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Hundreds of millions of people reached in UN campaign for World Humanitarian Day



Beyoncé films Humanitarian Day video at the United Nations. UN Photo/Cliff Watts

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A global United Nations campaign to highlight the impact that humanitarian acts, however big or small, can have on the world has been heralded as a success by its organizers, with more than one billion messages of hope encouraging people to do something good for someone else shared, via social media, on World Humanitarian Day.

“There are seven billion people in the world and we reached hundreds of millions of them with our message. People really care,” the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs,

Valerie Amos, said in a news release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), which she also heads.

For this year's observance of the Day, which falls on 19 August, the UN launched a campaign, entitled 'I Was Here,' aimed at engaging one billion people through social media so they can pledge a humanitarian action, and share their individual actions with others through an interactive website, www.whd-iwashere.org. On the morning of Sunday, 19 August, more than one billion messages were shared at the same time.

Organized by OCHA and launched on 2 August, the campaign received the support of US performing artist Beyoncé Knowles, who, along with songwriter Diane Warren, donated the song 'I Was Here' to the campaign. Her contribution also included filming a video for the song at the General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York.

“Thanks to the amazing work of Beyoncé and our partners, we now have a global commitment to humanitarian action. The message of people helping people is universal,” Ms. Amos said. “Making your mark and saying 'I Was Here' resonates powerfully with people all over the world.”

According to OCHA, the campaign numbers soared following the release of the 'I Was Here' music video on 18 August. The music video's release included displays on big screens in the cities of Dubai, Geneva, Addis Ababa, as well as in New York City's Times Square, among other locales.

“I feel like we all want to know that our life meant something and that we did something for someone else. That we spread positivity no matter how big or how small,” Beyoncé had said in the lead up to the Day.

The General Assembly proclaimed 19 August as World Humanitarian Day in 2008 to commemorate the 2003 Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad, Iraq, which claimed the lives of 22 UN staff members, including the world body's top envoy to the Middle Eastern country, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and wounded more than 150 people.

The Day aims to honour those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service and those who continue to bring assistance and relief to millions, in addition to drawing attention to humanitarian needs worldwide and the importance of international cooperation in meeting those needs.

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