



Uniting the world against AIDS

HIV prevention wins gold with African athletes

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Young athletes from across the continent visited the AIDS awareness stand to learn more about HIV prevention tools and techniques.
Photo credit: UNAIDS

As the flags were hoisted, national anthems sung and medals presented, HIV prevention emerged as a new champion at the 2007 All Africa games held in Algeria in July.

While athletes from across the continent ran, jumped, threw and sprinted their way onto the medal winners podium, volunteers from Algerian NGO 'AIDS-Algerie' kicked off a 'Games' HIV prevention campaign for young people in all key competition and residential sites across the Algerian capital Algiers.

Young athletes were encouraged to visit special AIDS awareness stands, where they were able to find out AIDS-related information and learn more about HIV prevention tools and techniques. With special screening of HIV prevention

videos and distribution of condoms, the AIDS campaign reached out to some 25,000 young African athletes.

"The awareness raising teams were able to encourage real interest and participation from the young African sportsmen and women," said Professor Abdelkader Semid, President of the Medical Commission for the African Games organizing committee. "This opened people's eyes to the risks of HIV infection and the need for HIV prevention," he added.

Organized with the support of the Games' steering committee, UNFPA, UNAIDS Secretariat and the Global Fund, the campaign demonstrated how HIV prevention can be successfully integrated into sporting events.

"The global response to AIDS needs everyone to get involved – from all sectors of society. This huge event gave us excellent access to leaders among Algerian and African youth – we hope this will encourage them to carry on our association's mission to respond to AIDS," Mr Adel Zeddami, President of 'AIDS-Algerie'.

Athletes attending the awareness-raising stands underlined their enthusiasm at taking part in the activity and their wish to move forward the AIDS response.

"This is a great activity for people like us doing sports all around the world. It's a really special programme and I would like to see it replicated across the world so people can protect themselves better," said Candy, an athlete from Nigeria.

Ivorian Judo champion Camara Mangué agreed: "I would like to call for all generations to face up to AIDS – it's everybody's issue."

"The world must unite and fight AIDS," said Namibian boxer Tobias.

Following the success of the campaign, it is hoped that the HIV prevention campaign will become a regular feature of future Games and other sporting events on the continent.

"Sport is a force for change and involving young people in sports and HIV prevention campaigns can empower them to be strong and become leaders on both fronts," said UNAIDS Country Coordinator for Algeria Dr Samia Lounnas Belacel.



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Photo credit: UNAIDS

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