

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Manchester United welcomes South Africa's call to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on the nation's children

**Cape Town, 17 July 2006** - As UNICEF and the Government of South Africa launch a campaign to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on the nation's children, Manchester United take time out of their tour to reinforce their support for UNICEF's work for children affected by the pandemic.

Arriving in Cape Town on the second leg of their tour, UNICEF Ambassadors **Sir Alex Ferguson** and **Ole Gunnar Solskjaer** took players **Darren Fletcher, Kieran Richardson, Jonathan Evans, Luke Steel** and **Ben Foster** to the largest hospital in the province to learn how HIV/AIDS and violence impacts the lives of children in the country. In South Africa AIDS is now the main cause of death among children under the age of five and plays a sobering role in the high rate of orphaning in the country. More than one million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Joined by the Premier of Western Cape and the Western Cape Minister of Health the team spent the afternoon at the Tygerbear unit for traumatised children at Tygerberg Hospital which provides trauma therapy and counselling to child survivors of HIV/AIDS, violence and rape amongst other things. South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexual abuse in the world, on average 50% of victims who report rape are under 18. There is a strong link between sexual violence and HIV infection.

The Manchester United team met and talked to child survivors and learnt how activities like puppet shows are used as part of trauma prevention therapy to help make children aware of unsafe situations. They also learnt about the child witness project which helps prepares the children for court appearances, supporting them from when the case is scheduled until after conviction and debriefing to minimise any further distress.

At the hospital **Ole Gunnar Solskjaer** said *"Just seeing these children smiling, holding a football and a teddy really made my day. Knowing what these children have been through it is wonderful to see how this UNICEF-supported project is really helping them. It is so important for us to protect, not neglect our children"*

Last week, the Government of South Africa in partnership with UNICEF launched the national 'Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS' campaign to underscore the urgency of the much needed attention, commitment and resources to reduce the impact of the epidemic on the nation's children.

UNICEF raised a global alarm in October 2005 calling on governments, the private sector, and individuals to join together to put the care and protection of children at the centre of the HIV/AIDS agenda. Manchester United was one of the first private sector partners to commit their support to the campaign pledging to raise £1 million over four years.

**Sir Alex Ferguson** said *"Manchester United recognises that HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest challenges facing mankind today. Manchester United is ready to play its part. Like any team, we must be focused, committed and work hard to get a result. We are playing for a win against a tough opponent, HIV/AIDS"*

While in South Africa this week players including tour squad captain Ryan Giggs will continue to take time out of their schedule to visit UNICEF supported projects focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention. The club's aim is for the players to learn about these issues and gain a better understanding. **Sir Alex Ferguson** added *"The United for UNICEF partnership is about investing in young people and we are in a position where we can help UNICEF raise global awareness about global issues like HIV/AIDS. But we need to be better informed and I will always encourage the players to go and see and learn about UNICEF's work so that they can carry important messages far and wide and use their position as role models to reach others"*

**Everyone can take action, by donating money or joining the campaign by visiting [www.unicef.org/aids](http://www.unicef.org/aids) <<http://www.unicef.org/aids>>**

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **Manchester United and UNICEF**

- ❖ United for UNICEF launched in 1999 and is the longest-standing partnership between any Premiership club and an international charity.
- ❖ Manchester United has raised over £2 million to improve the lives of more than 1.5 million children all over the globe including in China, India, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Iraq
- ❖ Over one billion people worldwide have been reached with important messages about education, health and child protection recorded by many of the first team players.
- ❖ The club is committed to backing UNICEF's global campaign for children and AIDS, 'Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS' and was one of the first major corporate partners to come on board
- ❖ The club is also sharing its sporting expertise to support UNICEF's pioneering work in the field of sport for development, using sport as a tool to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.