



With you

News of the help that together we're bringing to refugees 2005 Issue 2



Inside:

- 📄 Digging deep to meet Chad's water challenge.
- 📄 Kenya – Together for Girls.
- 📄 Survivors of the Tsunami say “Thank You.”
- 📄 A Personal Message from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
- 📄 “Angel of Burundi” wins refugee award.

Without us, refugees can experience dangerous gaps in vital aid • With us, they can get the practical assistance and protection they so desperately need.

Refugees around the world...



Togo

More than 40,000 people fled their homes for neighbouring Ghana and Benin following the volatile presidential elections in April, leading the UN Refugee Agency to oversee an urgent and increasingly challenging emergency relief operation in both countries. Refugees are scattered across large areas, stretching our resources and delaying important work on shelter and sanitation in some areas. Despite these difficulties, we continue to help refugees in every way we can.

Uzbekistan

Thanks to the UN Refugee Agency, more than 400 Uzbek refugees were dramatically airlifted to temporary sanctuary in Romania in late July. They had previously been unsuccessful in seeking asylum in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan following political unrest in their homeland which had forced them to flee. The refugees, who relied on basic emergency relief items from us, await the outcome of negotiations with a number of governments, in their search for a safe place to resettle. Fears remain though over the safety of 15 Uzbek refugees detained by Kyrgyz authorities and threatened with deportation to Uzbekistan. Urgent talks continue to secure their safe passage to a neutral third country.

Central African Republic

Frightened people continue to flee fighting in the Central African Republic, crossing the border into Southern Chad where the UN Refugee Agency is already urgently relocating up to 10,000 refugees who are in danger of being cut off by heavy rains. Thanks to the generosity of donors, we will be able to carry on supplying essential relief like food, blankets and water buckets at the main camp in Amboko – where the refugees are being relocated. The camp already holds 20,000 people. More than 45,000 Central African refugees, many who fled their country following a coup in 2003, have already found refuge in Chad.

Why I help Refugees?

Ana Ferrero, Field Protection Officer, the UN Refugee Agency Branch Office, Colombia – originally from Zamora in Spain

Q. What do you do?

A. I help internally displaced people (IDPs) in the border areas of Colombia and work at improving the asylum process for Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees in neighbouring countries.

Q. Why do you do it?

A. It's very exciting and challenging. Colombia is experiencing the greatest humanitarian crisis in the Americas – official figures state that this armed conflict has displaced between 2.5 and 3 million people.

Q. What are the most pressing needs in your operation?

A. Over 10% of the world's internally displaced people are Colombian. In 2004, more than 20,000 Colombians sought asylum – and numbers are increasing, year on year. The most pressing requirement is to highlight IDP issues in the political agenda, so we can protect and assist those in need.

Q. What is the most challenging part of your work?

A. To strengthen the presence of state institutions and increase access to basic services for internally displaced people – and working in the field to aid and protect people in risk areas and identify gaps in assistance and need.

Q. What is the most rewarding part of your work?

A. Enabling refugees to enjoy the same human rights as you and me!

Digging deep to meet Chad's water challenge

In the hot, harsh desert of Eastern Chad, the UN Refugee Agency is working hard to supply nearly a quarter of a million Sudanese refugees with clean drinking water. But as natural sources dwindle, can the agency keep up with demand where water is extremely scarce?

Ask Abdou Mahaman Dango, a Water and Sanitation Officer with the UN Refugee Agency in Eastern Chad, what happens when people get badly dehydrated. You get a stark answer – he has seen it many times before. “They become weak, very tired and vulnerable to all kinds of illness,” he says. “They’ll drink any water they can get hold of – even dirty water – and many get diarrhea, which makes you lose more water. It can kill you.”

Approximately 215,000 Sudanese refugees are crowded into 12 camps scattered along the border with Sudan, seeking safety from violence in their homeland.

Supplying nearly a quarter of a million new arrivals with enough clean water to drink and wash in – and supply it fast – is a truly massive operation.

The UN Refugee Agency is doing all it can to find new sources of water to supply both refugees and local people. As water reserves run low, specialist partners are carrying out geological surveys, trying new methods for collecting water – even using satellite remote-sensing technology to locate underground sources.

But it may not be enough. The



program urgently needs support to carry on meeting the vital water challenge.

