

UNICEF CANADA ANNOUNCES A FIVE-YEAR HIV/AIDS CAMPAIGN TO TURN THE SPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN: THE MISSING FACE OF AIDS

TORONTO (November 30, 2006) -- Nigel Fisher, President & CEO of UNICEF Canada is pleased to announce the appointment of Alison Lawton, Venture Philanthropist as Chair of UNICEF Canada's Unite for Children. Unite Against AIDS campaign. Ms. Lawton is an accomplished Canadian business executive, director and financier. She is a committee member of UNITAID and works closely with the Clinton Foundation in her initiatives on HIV/AIDS.

UNICEF's global Unite for Children. Unite Against AIDS campaign responds to the lack of attention given to the needs of children and adolescents within the context of the pandemic. The organization's work focuses on urgent imperatives known as the 4 P's: primary prevention; prevention of mother-to-child-transmission; paediatric AIDS; and ensuring protection, care and support for children infected and affected by the disease.

"UNICEF is committed to transforming the lives of children affected by AIDS," says Mr. Fisher. "Around the world, we are helping women avoid passing HIV to their children. We are enabling young children, made extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by the loss of their parents, to receive an education. And, perhaps, most encouragingly of all, we are supporting young people in some of the most impassioned and dynamic activities I have ever witnessed in educating their peers about the life skills necessary to staying strong and healthy in the face of this scourge that is ravaging their generation. Indeed, these young people provide the greatest hope in changing the course of the AIDS pandemic for the future."

The Unite for Children. Unite Against AIDS campaign aims to raise Canadian funds for this work, while fostering corporate social responsibility, encouraging increased paediatric AIDS research and development, and advocating for an elevated commitment to children within the Canadian government's AIDS funding.

Some of the campaign initiatives planned for 2007 and 2008 include an interactive school education programme, public service ads, a half hour documentary film, an interactive Web site, various public and fundraising events.

Campaign Chair Alison Lawton has worked on HIV/AIDS initiatives in Canada for many years, including sitting on the board of the Positive Women's Network and PARK, and organizing in-home childcare for children living with AIDS. More recently focused on HIV/AIDS in developing countries, Ms. Lawton says, "the effects of AIDS on children in Africa are devastating". Lawton, who is also an independent documentary filmmaker and currently updating her latest film: Hope: In the Time of AIDS, describes the impact on children as being far and wide. "A generation of children and adolescents has never known a world free of HIV and AIDS."

HIV/AIDS Statistics:

- Daily, there are approximately 1,450 new HIV infections in children under the age of 15 due to mother-to-child transmission.
- Eleven children under 15 die of an AIDS-related illness every 15 minutes.
- More than 4,000 young people aged 15-24 are newly infected by HIV every day.

- Children under 15 account for 1 in 7 global AIDS-related deaths and 1 in 8 new global HIV infections.
- There are 15 million orphaned children because of HIV/AIDS, and more than 12 million are from sub-Saharan Africa alone.
- It is estimated that 40 per cent of all new HIV infections are among adolescent and young people in the 15-24 age group.

In 2006:

- 39.5 million people were living with HIV, of which 2.3 million were children under the age of 15.
- 4.3 million people were newly infected by HIV, of which 530,000 were children under the age of 15.
- 2.9 million people died of AIDS, of which 380,000 were children under the age of 15.

Despite the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on children, they are largely missing from government policies, programmes and reports, funding priorities, pharmaceutical priorities, private sector programmes, media coverage and the public consciousness.

"I know that we can mobilize Canadians to support programmes for children affected by AIDS and help move children to their rightful place on the AIDS agenda," says Ms. Lawton. "I have just returned from a trip to Africa and have seen the unquestionable return on investment in such programmes - not just for individual children, but for families, communities and nations."

UNICEF is the world's leader for children, working in 156 countries and territories to save, protect and enhance the lives of girls and boys. UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, promotes quality basic education, protects children from violence, exploitation and AIDS, and is the world's largest provider of vaccines for developing nations. A global leader in emergencies with six decades of on-the-ground experience, UNICEF saves and rebuilds children's lives in natural disasters and conflict. UNICEF is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from individuals, businesses, foundations, schools, associations and governments.