


Coming back to life

If you were to walk around the small dusty town of Dungu or surrounding villages, you would most likely encounter Sister Angélique Namaika and some of the hundreds of girls she has helped in the past five years in this poverty-stricken and unstable corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The inspirational Roman Catholic nun regards them as her daughters, whose broken lives she has helped to rebuild.



A young woman, former victim of LRA violence, helped by Sister Angélique.



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– *Sister Angélique Namaika*

For her vital work helping the most vulnerable, the displaced and the survivors of abductions by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Orientale Province, UNHCR has honoured Sister Angélique with its prestigious Nansen Refugee Award.

It is recognition that is applauded by the approximately 2,000 women and girls she has helped selflessly over the years in north-eastern DRC. Part of the bond she has with many of these girls is their shared experience of forced displacement. In 2009, she herself was obliged to leave with many others when the LRA attacked Dungu.

Like others captured by the LRA, young and old, she says it was a very difficult time. But alongside her admiration for the resilience and courage of the survivors she met, this traumatic experience has reinforced Sister Angélique's determination to do more.

Since 2008, Sister Angélique has been helping the most vulnerable women through her humanitarian organization, the Centre for Reintegration and Development. Many have been abducted and physically or sexually assaulted, including being raped. They find it difficult to reintegrate because of the stigma.





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Sister Angélique Namaika assists IDP women at the *Maison de la Femme* in Dungu, DRC. Cooking and sewing are two of several income-generating skills that Sister Angélique teaches women in order to help them to become financially self-sufficient.



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“SISTER ANGÉLIQUE HAS PROVEN THAT EVEN ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF FAMILIES TORN APART BY WAR. SHE IS A TRUE HUMANITARIAN HEROINE”

–António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

- ● ● Sister Angélique works to help restore their self-esteem and will to live by teaching them a trade, helping them become literate, finding them employment, offering them shelter and showing them that someone cares.

Rose* was a child of 14 when she was taken and held for almost two years as a captive of the LRA. When Sister Angélique met her, she had just been rescued by the Ugandan army. Still traumatized and suffering from a sexually transmitted disease, she had come to Dungu with a baby to find her mother, but the woman rejected Rose and accused her of being part of the LRA. With nowhere to go, she was planning to return to the bush. She had no means to survive other than selling charcoal. That was not all: her child was sick, but Rose could not afford to take him to hospital.

So Sister Angélique took Rose under her wing and after giving her food, shelter and care, taught her how to bake and sew. “After two days, she started baking and selling mandazis (donuts),” the nun recalls. “Today she sells them in the market and makes clothes for women and children. Back then, she

dreamed of owning a sewing machine – she has one today. Her two-year-old son is in good health and she has been reconciled with her mother.”

She goes on: “I have always helped women and girls, even before I came to Dungu. I am convinced that all women should have an education Women need to have the ability to earn money, and that’s why I started teaching them skills such as sewing, baking and cooking.”

Sister Angélique insists that she does not simply feed these young women; she helps them to learn a trade so that they are able to have an income, care for their families and send their children to school. She also teaches women to read and write and to be able to speak in public.

Now that Sister Angélique has won the Nansen Refugee Award, and international recognition, she will continue to help more women and girls who have survived abduction, abuse and sexual and gender-based violence, amidst the atrocities of war and conflict, to come back to life. ■

*Name changed for protection reasons



SGBV – a humanitarian challenge

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most widespread protection risks faced by people of concern, regardless of their origin, cultural background or their gender. In 2012 alone, UNHCR and its partners reported nearly 12,000 incidents of SGBV against men, women, girls and boys – but it is believed that the true number is much higher.

There are several reasons for the dearth of accurate information on SGBV in humanitarian settings. Measurement is often based on self-reported incidents by women, men, girls and boys, who may be reluctant to disclose this type of information, even in a safe setting for reporting and referral. Unwillingness or inability to discuss SGBV and related issues may be due to the fear of stigma or reprisals, or of transgressing cultural norms which view some forms of SGBV as acceptable. Furthermore, an effective and just remedy through formal or informal justice mechanisms is too often lacking.

The difficulty of measuring the extent of SGBV is compounded when collecting information about its impact on children – the most vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse – but who also face greater obstacles in reporting these incidents.

SGBV prevention and response requires an integrated and multifaceted response, involving a wide range of actors, not least the communities themselves. It touches upon so much of the Office's protection work, including reception procedures and arrangements, shelter, liveli-

hoods, psychosocial care, reproductive health, education and legal assistance.

