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Foundation



# Strategic Plan

## 2024-2028

[www.mukwegefoundation.org](http://www.mukwegefoundation.org)

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# Introduction

## Our Vision, Mission and Theory of Change

The Mukwege Foundation's vision is a future where conflict-related sexual violence is no longer seen as inevitable but is recognised for what it is: a crime that should have consequences. We want the international community to draw a red line against wartime sexual violence and strengthen its accountability mechanisms against states and individuals.

Our mission is to support survivors' demands for a world where sexual violence as a weapon of war is no longer tolerated and bears consequences for individual perpetrators and states. We work for a future where survivors receive the holistic care and compensation they need to rebuild their lives. We create opportunities for survivors to speak out and be heard, and, where they can, organise to create change, influence policies, and demand justice and accountability.

Our goal is to change the collective response to conflict-related sexual violence. Our Theory of Change is centred on survivors, placing their needs and priorities first. To heal from the harms of sexual violence, victims need to regain agency and control over their lives, their decisions, and their bodies. Their needs are complex and interconnected, and the solutions need to be designed with this in mind.

Our approach is survivor-centred. Survivor-centredness recognises that survivors are not passive recipients of assistance but active participants in everything that concerns them. Their voices should be amplified so that they can meaningfully participate in any processes and decisions

that may affect their lives, including the policies and programmes that aim to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. Adopting a survivor-centred approach reflects our commitment to accompany survivors on their healing journey, to transform trauma through compassionate holistic care and to create opportunities for survivors to become agents of change. We believe survivors themselves are best positioned to define their needs and solutions. We work to create the conditions that will allow survivors to take a leading role in fighting for their rights.

### **The Mukwege Foundation sees three interconnected strategies as essential for this change to happen:**

1. Promote access to holistic, quality care for survivors of sexual violence worldwide;
2. Support survivor-led activism for solidarity and recognition, and to end stigma;
3. Advocate for justice and accountability, including survivor-centred reparations and redress.

The underlying assumption for all these strategies is that the collective silence and stigma around sexual violence is what makes it such an effective weapon. It places the burden of shame on victims and their family members, it enables impunity, and it prevents victims from seeking support.



Our strategies reinforce each other, creating an enabling environment where survivors can genuinely become agents of change:

- When victims have access to compassionate, holistic, quality care, which meets all of their needs, they can recover and heal from trauma, and regain their personal agency.
- When survivors are given safe spaces to share their experiences among peers, and have their stories heard, they can support each other and start to reclaim their power.
- When survivors know their rights, and can voice their needs, they can become agents of change. They can organise themselves to claim their rights to justice and reparations.
- When survivors and their communities speak out about sexual violence, they can break through society's collective silence, and challenge deeply rooted taboos which blame victims, exclude them from decision-making, and leave them powerless to change their situation.
- When survivors' experiences and testimonies are documented on their own terms, the harms that they have suffered can be publicly acknowledged, and the widespread denial of these atrocities can be challenged.
- When survivor-centred accountability and transitional justice mechanisms are in place, the cycle of impunity and recurrence can be broken.

## Opportunities and Challenges

This new Strategic Plan draws from the successes and insights of the previous 2021-2023 strategic plan period. Through discussions with the Mukwege Foundation (MF) team, management, survivors, and the Supervisory Council, we have undertaken a thorough process to review our work, to look forward and to consider our organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Our joint conclusion is that there is no need for drastic changes in the new strategic plan period.

Our Theory of Change and mission statement are still highly relevant, and the context does not require us to radically adapt the analyses and strategic underpinning in the new Strategic Plan 2024-2028. It will therefore be a continuation of the organisation's general direction of travel – with fine-tuning where and when appropriate, and at a slower pace of growth in the first two years to allow us to capture the lessons learned and further strengthen our organisational backbone.

The results of the previous Strategic Plan have validated our Theory of Change. We have been able to make real progress both in the acknowledgement of the importance of our survivor-centred way of working and in recognising the importance of access to holistic care for survivors. With the Red Line Initiative, we have also made important strides forward in our global advocacy for increased state accountability to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

**Our three interconnected strategies – holistic care, survivor-led activism, advocacy for justice and accountability –**

**are increasingly recognised as the key strategies required to address survivor needs and enable meaningful survivor activism.**

The establishment and ongoing support of SEMA (the Global Network of Victims and Survivors to End Wartime Sexual Violence), and the close and specific working relationship with local and national survivor movements, have contributed to the increased recognition of the importance of a survivor-centred way of working and the concept "nothing about us without us".

