

## Maggy Barankitse promue Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur

BBC, Friday, 27 February 2009 France awards 'Angel of Burundi' 'Maggy' Barankitse has helped care for 10,000 children since 1993 A woman known as the "Angel of Burundi" has been awarded one of France's highest honours for humanitarian work. Marguerite Barankitse has spent 14 years caring for 10,000 orphans who were the victims of war and HIV/Aids. She also offers a place for women and child refugees returning to Burundi to rebuild their lives. The title of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour was bestowed upon Ms Barankitse on Friday by French Secretary of State for Human Rights Rama Yade.

Ms Barankitse - who prefers to be called Maggy - became a humanitarian on a much larger scale after saving the lives of 25 children during Burundi's civil war in 1993. It happened after she witnessed a massacre of 72 ethnic Hutus by Tutsis while teaching in the eastern province of Ruyigi. Whenever I am told I am being given an award, I am always astonished because I am only doing ordinary work

"Maggy" Barankitse Â Ms Barankitse founded the Maison Shalom charity that year and the number of children she was helping grew rapidly. She has now built a whole village of homes for the children, to give them a sense of a family life, BBC's Prime Ndikumagenge reports from Bujumbura. The charity has built hundreds of these houses, a day-care centre and a hospital, among other projects. "I don't think I should be given awards," Ms Barankitse told the BBC. "Whenever I am told I am being given an award, I am always astonished because I am only doing ordinary work." In November 2008, Ms Barankitse won the Opus Prize, a \$1 million faith-based humanitarian award from the United States. Her next project is to set up an international school to provide education to the children and her employees, our correspondent says.