

**STATEMENT BY UNICEF GOODWILL AMBASSADOR BERHANE ADERE AT THE
'LESSON FOR LIFE' ADVOCACY EVENT HELD AT THE ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN'S
FUND (ECF) VILLAGE IN ALELTU ON 25 NOVEMBER 2004**

Dear Students
ECF teachers
Members of the UNICEF family
Members of the media
Invited guests

I would like to first thank God for bringing us together in peace and good health in such a beautiful and refreshing setting.

The main reason for us gathering here is to promote the participation of children and youth in the 'Lesson for Life' campaign which will be held on World AIDS Day. On that day all of you children here will join your peers in all parts of the world to take part in the 'Lesson for Life.'

The brief discussions that I have had with you, the students of ECF, have given me a sense of your knowledge and awareness about HIV and AIDS. You know much more than I had anticipated.

What we expect from you during the 'Lesson for Life' campaign is for you to build on that knowledge and awareness so that you can not only protect yourselves but also your family, neighbors and friends from HIV and so that you can also give those around you who are living with HIV the love and support that they need.

I want to use this opportunity to ask you to consider an important issue as you take part in the lesson. As we look in our community, especially among youth, we find that the greater proportion of those who are affected by HIV are girls and women. This year's World AIDS Day theme focuses on girls, women and HIV/AIDS. When you take part in the 'Lesson for Life' remember to think about and consider the situation of women.

Here are three questions that I would like you to think about, discuss and propose answers to.

First, why do you think women, especially young women and girls, are more affected by HIV and AIDS?

Second, how do you think the community can better care for and protect girls and women?

And finally, I want you, children and youth, to ask how you yourselves can contribute to making girls and women less vulnerable to HIV. When you do this you should also

identify what you need from us adults in order for this to happen – what do you need from Government, NGOs, from your schools and teachers, from UNICEF and donor agencies? Think about the support that you will need in order to bring about the changes that could mean the difference between life and death. I look forward to hearing your answers.

Adults and experts have tried to find solutions, however the spread of HIV has not abated. If we tap your fresh and open minds, your innocent and straightforward approaches to problem solving I believe we may indeed find clues and solutions to the challenges that at present confound us.

I have a ten-year-old son. I am going to encourage him to take part in the 'Lesson for Life' campaign on World AIDS Day. I always advise and encourage him to respect girls. If we can respect each other then we can find solutions. I want my son and all of you to grow up healthy so that you can inherit this country.

Thank you.