Rehna Kauma (left), international UN Volunteer Associate Protection Officer with UNHCR in Afghanistan, during a World Refugee Day celebration with partners and beneficiaries in a returnee township. (UNHCR, 2015)

No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted

**Kabul, Afghanistan**: I am really glad to have had the opportunity to work as a UN Volunteer in Afghanistan since 2012. The time and work here is enriching and words cannot explain the satisfaction obtained from the field experience, whenever I am greeted with not just the warm welcome but the look of gratitude and joy from the very poor, yet very hospitable families in the remote locations of the Northern region of Afghanistan, where up until this year access was not a problem.

I could not get enough of the beautiful warm spirits. Words can never explain the fulfilment and rewarding experience of doing something for someone who can never repay you. It is true what they say: no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

I was recruited as a Protection Officer with a focus on internally displaced persons (IDPs), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and persons with specific needs, overseeing and supporting protection activities in the Maimana and Kunduz field units.

Later my focus shifted to both IDPs and returnees, and for this year returnees. I did not only support the country office with drafting the four-year
SGBV national strategy, but planned/designed the sub-office’s activities for the past two years in line with the national SGBV strategy.

I also initiated and drafted the complaints mechanism as an accountability and quality-check tool aimed at recognizing our impact and results, strengthening dignity to the beneficiaries, by not only giving them a chance to voice their concerns, but also generating awareness among the population about their rights.

Community-based protection methods and rights-based approaches in planned protection activities require qualified partners and colleagues to aptly assume their roles as duty bearers. So another of my rewarding experiences was building the capacity of partners and colleagues in this respect, as the training focal person.

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Asia and the Pacific

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Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions