

FOOTBALL

Ronaldo's gift to Kibera



From left to right: George Hirsch, a director of the New York Marathon, world half marathon champion and record holder Lornah Kiplagat, Shoe4Africa charity founder Toby Tanser and American television drama series ER star Anthony Edwards in Nairobi on Thursday. Photo/CHRIS OMOLLO

By ELIAS MAKORIPosted Wednesday, December 10 2008 at 19:55

Manchester United will be at White Hart Lane this weekend away to a rebuilding Tottenham Hotspur, but the English Premier League club's top striker and World Footballer of the Year probable, Cristiano Ronaldo, will have one eye on the unlikeliest of places - Nairobi's Kibera slums.

Ronaldo is among a group of leading sports and showbiz celebrities who have united to organise a charity race and exhibition football match in Kibera with a view to raising funds to build a Sh1 billion children's hospital in Eldoret.

Operating under the Shoe4Africa charity's umbrella, the Portuguese football star, American television drama series, *ER*, actor Anthony Edwards (Dr Mark Greene) and world half marathon champion and world record holder Lornah Kiplagat, are helping raise funds to build the 250-bed hospital which will be the largest children's hospital in Africa.

Autographed T-shirt

Ronaldo is away on the tight Manchester United schedule - that included last night's Uefa Champions League match against Denmark's Aalborg and a trip to Japan for the World Club Cup from Monday.

Edwards and Kiplagat are already in Nairobi and on Wednesday they launched Saturday's programme that will feature a five-kilometre women's only run and a match between celebrities and a Kibera women's football team at the Kibera Primary School.

Ronaldo has sent an autographed Manchester United shirt to be handed over to Prime Minister Raila Odinga in whose Langata constituency Kibera falls.

Director of NY marathon

Raila is expected to turn out for the Shoe4Africa celebrities at the match along with Boston Marathon champion Robert "Mwafrika" Cheruiyot, London Marathon champion Martin Lel, Kiplagat, Golden Globe Award winner Edwards and George Hirsch, director of the New York marathon, among others.

DJ Moz, founder of the K-Krew and Kenya's premier gospel DJ, will provide live music entertainment on Saturday at the Kibera Primary School from 8.30 am.

The charity event will also feature information sessions on HIV/Aids awareness.

"Running is the most celebrated sport in Africa and Kenya is known for producing some of the world's top runners, yet there is a lack of knowledge and information surrounding HIV/Aids," said Toby Tanser, former elite runner and founder of Shoe4Africa, on Wednesday.

"With this race, we hope to empower women through sports and education while promoting Aids awareness among the community and bringing attention to this national health epidemic."

"It's great to be associated with this project and we look forward to the building of the hospital and many more projects to come in Kenya," Edwards said at Wednesday's press conference in Nairobi.

Kiplagat, who retained her world half marathon title in Rio de Janeiro in October, said she had scaled down her running to help the Shoe4Africa project.

"Winning the world cross country championship in Mombasa was the climax of my cross country career and three world half marathon titles are good enough. "I now want to do more in the marathon and the Shoe4Africa projects," said the Kenya-born Dutchwoman.