Prevention and response to SGBV are life-saving interventions and are, therefore, a central part of an operation from the very outset. These interventions demand resolute leadership, strong coordination on the ground, and programmes designed to respond to the vulnerability of women, men and children in different humanitarian contexts. In recent years, these actions have been given priority through UNHCR's age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach; the High Commissioner's Special Projects in support of UNHCR's *Updated SGBV Strategy*; the inclusion of specific SGBV indicators in the Global Strategic Priorities 2014-2015; the establishment of senior regional protection positions dedicated to SGBV; and the *Dialogues with Refugee Women*. Yet critical gaps remain, particularly at the onset of emergencies when SGBV programming struggles to compete with other life-saving interventions and priorities.

UNHCR's *Updated SGBV Strategy* continues to be rolled out in a number of country operations in 2012-13. Safe spaces have been provided for women at risk and their dependents, as well as

for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals who have suffered from SGBV. Psychosocial counselling has included targeted recreational activities to help strengthen resilience and self-esteem. Access to justice for SGBV survivors has been improved in several countries through legal assistance; the revision of criminal codes; support for mobile courts; and the strengthening of traditional community dispute settlement mechanisms. In 2014, country-specific strategies will be introduced in Argentina, Burkina Faso and Morocco, to reinforce action in challenging areas such as violence against LGBTI refugees, and survival sex. Results will be monitored with the support of four senior regional SGBV protection officers.

In 2014-2015 UNHCR will partner with others in rolling out the revised *IASC Guidelines for GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings*. Monitoring the impact of this multisectoral approach will help to uncover and tackle issues such as survival sex, SGBV linked to household energy and lighting, and SGBV perpetrated against girls and boys – including in schools – so often hidden from immediate attention.

New Delhi police teach refugee women how to take care of themselves

NEW DELHI, INDIA | From the shouts and cries emanating from the run-down building in a New Delhi suburb, it sounded as though someone was in big trouble. “Hyaaaah!,” several voices screamed, while others shouted: “Now attack.”

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

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Once through the door, in the Offices of a refugee organization for Myanmar refugees, the anxious visitor

The refugees from Myanmar were taking part in a 10-day training programme organized by UNHCR and its

women and every move is hard fought. But the skills learned in the classroom in western Delhi could one day help them stave off attack or even save their lives.

“They want to learn and they are learning well,” one instructor, Sunitha, stressed, noting that this was the first time the New Delhi police had taught self-defence classes to refugee women.

Aside from learning how to fend off attacks, the course participants are also given tips about places to avoid and areas where danger often lurks, including badly lit parks, urban areas off the beaten track and night markets. Because vegetables are cheaper the later it gets, refugees often go out late at night to make their purchases.

lang, who lives alone, said the classes had helped her a lot. “If someone touches me at the night market, I can fight back. I feel more confident now.”

Niang, a mother whose husband is missing in Myanmar, also welcomed the classes, revealing that she had once been molested. “We face a lot of problems in Delhi, but now **if this happens again, I will be able to defend myself.**”

UNHCR plans to organize similar courses for Somali and Afghan refugee women in the coming months. ○

“IF SOMEONE TOUCHES ME AT THE NIGHT MARKET, I CAN FIGHT BACK. I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT NOW.”

was relieved to discover that **it was only a group of 30 refugee women learning self-defence skills** under the watchful eyes of Indian policewomen.

implementing partner, the Socio-Legal Information Centre, and conducted by constables from New Delhi’s Crime Against Women cell.

The course is designed to

give women the basic skills to defend themselves in the Indian capital of New Delhi, which has the country’s highest rate of crime against women, including sexual harassment and random attacks in public, as well as rape. “I want to protect myself,” said Sung, a 50-year-old widow, adding that “refugee women have been attacked.”

Sung and her fellow trainees are enthusiastic - sometimes overly so. There seems to be a suppressed anger among the



UNHCR / N. BOSE

Police constables demonstrate an attack position during a self-defence class for refugee women.

FROM REGION TO REGION

In the **Americas**, the SGBV strategy will focus on the integration of refugees and IDPs of concern into national protection mechanisms, including through capacity development and support for national legal and psychosocial service providers. In Ecuador, the Office will provide psychosocial support to survivors of SGBV by expanding the highly successful art-therapy weaving project that was introduced in 2012 through the High Commissioner’s Special Projects. UNHCR will provide livelihood assistance for asylum-seekers at risk of SGBV in Panama, as a means of preventing survival sex and other protection risks pending decisions on their refugee status and the right to work.

In response to the **Syria crisis**, UNHCR has created dedicated SGBV posts in Lebanon and Jordan, and introduced training to build the technical knowledge and skills of inter-agency teams to counter SGBV in countries hosting Syrian refugees. Referral mechanisms have been established to ensure access by SGBV survivors to medical and psychosocial services, physical security, and legal aid, in safe spaces and community centres. In August 2013, UNHCR conducted an in-depth assessment of SGBV in countries affected by the Syria crisis and has developed an action plan with concrete recommendations for each country.

