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Joint press statement

UN trains Olympic volunteers on AIDS awareness

The UN, Beijing Youth League, China Red Cross and MSI join forces with people living with HIV to train Olympic volunteers on HIV prevention and anti-discrimination

Beijing, 15 June 2008 – Convened by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the United Nations system in China has launched a training programme for Olympic Volunteers on HIV prevention and anti-discrimination. The training is being conducted in collaboration with the Beijing Youth League, Marie Stopes International (MSI) China and the Red Cross Society of China, and is part of the volunteers' preparation for service during the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Around 5,500 volunteers are taking part in the training which is being held in 12 different universities from 14-15 June. Some 100,000 additional volunteers will receive a basic information package on HIV, providing a unique opportunity to reach Chinese youth with important knowledge and skills on HIV prevention and anti-discrimination. Among the trainers are people living with HIV who have been trained as trainers and public speakers as part of a project supported by UNAIDS and UNDP.

“Many young people do not have the right information on AIDS, fuelling false fears, stigma and discrimination. This is bad in itself, but also hampers HIV prevention work,” said Bernhard Schwartländer, the UNAIDS Country Coordinator in China. “Engaging some of China’s most capable young people and making them the messengers of positive and correct knowledge on HIV can help dispel inaccurate myths and break down the stigma and discrimination against people affected by HIV,” he said.

The training is an important contribution to the response to HIV in China as well as to the successful organization of the 2008 Olympics and Paralympics. Volunteers who have been successful in applying to serve during the Olympics are among the brightest youth in China. Many may go on to be future leaders, making them key advocates for HIV prevention and other development issues in the future.

“We hope that through this training, Olympics volunteers, as ambassadors for Beijing citizens, will be better prepared to inclusively welcome all groups of people to Beijing during the Games, especially those living with HIV. It is our hope that Olympic volunteers will share this knowledge and look for opportunities to continue volunteering on important development issues such as raising awareness of HIV” said UNDP Country Director Subinay Nandy.

This training event has been co-funded by UNAIDS, UNDP and UNV and is one of many planned in a partnership between UNDP, UNV and the Beijing Youth League as part of a project aimed at strengthening volunteerism for development in China through the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games.

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For more information on UNV: <http://www.unv.org/>

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