

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF Celebrity Advocate, Nicole Fox, lends her support to UNICEF emergency efforts in Musina

6 February 2009, Musina, Limpopo Province – Popular radio and TV personality and UNICEF celebrity advocate, Nicole Fox, accompanied by UNICEF representatives traveled to Musina to assess the humanitarian situation in the Limpopo border town and discuss her support to the work that UNICEF in collaboration with government are doing in the area.

The first part of the visit focused on Bonwa-Udi Primary School which has opened its doors to destitute Zimbabwean children. The school, though already overstretched with over a thousand children enrolled, has made room to accommodate the high numbers of displaced Zimbabwean children seeking an opportunity to continue with learning. The school has currently enrolled over 100 Zimbabwean children. UNICEF is providing support towards addressing the challenge of congestion in the school. Many of these children are living either at a shelter at the United reform Church or at the Musina Showground – with no shelter at all.

In spite of the difficulties that these children face, there was excitement in the classrooms due to the presence of visitors. Nicole talked with many of the children and even took part in one of the lessons.

The majority of the migrant children are unaccompanied by adults and face problems of nutrition, sanitation and protection. Project Officer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children at UNICEF South Africa Heidi Loening-Voisey explained “their immediate needs, food and shelter, are a great concern, as well as their long- term needs, such as education and care.

Later, Nicole and the UNICEF representatives visited the United Reformed Church, one of three informal safety shelters in the area. These shelters offer temporary protection for the children, UNICEF and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) are hoping to increase the number of safety shelters and have them formally acknowledged by the Department of Social Development.

“The trip to Musina was incredibly moving and heartbreaking but also really motivational in terms of getting involved. It is absolutely an emergency situation. My priority is to help UNICEF as much as possible to raise funds and awareness about the situation and to help save the lives of the children” said Nicole.

Nicole plans to use her public profile to offer her support to UNICEF in drafting a national appeal to assist with education, child protection and welfare issues in the Musina area.

Recently, at their wedding, Nicole and her husband Ramzi asked their guests to give their wedding gifts in the form of a donation to UNICEF and more specifically to UNICEF's emergency work in Musina.

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