

Name: StrongMinds  
Location: Uganda, Zambia, US  
Founded in: 2013  
Team size: 12 (7 volunteers)  
2019 Funding: \$5,300,000



Organization website



Founder's Pledge evaluation



## About Us

StrongMinds is a social enterprise founded in 2013 that provides life-changing mental health services to impoverished African women. Since many African women cannot even begin to tackle issues like poverty and economic development until they overcome depression, StrongMinds provides treatment for women who suffer from this pervasive and debilitating mental illness. By providing group talk therapy delivered by community health workers, StrongMinds is the only organization scaling a cost-effective solution to the depression epidemic in Africa.

## Treatment Model

### Group Talk Therapy to Treat Depression

IPT-G is a simple, proven and cost-efficient community-based model to treat depression that focuses on relationships among group members. Groups are led by a facilitator over a period of 8-12 weeks to help members identify the root causes and triggers of their depression, and formulate strategies to overcome those triggers. Since depression is episodic and recurrent throughout most people's lives, these newly acquired skills have both immediate and long-term preventive impacts for the sufferer.

### Adapting IPT-G to impoverished women in sub-Saharan Africa

Since 2013, StrongMinds has been focused on creating a model that is effective in treating depression and easy to scale to reach the most vulnerable women with depression in sub-Saharan Africa. This drive has led to the creation of a model of intervention that is uniquely StrongMinds.

Using Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G) as the foundation, StrongMinds has adapted and enriched this approach with specific role-playing activities and interactive visuals and charts. Each talk therapy group runs for 8-10 sessions, lasting 60-90 minutes each.

The sessions are divided into three phases, each with distinct objectives:

- **Initial Phase:** This phase focuses on creating initial bonds between group members and building rapport with one another so women feel comfortable sharing personal information and discussing the reasons for their depression.
- **Middle Phase:** This phase ensures that all members are actively engaged and helping each other by making suggestions regarding one another's problems. This is also the phase where important progress is made for members to fully understand all the symptoms and triggers of depression.
- **Termination Phase:** This phase focuses on preparing members to end formal sessions. Members are reminded to continually identify their own triggers of depression in the future and what they should do to respond. Individual action plans are created and reviewed.

The StrongMinds model is achieving the same results as academic studies. Women who complete our talk therapy groups not only resolve their current depressive state — they also learn coping strategies to help prevent future depressive episodes.

Roughly 75% of the groups continue to meet after formal sessions conclude. This continual connection allows the women to work through their depression triggers together as they arise. In addition, many groups form Village Saving and Loans Associations, which provide financial stability and allow the women to better provide for their families.

## Is the intervention cost-effective?

We estimate that StrongMinds prevent the equivalent of one year of severe major depressive disorder for a woman at a cost of \$200–\$299, with a best guess estimate of \$248.