

ABOUT US

StrongMinds is a social enterprise founded in early 2013 to provide life-changing mental health services to low-income African women.

We are initially focused on treating women of all ages in Africa who suffer from the most pervasive and debilitating mental illness: depression. We are guided by an ambitious and unique goal of **treating two million depressed African women by 2025**—enabling these mentally ill individuals and their families to lead healthy, productive and satisfying lives. We presently operate in Uganda, a post-conflict and highly impoverished country, where 1 out of every 4 women suffers from depression.



THE NEED

Nature Magazine recently wrote, “depression is the biggest blight on human society—bar none,” and nowhere is that more clear than in Africa, where approximately 100 million people suffer from this disease. For African women, who are afflicted at twice the rate of men, depression is the number one cause of disability. Due to the lack of investment in mental health services in Africa, 90% of Africans with depression—including 66 million women—have no access to effective treatment.

Depression is not a simple feeling of sadness, which diminishes after a few days. Rather, it is a disease which disables more Africans than HIV/AIDS, cancer, or heart disease. This illness endures for weeks or months, and in some cases years. Symptoms include extreme fatigue, inability to concentrate or make decisions, feelings of guilt or anxiety, and a general loss of interest in life.

An African woman with depression, compared to her healthy peer, suffers greatly: she is less productive, has a lower income, and has poorer physical health. If she is a mother, the negative impact extends to her entire family. Research shows that children of depressed mothers are more likely to have poor health, struggle in or miss school, and suffer from depression themselves.

OUR MODEL



StrongMinds implements an innovative, simple, and cost efficient approach to treat impoverished Africans who suffer from depression. Our model is based on group interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT-G) and is facilitated by lay community workers.

IPT-G is a proven technique, supported by clinical trial success in Africa, which focuses on improving the interpersonal relationships of depressed group members. StrongMinds Therapy Groups utilize our unique structured model over several months to help group members identify and manage their interpersonal difficulties, ultimately reducing their symptoms of depression without the use of neuropsychiatric medications.

Members of StrongMinds Therapy Groups forge strong social bonds with their fellow depressed women, and 81% of groups continue to meet after formal sessions end. This continuation permits members to reinforce the skills they have learned and enables them to manage and prevent future depressive episodes.

In addition, some women who have successfully completed a StrongMinds Therapy Group are selected and trained in an adapted StrongMinds curriculum to lead their own volunteer Peer Therapy Groups for depression within their communities.

OUR IMPACT

In our initial three years of fieldwork from 2014-2016, StrongMinds treated nearly 10,000 depressed women in Uganda. 82% of these women were depression-free at the conclusion of treatment and the majority of these women showed strong gains in their physical health, employment, and the ability to save part of their income. Importantly, their children also benefitted by showing improvements in school attendance and nutrition. Over the next three years, 2017-2019, our team aims to take a 10-fold step forward and treat over 100,000 women in Uganda and an additional African country.