

Meaningful World

**The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention
(ATOP)**

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Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Mission to Uganda

Humanitarian Post-Trauma Healing and Working with academia, NGO-s, women's centers, orphanages, religious centers, and the community at large.

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Summary

Uganda, often referred as the "Pearl of Africa," boasts a range of strengths that contribute to its unique character and potential. The country is blessed with abundant natural resources, including fertile soils, favorable climate, and significant water bodies, which support its robust agricultural sector. Additionally, Uganda's diverse wildlife and stunning landscapes attract tourism, contributing to its economy. The country has also made notable strides in education and healthcare, with improvements in literacy rates and access to medical services. Although it is the 'Pearl of Africa,' the country struggles with ongoing challenges and long-term traumas. Due to economic stagnation and industrial difficulties, environmental disasters, and an influx of refugees from South Sudan and DR Congo, the challenges this country and its people face are numerous.

Currently, Uganda is challenged by the following collective and generational traumas: natural disasters, including 20 floods, 40 epidemics, 9 droughts, and 5 landslide events. These natural disasters took a toll, amounting to over 200,000 deaths and at least \$80 million in economic loss. History of civil wars and internal conflicts, notably under British Colonization and later under Idi Amin and during the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency and conflicts alike have left lasting scars on the population resulting in generational trauma. Finally, average income is low, with many people living on less than \$2 a day and significant poverty, especially in rural areas.



Considering these challenges, ATOP MeaningfulWorld team, consisting of Dr. Ani Kalayjian and Romance Albarqawi from the US and Margo Sargsyan from Armenia, was deployed to a first humanitarian relief and trauma healing mission in Uganda from 18 June 2024 to 1 July 2024. We worked with the community at large: academia, counselors, religious organizations, their families, women and children in the slum areas, NGOs, and populations deeply affected by trauma. Additionally, we continued our campaigns to transform horizontal

violence and generational trauma through teaching 7-step Integrative Healing Model, meaning-making while peace building, Emotional Intelligence, ecological consciousness through “Uganda is my home” campaign (addressing trash removal at universities, schools and churches), and gender empowerment!

We were filled with heartfelt gratitude to connect with our brothers and sisters in Uganda. We love and appreciate their indomitable spirit of survival. We were in awe and disbelief witnessing their big smiles and heartfelt faith in God. Every day we were questioning to ourselves “how could they feel grateful without having running water, electricity, sewage, trash removal, food to eat, and other comforting necessities?” We were humbled daily.

Despite the harsh living conditions, the communities demonstrated remarkable resilience and a strong sense of faith. This was particularly evident in the smiles and positivity of children and adults in the slums and the collaborative spirit among university students and faculty. Both professionals and laypeople expressed a strong desire to learn and implement new coping strategies, meditation practices, and empathetic listening techniques. This eagerness underscored the potential for sustainable improvements in mental health care within the community.



We were able to identify and address the following challenges during the mission. **1. A significant need for mental health support** was present across multiple regions, including Mbarara, Mbale and Kampala. The lack of access to mental health resources and the prevalence of trauma among the population posed substantial challenges. **2. Extreme Poverty and Illiteracy:** In the Namuwongo-Kanyogoga slum and Light Children’s Ministry in Lwakhakha, the team encountered severe poverty and illiteracy, which hindered efforts to provide effective emotional and educational support. **3. Inadequate Living Conditions:** The team observed dire living conditions in the slums, with many families living without basic necessities like doors for security, contributing to increased vulnerability and sexual abuse against women. **4. Nutritional Needs:** Ensuring basic nutrition was critical, as many community members struggled with food insecurity, which compounded their emotional and physical health issues.

We conducted **17 programs in 6 universities, 3 orphanages, 8 NGOs, 3 counseling centers and slum areas** reaching 500 people directly and over 7 million through our appearance on GNTV, aimed at raising mental health awareness, empowerment, mindfulness, meaning-making, and peace building. The MeaningfulWorld team employed a multi-faceted approach to tackle these challenges, integrating both immediate relief and long-term mental health strategies. We offered the following:

1. Workshops on empathy and holistic healing, led by Dr. Ani, utilizing the 7-step integrative healing model. The team donated flower essences, and essential oils to all the stakeholders involved. The team also conducted workshops on empathetic listening: Margo Sargsyan shared the Four Agreements by Miguel Ruiz, and Romance Albarqawi shared tips for nurturing confident children, directly addressing the emotional and physical needs of the community. The team emphasized the importance of holistic healing, introducing practices such as meditation, empathetic listening, Saoul-Surfing, and the use of flower essences and essential oils. These practices were incorporated into workshops across various locations, including Light Children’s Ministry and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization. **2. Community Support in Slums:** Providing essential supplies like food, doors, and educational scholarships had a profound impact. The immediate relief of basic needs allowed for

more effective engagement in emotional and mental health support activities. **3. Educational Support and Scholarships:** The team spoke with children about values like love, respect, sharing, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and gratitude at Trinity School, distributing MeaningfulWorld’s friendship bracelets to foster a sense of community and belonging. The team met with the Director of Education of the City of Kampala to develop a comprehensive training program for teachers. **4. Collaborative Programs with Universities:** The team collaborated with 6 universities, including Makerere University, Kampala International University and Kyambogo University, to integrate mental health practices into their curricula. Workshops on managing negative emotions and meditation were conducted, and resources like books and essential oils were donated to support ongoing mental health education. **5. Supporting Mental Health Professionals:** At the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, the team worked with seasoned psychologists, focusing on preventing secondary trauma and providing tools for post-traumatic growth, as well as providing private supervisions with therapists in practice.



