

05.07.16 - Meet the UN's Goodwill Football Ambassadors!



The SDGs football! Photo: Twitter.

As we are in the middle of the Euro 2016 football championship, it seems like the perfect opportunity to meet some of the United Nation's various Goodwill Ambassadors involved in the beautiful game. Working with various agencies of the UN, these Goodwill Ambassadors promote the UN's message to a wide audience by virtue of their popularity and notability.

Today we will look at four of these Goodwill Ambassadors and some of their work!

Zinédine Zidane



Zidane in Mali promoting anti-poverty projects. Photo: UNDP.

French football star Zinédine Zidane, born in 1972, earned his reputation as one of the world's best players with his incomparable, often impossible-looking displays of technique and control — but there are things that he would not "give up for any amount of fame or success."

Zidane was appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador with the United Nations Development Programme in 2001. Since then Zidane has worked a lot on, often with other football stars, anti-poverty measures.

Michael Ballack



Michael Ballack, UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador. Photo: UNAIDS.

Internationally acclaimed footballer Michael Ballack was Captain of the German National Team and played for Bayer Leverkusen in the German league. Since 2006, Ballack has worked with UNAIDS in his capacity as a Goodwill Ambassador. As an internationally recognised and respected football player, Michael has acted as a role model for many young people.

Since 2013, Ballack has been engaged in the Health 4 Men initiative in South Africa. Specifically targeting the gay male community in South Africa, a group especially at risk of transmitting AIDS/HIV, Ballack stated: *"I think it is so important that we give attention to HIV because it is everybody's business"*.¹

South Africa has the largest HIV epidemic in the world with an estimated 5.6 million people living with HIV. During the past few years the country has made remarkable progress in reversing the course of the AIDS epidemic. Now, the country has the largest HIV treatment programme in the world with 1.9 million people living with HIV on antiretroviral therapy.

"I have really learnt a lot during this trip and I look forward to continuing to work with UNAIDS on stopping the spread of HIV," said Mr. Ballack.

Lionel Messi



Lionel Messi in his capacity as ambassador. Photo: UNICEF.

Named the FIFA World Player of the Year in 2009 and winner of three Golden Ball awards for the best European footballer of the year, Mr. Messi was appointed UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in March 2010. Since then, he has been a strong advocate for some of the world's most vulnerable children and has visited Argentina, Costa Rica and Haiti to help raise awareness and support for the work of UNICEF and its partners.

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Since the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, Messi has also acted

as a Sustainable Development Goal Advocate. These advocates are eminent persons who assist Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his promotion of the SDGs. Aiming to increase the momentum and commitment of countries to the SDGs, the advocates raise awareness of the SDGs all over the world and to engage new stakeholders to implement the goals.

David Beckham



David Beckham with UNICEF. Photo: UNICEF

David Beckham, the British born soccer star, is admired by legions of fans around the world for his skilful moves and powerful kicks on the field. On 10 January 2005, the former England captain was appointed UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador with a special focus on UNICEF's Sports for Development programme.

In 2015, Mr. Beckham (pictured above) launched the Assembly of Youth project. This installation at the UN Headquarters in New York City harnesses new social media technology delivers the messages of children from all around the world directly to world leaders. The launch of this installation was in preparation for the rollout of the Sustainable Development Goals, of which Mr. Beckham will continue to communicate in his capacity as a Goodwill Ambassador.