

StrongMinds Offers Critical Mental Health Services in Sub-Saharan Africa

The global NGO is responding to the COVID-19 mental health crisis by offering free phone-based group talk therapy to vulnerable populations

MAPLEWOOD, NJ, UNITED STATES, August 17, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NGO [StrongMinds](#) is responding to the emergency in sub-Saharan Africa as countries experience increasing levels of depression and anxiety. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 pandemic a significant crisis and acute stressor that can induce trauma and destabilize the mental health of individuals.



A StrongMinds client uses free phone-based group talk therapy in Uganda.

StrongMinds, a mental health non-profit working in Uganda and Zambia, is providing the continent's first free phone-based group talk therapy to women.

The continued COVID-19 crisis has heightened many known risk factors generally associated with poor mental health – financial insecurity, unemployment, and food scarcity – while protective factors such as social connection, employment, educational engagement, and access to daily routines and health services – have fallen dramatically. Uganda is currently ranked among the top six countries in Africa in rates of depressive disorders.

StrongMinds has partnered with the Ugandan Ministry of Health to offer free mental health support services at this, particularly challenging time. The women the organization serves are already highly vulnerable to economic hardship, and some groups, such as refugees, have been severely impacted. According to the [World Bank](#), the poverty rate among refugees is projected to be around 50 percent, significantly higher than the pre-COVID-19 rate of 44 percent.

"Though we are beginning to see a reduction in COVID-19 cases, there are going to be many new individuals struggling to cope with stressors related to the virus, including those experiencing the

loss (or multiple losses) of a loved one, unemployment, food insecurity or even the long term effects of COVID 19 on their health," said Christina Ntulo, Deputy Country Director for StrongMinds Uganda. "StrongMinds is working on the ground to address the mental health challenges of the people that need our services most. We hope to provide the necessary resources to help restore mental health through the treatment of depression and to strengthen resilience."

StrongMinds therapy uses Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G), a WHO-recommended intervention for low-resource settings. StrongMinds' [data](#) also suggests that access to mental health services has a bolstering effect on new stressors from the pandemic, which may prove to be particularly helpful during the current lockdowns.

Before the pandemic, StrongMinds estimated that 66 million women across Africa experienced depression and that 85% had no access to effective treatment. Today, as lockdowns continue in waves across Uganda and Zambia, StrongMinds is the only organization to offer free access to its proven depression treatment through a teletherapy model supported by an ongoing public information campaign.

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