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Tomorrow's future

At 23, Swiss tennis star **Roger Federer** is at the top of his game. And when he's not dominating the competition, Federer promotes sport and development through the Roger Federer Foundation. He told TUNZA all about it.

You helped launch the International Year for Sport and Physical Education 2005. In what ways do you think sport can improve the lives of communities and help children living in poverty, disease and conflict?

I am convinced that sport is a perfect way to learn about achieving a common purpose, how to do things together and in particular how to be fair to each other. I strongly believe that sport keeps you focused and disciplined, you learn to mix with different personalities and nationalities all over the world. For sure, sport improves understanding for each other.

You established the Roger Federer Foundation to 'promote sport and support projects for children in need'. How does the Foundation achieve this dual aim?

My personal objective is to share the good luck I have experienced and make my small contribution towards a better world. The Foundation enables me to both support young sportspeople and help children in need. I want to be close to any project we have so the

sports support is mainly focused on tennis and the charity activities on South Africa, where my mother grew up. Here we work with our partners, IMBEWU Community Volunteers, a local NGO, to improve the lives of young people in the townships of Port Elizabeth. Nine youth volunteers run the NGO's Swiss arm, raising funds to sponsor schooling and two meals a day for needy pupils – and a playroom in Dora Nginza Hospital for HIV-positive and severely burnt children.

How did you feel when you saw the impact of activities to help children in the townships on your visit earlier this year?

The visit to New Brighton enabled me to understand the situation in the township as well as to see what impact IMBEWU has on the community. It was a very emotional visit, to witness children suffering in hospital as well as to see the housing facilities the children come from. I was surprised how friendly and relaxed the people were, despite their poverty.

How do you balance your sporting and charitable activities, and what have you learned from pursuing both?

Being the No. 1 tennis player in the world, I am aware that I am a role model for youth. I have to focus on tennis at the moment, but I try to find time to share my good fortune with others. I initiated an exhibition match in Indian Wells, United States, to respond to the tsunami catastrophe. There are always different ways to help. Presently time is a problem, but we try to find a good balance and I have a team that supports me.

How can young people follow in your footsteps and make a difference to the world around them?

I believe that if you set a good example by your deeds, other people strive to become like you. We need to encourage education – in this way we can also achieve a better world for all the young people who are tomorrow's future.

