



Athletes running a past Shoe4Africa race in Eldoret. PHOTO: P. OCHIENG/STANDARD

# RUNNING FOR HEALTH

## Shoe4Africa ready to launch a multi million shilling children hospital in Eldoret

By JONATHAN KOMEN

Eldoret Town comes alive when Shoe4Africa lays ground for a multi-million shilling public children hospital on the New Year's Eve.

The project, which will be their second public children's hospital in Sub-Sahara Africa after the first one in South Africa, has attracted support from sports celebrities.

They include academies best actress winner Natalie Portman, Fifa's World Player

Cristiano Ronaldo and international film star Anthony Edwards, who have contributed largely towards the project.

Hugh Jackman, the 2011 New York Half Marathon actor, has raced in the Shoe4Africa charity race.

Also in the mix are an armada of Olympic and World Champions, among them Kenya's late Sammy Wanjiru, who became an ambassador in the 2007 Shoe4Africa race.

Consequently, the annual Shoe4Africa 5km run in Iten,

would shift to Eldoret with the ground breaking ceremony of the facility to be held at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital grounds.

Toby Tanser, the Shoe4Africa director and former athlete, said it will be a milestone to obscure charity as they begin the project.

"Currently for a population of 850-million people, Sub-Saharan Africa has only one dedicated public children's hospital; 5,000 km away in Cape Town, South Africa.

"With our small obscure charity, we will start our number two; breaking ground on a vacant lot in the grounds of the Moi Referral Teaching Hospital," Tanser told *Fever-Pitch* by telephone yesterday.

Tanser founded Shoe4Africa back in 1995 when giving away one pair of

running shoes to an aspiring runner.

He never dreamed that a trip to Kenya would take him on the path to building this children's hospital. And for him, the journey has been both rewarding but rough.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

Tanser, an author and a director at the New York Marathon, said: "Where I grew up, every child had access to children's public health.

"I lived in a hospital for a couple of months after smashing multiple bones in my right arm; it was like being in a hotel."

He said the challenges makes the ground breaking ceremony makes the landmark project a unique.

"It might not have been initiated had it not been for

the warm hospitality rural nyans I offered to them a decade ago, and most importantly it is a journey emboldening the spirit that one can make a difference in the world," said Tanser.

The race has in the past attracted interest from Kenyan Olympic and world champions. Douglas Wakiihuri, Luke Kibet, two world marathon champions, led hundreds of children in a peace race.

Kenya's first ever Olympic medalist, Wilson Kiprui has also attended of the competitions.

Shoe4Africa has funded the building of public schools that have been built to honor the athletes Martin Lel and Jethro Jepkosgei in Nandi, Sally Kipyego and Moses tanui in Marakwet.