



Annual Report 2017



Dear Friends of Common Threads Project

The past year has been a time of significant growth for Common Threads Project. In addition to continuing our projects in Nepal and Bosnia, we launched an exciting project in South Kivu,

Democratic Republic of Congo. We are honored to be collaborating with Dr. Denis Mukwege and the Panzi Foundation to introduce our therapeutic approach where the incidence of sexual violence is unimaginably high.

The intensive training that we conducted in Bukavu in August was a powerful experience for all of us: Congolese clinicians immersed themselves in Common Threads Project methodology, worked on their own trauma healing (all who live in this context are survivors of war and trauma), and diligently prepared themselves to lead women's circles. And for the first time, despite my initial resistance, and out of necessity, we trained several men to be facilitators. When they demonstrated how skillful, compassionate, and artistic they were, I had to let go of my own sexist prejudices! I guess we all learn a lot about ourselves during this process.

There are now three circles running in DRC: one at Maison Dorcas (the residential treatment wing at the Panzi Foundation), and two in the mining villages of Kamituga and Luhwindja. Four more circles are due to begin this Spring in DRC. It has been an amazing launch this year!

2017 finished with an expansion of the Nepal program. You can read about that story in the special section on Nepal in the report that follows.

All this success is thanks to your generosity and responsiveness to the urgent needs of survivors of sexual violence, trauma, war and displacement. We put out the call, and you responded with heartfelt support and financial contributions. We went from \$17,000 in individual gifts in 2016 to \$45,000 in 2017. You took a risk in supporting the project in DRC – and we succeeded! We could not be more grateful, for as you will learn in this report, your investment yielded a high return. Along with our partners in the field, beneficiaries and facilitators who experience the intervention firsthand, and colleagues who learn about our work at scientific meetings, you can see that your investment brings a high return.

It's clear that the recovery women experience when they participate in Common Threads Project therapy is transformative. Not only do their mental health symptoms reduce substantially, but daily functioning, coping capacity, social relationships, sense of self, and personal empowerment build throughout the program.

Our interventions are also cost effective: In the first and most expensive round of a project, it costs about \$8 per face-to-face client hour for group therapy. Once the therapists have been trained they can continue leading groups at an increasingly reduced cost with each subsequent round of intervention.

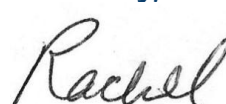
You have helped build something urgently needed: an intervention that is appealing to participants, efficacious, and remarkably cost effective. Your support has made it possible for us to achieve this success and we are deeply grateful for that.

As you know, we live in a world where sexual violence and its accompanying trauma are sadly prevalent. There is massive need and growing interest in the innovative healing approach we offer. But before we can scale up and address the recovery needs of more women through additional projects, it's imperative that we first build a strong organizational platform that will sustain our work. In 2018, with your help, we can create the infrastructure needed to take Common Threads Project to the next level. So I ask you to consider reaffirming your commitment to Common Threads by making a donation on our website www.commonthreadspj.net or by check. Our mailing address is: 25 Plaza Street West, Brooklyn NY 11217. In addition, please help us spread the word about Common Threads Project by sharing this report with your friends. We need to increase our base of support and you can be important ambassadors for us!

If you would like to speak with me about our work or a contribution I am happy to receive your call at 301 928 7907 or to respond to your questions by email (cohen@commonthreadspj.net).

Thank you, again, for your generosity.

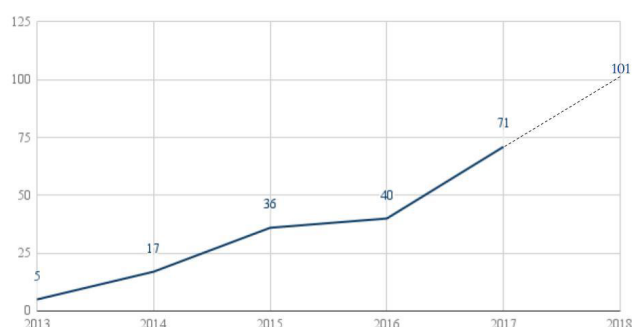
Sincerely,



A Year of Growth

Figures shown are the cumulative numbers of facilitators trained and women served since the program's inception.

