

You Can Change Someone's Life

Issue 26

Here's How

**HelpAge
Canada**

age helps



This Congolese grandmother is a survivor

Jacques Bertrand

Several years ago, three men from her area broke into her home and took away all of her possessions. Before they left, each one of them raped her.

Leonie received help. Not from a big, international organization, but from a local one, made up of gutsy Congolese women who understood perfectly what had happened to her and how deeply hurt she was.

Leonie needed medical help; she received it. She spent one long month at the hospital.

She was shocked; members of her family rejected her; they said she had brought shame on them. Leonie received psychological therapy.

Leonie knew the three young men who had raped her. They were minors from her own area.

With the encouragement of the other women, she denounced them.

They were arrested, put on trial... and were sentenced to pay repairs of \$1,000.

Yet for Leonie this was not the end of the story. The families of the three young men



were upset. They were blaming her for the punishment of their sons. On top of the high stress Leonie was already experiencing, it became too risky for her to remain in her community. Her support group helped her find a safe place to live.

The women's organization was SOFEPADI (Women Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development), our long-time partner in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It took her months and years, but Leonie showed plenty of

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Meaningful recognition

We are very excited to share that HelpAge Canada's long-time partner, Julienne Lusenge, is among the 100 Most Influential People in Gender Policy for 2019. The annual list gathered by Apolitical (www.apolitical.co) also includes people such as Michelle Obama, Melinda Gates, Ruth Bader-Ginsburg and Emma Watson.



Julienne Lusenge

The list was created from over 9000 nominations from governments, international organisations and academia, including UN Women, Women Deliver, Women in Global Health, the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, Harvard, and the Gates Foundation.

Julienne Lusenge is known around the world as a human rights activist who focuses on supporting survivors of wartime sexual violence. In response to the high levels of

such crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2000 she co-founded SOFEPADI (Women Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development).

A born leader and relentless force for change, Julienne has been catalyzing the women's movement in the DRC for over 30 years by elevating the social status of women and girls and promoting women's participation in political and

decision-making spaces.

In 2018, she received the Women's International Rights Award from Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy and, in 2016, was awarded the Ginetta Sagan Award from Amnesty International. This nomination is also the recognition of the tireless efforts of thousands of women who benefitted from the work of SOFEPADI.

This Congolese grandmother is a survivor *(continued from page 1)*

resiliency. Through the sponsorship that she benefits from, Leonie started to sell vegetables. After several months she managed to buy a small plot of land (25 m²) near Oicha, in North Kivu, and built a small home there.

The money she received even allowed her to pay for the school fees of two of her grandchildren. That is probably what she is most grateful for, but that is not even the end of the story.

Leonie, 58, now volunteers for SOFEPADI. She accompanies other women who fall victims of sexual violence. In other words, this wonderful woman who suffered so much hardship, is giving back. This means that other women who are experiencing sexual violence receive guidance and friendship from a woman

who has been through the same ordeal. She told me: "Because I know what they went through, I cannot stop helping them." With your generosity, we can continue to help older women like Leonie.

Would you like to sponsor a Grandparent? Our partner organizations are caring for older persons in need in these countries: Jamaica, Haiti, Dominica, Kenya, India and Sri Lanka. For \$ 34 per month, you can help respond to the basic needs of a vulnerable senior.

You may also choose to make an impact with a monthly donation to the amount of your choice. An easy way to do so is to visit the donate page at www.helpagecanda.ca.

Thank you for supporting seniors in need!

A very difficult period in North Kivu and Ituri provinces

Normal times are hard enough in this land that hasn't known peace in twenty years. A deeply traumatized woman told me that the month before, a group of armed men had kidnapped her five children, escaping with them to the forest. "What is going to happen to them?", she asked, still too shocked to cry. "I haven't heard a word. I will never see them again."



Attacks with machetes struck everyone, young and old.

People of all ages are killed, maimed, kidnapped, sexually assaulted... And it is getting worse. In June, the bodies of 141 people have been found in the province of Ituri. The grounds near the hospital in Bunia have become a camp for thousands of displaced persons. Young and old, men and women, they co-exist under plastic tarps, undernourished and in need of medicines. In June alone, according to the United Nations, over 300,000 people have been displaced by the attacks on villages.

There are complex issues behind this ongoing tragedy: land, ethnicity, historical grievances, politics, access to gold and natural resources, corruption... With a few hundred dollars, someone can sponsor an attack on a community, watch what happens next, and benefit from the ensuing chaos.



Our partners are present with the displaced persons.

Seen from the outside, it all looks like a hopeless mess. However, if you are a woman in this most troubled part of the country, there is an organization that can make all the difference for you. And this is where each of us can get involved, through a donation to HelpAge.

SOFEPADI, our partner organization, improves the experiences of victims of sexual violence in four very concrete ways. They offer badly needed psychological and medical help. (Leonie, on page 1, is a good example.) They teach them new skills and give them small grants of US\$ 100. It is working so well that some have been able to buy a small piece of land to grow food, and another sends her grandchildren to school by producing dried fish.

On top of that, SOFEPADI successfully supports court cases, and hundreds of men have been sent to jail – even members of the police and the military !

Thanks to SOFEPADI, women reclaimed their dignity, something priceless.

Are you considering leaving a bequest ?

Jacques Bertrand
Executive Director

We are very fortunate at HelpAge Canada. Many of our donors have been with us for 15, 25, even



more than 30 years. When I speak with some of you, you say you support us because we are all about seniors, and that “no one else does what you do”. True. But we would have stopped our great work a long time ago if it wouldn't be for your generosity. Fortunately, we share the same passion, and hundreds of vulnerable seniors benefit from it.

You cannot imagine how we feel when we receive a call or a letter that says: “You are my favourite charity, and I am putting you in my will!” We receive this news always with profound respect and gratitude. And joy. Because these large donations have allowed us to give back their eyesight to hundreds of people in India; they launched microbusinesses in Kenya and helped provide physiotherapy in remote corners of Haiti. In Canada and abroad, bequests always have a major impact on our mission.

You can improve the lives of vulnerable older people with a simple decision to include HelpAge Canada in your will. A charitable bequest can include:

- A net sum of money
- Securities
- Real estate
- A set percentage of the value of your estate
- A residuary gift (the amount remaining after other payments, debts, and gifts have been distributed)

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just call Eilis at 1-800-648-1111.

Thank you for supporting seniors in need!

HelpAge Canada needs your support to continue assisting vulnerable older people. Please consider leaving a bequest as your legacy of caring. If you would like more information, do feel free to call Beth at 1-800-648-1111 or email her at bethgordon@helpagecanada.ca

With all our gratitude.

Newsletter cover photo: Maseka Katsuva, of Oicha, in North Kivu has a better life thanks to our Canadian donors.



Thank you for caring

HelpAge Canada is a member of:

**HelpAge
International**
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