

RONALDO



UNDP GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

HIV/AIDS Does Not Recognize Borders

Being poor is hard enough, but poverty added to a deadly disease is nothing short of a disaster for families and whole communities.

As UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador to combat poverty, I am deeply aware of the link between poverty and AIDS. Poor people suffer more from disease, and HIV/AIDS creates more poverty.

Being poor is hard enough, but poverty added to a deadly disease is nothing short of a disaster for families and whole communities. Since HIV/AIDS is found especially among the youngest and most active, the more it spreads, the more people in the prime of life must stop working and support those who depend on them. The results are devastating for low-income families. HIV/AIDS is becoming a major development problem affecting all sectors of society and, even worse, it is wiping out the progress made thus far.

While it has been possible to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS in rich countries through prevention campaigns and investment in research and treatment, things have been very different in many poor countries. In the poorest countries, many have no access to information that could prevent infection, and those who are infected do not have the drugs that could give them a few more precious years to live.

Many of those afflicted are found in the most impoverished areas and among the most vulnerable groups. Efforts to raise awareness and help with prevention must be concentrated in the weakest sectors.

WORLD AIDS CAMPAIGN 2001


I care... do you?

You cannot tell just by looking at someone that they are infected with HIV. Be safe – wear a condom.

Ronaldo
UNDP Goodwill Ambassador
Special Representative for the World AIDS Campaign

It is not easy to speak about AIDS if nobody listens to you. I like to listen.

Luca, volunteer for Arché
Italian AIDS NGO



UNAIDS
UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS
www.unaids.org

Photo: UNAIDS/Chris Schilberger

In my native Brazil, intensive HIV/AIDS education and prevention campaigns have demonstrated that it is possible to reduce the intensity of the epidemic and keep it from spreading unchecked. Another essential part of the programme implemented in Brazil has been the determined approach of the government to promote the production of drugs that help to combat the effects of the disease.

The active participation of the government and the allocation of reasonable budgets to prevent and combat the illness are bearing fruit. Undoubtedly, Brazil still has much to do, but the country

has been able to turn a national disaster into a public health problem. My country can serve as an example to other nations on the road to development.

The solution has to do with the assistance given by rich countries to the poorest countries and with national government policies. The solution also lies in information and mobilization on the issue, and those are areas where I have a major responsibility.

As a soccer player, I have a duty to tell my fans to protect themselves. As a young person, I can speak on the issue to my generation. As a father, it is my duty to be prepared to talk about AIDS with my children. Talking about

HIV/AIDS with our children will involve talking about issues concerning sexuality and drugs. We should be prepared to face those issues in accordance with our own beliefs and values, in terms appropriate to every age because, unfortunately, AIDS is part of our world and the world of our children.

It is also important to teach the younger generation that all who live with HIV/AIDS must receive the same treatment, no matter what their origins, and that each infected person has the right to live free of discrimination. Our children will be better equipped to face the disease and will feel freer to talk and learn about it.

Finally, it is my duty as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador to make an urgent appeal to the rich countries and private companies to mobilize even more against HIV/AIDS in the poorest countries. The developed countries must give greater support to the fight against poverty and its worst consequences. As far as HIV/AIDS is concerned, the rich countries must understand that it is not enough to contain the epidemic at home. Urgent action is needed worldwide for two reasons: out of solidarity, and because—let's not fool ourselves—HIV/AIDS does not recognize borders. ■

Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo has been UNDP Goodwill Ambassador since February 2000.