

# aktuell



overcoming traumatic stress for a world without violence

## Uganda: Building peace at every level of society

vivo remains steadfast in strengthening war-affected communities and families in Uganda by working individually, communally, institutionally and academically. With 21 staff members under the leadership of Anett Pfeifer, 1,050 clients have received trauma-related mental health rehabilitation services in 2024 alone. Across 8 locations, 800 community members have received Community Sensitisation (CS) on trauma, stigmatisation, and anger management. A new training method of Forum Theatre is already in development to support these community efforts. Five partner organisations have received vivo training on counselling skills, anger management, gender-based violence,

child development, work related stress and self-care for caregivers. In cooperation with the Sacred Heart University in Gulu, vivo collaborates on a Bachelor course in Counselling Psychology and offers internship placements for students. Masters students from the Psychology Department at Makerere University in Kampala receive NET training. vivo participated on two public campaigns: the Commemoration Day for Survivors of Torture and a Mental Health Awareness Community Run. Additionally vivo raises public

awareness during monthly radio programs and regular rural market visits. vivo's advocacy is ensuring that government officials, academic institutions and future trauma counsellors in Uganda understand the mental health needs of trauma survivors. ■



vivo counsellors Harriet, Juliet and Olympia during a training

## Ethiopia: A powerful alliance in post-war recovery

Degraded ecosystems, disrupted economies and traumatised communities are prioritised targets in the post-war recovery efforts in and around the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Freshly founded in 2024, the "One Health Alliance" sets out to address these issues

and serve as a model for post-war recovery world wide. vivo International joins Permachive, Mekelle University, WeForest, the Center for International Health at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, and the Center for Trauma Management and Research in this coor-

dinated, cross-sectoral action. Featured at the Clinton Global Initiative 2024 Annual Meeting, vivo was highlighted as a collaborator and will support efforts to increase access to mental health services through a model of integrated recovery and support. ■

# Lebanon: Urgent Need & Call to Action!



Village Al Najat enjoys nature while training together.

Hosting millions of refugees fleeing neighbouring countries for generations, the Lebanese people have also been surviving wars on their own soil, reeling from economic crises, and picking up the pieces from the Beirut blast in 2020. In response, vivo member Maria Magdaléna El Khazen founded **Village Al Najat** in 2011. Volunteer driven, the psychologists at Village Al Najat provide

pro bono therapeutic interventions to war-affected individuals in exchange for extensive training and supervision. Since 2020, over 85 psychologists have been trained in NET and 70 patients have received NET. Remarkably, all of this work has occurred without having a building to call home.

Unfortunately, the very existence of Village Al Najat is in jeopardy. With

regional conditions steadily worsening, Village Al Najat needs a safe base for their work. To support both local inhabitants and shelter-seeking refugees with trauma-focused care, they are currently fundraising for a permanent centre to facilitate therapy, training, and outreach. ■

## DRC: vivo's stronghold in Goma paves new paths to peace

Since 2020, vivo's efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have already seen over 2,000 patients treated and over 140 counsellors trained. With the Goma infrastructure financially maintained, there has been capacity to develop new projects that benefit peacekeeping efforts both regionally

and beyond. These projects include a **NETfacts** health care system project in Djibouti and a demobilisation program **STAR-EST** of the World Bank for the DRC. The scientific contributions also continue to roll out. Two theses have been finalised showcasing vivo's scientific work in the DRC, with three more on

the way. An exciting doctoral dissertation on the impact of the NETfacts community intervention on shame coping behaviour and social cohesion in violence affected communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo is also in the works! ■

## Ukraine: Training the reinforcements

After a successful launch in 2023, Charité University Hospital Berlin has extended **SOLOMIYA**: "Strengthening of Longterm Medical and Psychosocial Infrastructures in Ukraine by a Network of Hospital Partnerships." Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

