Meet Joan

In DR Congo, six women travelled through the forest for days, on foot, to sell and trade their produce in a larger town.

Before they could reach the town, three men attacked the group. They raped each woman. One of these women was Joan.

A group of people found Joan crying and took her to safety. The next day, Joan was told about a local trauma centre she could visit which would treat survivors of sexual violence.

She passed this message on to the other women who'd been raped, but they were too ashamed to go to the centre and speak about what had happened to them. In DR Congo there is often tremendous stigma around sexual violence.

Joan was also frightened to seek medical assistance. But as the pain from her injuries grew, she had to act. She went to the trauma centre where she was told she'd contracted a sexually transmitted infection.

Thanks to money donated by SCIAF supporters in Scotland, Joan was able to receive counselling and medical care. She also attends a women's group where she can talk about what happened.

In her town, some people laugh at her, but many understand what she is going through – because they have survived the same trauma.

Although Joan finds strength from hearing others' stories, she is terrified in her day-to-day life. She cannot trade in larger towns because of the fear of what could happen to her when she travels.

Where Joan lives is very dangerous - very recently, there was a shooting in her village. Thieves with weapons attacked and robbed her neighbour.

Joan desperately needs money – especially because she suffers from a sexually transmitted infection. People with HIV are given free medicine, but those with other sexually transmitted diseases and infections need to pay for their medical treatment.

Joan is very grateful for the programme and the help she has received, but she longs for peace.