



CRICKET WORLD UNITES FOR AIDS

The leading teams and players from world cricket will unite together this week in support of people living with HIV/AIDS for the fourth consecutive year.

World Aids Day, which is on the 1st December, will be marked with a series of activities on or around the day at major Test and ODI matches, while the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Development Program will also run a number of events aimed at providing education on HIV/AIDS for young people on cricket programmes.

These events are the latest activity to take place as part of the ICC's partnership with UNAIDS and UNICEF.

Among the highlights taking place this week, players from both India and South Africa will wear red ribbons at the Twenty20 international in Johannesburg on Friday, to show their support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Representatives from both teams will address the crowd before the game on the importance of tackling HIV/AIDS, before balloons will be released into the sky.

Graeme Smith, the South African captain, who visited children living with HIV/AIDS in Ahmedabad during the ICC Champions Trophy in India, along with some of his playing colleagues, commented: "The children we visited in Ahmedabad reminded us of the devastating situation back home where the disease has left thousands of children parentless and orphaned.

"Young people are in the front line of the battle against HIV/AIDS and I urge them to get to know as much about it as possible.

"Ignorance is the biggest enemy while knowledge will lead to prevention and the ability to educate your friends.

"On this significant day, we the Proteas pledge our support to all those infected and affected by HIV/ AIDS and we will continue to fight the stigma associated with those living with the virus".

Rahul Dravid, who will miss Friday's game through injury, said: "Our first ever Twenty20 international match in Johannesburg will be a momentous and historic occasion for Indian cricket. As well as providing the opportunity for us to gain valuable match experience ahead of the Twenty20 World Championship next year, as the match takes place on World Aids Day we will be using this game to show our support for the

millions of people in India and South Africa, living with HIV/AIDS, by wearing red ribbons on our shirts."

Players from Pakistan and West Indies are also committed to showing their support for this issue.

West Indian batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan said: "We should all make a conscious effort to protect ourselves. I want to urge everyone, especially young people across the globe, to make sure they are aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and always use protection."

Australia and England's captains, whose players will both wear ribbons in the 2nd Ashes Test Match at Adelaide on Friday, have also united behind the cause.

Ricky Ponting said: "By uniting for children on World Aids Day in such a high profile Test Match, we hope to make a difference to those whose lives are touched by HIV/AIDS, and show that the cricket world is united in having a positive impact on this issue."

England skipper, Andrew Flintoff, added: "The English cricket team is committed to supporting the Spirit of Cricket both on and off the field. I believe it is important to use our position and profile to support important social causes and we are delighted to support the International Cricket Council's partnership with UNAIDS on World Aids Day."

There are also activities taking place across the 87 Associate and Affiliate Members of the ICC, including at the ICC Tri Series which is being staged in South Africa between Bermuda, Canada and the Netherlands.

And the ICC Development Program will also see a series of events in Member countries. For example, in Uganda, a range of World Aids Day activities are taking place as part of their Girls cricket week. There will be group talks, t-shirts distributed with AIDS messages, players will wear red ribbons and there will also be counseling sessions available.

"The issue of children and young people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS has been missing from the global response for far too long. The leadership shown by the ICC in highlighting the need to unite for children and unite against AIDS is a demonstration of the power of cricket and sport," said Peter McDermott, who leads UNICEF's HIV/AIDS programme. "By mobilising teams, coaches, media, fans and others to put children at the centre of the AIDS agenda, the ICC is making an invaluable contribution that we hope others will replicate."

Calle Almedal, Senior Advisor, UNAIDS added: "UNAIDS believes in uniting the world against aids and actively involving all partners in the response to AIDS including the sports sector. Sport is a force for change, breaks down barriers, builds self-esteem and can teach life skills and social behaviour.

“Leading sports people such as the top cricket players can act as role models for today’s young generation – a generation that has not known a world without AIDS. Increased access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is urgently needed and the world must “keep the promise” to those in need.”

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