

## MEDIA RELEASE



### ICC Chief Malcolm Speed revs the “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” campaign

Cape Town 17 September 2007 - The International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Malcolm Speed took on scores of South African children in a cricket game to boost the “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” global campaign. The campaign uses international cricket to raise awareness of the needs and rights of children in the fight against aids.

Accompanied by UNICEF Regional Director, Afshan Khan, and his wife, Alison, on a visit at Luleka Primary school in Cape Town’s Khayelitsha Township at the weekend, Speed, 59, showed he can still hold his own against the energetic school children. The final score cheered the school children, teachers and members of the community.

Most significantly, Speed’s visit to the school marked a major milestone for the campaign that has been in top gear since the ICC World Twenty20 touched the South African shores.

“Give the children a cricket bat and a ball and they are in the game. This just shows the power of sport in shaping these children into adults society wants them to be. The ICC support for this initiative is grounded in the belief that cricket can bring real hope to millions of children around the world, in particular South Africa, especially those impacted by HIV and AIDS in one way or another.

“By getting every child involved in the game, it underlines the big message of de-stigmatising HIV and AIDS. It also stresses support for everyone infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.”

He added: “This is the future of cricket. It is also the future of the country. The children can excel on the playing field and in other areas. It is hoped this campaign can help in creating a huge reservoir of sporting and academic talent.”

Speed’s observations give credence to the ongoing debate about stepping up awareness and prevention HIV and AIDS prevention among children. UNAIDS statistics show that more 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.

With the highest number of HIV people in the world, South Africa has made important strides in the provision of treatment in the recent past and has now the fastest growing uptake and largest number of people on ARV treatment in the world. Yet, AIDS remains the leading

cause of death in women and children in the country. UNICEF says improvements in child health and survival will be dependent on the acceleration of access to HIV prevention and treatment for both mothers and children.

Despite this daunting situation, the world still thinks of AIDS as a disease that primarily affects adults. Children are missing from the minds of global policymakers, national governments, pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions and public groups responding to the AIDS pandemic

Speed has a long-standing interest in promoting awareness of HIV and AIDS, and growing budding cricket talent. He has carried out similar tours in other countries, with the most recent being in Delhi in August and in the Caribbean during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007.

UNICEF's Khan said: "Cricket has the power to deal with some of the challenges faced in the fight against HIV and AIDS. These include de-stigmatising the disease and bringing to the attention of policy makers, governments and pharmaceutical companies to ensure that children's rights and needs are addressed.

"Therefore, the partnership with the ICC goes to the core of UNICEF's work of ensuring health education, equality and protection for every child."

School principal Abraham Sonti expressed the dire need to improve sporting facilities at the school. He said: "We can focus the children on sports and academic work to steer them from the social vices rife in the communities where they come from."

Despite the obvious adversities faced by the school, the smiles on the parents, teachers and school children told a story of hope. The story of hope was best expressed by the captivating entertainment and display of messages such as "You can still play with someone who has HIV and AIDS." Aaron Maseti, a grade six learner at the school, thundering in IsiXhosa praise singing is just one example of the other talents the school has in addition to cricket.

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