



## No other cheek left to turn

### Lay counselors increase access to trauma care in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**G**ender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread problem in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 2020, vivo has been improving mental health services and reducing perpetual violence in individuals and communities affected by GBV. To ensure that expertise and resources remain sustainable within the communities, local lay counselors were trained to provide psychotherapeutic treatment.

A clinic was established in Goma and more than 200 lay counselors have been trained in Narrative Exposure Therapy

(NET). The local expert team additionally trained lay counselors to provide supervision to their peers. In total, more than 8.500 NET treatments have been provided.

NETfacts, a model integrating individual trauma treatment with community-based intervention was implemented. Over 2000 individuals in six different communities participated. The NETfacts approach is effective in reducing both trauma-related symptoms and the stigmatization of GBV survivors and perpetrators. ■



A community lifeline created with the support of vivo trained lay counselors



## Fortifying the Frontline: Training therapists in Ukraine

As the damages of war continue to accrue, so do the efforts and responsibilities of the healers. Ukrainian mental health professionals are treating trauma in both civilians and military members alike. To support their efforts, vivo is providing a specialized, comprehensive training and supervision curriculum to 60 Ukrainian therapists. Fifteen vivo members will share their expertise and dedication in this collaboration of 34

institutions in a project coordinated by Charité University Hospital Berlin.

The SOLOMIYA project takes a significant step towards enhancing medical and psychosocial support structures in Ukraine. SOLOMIYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and supported by the GIZ Hospital Partnerships Funding Program. ■

Heading the SOLOMIYA project is vivo member Elisa Kaltenbach.

## Where is home? Guiding women and children after ISIS

The women and children returned from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are suffering from both trauma and aggression symptoms. The children also experience ideological change: rejecting the culture and religion of their home

community. Both the home communities and returned children are struggling with reintegration. Many of the therapists themselves have also been traumatized.

In Kurdistan, Iraq, these therapists

have been trained to treat the wounds of both experienced and perpetrated violence. In collaboration with the Jiyana Foundation (Iraq) and the Helen Bamber Foundation (UK), vivo implements their ongoing training and supervision. ■

## Returning to the fold: Reuniting young mothers and their families in Burundi

Young women with unwanted pregnancies in Burundi often are excluded from their families and forced to drop out of education. Unable to find partners willing to marry and care for someone else's child, they face increased risks associated with long-term exclusion from society, including unemployment, extreme poverty, and exploitation. Initial estimates show that 12% suffer from trauma-related disorders and suicidality and 4%

indicate an increased risk of infanticide.

Over the past two years, vivo has supported both the social reintegration of these young mothers and the prevention of violence against their children. The year-round projects offer a wide range of services: therapeutic trauma interventions, suicide and infanticide prevention, family conflict mediation, childcare assistance, and vocational training. ■



"The big change that vivo has brought us is understanding that you can approach the person who has been raped, [...] and that they have the right to approach those who have not been raped."



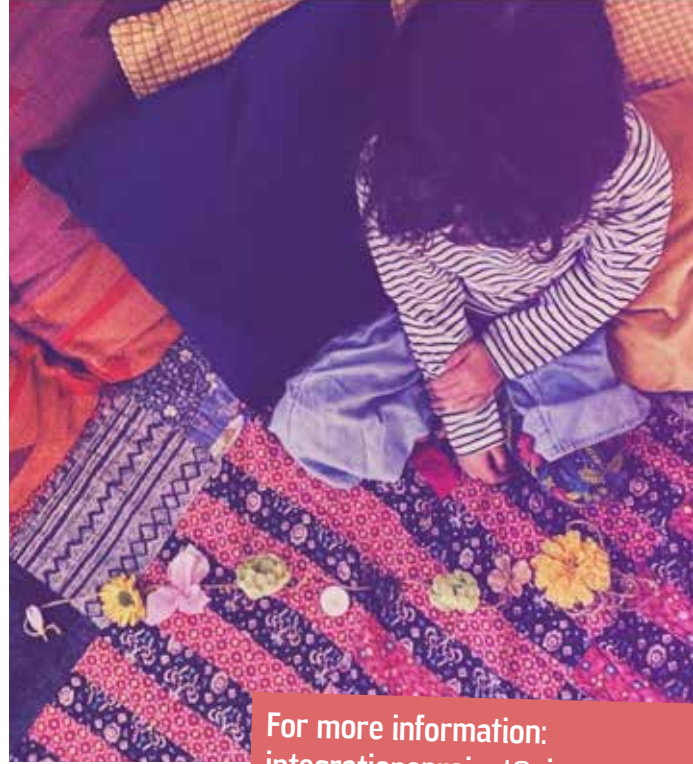
# Healed people healing people: Recovery Companions in Germany

