

## PRESS RELEASE

### Four South African youngsters to represent the country at 'J8' Summit UNICEF hosts fifth annual parallel G8 Youth Forum, 4-12 July

**Pretoria 16 June 2009**...In South Africa's Western and Northern Cape and Free State provinces, four South African students are busy preparing for more than their annual winter exams. That's because the four have been selected from a nationwide field of young people, ages 14-17 years old, to represent their country at the Junior 8 or 'J8', a parallel youth forum to the annual G8 Summit meeting of world leaders to be held this year in Italy in July.

UNICEF Representative Aida Girma, made the announcement on the Day of the African Child, celebrated in South Africa as Youth Day. The students are: Yumna Jackson, Bridgetown High, Western Cape, Refiloe Tsumane, Wrenchville High School, Northern Cape, Aletta Dhlamini, Brentpark High, Free State and Richmond Sajini, Alexander Bay High School in the Northern Cape. All four and their chaperones will soon be heading off for deliberations on issues affecting them and the entire world in the ancient city of Rome.

"UNICEF is pleased to have the support of the Department of Education for this once-in-a-lifetime youth participation initiative for these outstanding young people," said Ms. Girma. "They have demonstrated academic excellence throughout the school year and are all winners of one of the country's highest accolades – the Albert Luthuli History prize. We know they will be wonderful young ambassadors for their country."

Contacted following the announcement, Richmond Sajini said, "I am very excited to have this opportunity. I am honoured to be chosen to go the Rome and I am looking forward to working with the other children and learning from them at the J8."

#### **Sharing young people's concerns and proposing solutions to world leaders**

The 'J8' is an annual event where young people from around the world meet to share their concerns and propose solutions on how to solve the world's big challenges with G8 leaders and the world. The

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South African students will join teams of young people from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy Japan and Russia, as well as participants from eight non-G8 countries, to discuss the same topics that global leaders will discuss during their gathering.

This year's topics include: HIV and AIDS, poverty, climate change and the global financial crisis. The aim is to amplify the message to world leaders that children from all over the world are equally affected by G8 decisions.

### **Delegates represent the young people of the world**

This is the fifth year that UNICEF has organised the 'J8'. Organisers say young delegates have the opportunity not only to share their ideas, opinions and proposals with the leaders of the world, but also to serve as representatives of young people like themselves from countries around the world.

There will be opportunities for some of the J8 delegates to meet face-to-face with G8 leaders to discuss their proposals. Delegates may also engage in media events such as press conferences and interviews where they can share their experiences and recommendations. All the participants will adopt the *Concluding Recommendations* document at the end of the J8 Summit.

"None of these children has ever traveled outside the country, let alone on an airplane to Europe, so there is huge amount of excitement on many levels," said Lindiwe Nzutha, one of the chaperones accompanying the children to the Summit.

"It's more than I could ever dream of. I am so happy," said Richmond."

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