(BMZ) and supported by the GIZ Hospital Partnerships Funding Program, SOLOMIYA's extension allows Ukrainian mental health professionals (MHPs) to receive four additional online trainings and follow-up clinical consultations in Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), KIDNET for children, FORNET for forensic

offenders, and NETfacts for communities. Led by Dr. Elisa Kaltenbach, a team of vivo members equip Ukrainian MHPs with tools needed to assist civilians and military members dealing with trauma-related disorders. ■

# Germany: Transforming migration experience into expertise



**BW schützt!** project gathers a variety of experts on the experience of migration.

**M**igration involves a mosaic of stressors that impacts individuals differently. Those who have successfully resettled into a new society stand in a unique position to guide those coming along the path after them. Their expertise helps lighten the load on an already overburdened healthcare system and efficiently creates new opportunities for increasing accessibility and community building. To help heal old trauma wounds and prevent new ones, vivo has been hard

work developing sustainable and disseminable systems of care that can provide relief to overburdened mental health care systems while still ensuring effective and appropriate care to meet the needs of new arrivals.

At the **BW schützt!** project, vivo members train, accompany and supervise specialised coaches with their own backgrounds of migration to screen and support others with similar experiences. To date, 35 coaches

have been trained in screening and Narrative Trauma Coaching (NAT). Of the 230 participants screened, early results show that over one-third can be offered preventative NAT coaching. The less than one third of the participants identified as needing professional treatment can receive the referrals they so desperately need. Set to run until October 2025, this two year project is financed by the state of Baden-Württemberg. ■

## New Manual Coming: July 2025

### Practical Guide Narrative Trauma Coaching (NAT) – Self-efficacy through Narrative Biography Work

by Elisabeth Kaiser, Katalin Dohrmann, Thomas Elbert, Brigitte Rockstroh & Maggie Schauer

vivo members will support the evaluation of a newly developed module Narrative Trauma Coaching (NAT) which implements narrative biography work as conceptualised in Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET).

NAT coaching aims to protectively and preventively prevent the development of trauma-related disorders in stressed migrants who would normally not be offered treatment for their suffering. This project is being

implemented in cooperation with the NGO Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe under the direction of Priska Löhr and the University of Konstanz under the direction of Prof Anke Hoeffler and Dr Anke Köbach. ■





# Upcycling towards peace: Anselm Crombach

of vivo projects and the financial means to keep vivo's outpatient clinics open.

Anselm prioritises scientific sustainability by contributing evidence-based solutions to a world desperate for answers. His work shows that the scraps of the past do not belong in the landfill, but rather can be used to craft a new fabric of

society. When it seems that humans will never stop recycling their pain forward, Anselm sees an opportunity to create something new. The upcycles of violence are most obvious in his work in Burundi, the DRC and South Africa. From the children discarded on the streets to the combatants trained in destruction to the families torn apart from the inside out, Anselm brings a scientifically supported message of

hope. For years, he has been recruiting, training and guiding battalions of peacekeepers and caregivers to expertly serve at the frontlines. He assists communities in overcoming their violent pasts, fostering their current social cohesion and building a better environment for their children, both now and in the future.

Born and raised in Heidelberg, Germany, Anselm is fluent in German, English and French, with conversational Kirundi added to his language list. Anselm now resides in Saarbrücken for his Junior Professorship Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy for Children and Adolescents at the Saarland University. To take care of himself in this intensive line of work, Anselm spends time with friends, goes bouldering and abstains from violent movies. He stays engaged and motivated by the opportunity to learn firsthand from different cultures and the deep meaning found in the work itself. ■

**For Anselm Crombach**, sustainability resounds in every aspect of his work. He has spent years charting vivo's map towards a financially secure future. A vivo member since 2011, Anselm also served from 2018 to 2022 as Treasurer on the vivo board. He keeps it straightforward, stating that "stable fundraising with predictable donations is of the utmost importance for vivo' continued sustainable development." Concretely, he wants to see a scaling up



**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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