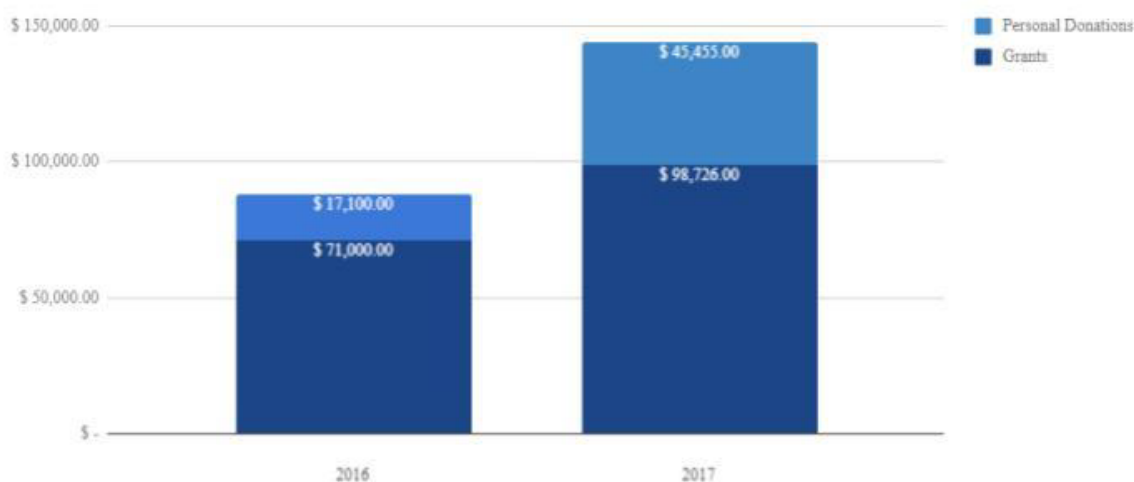
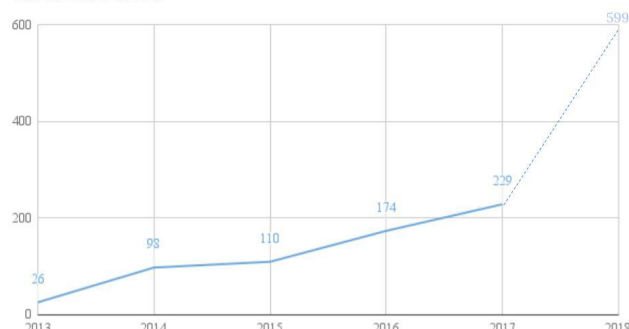
Facilitators Trained



2017 saw our largest increase in facilitators trained and survivors served. The new program launch in DRC included the training of sixteen new facilitators, and expansions in Nepal led to an additional fifteen facilitators completing Common Threads training. A total of fifty-five new survivors began Common Threads women's circles this past year, in both Nepal and DRC.

Donations from individual supporters of Common Threads nearly tripled in 2017! Individual people giving what they can is what makes it possible for this organization to provide opportunities for trauma recovery around the globe. We also rely on grants from foundations and multilateral organizations, including The Oak Foundation, the Pro Victimis Foundation, and the Ville de Geneve. It is vital that this growth continue going forward in order to sustain Common Threads, and provide more women with recovery opportunities.

Survivors Served



2017 In Review

January

Nepal project completes Phase 1 pilot with earthquake survivors



February

Unveiling of our new Common Threads Project logo!



March

Conducted facilitators' training at Medica Zenica in Bosnia



April

Common Threads Project received 501(c)(3) status in the US

And formed a partnership with the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation



May

Launched new Common Threads Project website
Dr Cohen presented at the North American Refugee Health Conference in Toronto



June

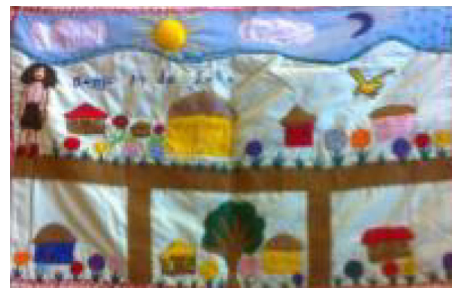
Dr, Rachel Cohen and Lisa Oarlock helped facilitate first global meeting for survivor/advocates in Geneva with Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation



2017 In Review

July

Celebrating 5 years of Common Threads projects around the world!



