
Beyonce to lead anti-poverty concert

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Other performers at the September 26 show in Central Park will include Coldplay, whose frontman Chris Martin has signed on to a long-term role in arranging the festival, and English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran, who previously announced his participation.

Launched in 2012, the annual concert coinciding with the UN General Assembly is free for fans who commit to actions aimed at eradicating extreme poverty.

Beyonce will be playing one of only two announced shows since the pop superstar ended a world tour last year.

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This year's festival "is especially rewarding as we all join focuses and utilize our talents for one goal: to end extreme poverty globally," Beyonce said in a statement released Thursday.

The festival, which in the past has been broadcast only in the United States by MSNBC, will aim to reach a worldwide audience through a YouTube livestream, among other broadcast plans.

Beyonce was a surprise performer at last year's festival during a set by her husband, rapper Jay Z. Another unexpected guest was Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who vowed to improve sanitation for his nation's poorest.

Leaders of the Global Poverty Project, which spearheads the event, recently traveled to India to meet Modi and discuss collaboration with Indian stars, said Hugh Evans, its chief executive.



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The concert will come a day after the United Nations is expected to announce new targets at the end of a 15-year global push against poverty known as the Millennium Development Goals.

"The stakes are a lot higher than any previous year," Evans told AFP.

"There is a huge focus this year on ensuring these new goals are not just a nice wish list for development but are fully financed, and that we actually have the means to ensure that these goals are achieved," he said.

One goal of the campaign is to ensure that most assistance goes to the world's poorest. Only 32 percent of US foreign aid goes to least developed countries, according to a recent study.

The festival will also seek firm commitments on funding for sanitation, food security and education.

Teenage Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in 2012 for her support of education for girls in Pakistan, on Tuesday urged world leaders to give all children access to 12 years of free education.

The cost, she told a forum in Oslo, would be \$39 billion -- which she described as the equivalent of eight days of global military spending.

The United Nations points to substantial progress in the 15 years since establishing the Millennium Development Goals.

Some 836 million people live in extreme poverty, down from 1.9 billion in 1990, and tens of millions of lives have been saved through disease prevention efforts, according to a UN progress report.

But it pointed to persistent problems, including out-of-school children, gender disparities and rising water scarcities which affect 40 percent of the world's people.

The concert aims to put development high on the agenda with young people, at a time of a myriad global crises from Syria to Ukraine and economic uncertainties in China and the eurozone.

Tickets for the concert will be earned by actions against poverty that include calling government offices and, for the first time this year, volunteering.

The festival has generated 2.3 million such actions since 2012, organizers said.
