



Speech

**Remarks by Kathleen Cravero,
Deputy Executive Director, UNAIDS,
at the 2nd International Cricket Business Forum**

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It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today at the 2004 International Cricket Business Council Forum and share with you all a few thoughts on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and our global quest to stop its deadly spread. I speak to you on behalf of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS – better known as UNAIDS. UNAIDS is a partnership of 10 UN organizations and a Secretariat that facilitates their work. UNAIDS is unique in the UN system – so we are not only telling others to do business differently when it comes to AIDS. We are doing it differently ourselves.

We at UNAIDS value our partnership with the International Cricket Council, which has grown steadily since it was launched in September 2003. In joining hands with UNAIDS, the International Cricket Council is once again providing a model of good practice in promoting social causes. I would like to convey our sincere thanks to the leadership at ICC. Mr. Malcolm Gray the past President of ICC championed the partnership during his term. We count Mr. Ehsan Mani, the current President and Chairman, as one of our great advocates – and a budding AIDS activist! His public speeches and messages on AIDS as well as his visits to AIDS projects across Asia, Africa and West Indies have helped raise awareness among the sporting community. Mr. Malcolm Speed, Chief Executive Officer, and his team are fully dedicated to AIDS and have promoted the issue – and our partnership - at every opportunity. We enjoy working with them and look forward to a long undefeated innings together. Our quest must be no less than to 'run out AIDS'.

Our partnership with you demonstrates once again that sports play an important role in the fight against AIDS. In India, home to the largest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Asia, the picture of an HIV-positive person holding hands with the cricket captains of India and New Zealand broke down many myths and feelings of stigma. One leading AIDS activist, also living with HIV/AIDS in India, told us that this was the first time he saw such a meaningful gesture towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

The wearing of Red Ribbons by the cricket teams of England, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Pakistan and West Indies on World AIDS Day last year was a powerful symbol. It demonstrated the personal commitment of cricket players to stemming the tide of AIDS.

What do these numbers mean in cricket terms?

There are almost 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the world today. Nearly 13 million of them live in test-match playing countries. India and South Africa alone have nearly 10 million people living with HIV/AIDS. Outside of sub-Saharan Africa (which continues to be the hardest hit), the West Indies is the region worst hit by AIDS and Asia has the fastest growing epidemic (especially in South Asia). In sum the epidemic is well entrenched in the cricketing world and we cannot afford to ignore it.

These numbers mean that by the time a single over is bowled, 30 people would have been infected with HIV. Half of them would have been young people between the ages of 15- 24.

Most of these young people would have had little information about AIDS or would have limited access to means of protection such as condoms, clean needles or the skills to say no when put under pressure from peers.

By the time a one-day match finishes, nearly 8000 people would have died from AIDS. Most of them would not have had access to HIV medicines and care.

The number of people living – and dying - with HIV reveals only one small part of the epidemic. Hidden behind these numbers are the millions impacted by its rampant spread - children, parents, wives, husbands, grandparents, businesses and nations.

HIV/AIDS continues to exact a devastating toll on individuals and families around the world. In the hardest hit countries it is also one of the greatest impediments to socio-economic development, erasing decades of health, economic social progress, reducing life expectancy by more than two decades, slowing economic growth, deepening poverty and exacerbating chronic food shortages.

Women continue to be the hardest hit by AIDS. Each year they account for an increasing proportion of HIV infections, reaching over 60% in Africa last year. Women face discrimination, stigma and other issues that inhibit their access to HIV information and prevention services. They also face spiral challenges in accessing HIV treatment

Cricket will also get affected.

AIDS is not just a disease of the poor or of marginalised groups. In many countries, players, officials and those involved in promoting cricket have already had to confront the reality of HIV, through the loss of colleagues, friends, and relatives and the virtual collapse of their communities.

Imagine a cricket team with just 7 players! In countries where more than 15% of adults are infected with HIV, 1/3 of boys now aged 15 will die of AIDS-related illnesses: that's 4 players on any cricket team

Lessons learned from responses so far

The good news is that AIDS is a problem with a solution. Some developing nations have shown real success in the response to AIDS – particularly in preventing new HIV infections among adolescents and young adults, although less success in offering antiretroviral therapy. Most notable are Uganda, Senegal, Brazil, Cambodia, Thailand, and a growing number of cities in East Africa, such as Kigali and Addis Ababa. However, these few successes need to be sustained and expanded. It is the job of UNAIDS to make this happen – to support national partners in strengthening their responses to AIDS.

When infection rates and AIDS deaths are mounting in so many parts of the world, what accounts for these successes? There are, we believe, seven key elements that are present in every effective response to date. These elements should inform and underpin our efforts to expand our success against the epidemic.

