

Media Release

UNICEF launches campaign on prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV

Advertisements promote the gift of life and help dispel stigma and discrimination

Pretoria, 2 September, 2008 – UNICEF has announced the launch of a new advertising campaign aimed at dispelling stigma on HIV transmission from parent to child. The themed advertisements encourage parents to “Give Life” to their unborn babies getting tested for HIV early in pregnancy to access effective interventions currently provided for free in public health care facilities to help reduce the risk of HIV transmission to the baby.

“In South Africa, we know that fear and stigma prevents many people from even wanting to know their status and accessing treatment. We also know that prevalence of HIV amongst pregnant women remains high. In the absence of any intervention, 20-35% of infants could be infected during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding” said Dr. Ngashi Ngongo, Chief of Health and Acting Deputy Representative at UNICEF South Africa.

“If a mother gets tested early and knows her status, she can help reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to her unborn baby to less than 10% by taking advantage of free access to treatment interventions as well as information and counseling available at most local health facilities, hospitals and clinics around the country,” he said.

Themed Adverts promote the gift of life

The new ads feature friendly, cute and adorable images of babies themselves conveying a variety of messages about the positive characteristics and attributes they have inherited from their parents – but not HIV. The ads are developed by the Johannesburg advertising firm Saatchi & Saatchi. UNICEF says that print, billboard and radio adverts were launched in July. A television ad will follow in mid September this year.

Other UNICEF Programme Elements

UNICEF is also working at community level with civil society partners to roll out other aspects of its HIV and AIDS anti-stigma campaign. These partners are expected to bring an interactive experience to local communities throughout South Africa via community theatre and drama.

One of these activities, to be launched shortly, is the **arepp: theatre for life** by the edutainment theatre company that uses live dramatic theatre to provide complimentary, interactive, social life-skills education to school-going youth grades 0-12 as future parents for the promotion and development of self-efficacy and resilience. The theatre groups bring magic to the HIV prevention messages in live presentations to audiences in schools and communities nationwide.

In addition, UNICEF says, the *Siyayinqoba Beat it!* TV series will feature documentary video “inserts” filmed by local youth journalists. These will be broadcast weekly on SABC on Thursdays at 13H00. *Siyayinqoba Beat It!* represents one of the main vehicles that brings a scientifically-based understanding of HIV treatment issues to a mass audience via television. The project targets people living with HIV and AIDS, partners, families, friends, colleagues and caregivers and communities.

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About UNICEF: UNICEF is the leading children’s organization, committed to improving the lives of children all around the world. UNICEF works with government, other organizations & local communities to make a sustainable difference in the lives of children in South Africa. UNICEF works for the survival, protection and development of children through promotion of health, education, advocacy and fund raising. For more information, please visit our website on www.unicef.org/southafrica

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