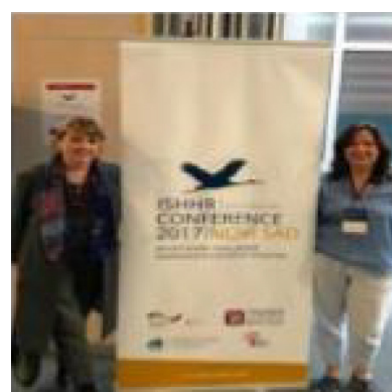
August

Conducted facilitators' training in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo



September

Psychologists Cynthia Uccello and Catherine Butterly presented on Common Threads at the International Society for Health and Human Rights conference



October

Kamba Moja (Swahili for Common Threads) circles launched in three sites in Democratic Republic of the Congo; Bukavu, Kamituga, and Luhwindja



November

Dr. Rachel Cohen presented Common Threads's approach at the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health of Women in Athens, Greece



December

To gear up for program expansion in Nepal, we trained 15 more clinicians in Kathmandu



Empowerment In Nepal

When the devastating 2015 earthquakes hit Nepal, nearly 9,000 people died, 3.5 million people lost their homes, and countless numbers lost their livelihoods and communities. Thousands still struggle to recover from severe distress and depression. These are also the kinds of conditions that heighten rates of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Our partner, TPO Nepal, has been conducting groups for refugee trauma survivors since our Geneva-based Common Threads Project branch initiated training there in 2014. With a track record of success with trauma survivors, and with a grant from UNICEF, TPO Nepal is responding to the overwhelming needs of earthquake survivors in the hardest hit districts. To help them expand the reach of Common Threads, we held a training for 15 new facilitators in Kathmandu in December 2017. The Ministry of Health wanted to participate as well, and sent some of their staff to the training. These clinicians will launch Common Threads Project women's circles in 7 districts beginning in 2018.

"We cried a lot during that process and realised that everyone was going through their own journey and that we were not alone."

Nepali women's circle participant



The Nepal project provides an inspiring model for growth and sustainability. When we began in 2014, Jamuna Shrestha and Indira Pradhan were two of the excellent therapists we first trained. They have continued to conduct women's circles, and supervise other clinicians (as we mentored and supervised them). Most recently, they co-led the training of new therapists with Dr. Cohen. And now the torch has been passed! In the future they will be able to lead their own Common Threads Project facilitator training course.

Similarly, Ghazala, Rizwana, and Asiya, three Pakistani refugee women who participated as beneficiaries in our first circles, have come up through the ranks. During their recovery process, they overcame a great deal of adversity and are now thriving, serving as witnesses to the power of Common Threads Project's healing power and exemplifying "post traumatic growth." In the aftermath of the earthquakes they could be found outside in the neighborhood leading stress reduction exercises they had learned in Common Threads. So eager were they to help other women that they began to assist Jamuna and Indira and co-facilitate subsequent Common Threads circles. They have become leaders in their community and even started their own sewing business. They now provide for themselves and their families. In December, they joined Rachel, Jamuna, and Indira to help teach a day of training new facilitators. This is our empowerment dream come true!

New Partnership in DRC

Common Threads Project is proud to have begun our association with Dr. Denis Mukwege, one of the world's most renowned physicians working to help survivors of sexual and gender based violence. In 2017, we launched our program at his clinic in South Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rachel Cohen and art therapist Tally Tripp (an extraordinary addition to our clinical team) conducted an eighty hour experiential training in the Common Threads approach for fifteen Congolese mental health practitioners. This enthusiastic group gave Common Threads its Swahili name: "Kamba Moja" (a thread that unites).



These skilled facilitators lead Kamba Moja women's circles at Maison Dorcas at the Panzi Foundation, in Bukavu, and in Kamituga and Luhwindja, mining zones where sexual violence and exploitation are most extreme. The Phase I women's circles are deeply engaged in the process of healing, and preparations are underway for Phase 2. Dr. Cohen plans to return to DRC for a site visit in early 2018, and a second round of Kamba Moja circles should begin in March.

Deepening the Work in Bosnia

The women's circles in our Bosnia locations continued to move through the treatment process in 2017. To offer additional support to our Bosnia facilitators, our team of experts returned to Zenica to conduct a follow-up training in our treatment approach. Bosnian facilitators had an opportunity to share their experiences in Phase 1, discuss the progress of the women in their circles, deepen their understanding of the methodology, and prepare for Phase 2. Special attention was also paid to secondary trauma and self-care strategies for overworked and highly stressed local clinicians.

