



**UNITE FOR CHILDREN
UNITE AGAINST AIDS**



Press release

UN Executive Directors and HRH Princess Mathilde of Belgium encourage more action to address impact of AIDS on children and young people in Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, 17 February 2006 – The Executive Directors of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and Her Royal Highness (HRH) Princess Mathilde of Belgium in her capacity as the UNAIDS and UNICEF Special Representative for Children and AIDS, today encouraged greater action to support children and young people in Tanzania in the AIDS response.

During the three-day visit to Tanzania, the high-level delegation met with the Tanzanian President and First Lady, government officials, the donor community, children orphaned by AIDS, and people living with HIV. They visited community-based programmes that provide care and support to children and young people living with HIV, as well as prevention services, including HIV testing and counselling.

“During the past days, I have heard the missing voice of children giving testimony on HIV/AIDS issues. I am convinced that education for children and young people is of great importance. More than ever, it is clear that prevention is crucial, because ignorance is the worst enemy of the AIDS response,” said HRH Princess Mathilde of Belgium.

It is estimated that HIV prevalence in Tanzania is 7 percent which translates into approximately two million people. Young people are at higher risk of HIV infection in Tanzania with half of all new infections occurring among young people aged 15 to 24, according to UNAIDS and UNICEF.

The delegation stressed the importance of education and AIDS awareness as a proven component of the “social vaccine” against HIV. Tanzania has made strides in providing free primary education which could be a key avenue for HIV prevention. But the mission noted the need to strengthen secondary education and activities for out of school youth.

Young women are more likely to be infected than men the same age, often because they lack information about HIV. More than 55 percent of young women and 50 percent of young men do not know five of the most important facts about how to prevent HIV. Some studies have suggested that more than 65 percent of sexually active girls have relationships with older men.

The mission appreciated the impressive spirit of volunteerism at the community level, particularly by women.

“Community volunteerism can make a tremendous difference in the response to HIV and AIDS,” said Ms Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF. “We must do all we can to support communities—improve education and health care systems, ensure access to clean water and sanitation, as well as adequate nutrition—to strengthen the ability of communities and families to cope with HIV and AIDS.”

The joint mission expressed concerns that the prevailing drought situation could negatively impact people living with HIV and people receiving antiretroviral treatment. Lack of food and good nutrition impacts the immune system and undermines effectiveness of treatment.

Sustainability and increasing the availability of quality services will be key challenges in the next phase of the Tanzania AIDS response.

While more than 2,000 children now have access to AIDS treatment, it is still difficult for them to access antiretroviral therapy due to the limited supply of paediatric formulations. The mission noted the need to increase Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMCT) services which are currently reaching only 7 percent of pregnant women in need. Treatment for adults has increased 4-fold, but still remains far below that which is required.

As international funding for AIDS increases, one key factor is to ensure money is spent effectively, focused on those most at risk to HIV as well as people living with and affected by AIDS. To “make the money work”, the mission recommended that greater efforts be made to ensure that the money reaches down to support community initiatives for the prevention, care and support and treatment for children and adults.

The mission concluded that Tanzania is making progress. “Accelerating the AIDS response is urgently needed so that every citizen of Tanzania has access to HIV prevention, treatment and care,” said Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, “Reaching universal access requires the mobilization of the entire society.”

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, brings together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations to the global AIDS response. Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Based in Geneva, the UNAIDS secretariat works on the ground in more than 75 countries world wide.

For nearly 60 years, the United Nations Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**) has been the world’s leader for children, working on the ground in 157 countries to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for poor countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS

The *Global Campaign on Children and AIDS: Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS* was launched by UNAIDS and UNICEF in late in 2005 to bring much needed attention and resources to efforts to address the impact of AIDS on children. It focuses on four key areas—known as the four Ps - the **prevention** of mother-to-child HIV transmission; **paediatric** AIDS; **primary prevention** of infection among young people; and the **protection** and support for children affected by AIDS.

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