For 3.1 million individuals seeking refuge in Germany, psychotherapy is often out of reach. For the state healthcare system, capacity is low, stakes are high and the timing is tight. Coordinated Care and Inclusion of Healthcare Patients (KOBEG) is a vivo project in Constance, Germany that found a solution that has been in plain sight all along.

Equipped with the expertise of their own prior self-experiences of trauma and resettlement, well-integrated peers are the cultural experts that have been missing. Trained to guide refugees navigating the German

healthcare system, these “Recovery Companions” have significantly reduced barriers to care. So far, more than 80% of the refugees participating in the comprehensive psychotherapeutic care have benefited.

“Recovery Companion” is now being advocated for as a paraprofessional position for employment. After 6 years of more than 20 Recovery Companions guiding their peers through the first harrowing years in Germany after escaping war and



For more information:  
[integrationsproject@vivo.org](mailto:integrationsproject@vivo.org)

terror, our qualitative research study reports on their powerful experiences in the project entitled “I know I can help them. And that’s invaluable.” ■

## How do we help?

### Asking the right questions in Ethiopia



Conflicts spreading across regions of Ethiopia have resulted in a complex security situation. Access to many critical areas has been blocked. The specific assistance needs of affected communities is unknown.

The government of Ethiopia has asked for help.

vivo international is providing the toolkit to learn about the needs and experiences of these survivors, clinic patients and care providers. The project is called ‘Response-Recovery-Resilience for Conflict-Affected Communities in Ethiopia Project (3R-4-CACE)’.

A follow up mission will take place in January 2024 to implement NETfacts in the region. ■



# In vivo veritas: Amani Chibashimba

## Amani means peace

In 1985, Amani was born in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Growing up with five younger sisters amidst a cultural mosaic of Congo, Burundi & Rwanda, Amani's "one big family" had everything they needed. As abundance turned to war, flight and devastation, the very landscape of home became unfamiliar. Amani knew that "nothing would ever be the same."

## Violence experienced, violence explained

Amani decided he was not going to back down. He moved to Kigali, Rwanda and studied Criminal Law. While working with the Dutch Embassy, he interviewed convicted perpetrators in prison.

He was expecting to encounter monsters without a conscience. Instead he met people with an explanation.

## The NETfacts of Restorative Justice

Amani continued on his journey to study International Criminology and work for the International Crimes Court (ICC) in the Netherlands. Upon returning to Kigali to teach law, Amani collaborated on vivo's groundbreaking NETfacts community project. From NET interpreter to practitioner to supervisor, Amani traversed vivo's mission to now run vivo Congo with over 40 staff members under his leadership. For the countless beneficiaries of restorative justice, Amani is the ambassador of peace as manifested in his namesake. ■

**Amani Chibashimba is building a permanent center in Goma to raise awareness and support the healing of the trauma wounds across Africa. Funding is needed to ensure the sustainability, security and mutual reliability of his team.**

**Amani wants to be asked, „Is your team doing okay?“**



**vivo international e.V.** is a non-profit organization committed to supporting victims of traumatic life experiences in civil society as well as in the context of war, flight, torture and human rights violations.

**Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)** was developed by vivo founding members Frank Neuner, Maggie Schauer and Thomas Elbert. NET is used worldwide for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress.



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vivo international e.V.

PO Box 5108

78430 Konstanz Germany

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Photos: vivo international e.V.

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WWW.VIVO.ORG