

Speech

**Visit of International Cricket Council President,  
David Morgan to UNAIDS Secretariat**

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**Speech by  
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As a youngster, like for many children in India, my dream was to become a cricket player for my country. Being anything else seemed to be almost unnatural. However, this dream was detoured when I moved away from my homeland. After that, I had limited access to playing cricket - but the influence that cricket had on my life and the values it instilled in me live on in me to this day and probably will forever.

I grew up playing cricket everyday. The monsoon season in Bombay was the most depressing time of the year since we couldn't play for up to 4 months. Sometimes, we got lucky and found dry patches where we could practice until the rain came pouring down again. Even so, this only fueled my passion further and come summer, I was charged and ready to go for another season of 6 over matches (our version of the 20/20), underarm spinners, and running away when we broke someone's window with the 10 rupee tennis ball (which at the time, was a fortune to us). All of these were priceless experiences which I would never trade away.

Through all of these experiences, I learned what it was like to be part of a team, how to deal with victory and defeat, and generally what it was like to do something I loved without a care in the world. The influence cricketers had on my life was also phenomenal. I would collect posters, articles and any sort of memorabilia that I could get my hands on. I practically worshiped all cricketers, no matter what country they were from or what the color of their skin was. I looked up to these players - no word or piece of advice given by Sachin Tendulkar, no commercial featuring Kapil Dev ever went unnoticed in my book.

Looking at my own experience of the influence of cricket in my life, I feel that UNAIDS and the ICC have a lot to offer each other, as well as the world when it comes to connecting young people through sports with AIDS awareness. The influence of cricket is growing around the world; unfortunately, the AIDS pandemic is growing as well. I could not think of a better way to spread HIV prevention messages and to eradicate HIV-related stigma and discrimination than through a partnership such as this one. Young people often need guidance to help them in the right direction and quite often need lessons on how to live life safely. And yet when these lessons are given by adults who talk down to them, and often assume that they are troublemakers, it means that those lessons are ignored or met with rebellion. But when the lesson comes through your role models, by someone you admire, in simple language, talking straight to you but with respect, that message gets home to us. If cricketers can sell shaving cream and cars in India, surely they can use their influence to pass on messages that help us to live life as healthy adults. So many young people are getting infected with HIV because they don't get such messages on HIV. Through the help of the ICC and cricket players, we can help capture the attention of young people and pass on those life-saving messages.

We can certainly not undo what's done but we can make sure that we are more careful in the future to protect ourselves from HIV and to treat people living with HIV with dignity and without stigma and discrimination. Every young person deserves a chance to live a healthy life and I feel that with the help of the ICC and UNAIDS, we can ensure that we keep the next generation educated, informed, and safe through a sport that they love.

I was fortunate enough to be educated on HIV at home and school - an opportunity that many do not ever get. I want others to have that chance.