Elsewhere in the **Middle East and North Africa**, interventions in Yemen include the introduction of stronger measures to pursue perpetrators by expanding and creating legal units in IDP community centres. The aim is to ensure that at least 100 survivors of SGBV will receive legal aid in 2014. The Office will also work closely in partnership with key line ministries and provide training to judges, police and prosecutors in order to reduce the level of impunity and build confidence in the judiciary.

In **Africa**, UNHCR plans to emphasize community-based prevention by addressing gender inequality as a root cause of SGBV, through developing a “gender ambassador” programme among urban refugees in Zambia; engaging men and boys against SGBV in Ethiopia; and sensitizing refugee communities in

This matrix presents some examples of interventions planned by UNHCR in 2014. Efforts to increase awareness and focus on appropriate operational responses will aim to mobilize the resources needed to combat SGBV and related protection concerns for refugees and other displaced people of all ages.

ANTICIPATED AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2014	EXAMPLES
SECURITY FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION	
Risk of SGBV is reduced and quality of response improved	
Assure SGBV programming in emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 6 SGBV Protection Officers will be deployed at the onset of emergencies to set up SGBV prevention and response programmes.
Provide guidance through roll-out of updated strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 40 country operations will be supported to develop and implement country-specific SGBV strategies in 2014-2015. ■ UNHCR will contribute to the roll-out of the revised IASC Guidelines for GBV interventions in Humanitarian Settings.
Strengthen monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR will roll out the inter-agency gender-based violence information system (GBVIMS) in 8 additional operations in 2014 and 2015. ■ The integrated SGBV, child protection and education M&E framework will be applied in 9 country operations in 2014. ■ Guidance on SGBV in schools will be further developed.
Reinforce SGBV prevention in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programming for SGBV prevention and response in schools will be improved in 4 country operations in 2014.
Strengthen partnerships for access to justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capacity development, advocacy and support work will be pursued in 2014 with traditional justice mechanisms with the aim of achieving agreement on the application of international standards on women's and children's rights in 3 country operations by 2015. ■ The facilitator's guide on SGBV will be field tested with UNHCR field staff and partners in 4 operations in 2014.
Develop SGBV capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 25% of staff will complete the SGBV e-Learning programme in 2014 and 80% in 2015. ■ A protection learning programme for senior protection and programme staff will be launched to strengthen capacity in conducting community-based participatory programming.

Cameroon in order to reduce the incidence of SGBV. In Kenya, the Office will be working to reinforce the capacity of lawyers to offer legal assistance and representation in court in order to strengthen the formal alternative to traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (known as “maslaha”).

In **Asia**, a unique programme designed to break the cycle of violence related to SGBV, will provide counselling to perpetrators in Nepal. In Bangladesh the Office will focus on supporting and strengthening national systems that address SGBV, and initiating early prevention tools such as gender-equality curricula in schools. UNHCR also plans to build referral pathways in Myanmar through the strengthening of SGBV standard operating procedures and case management, and the training of partner, government and UNHCR staff on SGBV prevention and response. It is essential for core response services to be available, in order for survivors to come forward.

DEVELOPING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

In 2014-2015, the Office will develop the capacity of its own staff, partners, local authorities, and people of concern, through various tools and approaches targeted to specific contexts and needs. As an example, within the next few years it will be mandatory for all UNHCR staff above G-5 level to undertake the SGBV e-learning programme.

Strengthening data collection and analysis will be another priority, including through the inter-agency gender-based violence information system (GBVIMS). Particular efforts will be made to identify survivors with specific needs and to ensure that SGBV services are accessible to all survivors, in line with the *Updated SGBV Strategy*. A new network of inter-agency partners, including legal and psychosocial actors, will help ensure that SGBV programming addresses the specific needs of men and boy survivors.

A global monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework will facilitate link-

ages among SGBV interventions, child protection and education-related activities, and provide integrated monitoring and impact assessment.

Impunity remains a significant obstacle to achieving SGBV prevention and response goals in humanitarian settings. UNHCR will work to set up innovative partnerships for legal remedies with both formal and informal justice mechanisms, to ensure access to justice for survivors of SGBV even in remote areas, where courts and judges are not present and where cases are resolved by communities or families themselves. By engaging with traditional and religious leaders and empowering female community leadership, UNHCR aims to broaden access to legal remedies for SGBV survivors. Such measures will also help prepare communities for their return home after displacement, by strengthening a community-based approach to justice that respects gender equality and punishes SGBV. ■