

## MEDIA RELEASE



### Kiwi stars promote HIV and AIDS awareness in Alexandria

Johannesburg, 03 September 2007 - Children at the Little Champs Alexan Kopano School in Alexandria, Johannesburg, today had the opportunity to meet some of New Zealand's ICC World Twenty20 squad as part of the International Cricket Council's partnership with UNICEF and UNAIDS to promote HIV and AIDS awareness, especially among children and young people.

The campaign headlined , "Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS", will use the high-profile of the ICC World Twenty20 that begins on 11 September in South Africa, and the associated star power of the players to bring the plight of children living with and affected by HIV into greater focus.

The children had the opportunity to meet Kiwi stars Ross Taylor (23), Jeetan Patel (27) and Gareth Hopkins (30), who joined in a range of HIV and AIDS awareness activities.

Patel said: "Cricket can bring out the full potential of the children by equipping them with vital skills and keeping them out of harms way from AIDS and HIV and other social vices."

"I strongly share the view that future cricket greats and political leaders will come from among these children, and that is why it is important to halt the spread of AIDS and HIV."

Ross Taylor added: "We see this as our little contribution to ensure that the lives of children and young people are not lost to the prevalence of AIDS and HIV, especially in South Africa and other countries most impacted by the disease."

Kami, the HIV positive muppet who features in the popular children's television education show, Takalani Sesame and appointed UNICEF's global champion for children was also spot on. The children and New Zealand cricketers enthusiastically responded to Kami's message to de-stigmatise HIV and AIDS while imitating the theatrical performances step by step.

UNICEF South Africa Representative, Macharia Kamau, says: "The cricketers have incredible influence to highlight the situation of children and young people impacted by HIV and AIDS.

"The popularity of cricket and the high profile media attention the ICC World Twenty20 enjoys gives us a big platform to engage the youth, policy makers, governments and all people involved in fighting HIV and AIDS. As you may realise, cricket is hugely popular in many of the countries that are most impacted by AIDS, including South Africa."

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South Africa is home to an estimated 5,4 million people living with HIV. According to a Statistics South Africa report, ***Mortality and Causes of Deaths in South Africa, 2005***, children's deaths between 0 to four years stood at 61,461, representing 10,4 percent of all deaths. The report noted that most of the leading causes of infant and child deaths are preventable and treatable diseases such as AIDS and respiratory infections.

Despite these daunting figures, 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.

The visit by the cricketers to the Little Champs Academy in Alexandra forms part of the series of activities that have been planned to bring to the attention of the world that the needs and rights of children must top the agenda in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The players will also wear red ribbons in selected matches to show their solidarity for the campaign.

In addition, cricketing icons such as South African skipper Graeme Smith, India's Kumar Sangakkara, Yurraj Singh and many others will feature in public service announcements that will be beamed on big screens during the matches. The public service announcements will also be broadcast in 105 countries.

Managing Director of Little Champs Academies, Kevin Fine says: "This ICC, UNICEF and UNAIDS initiative adds impetus to our programme of integrating sports into the learning curriculum to give children valuable life-skills, especially around HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention. We have so far reached more than 5,000 children, and we hope to reach more with the support such as the one we have received today from the New Zealand cricket team."  
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ISSUED BY: Davis Mulenga on behalf of UNICEF South Africa  
+27721474847, [davis@unicef.org](mailto:davis@unicef.org)

### MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Davis Mulenga, UNICEF Communication Consultant - +27721474847, [davis@unicef.org](mailto:davis@unicef.org)  
Yvonne Duncan, UNICEF South Africa – Chief of External Relations and Strategic Partnerships  
on: +27825613970, [yduncan@unicef.org](mailto:yduncan@unicef.org)