“If we had the resources, we could undertake major new water work,” concludes Abdou. “We could construct dams, water catchments schemes and build pipelines – to supply the camps even if they are some distance away from the water. If we are not able to do this, the limited supply we’re exploiting now will soon be depleted. Wells and boreholes will become dry – and the refugees will get less and less water. There could be a crisis,” he warns.



Kenya – Together for Girls

Barriers to girls’ education are being broken down in a comprehensive way. Not only are more girls being given the right facilities when they get to school – 57 new latrines for girls have recently been built, addressing a problem that was keeping many girls at home. The project is also taking the unusual step of using school sports like volleyball, netball and badminton to involve girls more deeply in school life when they get there. New classrooms, desks, textbooks and newly trained teachers – with more of each on the way – are further improving girls’ opportunities.

“Together for Girls” is making a real difference. The number of girls attending school has gone up significantly. And exam results have improved dramatically – Habibo was just one of many refugee girls at Dadaab to sit last year’s final high school exams and pass with marks good enough to get them into university.

“We are very happy with our students this year – especially the girls,” says Toshiro Odashima, head of the UN Refugee Agency office in Dadaab. “Girls normally encounter cultural difficulties such as early marriage, female circumcision and community apathy.” These are considerable concerns, indeed. But with your help, and our continuing efforts, “Together for Girls” is set to build on the outstanding success so far – providing confident, better educated young women who will have greater opportunity to rebuild lives and communities on their eventual return to Somalia.

“Together for Girls” tackles a serious problem at the camps in Dadaab, home to some 130,000 refugees who fled conflict in Somalia during the 1990s. Less than half of school-aged girls at the camps are enrolled in school – a situation seen across the developing world – making the progress of young women more exceptional still.

Habibo Bishar Mohamed, a 19-year-old girl, recently passed her certificate of secondary education, and now has the chance to go to university. Nothing too unusual about that, you might think. But there’s more. She passed it with one of the highest marks in the whole of Kenya’s vast North Eastern Province. And she lives in a refugee camp.

Habibo’s achievements are her own. But they would not have been possible without the kind of vision that drives “Together for Girls”, a pioneering schools project run by the UN Refugee Agency in three sprawling refugee camps in Dadaab district, 500 kms from Nairobi.



Help urgently needed to protect earthquake survivors

As the cataclysmic earthquake of October 8 swept across South Asia, millions were left destitute, injured and bereaved. In the worst-hit areas, up to 90% of towns and villages were wiped out. Temperatures plummet as winter closes in. Rescue attempts were hampered by blocked roads and continuing aftershocks – and countless victims of the devastation still urgently need help, if they are to survive this winter.

Measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale and followed by powerful aftershocks, the earthquake flattened everything in its wake. In Pakistan, the traditional stone and mud-sided buildings crumbled, leaving little hope of survivors. Those who did escape slept in the fields, too terrified to return to their homes. “The sheer scale of destruction was dumbfounding” said Indrika Ratwate, one of the UN Refugee Agency’s representatives in Pakistan.

The demand for aid was overwhelming. Tents and plastic sheeting, food, water, blankets, sanitation and medical supplies were urgently needed – as well as helicopters to transport them. Landslides and blocked roads hampered rescue efforts, putting those in remote areas increasingly at risk.

The UN Refugee Agency reacted instantly, releasing emergency supplies within hours of the disaster and distributing some 2,000 tonnes of aid by the end of the month. From the outset, our supporters rallied to raise desperately needed funds – saving the lives of countless men, women and children. But the sheer numbers affected mean we urgently

“We are extremely concerned about those who have been left with no shelter, no heat and none of the essentials required for daily subsistence. As well as the many Pakistani victims, they include Afghan refugees.” – Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

need more. All our stocks have been drained, which could have disastrous consequences: “Supplies need to be replenished quickly so the UN Refugee Agency can meet other emergency demands,” says

the UN Refugee Agency’s Chief spokesperson Ron Redmond. “This means additional funds are needed from donors.”

In the wake of the disaster, we helped set up camps for the homeless right across Pakistan and Kashmir – bringing hope to those who had lost everything. Mohammad Ashram, a teacher in the village of Muslimabad in Kashmir, lost four pupils – and his own beloved five-year-old daughter. “This is our last ray of hope,” he said of the Bassian camp, where he and his remaining family sought shelter. “I have nowhere to go to and am very grateful for this assistance.” But without his little girl he feels “totally lost.” Other parents were luckier.