**"Nothing about us  
without us"**

The Mukwege Foundation is increasingly recognised as an important actor in this field. Our leadership in working with survivors and our survivor-centred approach continues to set us apart. While we identify the survivor-centred approach as an organisational strength, we acknowledge the need to provide a fuller definition and methodology of what this entails. We will articulate this approach more clearly in our communications, and in toolkits and training materials connected to our programmes, not only to ensure we apply this systematically throughout our work, but also to be a more powerful advocate for this approach.

In today's global humanitarian and development sectors, there is also increased recognition and evidence that holistic care is the pathway for survivors to healing. However, its effective

implementation remains a significant challenge.

This challenge is also faced by the Mukwege Foundation. One of our primary obstacles lies in ensuring that holistic care — encompassing the four pillars of medical care, psychosocial assistance, access to justice and socioeconomic support — is accessible to every survivor we encounter. This becomes especially challenging within national network support programmes where we are currently not able to consistently offer survivors access to all four pillars.

To address this, we are committed to intensifying our advocacy to promote wider and more readily available quality holistic care. To be true to our mission, we need to align our three interconnected strategies more fully — holistic care, survivor-led activism, and the pursuit of justice and accountability — across all our programmes.

We will develop country strategy documents that will guide our multi-year engagement, based on a thorough understanding of the context, of survivor needs and of contextual opportunities. These country strategies will be the basis for holistic care and national survivor network support programming and serve as the basis for concept notes and other donor communication.

Building on these opportunities, and addressing the challenges, the Mukwege Foundation will continue to expand and intensify its programmes and advocacy. To expand our current work on holistic care, to mobilise survivors' agency and to promote survivor-centric transitional justice, we will further strengthen our operational, technical and staff capacities and nurture our strong working relationship with Panzi

Foundation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It will also be essential to continue to support Panzi in growing its capacity to embark on the joint mission of expanding the holistic care model beyond the borders of DRC.

The establishment of the Global Survivors Fund in Geneva in 2019 as a result of the dedicated advocacy spearheaded by Dr Mukwege and Nadia Murad (co-laureates of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize), alongside SEMA, has opened up significant opportunities for survivor-centred interim reparation projects. Our continued strong partnership with the Global Survivors Fund will create opportunities to support local survivor networks in countries worldwide.

Fundraising has been identified as a key strategic challenge for the upcoming strategic plan period. While project funding has been instrumental in allowing the organisation to grow its programme portfolio, it also became clear that it is impossible and undesirable to be over-reliant on earmarked project funds.

As most of our current project funding comes from Western governments, the current political climate in Europe and the US poses a risk for the future availability and priority setting of this funding stream. Despite greater recognition of the importance of addressing gender inequality, including sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, in Feminist Foreign Policies and UN resolutions, we do not see this reflected in an increase in available funding.

In addition, although the "localisation agenda" is a positive development, which could be well-aligned with the survivor-centred approach by targeting funding to grassroots organisations such as local survivor networks, the benefits of the

model of accompaniment and support provided by the Mukwege Foundation — and the peer-led learning and solidarity of the SEMA global network — are excluded from this funding.

To address these challenges, the need to further diversify our income streams and increase the percentage of unearmarked funding in relation to our total income is paramount. This will not only allow us to maintain our core mission and values but also to run our organisation in a responsible and sustainable way. Over the next strategic plan period we will therefore strive for increased diversity of donors for project-based funding, while at the same time aiming for a minimum of 25% of our total income to be unearmarked. We realise with the overall increase in our projected income that this will be a challenge and will need significant investment in both senior management as well as fundraising capacity to ensure that we succeed during this strategic plan period.

**This Strategic Plan is not just about our Theory of Change and our mission, it's also about our people.**

Our dedicated and motivated team share a common set of values and a strong commitment to our survivor-centred approach. As a small, relatively young organisation, we possess the agility to adapt and the opportunity to evolve. Mirroring the fast-paced growth of our programme portfolio during the last strategic plan period, the programme team has rapidly expanded. Due to this growth, the development and capacity of the Foundation's operational processes and team warrant our attention.