- First, leadership. No money can replace courageous leadership at all levels. The response to AIDS must be led from the highest level in the state. It must also be supported by well-known people that the public knows and trusts – sports personalities can play a key role in this regard.
- Second, comprehensiveness. Success comes from sustained and comprehensive approaches on prevention, care, treatment and impact mitigation. There is no silver bullet – progress against AIDS requires hard work on all fronts. A commitment by all states in the world to accelerate and scale up implementation of a comprehensive response was forged at the UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in June 2001, when 189 Member

States endorsed the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

- Third, multisectorality and inclusiveness. The epidemic cannot be brought under control by the health sector alone – we need the broad engagement of all sectors and people from all walks of life, including people living with HIV/AIDS, faith-based organizations and sports clubs of all types.
- Fourth, breaking down stigma and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination are major obstacles in encouraging people to take advantage of prevention and care services. As such, they undermine prevention efforts and drive the epidemic underground. The people in this room have a key role to play in breaking down stigma and discrimination – by speaking out and, better yet reaching out to people living with HIV.
- Fifth, information alone is not enough. It must be backed up by resources – and possibilities – to take action and change risk behaviour. We know that if young people are given real options and opportunities to act on the information they receive, they do so – with commitment and enthusiasm. Telling a young girl who has no other way to pay her school fees not to sleep with an older man who is ready to pay them on her behalf, is worse than useless. It is irresponsible. Eliminating the fees or giving her another way to pay them would be more constructive approaches. As sports professionals we hope you will help promote greater opportunities for young people in your countries.
- Sixth, current prevention options often miss the point when it comes to women and girls. The fact is that women do not have the option to abstain when they would like to, many get infected despite their faithfulness and the vast majority of them are not in a position to negotiate condoms. All these things are important. But if we don't address the real situations women face, they won't make a difference. We need to look beyond the obvious. We need to recognize, for example, the positive impact of reducing violence, protecting property rights, increasing access to reproductive health care and HIV treatment and ensuring access to education on women's vulnerability to HIV. Once again, your willingness to promote this broader, more female-friendly approach to HIV prevention will make a big difference to the success of our efforts worldwide.
- Finally, act now, or pay later. Africa has learned this lesson the hard way. Denial and ignorance do not reverse this epidemic anymore than wishing to win ensures victory. Just as in sports, winning the battle against AIDS requires determination, hard work and preparation – before, during and after the game. The countries of Asia and Eastern Europe must take this truth to heart before it is too late.

Cricket can play a leading role in the Global AIDS effort

The world is only now waking up to the fact that AIDS is the most formidable, complex development challenge in human history. Now that the International Cricket Council is fully awake, what can you do to stop AIDS?

Promote awareness about AIDS. You might think the whole world knows about HIV/AIDS, but the truth is that nearly half the world still does not have accurate information about HIV prevention or treatment. You can spread the word in a number of ways.

For example: commentators can talk about it during matches; sponsors can air AIDS public service announcements and give space to AIDS messages in stadium advertisements; and sports journalists can reach millions of young people who read only the sports papers or listen to sports news.

Encourage coaches to play a key role. UNAIDS is working with the ICC to develop a curriculum and handbook for use by coaches. We hope this handbook will make it easy for coaches and cricketers to talk about AIDS. Coaches can reach people who might never see a health worker.

Serve as role models. Cricket players can be good role models. Sunil Gavaskar remarked at a recent ICC meeting that he would have worn a helmet during his playing days, if there was one available. Fortunately with HIV/AIDS, the means of protection is available. Just as there is nothing macho about going in to bat without your pads, gloves and helmet, using protection, whether its fidelity or condoms or other means, is the best way to avoid HIV infection. People need to know this protection exists, have consistent access and be willing to use it. Cricketers can help promote healthy choices leading to safer behaviour.

Sanath Jaysuria, who has served as UNAIDS ambassador in Sri Lanka, has appeared in Public Service Announcements, promoting HIV awareness. Similar work is also now being done by Murali, Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar. We need more of them – and you - to speak out loudly about AIDS.

Cricket administrators have a powerful influence and reach with sports and youth ministries. They can pressure governments to take the epidemic seriously. We hope other sports officials will follow the example of Mr Mani and speak about AIDS in public forums.

Combat stigma: Cricket can help eliminate the stigma and discrimination I mentioned earlier in this remarks. A visit to a hospital or a care centre, a public handshake, a game or meal with people living with HIV or a few simple messages can make a big difference.

For example:

- A person with HIV can lead a healthy life for many years. There is no reason for them to stop playing cricket (or any sport), to drop out of school or be absent from work.
- Having HIV is not shameful or criminal. Every person with HIV has his or her own story. They should be listened to, not shunned.
- There is no need to fear people with HIV. Involve them in HIV prevention efforts – they can be powerful forces for change.

Promote sound HIV policies in the workplace, including within the ICC. People need reliable information about HIV/AIDS. They need to work in environments where questions can be asked and honest, frank answers received. After two decades of struggle, we know that HIV prevention is good for business.

Help raise resources for AIDS. While resource flows to AIDS have increased dramatically, we still fall far short of the resources required to reverse AIDS. Every

penny counts. There must be imaginative ways that the cricket world can help in resource mobilization.

Finally, protect young people and women. Women and young people are the most affected by the AIDS epidemic. Players can challenge stereotypes about women and girls and speak out against abuse and violence. Protecting young people means protecting the future of cricket.

The future of the partnership

We look forward for building our partnership with the ICC - with its national boards as well as its business partners. We look forward to making this the most innovative public-partnership ever forged against AIDS.

Our engagement with the National boards is, in fact, steadily increasing. We are keen to develop partnerships at country level - our country-level staff are primed and ready to go. Many are already in contact with national cricket boards.

We look forward to the Champions trophy which will be held this September. We congratulate the ICC for agreeing to promote HIV/AIDS at this key event. We stand ready to work with you to make this a fully memorable occasion – for AIDS as well as for cricket.

As an American, I would usually say we should “hit a home run” or “score a touchdown” in making this partnership work. But in preparing for today, I studied up on cricket. So let me say instead that, through this partnership, we must score as many centuries as we can, hitting all sixes and taking all the twos and singles. Every run counts in the struggle against AIDS.

So let's start the winning match today.

Thank you.