"We don't have a full report yet; we're hearing there's up to 100,000 casualties. All we do know is it is large, and the faster we can help, the better it will be," said Ely. "How can we help? The mercenary part of me says money, and there's no question that money will make a difference; it will help us buy supplies.

"But I have to be absolutely honest. Understanding is an important part of the equation, too," Ely continued. "If we understand today and believe in the need of helping others around the world, then tomorrow we'll make a difference...so, I'll say money now, understanding always."

The Peel Board fundraiser runs all week at schools across Mississauga and Brampton. Schools will tally the final amount next week, said Jim Grieve, Peel Board director of education.

"Our students are incredibly generous and connected with all parts of the world through family members and work of their teachers," Grieve said.



Unicef Canada Child Ambassador Bilaal Rajan sits amongst school supplies and toys that will be sent to aid the children affected by the Myanmar Cyclone.