Organisational growth necessitates robust onboarding processes and guidance for new staff. The risk of losing institutional

knowledge underscores the importance of preserving and strengthening our internal procedures and processes as well as capturing the lessons learned and strengthening our institutional knowledge base.

Amidst these challenges, we will continue to leverage our strengths — a growing recognition as an expertise hub, a strong SEMA with survivor champions, increased acknowledgement of the model of holistic care in responding to the needs of survivors, and strengthened capacity of national survivor networks to speak out and create change. These strengths serve as beacons, guiding our path and reminding us of our potential to make an even greater impact.

Building upon the lessons learned and reflections on our previous Strategic Plan, we are confident in the direction and goals set out in our Strategic Plan for 2024-2028. This plan, outlined below, propels us forward on our journey. It ensures increased access to holistic care for survivors, amplifies survivors' voices, and strives towards a world where conflict-related sexual violence is recognised for what it truly is: a crime that can and must be prevented and responded to effectively.



# Strategy 1: CARE

Promote access to holistic, quality care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence worldwide

Our approach to care is inspired by the 25 years of experience of Panzi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, led by Dr Mukwege and the Panzi team. Their holistic model of care includes four key pillars: medical care, psychosocial assistance, access to justice, and socioeconomic reintegration support.

We promote the model of holistic care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence pioneered at Panzi Hospital DRC as a human rights standard globally, and we facilitate its rollout to other (post)-conflict contexts. Wherever possible, we promote an approach where these services are integrated in existing healthcare systems, and we work with local actors to embed the model sustainably in the country context.

Though we aim to support the creation of full one-stop centres, or other holistic care delivery models that include all four pillars of support, we will also support projects in which the Mukwege Foundation strengthens one or two core pillars, prioritising the provision of survivor-centred, compassionate medical and psychosocial care.



**Over the past five years, we have defined the following key actions to implement our holistic care strategy:**

## Ensure access to care

- Support local partners like CSOs, service-providers, health structures and more, with funding and technical assistance to implement or facilitate access to care.
- Organise referrals or alternative access to specialised care for victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

## Build capacities

- Organise learning programmes and tools for different skilled and non-skilled professionals.
- Implement Training of Trainers programmes.
- Organise a range of knowledge exchange activities with Panzi and MF experts, taking a Linking and Learning approach.

## Advocate for holistic care towards governments and other key stakeholders

- Document and share evidence
- Share and promote lessons learned





## Lessons learned

- It is key to plan for survivor consultations at the start of every holistic care initiative to ensure that care is responsive to survivors' needs, priorities and wishes.
- Training on holistic care should always start with bringing together professionals from different sectors. Panzi uses the metaphor of the chair: if one leg is missing, the chair comes crashing down. The same is true of the holistic care model. By bringing together multisectoral actors, who may rarely interact, or who may work in siloes, different professionals see the intersection in their activities, better understand their mutual struggles and capitalise on mutual strengths – with the view to improve the quality of end-care received by survivors of sexual violence.
- Include survivors in training for professionals. Professionals have reported that survivor participation and testimony enriches training activities and can open up space for difficult but important discussions about how better to care for individuals.
- Include survivors and their networks in the development and delivery of holistic care, and in ensuring accountability. Survivor networks are important resources for holding care-providers, institutions, policymakers and governments accountable to their commitments.
- When providing training for individual professionals, it is important to ensure institutional engagement so that trainees can implement the training they receive upon return to their home institutions.

- Scaling the holistic care model cannot rely on training and funding alone. Even in contexts where funding is available, survivors' experiences with care providers are less than favourable, in countries affected by conflict, as well as those in so-called 'peace time'. The equation of scaling compassionate, holistic care in alignment with the Panzi model and philosophy of care, is not limited to training and resources and must include significant investment in ensuring behaviour change over time.

## Ensure access to holistic care

Building on these lessons learned, we will implement and further develop these actions to ensure the further rollout of the Panzi-inspired model of holistic care, adapting our approach according to the specificities of each context.

We will have the capacity for a maximum of three holistic care programmes that require the in-country presence of MF staff. For the next 2 years we will continue with the in-country programmes in Central African Republic and Ukraine and start a new programme in Burundi.

