

Remarks delivered by Bilal Aurang Zeb Durrani:
UNICEF Country Representative, Timor-Leste
On the occasion of the Opening of T-20 CRICKET LEAGUE-2023 in Dili, 14 August
2023



Let me begin by thanking the Timor-Leste Cricket Federation for taking this initial step to bring cricket to the children of Timor-Leste. I also wish to highlight the befitting coincidence that the children and young people of Timor-Leste are taking part in this tournament, a few days after the global commemoration of International Youth Day, which was on Saturday 12th August.

Ladies and gentlemen – there are a few reasons why UNICEF has taken a keen interest in supporting the Timor-Leste Cricket Federation in this inaugural cricket tournament.

Firstly, sport is an important medium for inclusion and guaranteeing fundamental rights of children and adolescents. The right to play and to participate in leisure activities, is a basic children’s right, which is explicitly mentioned in article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).



As a key custodian of the CRC, UNICEF is therefore happy to support initiatives which bring sport and leisure within the reach of every child. I am pleased to note that children from different Municipalities (both boys and girls), are also here taking part in this tournament – this makes this tournament very inclusive in nature.

Secondly, one of the main programmatic focus areas for UNICEF, is health. Sport and physical activity are essential for improving child health and wellbeing, and

therefore become integral in supporting Timor-Leste’s health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

And the third point is that across the world, UNICEF regards sport as a wonderful tool to attract, mobilise, inspire, and positively engage children, adolescents and young people.

We are aware that without appropriate alternatives, mainly children fall prey substance abuse, violence, and other risk-taking behaviours.



Sporting activities such as cricket, therefore, provide our children and young people with a safe and secure environment, which can protect them activities which are detrimental to their physical and mental health.



You might be aware that UNICEF has a long-standing partnership with International Cricket Council, mainly to promote girls participation in cricket. Learning from the success of this engagement, UNICEF in Timor-Leste looks forward to exploring how children in Timor-Leste can also benefit from such a partnership.

Through the beautiful game of cricket, we can contribute to building an inclusive and peaceful society, giving children and young people every opportunity to survive, grow, and develop.



Once again, thank you to the federation for organizing this league and I wish all the participants a fun filled and fulfilling tournament.

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