

**Talk by William N. Ryerson
President, Population Media Center
On the Occasion of
Population Media Center-Ethiopia's Tenth Anniversary Celebration
July 1, 2010**

What is a Decade?

Honorable Ambassador, Teshome Toga, Speaker of the House of Peoples Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Thank you for honoring us with your presence.

Ms. Lois Mushonga, Country Director, Save the Children Norway

Dr. Negussie Teffera, Country Representative of Population Media Center. Thank you for that introduction. And thank you for your inspired leadership of Population Media Center-Ethiopia over the last ten years.

Invited Guests

Prize winning writers of the book, *Mulu Sew*, to be launched today

Ladies and Gentlemen

What is a Decade?

- It's but a second in the sweep of human civilization.
- It's a speck in the sands of time since Lucy and her older, taller, male relative walked in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia.
- It's nearly one-fifth of the lifespan of the average person in Ethiopia.
- Sadly, it's 100% of the life of some children.
- For too many girls, a decade represents their complete childhood: the age of innocence before the onset of genital pain, or the time before they find themselves married to a man they did not know and do not love, who rapes them nightly.
- For some couples, it is the time in which they meet, fall in love, marry, and begin raising a family.
- It is more than the time it took one village in Oromia to come together to decide to enforce the law against marriage by abduction, making it safe for one family to begin sending their 12-year old girls to school.
- It is almost five times the time it took for family planning use to increase dramatically among half the population listening to a program named Yeken Kignit, as reported by the New York Times on June 3.
- It is three times the period it took a program named Naedeti to cause parents in the Afar region to stop circumcising their daughters, as reported by Women's E-News this past Sunday.
- It is the time during which 20,000 people in Ethiopia sat down to write letters to people they had never met but whom they felt they knew as closely as members of their own

families because of hearing programs coming out of an electronic box that they had in their house, invented by a man they never heard of named Marconi.

- It is the time it took Population Media Center-Ethiopia to become a role model for health and social development communications globally.
- It is the time during which the Packard Foundation, inspired by the success they spawned in Ethiopia, supported similar programs in Sudan, Nigeria, and Papua New Guinea.
- It is a time when the governments of Ethiopia, Norway, Denmark, and the United States all chose to support use of the Sabido methodology of entertainment-education.
- It is a time during which over 1,000 individuals made contributions to support the work of Population Media Center, as did dozens of foundations, corporations, and NGOs like Save the Children, CARE, Marie Stopes International, and PSI.
- It is a period during which a single movie demonstrated that effective communications can cause the governments of the world to shift gears and begin tackling the crisis of human-induced climate change.
- It is a time during which the population issue rose from being unmentionable to being discussed by news and information media – and some governments – worldwide.
- It is a time when thinking people began to abandon the idea of infinite growth on a finite planet and to see perpetual growth as the credo of the cancer cell – and instead, to work toward a sustainable planet where a certain number of people can live in harmony with nature and in balance with natural resources.
- It is a time during which highly creative writers, actors and producers – and highly effective managers – became the key players in leading Ethiopia – and the world – toward a brighter future.
- It is a time to celebrate a huge accomplishment of a simple idea and a great deal of work by PMC-Ethiopia.
- Congratulations to you! Please join me in cheering for Population Media Center-Ethiopia.