In addition, and in line with our aim to more closely integrate our strategies, we will further strive to increase access to holistic care for survivors in countries where we support national survivor networks projects but have no specific holistic care projects.

## Build capacities

In parallel, we will expand our engagement in Colombia by supporting the creation of a full one-stop centre and providing technical assistance. We will also support health professionals in Ethiopia by providing technical support to enhance their knowledge on the provision of compassionate trauma-informed care and the holistic care model.

## Advocate for holistic care

We will continue to promote the holistic care model at international conferences, at inter-agency forums, and by building partnerships with UN agencies, NGOs, academics and practitioners.

## Joint Training Modules

We will further build on the collaboration that started in 2019 between the Mukwege and Panzi Foundations and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Regional Training Facility (RTF). This collaboration aims to enhance survivors' access to quality holistic assistance in the African Great Lakes Region by developing and implementing joint training modules, delivered through the RTF's training activities. These form part of an ambitious regional programme to train thousands of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) professionals in ICGLR member states, using a Training of Trainers approach.

This programme continues to be a key opportunity to advocate for holistic care as a standard and right for survivors of sexual violence in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in those countries affected by conflict.

## Mukwege Chair

We will further strengthen our partnership with the universities that are part of the Mukwege Chair – Liège, Angers and Montreal - and build on these opportunities.

## How and what is needed

- We will continue to work in partnership with Panzi in scaling up holistic care for survivors worldwide. We will continue to support Panzi to create the additional capacity across its holistic care teams, enabling the scale-up and rollout of the Panzi-inspired model of holistic care. As a first step, we will implement the defined policy and framework regarding the Panzi Pool of Experts.
- We will maintain and expand the Mukwege Foundation pool of specialists to ensure the flexibility and expertise needed to respond to requests for support.
- We will finalise and pilot the online training modules to support the implementation of the [Holistic Care Handbook](#).
- We will further develop an advocacy strategy and implementation plan to promote holistic care as a human rights standard at national and international levels. In support of this advocacy strategy, we will strengthen documentation of and communication about the Foundation's holistic care strategy and programmes.
- We will work on a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the Care strategy to further strengthen the evidence base, allowing us to improve the model and providing evidence with which to influence policy and practice related to conflict-related sexual violence response.
- We will further align our Care strategy with our Voice strategy. Survivor networks can and do play an important role in promoting and facilitating access to care for other survivors.

# Strategy 2: VOICE

Support survivor-led activism for solidarity and recognition, and to end stigma

Survivors face crippling social stigma that prevents them from seeking care and justice, excludes them from their communities, and often leaves them to care for themselves (and their children) without any support. Many survivors suffer alone, unable to fight for their rights, or to influence programmes meant to support them. We believe this needs to change.

**With tremendous courage, survivors have come together to speak out, tell their truths, and to seek solutions for themselves and their communities. SEMA – which means “speak out” in Swahili – is a network of survivors which provides a safe place to share the experiences that have for so long been hidden and ignored, and where survivors can organise together to create change, break the silence and claim their rights – an insurmountable task that cannot be achieved alone.**

Today, SEMA gathers survivors from 26 countries. Collective action has enabled survivors to take a leadership role, speaking and acting as experts in their own right at international advocacy and policy events. It is rooted in survivor-led activist networks at the local and national levels, representing thousands of survivors of wartime sexual violence. These in-country networks vary according to their context, but in all cases they organise to raise awareness about the realities and consequences of wartime sexual violence, to combat stigma, impunity and harmful myths around sexual violence in conflict, to advocate for survivors' needs, and to commemorate and recognise the victims of these atrocities by creating a survivor-

centred history of conflict through survivors' experiences.

The international dimension is essential, bringing survivors from different generations, continents and cultures together to learn from each other. Organised global advocacy provides opportunities to amplify the voices of grassroots survivor activists and to represent their perspectives at the international level.

The Mukwege Foundation accompanies survivors' activism by enabling them to speak out against sexual violence in conflict and propose solutions that meet their needs. The Foundation supported the creation of SEMA and now acts as the network's secretariat, creating an enabling, safe environment in which survivors can determine their own priorities, make decisions and implement plans. It currently fosters national survivor-led networks in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar/Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, South Sudan, Uganda and Ukraine, and in the coming 5-year period will support survivors in Burundi to form their own network.



