

MEDIA RELEASE



“Cricket can help combat HIV and AIDS”, says Graeme Smith

Johannesburg 10 September 2007 - The Proteas skipper Graeme Smith is not only upbeat about victory in the ICC World Twenty20 Championships but also optimistic about the wins cricket can add to combating HIV and AIDS among children and young people.

Talking tough to the opponents, Smith, who joins an array of leading cricket icons to aid the “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” global campaign, couldn’t ignore the attention he was getting from scores of children and young admirers during a training session at Johannesburg’s Wanderers Stadium ahead of tomorrow’s kick of the 2007 championships.

“HIV and AIDS are relevant and pressing subjects here in South Africa. As cricketers we command the attention of the public and the media, and we want to use that to try and better the situation for the children and young people,” he said.

He added: “We have an important role to ensure that the message that says children’s rights and needs take prominence in the fight against AIDS reaches all the relevant people.”

Makhaya Ntini, Shaun Pollock and AB de Villiers joined their skipper in a short coaching clinic for the children. The smiles on the children and how they treasured the autographed miniature bats by the cricket stars left an impression that cricket has touched them in more ways than one.

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The “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” campaign stresses the unacceptable levels of HIV and AIDS prevalence among children and young people. It also makes a call to action to de-stigmatise the AIDS epidemic and shows how the values of cricket are applicable responses to AIDS while giving greater visibility to children living with and affected by AIDS.

The campaign recognises the power of world class cricket as a platform to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS, especially among children and young people. The ICC World Twenty20 2007, taking place in South Africa in September, is expected to add impetus to the campaign.

The South African cricketers have also recorded video footage, amplifying key messages overarching the “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” campaign as part of the ongoing awareness programme. Millions of fans will watch the footage on big screens during the tournament, and will be broadcast in 105 countries.

The backdrop to the campaign is the staggering numbers of than 1000 children under 15 dying from AIDS-related diseases every 24 hours. So, far more than 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

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