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Windies aid UNICEF campaign for children's needs and rights in the fight against HIV and AIDS

Johannesburg 10 September 2007 - The West Indies cricket team, taking part in the ICC World Twenty20 in South Africa, have added their voice to the global campaign for children's need and rights in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Skipper Ramnaresh Sarwan with his team mates Fidel Edwards, Darren Sammy and Runako Morton join an array of other international cricketing stars that have stepped forward to aid the International Cricket Council (ICC), UNICEF and UNAIDS campaign, headlined, "Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS." Notable among them are South African cricket skipper, Graeme Smith and his top charges Makhaya Ntini, Shaun Pollock and AB de Villiers.

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.

Meeting young admirers in during their training session at Johannesburg's Wanderers Stadium ahead of the start of the tournament, the West Indies players echoed the widely shared view that the spirit of cricket can help to prevent HIV infection and bring hope to

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millions of children and young people around the world whose lives have been adversely affected by the disease.

“Cricket is hugely popular, and its values such as focus, teamwork, hard work and friendship can really bring meaningful results in combating HIV and AIDS. Our contribution is to make sure that we impart these values and team spirit to the young children,” says the West Indies skipper, Sarwan.

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 backdrop to the campaign are the staggering figures of 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.

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