NETPAL

Evidence-based trauma therapy for war-affected children and adolescents in Gaza

An international university-based programme – built together with local professionals and scientifically evaluated.

Start: Launched in 2024 as a grassroots initiative

Target group: Children and adolescents aged 12 to 17 and their caregivers

Method: KIDNET/NET, based on Narrative Exposure Therapy

Implementation: Capacity building through a train-the-trainer approach with Palestinian mental health experts

Region: Gaza as primary focus, West Bank in development

Led by: An international consortium of universities and NGOs



The need

Children and adolescents in Gaza are exposed to ongoing violence, displacement and severe shortages of basic supplies.[1] This ongoing catastrophe began decades ago and has intensified drastically since October 2023. Many repeatedly face life-threatening situations and the loss of family members. Trauma-related reactions that lastingly affect development, ability to attend school and family life are widespread.[2]

As early as April 2024, UNICEF estimated that 100 percent of children in Gaza were in need of mental health and psychosocial support.[2]

Effective treatments exist. What is missing are trained professionals on the ground and care structures that can function under current conditions.[3]

Our approach

Why (KID)NET? Narrative Exposure Therapy is a manualised short-term therapy for people who have experienced repeated organised violence. **KIDNET** is its child-friendly form. Together with a counsellor, participants arrange their life story chronologically and process their most distressing experiences in a safe setting. Its efficacy has been studied in randomised controlled trials, including with children and in crisis regions.[4] The method requires only a few sessions and can be delivered by trained lay counsellors under supervision.[4]

LMU MEDIZIN

IKG Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung

vivo international

UNIVERSITÄT BIELEFELD

Universität Konstanz

Why train-the-trainer? Mental health professionals are scarce in Gaza. We therefore train local counsellors, provide ongoing supervision and qualify experienced counsellors as trainers. This keeps expertise on the ground. The approach follows the task-sharing model recommended by WHO.[5]

Step 1: Screening – structured assessment of traumatic experiences and psychological distress

Step 2: Treatment – KIDNET delivered by local counsellors under supervision

Step 3: Scaling up – long-term training of further counsellors by local trainers

As equal partners: Our partners in Gaza and our international team shape content, priorities and scientific focus on an equal footing.

REFERENCES

[1] UN OCHA (2026). Humanitarian Situation Report, 14 August 2026. ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-14-august-2026

[2] Ferguson, S. (2025). Mental health crisis for children in Gaza. UNICEF USA. unicefusa.org/stories/mental-health-crisis-children-gaza

[3] Abuhjayyer, K., Hamad, K. I., Hamam, R., Abdulrahman, M., & Aljamal, A. (2026). Structural collapse of mental health service provision in Gaza: A service evaluation under active conflict. BJPsych Open (Suppl. 1), S220–S221. doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2026.11525

[4] Schauer, M., Neuner, F., & Elbert, T. (2025). Narrative exposure therapy (NET) for survivors of traumatic stress. Hogrefe. · Siehl, S., Robjant, K., & Crombach, A. (2021). Systematic review and meta-analyses of the long-term efficacy of narrative exposure therapy for adults, children and perpetrators. Psychotherapy Research, 31(6), 695–710. doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2020.1847345

[5] World Health Organization (2022). World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all. WHO.

Photos: Salam Younis · As of October 2026

Embedded scientific research

Our project is scientifically evaluated from the outset. The results will form the basis for sustaining the programme and integrating it into local care structures.

Close monitoring: All participants receive therapy. Participants on the waitlist are closely monitored. Standardised instruments assess trauma symptoms, psychological distress and functional capacity.

Contextual adaptation: The Arabic KIDNET manual is revised and piloted with local professionals – a participatory process together with experts in the field.

Quality assurance: Regular supervision, documentation of treatment quality, monitoring of adverse events.

Use of funds and funding opportunities

Funds are allocated to four areas:

(1) Training and supervision of counsellors

(2) Remuneration of local counsellors and delivery of treatment

(3) Contextual adaptation of the manual and supporting materials

(4) On-site scientific support and coordination

Transparency: Donations are managed by vivo international e.V., earmarked and forwarded to our partners on the ground.

How you can support us

- Project funding by foundations and funding bodies – in full or by module
- Funding of individual components, e.g. training a counsellor or treating a child
- Donations to the non-profit NGO vivo international e.V. (reference: NETPalestine)

Get in touch – we would be glad to present the project to you in person.

Bank details

ACCOUNT HOLDER
vivo international e.V.

IBAN
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REFERENCE
NETPalestine

netpalestine.org

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