

SLF gives desperately needed support in
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

HEAL Africa (HEAL means Health, Education, Action, Leadership). Founded in Goma by Congolese orthopaedic surgeon Kaserika (Jo) Lusi and his social activist wife Lyn, HEAL Africa Hospital is a direct response to the horrific conditions of civil war and desperate poverty. Today the hospital has a Congolese staff of 28 doctors, 54 nurses, 340+ community development advocates and educators, a small administrative team, and hundreds of Congolese volunteers.

The 197-bed hospital is one of only three referral hospitals in the D.R.C. It provides general surgery, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, paediatrics, and internal medicine as well as established radiological and pathology services. It also serves as a centre for healthcare and research, and for training doctors and healthcare professionals.



They send medical practitioners and community development workers to distant villages to support local health facilities with services they are not equipped to deliver. Their public health activities attract hundreds of people seeking care, who never would have had the chance to travel to Goma. During the several weeks that medical staff spend in each village, they also provide training for the local health professionals. The services range from public health education on hygiene, AIDS/HIV prevention, surgery to correct clubfeet, and major operations. The hospital focuses on children born with HIV positive mothers, those who are confirmed HIV positive, and those who have been orphaned as a result of neglect by caregivers upon contracting the disease.

They provide personal counseling and medical assistance. The outreach staff also conducts education projects in communities that focus on prevention, support, and reducing the impact of HIV in a child's life when they are born from infected mothers.



Fondation Panzi

The Panzi model offers compassionate, holistic healing and personalised care, to treat women and girls who have been raped and suffered extreme bodily harm. It offers not just physical healing but restoration of the soul as well. Some patients are afterwards lodged at Dorcas House, if they can't return home (either because of continuing violence or because of stigma. Rape survivors are routinely shunned by husbands, parents and communities.). Here they learn to feel safe again, trust others, and gain a sense of self-worth and love for their bodies. At Dorcas House they receive education and training and help to set up micro-businesses and start life anew. They get legal assistance and education about their human rights as well as life-affirming music therapy.



General Referral Hospital of Panzi

The Panzi Hospital in Bukavu was founded in 1999 by CEPAC, the Pentecostal Churches in Central Africa. It specializes in treating survivors of violence, most of whom have been [sexually abused](#). Director **Dr. Denis Mukwege** has been operating on survivors of sexual violence for over a decade and is one of only two doctors qualified to perform this reconstructive surgery.



Dr. Mukwege

He published an analysis of the sexual violence crisis in eastern DRC in Public Library of Science Medicine in Dec. 2009, based on his extensive, first-hand experience.

Dr. Mukwege is the recipient of the *UN 2008 Human Rights Award*, the 2014 [Sakharov Prize](#), and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

The hospital was initially built for 120 beds, but the total number of beds is now 350, out of which 200 are devoted to sexual violence survivors. On average, Panzi admits 410 patients per month and is currently running at maximum capacity.

Stephanie Nolen wrote, “ Here, Thérèse takes her place in line, along with 80 women, waiting for surgery to rebuild her vagina. Dr. Denis Mukwege can repair only five women a week. The air is thick with flies. It reeks from women with fistula: rips in the vaginal wall where savage rape tore out chunks of flesh separating the bladder and rectum from the vagina. Yet Thérèse, 47, is happier than she’s been in years. “Until I came here, I had no hope I could be helped,” she says.



Therese

City of Joy



The City of Joy is a transformational leadership community for women survivors of violence, located in Bukavu. Conceived, owned, and run by local Congolese, the City of Joy first opened its doors in June 2011, healing women from their past trauma through therapy and life skills programming while providing them with the essential ingredients needed to move forward in life – love and community.

Since 2011, 1562 women have graduated from City of Joy, healed, been nurtured, learned new skills, empowered themselves and joined in a network of love and revolution. They have become leaders in their communities. They are no longer stigmatized for being raped. The idea was homegrown. Dr Mukwenge of Panzi Hospital invited Eve Ensler, author of “The Vagina Monologues” to meet with women survivors of violence. She was interested in knowing what solutions they felt would work in the face of such terrible violence. They told her what they wanted was a place to live in community so that they could heal. They wanted a place to turn their pain into power.

[You can watch “City of Joy: the film “on Netflix.](#)



Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko Jeremie Safari is E.D.

Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko is a not-for-profit organisation that was created to promote human rights and support morale and health of LGBTQ + sexual minorities in the DRC

Jeremie writes, “We formed in October 2010 in Bukavu in a social context punctuated by violence, discrimination and disregard for the human rights of LGBTQI people in the region.

The services we provide include identification and awareness people on HIV/AIDS, human rights and behavior change. We distribute condoms and lubricating gels to people in the city of Bukavu and the territories, provide care for sexually transmitted Infections, and also voluntary counseling and testing.

We organise round table discussions on certain laws of the DRC, in particular the family code and the penal code. We collect and document cases of violations of rights of people and provide legal assistance in cases of violations of rights. And we provide family mediation in cases of rejection and family abandonment of LGBTQI people.”



Jeremie says, "There is not any legislation that criminalizes homosexuality and therefore it's not a crime in DRC. But the police use article 176 of the Congolese Penal Code that criminalizes activities 'against good morale' to oppress the LGBTQI+ Community.

This leads to blackmail, harassment and discrimination of all kinds from many different places, including exclusion from schooling and health care, homelessness, sexual assault, death threats, illegal jailing and many more infractions on human rights".