

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Who instituted World Humanitarian Day?

A. In December 2008, the General Assembly determined that World Humanitarian Day should be marked on 19 August every year to “contribute to increasing public awareness about humanitarian work and the importance of international cooperation, and to commemorate all humanitarian and United Nations and associated personnel who have worked in the promotion of the humanitarian cause, and those who have lost their lives in the course of duty.”

Q. 19 August is the same day as the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad in 2003. Twenty-two people lost their lives, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Is this day held to commemorate that?

A. World Humanitarian Day was designated in memory of those who died in the bombing in 2003, but also in memory of the many aid workers who have lost their lives in the humanitarian cause. The day is also held to emphasize current humanitarian needs and challenges worldwide, such as threats to humanitarian aid workers by conflicting parties, challenges in reaching the people we try to assist, and the increasing complexity of the humanitarian environment due to food price shocks, global market turbulence, water shortages and climate change. Particular focus will be placed on the people on whose behalf we work.

Q. Is World Humanitarian Day about the humanitarian aid workers themselves, or the humanitarian cause?

A. Both. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals agreed there would be three main areas of focus for this year’s commemoration of the day:

- To draw attention to humanitarian needs worldwide;
- To explain, in simple, visual terms what humanitarian aid work entails;
- To remember those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service.

Q. Who does the campaign target?

A. As stipulated by the General Assembly, the campaign’s target audience is the global general public.

Q. Does this campaign specify which people or organizations call themselves humanitarian aid workers?

No, quite the opposite. The point is to show that the aid sector is truly global and encompasses people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, working together under many different umbrellas but with a shared set of principles that guide their activities.

Q. How much aid money is the United Nations spending on this campaign?

A. None. The General Assembly instructed that World Humanitarian Day be marked “within existing resources”. This means that no additional staff or other items have been budgeted for the day.

Q. Why is there no World Humanitarian Day logo?

A. The day is not about individual agencies. It is about humanitarian aid work. Humanitarian organizations have agreed that this day is an opportunity to explain why and how we do the work we do, and to talk about the principles of humanitarianism and how they are reflected in our joint endeavours.

Q. What events are already planned?

A. In New York and Geneva, commemorative events are being planned. It is our hope that there will be many events around the world. Last year, the day was marked in 41 countries. We hope that many more Member States and humanitarian organizations will join us in commemorating this important day in 2010.

Some examples of events from World Humanitarian Day 2009:

- The European Commission used the day to focus attention on forgotten crises.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, commemorative events were held in Kinshasa, Bukava, Goma and Bunia.
- In Ethiopia, the World Humanitarian Day film played in the main square in Addis Ababa.
- An OpEd written by the Emergency Relief Coordinator appeared in 41 newspapers around the world.
- In Nepal, the Minister of Home Affairs presided over a ceremony to commemorate World Humanitarian Day.
- Events were also held in 38 other countries around the world.

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