**"It was hard for me, deep within my soul....
For me, this is psychotherapy.
This sewing here, is something that is healing me."**
Bosnian women's circle participant

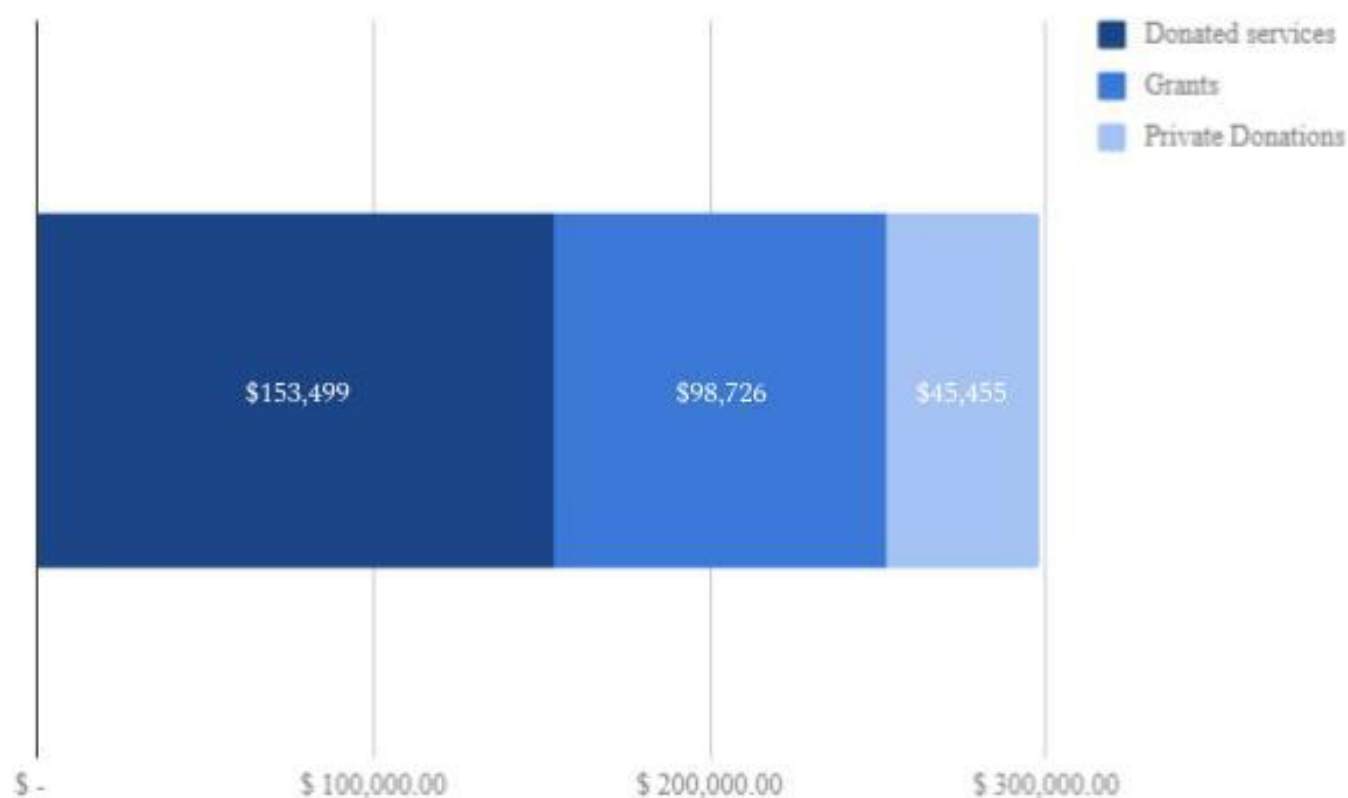
In addition to establishing the program in this region, research continues with participants in order to measure the effects of the Common Threads approach. Quantitative data was collected at the close of Phase 1, and over forty individual interviews were conducted, transcribed and translated. The quantitative data from Phase I has been collected and entered by our hard-working evaluation team led by Mirsada Hasic, and is being analyzed by research consultant Ivan Komproe. This preliminary research shows promising indicators of improvement for our participants, including a positive impact on mood, symptoms of distress, coping capacity and connection with others. Further reporting can be expected in 2018 after we are able to collect and analyze the Phase 2 data.

