

## **Speech by WHO Representative**

Speech of the WHO Country Representative to Botswana, DR Jean A. Kalilani, on the  
Occasion of the Launch of the Comic booklet  
"HIV/AIDS: Stand up for Human Rights"

*National Youth Centre: Gaborone, 29th October 2005*

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

In December 2004, that is 10 months ago, WHO and FIFA agreed to join hands to promote a human rights approach to responding to HIV/AIDS and to address stigma and discrimination that have always impeded our collective ability to effectively fight HIV/AIDS. This was in recognition of the complex linkages that exist between health and human rights. Violations or lack of attention to human rights can have serious health consequences. Health policies and programs can promote or violate human rights in the ways they are designed or implemented. Taking steps to respect, protect and fulfill human rights can reduce vulnerability and the impact of ill health. Ladies and gentlemen, we believe that all these three linkages between human rights and health apply not only to health in general, but more so to the problem of HIV/AIDS. We are glad therefore that today we are witnessing in Botswana this occasion to launch a cartoon booklet called "HIV/AIDS -Stand up *for* Human Rights" and related materials

Ladies and gentlemen, we will not win the fight against HIV/AIDS, if we do not adopt a human rights approach to fighting the disease. This includes putting people at the center of program planning and implementation of interventions for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. Fighting stigma and discrimination is therefore central to the provision of an enabling environment for responding to HIV/AIDS

The comic booklet and materials as you will notice, focus on young people. They aim to increase the young peoples' awareness and knowledge on HIV/AIDS as well as mobilize the youth to stand up for human rights in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I find this special emphasis on young people particularly important

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, HIV infection rates are very high in Botswana just like in most other Southern African countries. However the young people have much lower HIV infection rates. In this regard, the young people are a window of hope in our light against this disease, towards having an HIV free generation in the future. Educating them on HIV/AIDS and working with them to reduce stigma and discrimination will contribute significantly to the light against HIV / AIDS.

Indeed HIV infection is low in young people. However there are still young people who are HIV infected and some that are already with AIDS. Fighting stigma and discrimination will allow these young people to feel accepted and allow them and their families to cope well with their condition

At this juncture, allow me ladies and gentlemen to say a little bit about the importance of partnerships in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The complexity of HIV/AIDS requires that we forge strategic partnerships in dealing with it. Partnerships between the rich and the poor, Partnerships between the young and the old, Partnerships between the educated and the not so educated, Partnerships between men and women, Partnerships amongst the various organizations, agencies, departments, associations and so on. This is critical because everybody has something to contribute to the fight against HIV / AIDS.

The booklet that we are launching today is a result of such partnership, where WHO, UNAIDS, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and FIFA have worked together. This comic booklet has utilized football as a medium for disseminating to youth, the important message of HIV / AIDS and human rights.

We urge that we utilize these materials in building and strengthening partnerships amongst all stakeholders involved in HIV/AIDS, and begin to bring more strongly the participation and involvement of the Botswana Football Association.

We do hope you will find these materials useful and that we will receive feedback on

their use. This is important because with HIV/AIDS, we need to continuously adapt and adjust the way we respond.

Ladies and gentlemen it is now my pleasure and honour to hand over the booklet and the associated posters. Before I do so, I would like to say: “**Let us all stand up for Human Rights**”.

Thank you for your kind attention