

PRESS RELEASE

“Protect the Goal” campaign launched at opening of the Africa Cup of Nations

The campaign aims to harness the power of football to raise awareness of HIV

JOHANNESBURG, 19 January 2013—The President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé and the President of the Confederation of African Football, Issa Hayatou launched the “Protect the Goal” initiative on January 19 at the opening ceremony of the Orange Africa Cup of Nations in Johannesburg.

The “Protect the Goal” campaign aims to raise awareness of HIV and mobilize young people to commit to HIV prevention. Globally, an estimated 4.6 million young people (15-24 years of age) are living with HIV. About 2 300 young people are infected with HIV each day. Many young people living with HIV, who are eligible for treatment lack access or do not know their HIV status. The “Protect the Goal” campaign also stresses the need for ensuring all the 15 million people eligible for life-saving antiretroviral treatment can access it by 2015.

“Accelerating large-scale efforts for HIV prevention and treatment is imperative in Africa,” said President Jacob Zuma. “With strong leadership from government and community support, South Africa is showing results and its commitment to ending AIDS.”

Earlier in January, the President of Ghana, John Mahama attended an event to send off the Ghana Black Stars National Football Team to the Africa Cup of Nations. During the event, President Mahama signed a pledge supporting the “Protect the Goal” campaign. The Captain of the Black Stars also signed and read out the pledge. As part of advocacy activities in the lead-up to the tournament, UNAIDS country offices were able to enlist the support of other national football federations to the Protect the Goal campaign. As a result, team captains from Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, and Niger signed the pledge to support the campaign. Other countries are expected to join the initiative during the three week-long Africa Cup of Nations tournament.

During the Africa Cup of Nations, UNAIDS is partnering with the Confederation of African Football, the South African Football Association and the Tobeka Madiba Zuma Foundation to implement the “Protect the Goal” initiative. During the campaign, UNAIDS and its partners will disseminate HIV prevention messages on large electronic screens to football fans in all stadiums where the Africa Cup of Nations football games are taking place. The captains of each of the 16 teams participating in the games will read a statement calling on players, football fans and young people to support the campaign. The “Protect the Goal” campaign will continue until the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

“Football appeals so much to young people and I am thrilled to have such a groundswell of support from the stars of African soccer,” said UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé. “I know this is just the start of an astonishing campaign which will generate much enthusiasm among fans all the way to Brazil 2014.”

“We are extremely happy to support UNAIDS in their efforts to roll out this campaign across the continent,” said President of the Confederation of African Football, Issa Hayatou. “Our teams are committed to an Africa where AIDS is no longer a threat.”

The 29th edition of the Orange Africa Cup of Nations will last until 10 February, the day of the finale. It is the most prestigious football tournament on the continent and happens every two years. The sixteen teams participating in this year’s championship are: Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa (host), Togo, Tunisia, and Zambia.

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UNAIDS

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