We developed and offered the following sustainable and long-term programs:

- Dr. Kalayjian was invited to **be a Visiting Professorship** program with Nkumba University, recognizing the value of ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Dr. Faith at Kampala International University expressed interest in **working together on research initiatives related to mental health and community well-being** in Uganda and will be joining our research team for a collaborative publication.
- Makerere University **will be joining monthly support groups and trainings**, indicating a commitment to implementing and expanding the 7-step integrative healing model within their community outreach programs.
- Planted healing herbs of lavender, rosemary, lemongrass, and palm trees for shade, and ecological sustainability.
- Began the campaign “Uganda is my home,” for ecological beautification & health.

The team made the following offerings:

- o The team awarded **6 scholarships** to girl children in the slums, ensuring access to education despite economic hardships.
- o In Namuwongo-Kanyogoga slum, the team provided food supplies, such as rice and beans, to over **100 people**.
- o The team also donated **4 doors** to single mother families to protect the women, improving their security and reducing vulnerability to sexual abuse.
- o Several family received **a plant** as a gift (rosemary, lavender, lemongrass, or a palm tree) to plant next to their homes.
- o **Training of Trainers (ToT)** program will be discussed with the Director of Education Mr. Wafula Ivan and Madam Rita at the City Hall of Kampala. This department of the city council works with 10 districts of Kampala with 72 state schools and 30-50 students per teacher.

- **Support groups and monthly training** were established to ensure the sustainability of these practices at the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization. Zoom meetings will be held to expand support groups.
- All the participants of the program also were gifted with **Essential oils, Flower Remedies, earrings, books and clothing.**

Recommendations

Based on the mission's findings, the MeaningfulWorld team proposes the following recommendations:

1. Enhance Mental Health Resources: Increase funding and support for mental health programs, particularly in underserved areas. Training local mental health professionals using the integrative healing model can create sustainability. **2. Address Basic Needs:** Prioritize the provision of essential resources such as food, secure housing, and educational support. Partnerships with local organizations and international donors can help bridge the gap in basic needs. **3. Promote Holistic Healing Practices:** Encourage the integration of holistic practices, including meditation and empathetic listening, into mental health programs. These practices have shown to significantly reduce stress and improve overall well-being. **4. Empower Communities Through Education:** Invest in educational initiatives that empower both children and adults. Literacy programs, vocational training, and scholarships can provide long-term benefits and break the cycle of poverty.



Gratitude

The MeaningfulWorld team extends heartfelt gratitude to Anne Tweheyo, Bishop Stuart University Faculty of Nursing & Health Science; Rose Kyarimpa, Buhumiro Counseling Center; Pastor Jacob Bole, Christ Glory Church and the Namuwongo-Kanyogoga Slum; Shakiro Iluku Joyce and Professor Faith, Kampala International University; Miss Mollen and Dr. Judith, Kyambogo University; Dr. Akram Zziwa, Nkumba University; Dr. Loyce, Makerere University; Crystal Sam Kawaala, Trinity Family Nursery & Primary School; Taban Edward, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization; Ivan Luwaga, Light Children's Ministry; Honorable Mr. Wafula Ivan and Madam Rita, Kampala City Hall; Nicolas Taso, GNTV; John Bukenya, TM Director in East Africa; and Isaac Nimu, PACS Counseling Center.

The MeaningfulWorld team expresses utmost gratitude as well to the FES Flower Essence Society and TM Transcendental Meditation as well.

This mission underscored the power of empathy, holistic healing, and community spirit in addressing mental health challenges. The MeaningfulWorld team remains committed to supporting and empowering the people of Uganda in their journey towards improved mental health and well-being

Gallery of the Mission



Doonating doors for women in slums-Gifting Friendship bracelets in Mbale - Dancing with joy with Dr. Faith



Showing our Friendship bracelets ~ Planting trees & installing doors of security in slums ~ donating a set of our books

Your continued tax-deductible donations are appreciated!

<https://meaningfulworld.com/get-involved/donation>

Founded in 1990, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld, charitable organization affiliated with the United Nations Dept. of Global Communication, has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach professionals as well as responding to three decades of global and local disasters. ATOP is committed to health and global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory, peace, forgiveness, consciousness research, internship, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service the self and humanity. Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach Teams have helped rehabilitate survivors from over 51 countries, making a daily difference in people's lives helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing and meaning-making through post trauma growth, resilience, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, mind-body-eco-spirit health, visionary leadership, empowerment, and artful collaboration through a new world view.

Our Motto: When one helps another, BOTH become stronger