

**Launch of “Life Skills Through Sports” Programme
Olompafrika Sports Development Centre, Lobamba
12 October 2007**

Dr. Jama Gulaid, UNICEF Representative

Hon. Deputy Minister, Ministry of Regional Development and Youth Affairs
PS. Ministry of Education
President of the Swaziland Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association
Chairman of the Swaziland Sports Council
Children
Organizers of this event
Distinguished Ladies and Children

This is a great day for celebrations. We have had rainfall to be thankful for. We have the company of national leaders and many children for the launch of the first Life Skills through Sports Programme in Swaziland. We also have the support of the famous Barcelona Football Club and Barcelona Foundation. As you know, Swaziland is the first country to benefit from the Global Partnership between Barcelona and UNICEF. The assistance from Barcelona is supporting the Life skills through sports programme HIV preventions, waters and sanitation programmes, birth registration and protection of orphans and vulnerable children.

Sports have a special place in our lives. In ancient Greece, the period of the Olympic Games was a peaceful time. Even communities those were not friendly to each other declared temporary peace to allow athletes to compete in the games. In modern times, sports have grown in number and following. In the comfort of our homes, we can access live broadcast of sports events taking place thousands of miles away.

The Olympic Games have grown tremendously. There are also many international, regional events both professional and amateur events. Yet the big names in sports have roots in poor countries, villages and towns in Africa, South America and so on. This is the story of Pele, Eto, Ronaldino, Adebayo and Essien and world class female athletes like Mutola of Mozambique, Catherine Ndereba of Kenya, Adere Berhane of Ethiopia who just won the Chicago Marathon.

Sports bring us many benefits. In childhood, play helps promote development and socialization. Sports foster friendship, instill discipline and values that have live long benefits such as planning, training, and dealing with set-backs. Sports are the foundation of skills and practices which are carried over to the business and private sectors. The list of concepts borrowed from sports are impressive team building, team work, goal-setting, referee, rules of the game, and rewards and incentives.

UNICEF Swaziland is working closely with the government ministries, regions, sports authorities, teachers, children and communities to promote sports. We are committed to this special programme because of the link between sports and life skills. As a partner in Swaziland, we like to encourage the children to enjoy the sports programme but also learn skills that will help them live a healthier and happier life. They must also learn the discipline, team work and determinations which sports teach. They must apply the skill learned from sports to protect themselves and their friends from HIV, violence, teenage pregnancy, smoking, and drugs and train hard to succeed in school.

Together, we make a great team. A team that can help children score victories in and outside the play ground. Thank you all for the successful launch and special thanks to Barcelona and the UNICEF Spanish Committee for the investment in children of Swaziland. Let us go win.