2017 Financial Report

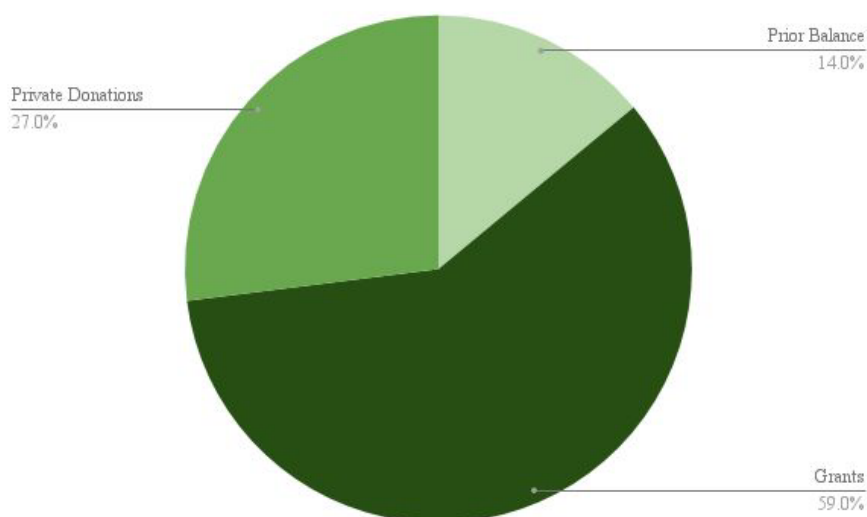
Thanks to the generous donations from our supporters, revenue for Common Threads increased by nearly forty percent in 2017. This was due in large part to personal donations, which increased from just over \$17,000 in 2016 to nearly \$50,000! Coupled with grants from the Oak Foundation, Pro Victimis Foundation, and Ville de Geneve, the total gross revenue came to over \$167,000, which allowed our organization to expand the program in Nepal, as well as launch a new program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Nearly half of the organization's expenses were program costs, meaning over \$54,000 went directly to training facilitators and running women's circles. Administrative costs (22.7%) and general operations (4.8%) totaled under \$32,000. Our spending in program development and has allowed us to explore new opportunities that will lead to scaling up and expanding the project into new locations. Program development costs (12.2%) were just over \$14,000. Monitoring and evaluation (13.9%) cost the organization about \$16,000; spending in this area has allowed us to monitor the effectiveness of the Common Threads methodology in facilitating trauma recovery and post-traumatic growth.

Common Threads Project continues to rely on the generosity of professionals who donate a great deal of time and effort through pro bono work. In 2017, the value of services donated to this organization was over \$150,000. The growth and success Common Threads has seen in the past year would not have been possible without the staff members, contractors, and volunteers who were willing to donate part or all of their pay. The goal of Common Threads is to continue to grow our revenue, so that it will be possible to have a greater number of paid positions within the organization.



2017 Financial Report

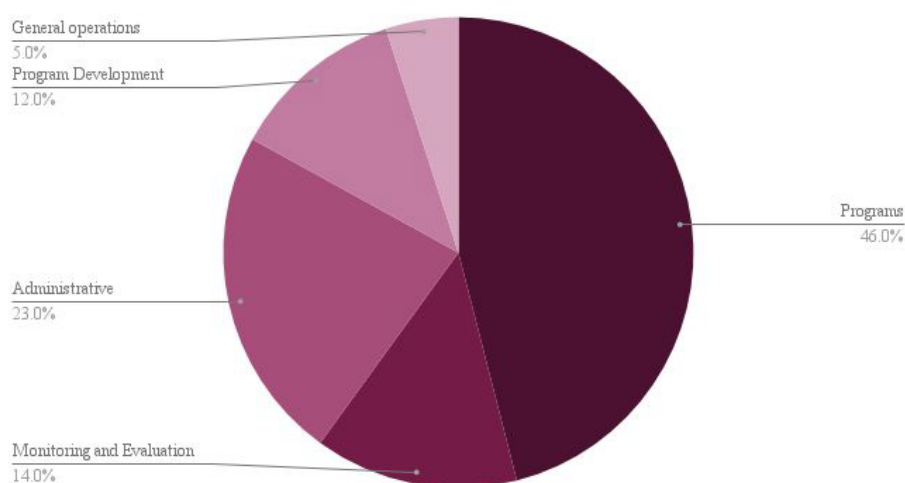


Revenue

Prior Balance	\$23,211
Grants	\$98,726
Private Donations	\$45,455
Gross revenue	\$167,392

Expenditures

Programs	\$54,007
Monitoring and Evaluation	\$16,091
Administrative	\$26,317
Program Development	\$14,136
General operations	\$5,610
Total expenses	\$116,164
Accounts balance	\$51,228



Thank you

Common Threads Project is entirely funded by private donations and grants. The following individuals donated to Common Threads in 2017.

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Common Threads Project is grateful for grants from the following organizations:



**The
Statue
Foundation**

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