

17 June 2005

World Refugee Day Monday 20 June

In celebration of World Refugee Day, the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, this year for the very first time launches a regional fundraising campaign in cooperation with different religious societies in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

This year, 2005, is a pilot year, but the vision is to bring all religious societies in the Nordic and Baltic region together every year on World Refugee Day around a fundraising campaign in support of the united international work for the world's refugees.

Each society will during World Refugee Day and week take their own diverse information and fundraising initiatives.

This year, in Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and Lithuania, religious communities have chosen to donate their church collect for the whole of June, to send out appeal letters to the business sector within their community, to give a financial donation or to encourage their members to support UNHCR directly through its bank account.

The funds raised on World Refugee Day will this year go towards the education of Somali refugee and returnee children, with a particular focus on girls who have grown up in refugee camps in Dadaab in Kenya.

Dansk Missionråd, Det Islamiske Trossamfund and Det Mosaiske Troessamfund in Denmark, Islamic Relief in Sweden and the Reformerte kirke in Fredericia participate in the fundraising campaign from the first year. The same goes for the Catholic, Lutheran and Muslim societies in Lithuania as well as the Lutheran church in Latvia and Caritas-Latvia.

World Refugee Day has been celebrated since 2001 with information and fundraising initiatives all over the world. On World Refugee Day, the Nansen Refugee Award is given to individuals or organisations for an exceptional contribution to the refugee cause.

This year, 2005, the Nansen Refugee Award will go to "the angel of Burundi"- Marguerite Barankitse, humanitarian worker and director of the Maison Shalom, in recognition of her work with over 10 000 children whose lives have been devastated by war and conflicts in the area around the big lakes in Africa.

The award ceremony will be held in Brussels on 22 June.

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Only two per cent of UNHCR's budget comes from the UN. The remaining 98 percent UNHCR has to raise itself in the form of voluntary contributions.

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