

Saturday, 13 December 2008

Shoe4Africa 4km, and star-studded charity football match takes place in Nairobi's slums

(<http://www.iaaf.org/mm/photo/competitions/competition/04/86/96/48696%5ffull-Ind.jpg>)

Shoe4Africa All Star team at the Kibera slums in Nairobi Saturday. Back Row l to r: Douglas Wakiihuri, Robert Cheruiyot, Martin Lel, Toby Tanser and Christopher Cheboiboch; Front Row, l to r: Elias Makori, Mathew Birir and Anthony Edwards (CHRIS OMOLLO (Daily Nation))

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Nairobi, Kenya - More than 3000 women congregated at the Old Kibera Primary School in Nairobi on Saturday (13) to participate in a 4km Shoe4Africa road race in remembrance of the post-election violence and turmoil which was so tragically visited on Kenya and its people early this year.

Nineteen-year-old Usilah Koech won the race in 15 minutes, 30 seconds, and said she was using the event to prepare for the Telekom Marathon, to be run on 20 December. Jackline Mukiti was the runner-up in 15:45, with the veteran Joyce Wangui, third in 15:50. The 35-year-old was 22nd at the Nairobi Stanchart Marathon in October.

Today's race was organised by Kenyan-born Dutch woman, Lornah Kiplagat, who is one of Shoe4Africa's ambassadors, and American author Toby Tanser, who is the founder of the Shoe4Africa Foundation, a US charity donating shoes to Africa.

Following the race a very special football match took place which drew together some of the all-time greats of Kenyan athletics.

Robert Cheruiyot, the four-time Boston Marathon champion, Martin Lel, the three-time London Marathon winner, along with Mathew Birir, the 1992 Olympic Steeplechase champion joined with other names such as 1987 World Marathon champion, Douglas Wakiihuri, former Boston runner-up Christopher Cheboiboch, and American television drama series, ER, actor Anthony Edwards (Dr Mark Greene) for the football match against a women's team from Kibera, the slum worst hit by Kenya's early year post election violence.

Athletics Kenya chairman and IAAF Council Member Isaiah Kiplagat and 2007 Mombasa World Cross Country Championships chief executive officer Isaac Kalua were among the chief guests at the gathering. Kalua had spent a sleepless night on Friday helping cut through red tape that would have delayed the arrival of the consignment of 5000 shoes meant for Kenya's poor.

On the sidelines of the match along with Lornah Kiplagat, three-times World Half marathon champion and World record holder, was former Kenyan sprinter Rose Tata Muya, and former World marathon record holder Paul Tergat.

"It's nice being able to share with them (slum people) their experiences. In the few hours I have been here, I have learnt their language and we are here to show them that we too care. We need to cultivate a spirit of co-operation and make them realise that they too are still important in the society," said Lornah Kiplagat.

"We also came from poor backgrounds and developed under harsh conditions yet we have defied the odds to do well in sports. It is never too late and each one of the Kibera youths can surely make it to the top," commented Tergat.

"Playing football with the people of Kibera is something that I believe will help them look at life differently. Their poor position notwithstanding, they can now focus ahead with hope," said Cheruiyot.

Goalkeeper Birir also had a good day, "I have learnt a lot today and I'm happy to be associated with the Shoe4Africa Foundation and the organization of today's great day," Birir said. "We need to have more of these charity events in Kenya, especially in the off-season to help support the needy in Kenya and in Africa."

Omulo Okoth and Elias Makori for the IAAF

Shoe4Africa 4km

RESULTS

1. Usilah Koech 15:30.
2. Jackline Mukiti 15:45.
3. Joyce Wangui 15:50.
4. Idah Gacheri 15:59.
5. Janice Kageni 16:12.
6. Silvia Kiberenge 16:22.
7. Virginia Ndirangu 16:35
8. Alice Nyokabi 17:20.
9. Catherine Onyango 17:26
10. Purity Mugo 18:30.