Another father at the camp rescued his young daughter, Bibi Saima, from under a collapsed roof. It took five hours to dig her out, but despite his fears, little Bibi was one of the lucky ones.

Afghan refugees in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan were among the casualties. Driven from their homeland by conflict, these vulnerable people were left with nothing once again. They are still surviving in makeshift camps. But the camps are ill-equipped to withstand the long months of winter. Tents – particularly “winterized” ones remain a pressing need, if these beleaguered people are to survive this new crisis.

As time goes by, it is hard to impress upon people strongly enough the apocalyptic impact of this disaster. It is difficult to conceive a tragedy on such a scale. Although we have raised millions, we need many millions more –

simply to ensure that every man, woman and child affected receives the bare essentials to survive the winter. Now, more than ever, the survival of vulnerable people who have lived through this terrible earthquake depends on donations. We have faith that our supporters will help.

First Aid arrives in devastated village

Muzafarabad, October 12, 2005. A crowd of people gaze anxiously skywards as a plane comes in to land. As it touches down, they rush forward, desperate for food and help. Four days ago, their village was one of hundreds decimated by the catastrophic earthquake. In its wake, more

THE TERRIBLE COST OF THE SOUTH ASIA EARTHQUAKE

**70,000+ dead
75,000+ injured
3,000,000 estimated homeless**

DONATIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED TO SAVE LIVES.

than a hundred people in this close-knit community are dead, others are trapped in the ruins of houses flattened by the force of the quake. Mohammad Jamil is one of many trying to take wounded relatives onto the plane “No one has come until now,” he says as he moves forward, cradling his injured daughter in his arms.

Visit www.unhcr.ca/pakistan for more information and slide shows.

- ▶ **Tents urgently needed**
Millions have lost their homes in the disaster – providing tents is a priority if they are to survive the winter weather.
- ▶ **Basic Nylon Tent**
\$75 can provide a basic shelter from the elements for one family.
- ▶ **Family Ridge Cotton Canvas Tent**
\$165 can provide a waterproof, rot-proof family tent with pins, pegs, hammer and repair kit. Designed for use in emergencies.
- ▶ **Lightweight Emergency Tent**
\$240 can provide a newly-developed emergency tunnel tent made of polyester that will provide superior protection and allows for sheltered cooking.

Survivors of the Tsunami say “Thank You”

The Tsunami caused devastation in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, but, thanks to supporters like you, the UN Refugee Agency was able to react swiftly and effectively. We normally focus on the effects of conflict, rather than natural disaster – but in view of the terrible destruction and our on-the-ground presence – we mobilised our emergency forces and did all we could to help.

In the Jaffna district of Sri Lanka, Bernard Mondraj and his family survived the Tsunami, but lost their house, boat and nets. He just wants to get back to normal life now and hopes to get a new boat soon: “I want to go back to the sea so I can support my family” he told us. Bernard’s family is living in Manatkadu camp. “UNHCR made these shelters early on” he told us, “and we are very happy with

them. Now we want to return to our village to build our permanent homes again... we are hopeful we can rebuild our lives.”

Your donations allowed us to help more than 100,000 people like Bernard in Sri Lanka, providing US\$ 1.3 million of relief items and building 810 temporary shelters. We have helped people rebuild their livelihoods by providing nets and boats for fishermen, as well as supporting the Government in coordinating shelter and helping the Census Bureau to list the missing, dead and injured, and record loss and damage.

In Indonesia, we assisted approximately 127,000 people, deployed emergency staff and technical experts, and airlifted more than 400 metric tonnes of relief items within just five days.



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Your donations helped us to provide families with emergency shelter, while we worked with local people to construct and repair homes and community buildings. By coordinating the specific skills of other organisations, we are continuing to ensure their resources and expertise are used to maximum effect. *So, even in the wake of one of the world’s worst disasters, you have helped us reignite hope for the future.*

About the UN Refugee Agency:

- 📌 We are currently helping refugees and displaced people in 116 countries.
- 📌 We have 6,235 staff – one staffer for every 3,300 people we help.
- 📌 We have 80% of our staff in the field helping refugees in emergencies, living in camps, and returning home.
- 📌 We are working with more than 500 specialist partners to deliver the all-round assistance refugees need.
- 📌 Last year, it cost us about \$75 to provide for the needs of each person in our care.

