SHiNE

Sharing HaRT in New Expanses

Building Evidence for Trauma Healing

Women and girls impacted by human trafficking often experience long-term mental health challenges that can undermine their ability to live dignified lives and fully engage in their communities. Yet quality mental health support remains out of reach for many survivors around the world. Move with HaRT was created to help address this gap. Using a mind-body approach to trauma recovery, the program is designed specifically for women and girls in low-resource settings. The SHiNE (Sharing HaRT in New Expanses) Initiative was launched to better understand its potential impact and answer a simple but urgent question:

How can we better support survivors to experience healing, connection, and wellbeing?

What is Move with HaRT?

Move with HaRT (created by Healing and Resilience after Trauma) is a group-based program that combines yoga, mindfulness, breathing practices, relaxation techniques, and supportive discussion. Over twelve theme-based sessions, it aims to create a safe space where survivors can move together, deepen somatic and emotional awareness, and experience collective healing. Designed for community-based delivery by non-clinicians, it offers a scalable model for expanding access to compassionate mental health care.

A Rigorous Survivor-Centered Study

SHiNE is the first randomized controlled trial to evaluate a mental health intervention for survivors of human trafficking.[1] Conducted between 2023 and 2025, the initiative engaged more than 300 women and girls to compare Move with HaRT programming with standard services (e.g., psycho-social support, vocational training, etc.). The study included three rounds of survey data and qualitative interviews. A Survivor Advisory Group helped shape the study, ensuring that lived experience informed key decisions throughout.

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Grounded in feminist values, SHiNE prioritized collaboration, shared learning, and ethical survivor engagement. Participant safety—including trauma-informed practices and a comprehensive suicide risk mitigation strategy—was prioritized at every stage. The collaboration brought together practitioners, researchers from across disciplines, and survivor leaders with a shared commitment to advancing knowledge at the intersection of violence, mental health, and healing justice.[2]

Promising Results

Preliminary findings demonstrate the potential of mind-body approaches to support mental health recovery and wellbeing. Study highlights:

- Move with HaRT showed strong acceptability and resonance: over 90% of participants ranked the program as a 9 or 10 (out of 10), with 10 defined as "a life-changing experience."
- Participants in Move with HaRT experienced improvements in anxiety, depression, and psychological distress sooner than those receiving standard services alone. Further, findings suggest that benefits were particularly strong for individuals experiencing the most severe mental health symptoms.
- Qualitative findings provided deeper insight into participants' experiences of change. Women and girls described greater emotional awareness and emotion regulation skills, enhanced personal agency, and renewed hope for the future. Many also reported improvements in physical wellbeing (e.g., reduced pain, more energy and better sleep) and deeper connection with family and peers.

"Ever since I joined this program, I used to tell myself that indeed this is the kind of life that I should have. Different from the first one–which was so full of anger, sadness, and regret. Right now, because of Move with HaRT, what I want is to have a permanent job so I am able to support my daughter and brothers, to enable us to have a good life. And I am very expectant that it will be so."

– SHiNE participant

Looking Ahead

SHiNE represents an important step toward strengthening evidence-based mental health support for survivors of human trafficking and other forms of violence. While much work remains, the study demonstrates the promise of a scalable, community-based model that does not require specialized mental health expertise. Findings also suggest that mind-body approaches such as Move with HaRT—focused on movement, embodiment, and connection—are culturally resonant and feasible to integrate into existing programming. As analysis and dissemination activities continue, HaRT is working to ensure these insights contribute to more effective and accessible pathways to healing for survivors worldwide.

2 SHiNE was a collaboration between Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT), the University of Alabama, IPA Uganda, a Survivor Advisory Group, and seven anti-trafficking organizations: Dwelling Place, Everfree, Hope for Justice, Rahab Uganda, Set Her Free, the Remnant Generation and Uganda Youth Development Link.