

**South African Launch of the final report of the
Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS (JLICA)
Home Truths: Facing the Facts on Children, AIDS and Poverty
12 August, HSRC Office, Pretoria**

Remarks by the UNICEF Representative in South Africa, Ms. Aida Girma

- The Honourable Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, Minister of Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities
- Ms. Olive Shisana, Chief Executive Officer of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
- Prof. Linda Richter, Executive Director, Child, Youth, Families and Social Development, HSRC
- Distinguished speakers and guests

- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to be here, on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund, to take part in the South African launch of the JLICA Report entitled: **Home Truth: Facing the Facts on Children, AIDS and Poverty**. I would like to take this opportunity to commend HSRC for making today's event possible. Too often, we fail to properly disseminate to policy makers, implementers, and others, the outcomes of important research work such as this one. Today's gathering is also an opportunity to welcome the Minister of the newly created Department of Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disabilities, the Honourable Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya.

Honorable Minister,

On behalf of UNICEF, I would like congratulate you on your appointment and the creation of your Ministry. I would like to assure you of UNICEF's commitment to work with your Ministry in advancing national efforts towards the realization of the rights of women and children in South Africa.

The Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS (JLICA) was created as an independent alliance of researchers, policy-makers, implementers, activists and people living with HIV and AIDS to generate and mobilize evidence to strengthen response to children affected by HIV and AIDS, promote innovative approaches and facilitate knowledge sharing and networking among the various stakeholders engaged in children's well being in the context of HIV and AIDS.

UNICEF is proud to be one of six founding organizations of JLICA, along with HSRC. Since 2006, JLICA has supported many research projects which have helped to shape policy directions with a view to improve outcome for children in the context of HIV and AIDS. The JLICA publication which is being launched in SA today challenges us to think out of the box and take bold measures to improve the effectiveness of the response to children affected by HIV and AIDS.

AIDS has devastated the lives of millions of children worldwide. Globally, children under the age of 15 accounted for 2 million of the estimated 33 million people living with HIV in 2007, 90 percent of them were in sub-Saharan Africa. That same year, some 12 million children in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated to have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Young people aged 15-24 account for almost half of new HIV infections among adults aged 15 years and up.

Despite the momentum generated by the **"Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS"** global campaign since its launch in 2005, the response to children affected by HIV and AIDS continues to fall short of what it was expected to achieve. Services for children are still far

from reaching the scale required to have an impact on the lives of children. Only a small proportion of children living with HIV are accessing antiretroviral treatment; less than 40 percent of pregnant with HIV are receiving antiretroviral drugs to prevent vertical transmission; and despite growing recognition of the benefits of social protection measures, with the exception of South Africa, few countries in sub-Saharan Africa have been able to scale up social protection programmes.

The JLICA report makes several strong recommendations, including the importance of well designed **social protection measures** to mitigate the impact of AIDS on families and children. The report also urges a **family-focused approach** to integrated service provision for children and families affected by HIV and AIDS and poverty.

The evidence generated through JLICA's research clearly show the way towards a more effective response to the needs of children affected by HIV and AIDS. However, we all know that evidence alone can't bring about change. Research results must be communicated convincingly to decision makers and other key stakeholders. Today's event is meant to do exactly that. In partnership with HSRC, we intend to widely disseminate the findings and recommendations of the report in South Africa and advocate for a redirection of the national to children affected by HIV and AIDS.

In concluding, I would like reiterate UNICEF's commitment to working with HSRC and the other JLICA partners in keeping alive the spirit of critical enquiry and joint learning to advance the wellbeing of children affected by HIV and AIDS.

I would like to assure you, Honorable Minister, of UNICEF's commitment to continue to work closely with the Government and its partners to bring about meaningful change in the lives of children in South Africa.

Let's Unite For Children and United Against AIDS!