A Personal Message from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees – Antonio Guterres

Mr. António Guterres joined the UN Refugee Agency as High Commissioner on 15 June 2005, succeeding Mr. Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands. A former Prime Minister of Portugal, Mr. Guterres was elected by the UN General Assembly to a five-year term and is UNHCR's 10th High Commissioner



Dear Friends,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support to our agency and the refugees we serve. Their needs are many, but every day we see the effect our work is having. Whether it is providing emergency assistance to people fleeing the fighting in Darfur, helping families to rebuild homes in Afghanistan, or increasing the numbers of refugee girls in school, this work would not be possible without the support of generous individuals like you.

I take up the leadership of the UN Refugee Agency

at a time when the right of refugees to seek asylum is still very much at risk. I believe that we have a crucial role to play in today's humanitarian world, and this conviction makes me very enthusiastic about leading this organisation and its dedicated staff through these challenging times. I am honoured to know that we have your support and that many people are willing to stand alongside us and are committed to making a difference in the lives of refugees. I urge you to stay involved and join our effort to bring hope to those in need.

Thank you.

Critical and popular acclaim as "Voices for Darfur" DVD is released



An impressive list of artists – including Franz Ferdinand, David Gray, Mick Hucknall, Chrissie Hynde and Sade – joined the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at London's Royal Albert Hall to raise funds for the victims of conflict in Darfur. The enthusiasm and commitment of performers were reflected in the words of Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) who said: "I'm very happy and honoured to be part of any cause that hopes to bring about a bit of good in this world, which is full of conflict and

darkness – most of which is caused by man himself. The greatest victims are the children."

Now people across the globe can share in that magical night, with the release of a DVD – described by *Musicweek* as "an incredibly worthy purchase... excellent performances from a stellar cast". All proceeds from the sale of the DVD will go to support the UN Refugee Agency's work in Darfur and Chad.

Contact withyou@unhcr.ca for ordering information.



“Angel of Burundi” wins refugee award

Marguerite Barankitse, known to many as the “Angel of Burundi” for her tireless work on behalf of children affected by war, poverty and disease, received the 2005 Nansen Refugee Award at a ceremony in Brussels on June 23rd.

Accepting the Nansen medal from HRH Princess Mathilde of Belgium and UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Wendy Chamberlin, Barankitse said her work was inspired by one single goal: peace. “Accept your fellow man, sit down together, make this world a world of brothers and sisters,” she said.

Barankitse, a Burundian Tutsi, was spurred to action in October 1993 when civil war broke out in Burundi. She had already adopted seven Hutu and Tutsi children. When all of them survived the massacres, she decided to devote herself to saving the lives of other children.

She has since opened three centres for traumatized and orphaned children and has assisted over 10,000 children. The Deputy High Commissioner applauded Barankitse’s contribution to building a more peaceful world by teaching children of all ethnic origins that co-existence is possible. “Throughout her work with her organisation, Maison Shalom, Marguerite Barankitse sends a message of hope for the future,” said Chamberlin.

The medal, named after the first High Commissioner for Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, is awarded every year. A prize of US\$100,000 is given in addition to the award to go towards Barankitse’s projects to help children.

Ways to give

Join our Emergency Response Team (ERT)

Our Emergency Response Team (ERT) is trained to react instantly to any refugee crisis. Often the first on the scene, the team organises vital basic help for people forced to flee their homes. From delivering tents and arranging healthcare, to purchasing trucks to transport water and distributing food to the hungry, the ERT needs to get help to those who need it – fast.

By supporting the team with a monthly gift, you can help provide the steady, reliable income that enables them to prepare for emergencies. In return, you’ll receive an exclusive membership card and inside briefings and news on the team’s lifesaving work in the field.

In one month alone, your \$25 gift could provide 7 children left out in the cold by the earthquake with warm blankets. Another, it could pay for enough soap for 12 refugee families to keep infections at bay. Another month, your donation could enable 25 boys and girls from Darfur who were forced into Chad to attend primary school for a year...

You choose how much you wish to donate each month. It’s up to you whether to give through your chequing account or credit card. You even have the option of changing the size of your gift or cancelling at any time.

To join the Emergency Response Team or for more information, call 1-877-232-0909 or visit www.unhcr.ca/ERT

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