## Lessons Learned

- Survivors are the best advocates for their own needs and rights. The Mukwege Foundation plays a key role in ensuring that survivor participation is safe, meaningful and respectful and that survivor activists are not undermined (unintentionally) as helpless victims nor exposed to retraumatising, invasive questions.
- Inspiration, hope and solidarity are essential to maintain motivation and momentum, particularly in the face of inevitable setbacks. There is significant evidence that survivors experience feelings of mutual support, recognition, and wellbeing through their participation in peer-led networks at both global and national levels.
- Sustaining strong connections between the local, national and international levels is essential to forge a shared vision and amplify survivors' voices. Grassroots energy from the national networks can be communicated and leveraged in national and global advocacy efforts by survivors themselves. Online connections, meetings, media opportunities and translation services are the essentials needed to gain visibility and reach.
- **The survivor-centred approach is not just a means, but an end in itself, 'Nothing about us without us'. Survivor ownership, participation and autonomy can be fostered with a mix of mentoring, coaching, learning exchanges and skills development approaches, so that they can set the course of their movement themselves.**
- Accompaniment is a crucial ingredient in nurturing and building successful networks. The Mukwege Foundation takes the role of a good ally in fostering survivor-led networks by sourcing and channelling financial resources to networks that may not be legally registered, by providing strategic guidance, logistical support, technical advice and 'lending' some operational capacities to survivor networks as they develop their own organisational capacities.

### SEMA, the Global Network for Victims and Survivors to End Wartime Sexual Violence



#### Governance and organisational development

In this strategic plan period, we will continue to act as the supporter, ally, facilitator and secretariat for SEMA. SEMA has the possibility to further grow into a truly diverse global activist movement. However, agreement amongst SEMA members on membership criteria, representation and internal governance, as well as the links between SEMA individual members and national survivor movements, needs to be reached to allow the network to achieve its full potential. Together with SEMA, we will identify new SEMA members - prioritising survivors from new regions and countries - to further expand its global representation.

## Peer learning and knowledge sharing

We will continue to organise regular webinars for SEMA members, including on their Charter and internal processes, the Red Line Call to Action, and the topic of children born of war. We will continue to seek advocacy opportunities for SEMA's Call to Action, the Red Line Guidebook and SEMA's engagement in the PSVI Global Alliance, as well as other ad hoc opportunities. We will continue to facilitate survivor engagement in projects initiated by other NGOs, such as the Murad Code.

## Advocacy

In this strategic plan period, we will pay specific attention to supporting survivors in advocating for SEMA's Call to Action

## Collective Memory



Collective memory initiatives offer a survivor-centric way to document and share the experiences that have for so long been hidden and ignored. Beyond sharing their individual stories, survivors have called for the creation of a collective memory — a new perspective on the history of conflict which places survivors' stories in their historical context and brings their voices to the heart of our understanding of these atrocities.

In this 5-year period we will build on the work done in the previous strategic plan period towards the realisation of an online museum combining an archive, virtual

exhibition and educational resources that will allow ongoing, global engagement on issues around the representation and impact of sexual violence in conflict. It will give a home to the living memory of survivors, be an archive for researchers, raise awareness for audiences of all ages, and be a powerful tool for local and international advocacy by survivors.

## How and what is needed

- We will strive to organise two global retreats, giving victims and survivors a safe space where they can speak out, share with their peers, receive support, and further develop their advocacy skills.
- Together with SEMA members, we will support the creation of a SEMA advisory committee that can act as a linchpin between SEMA and the Mukwege Foundation.
- The SEMA advisory committee will also have an advisory role for the Mukwege Foundation's Supervisory Council.
- We will enable survivors to further develop their leadership skills.
- We will continue the self-help webinars to mitigate re-traumatisation and promote good self-care practices.
- We will facilitate five webinars per year on topics chosen by SEMA members.
- We will continue to provide modest financial support for connectivity, to ensure all SEMA members have access to internet and can play an active role in the network.
- We will pay attention to the safety and security of survivor activists — at international and national levels — by providing training and support, and by sustaining key partnerships.
- Funding for SEMA requires specific focus and attention. We strive for multi-annual flexible funding.

## National survivor networks

During the previous strategic plan period, we further increased the number of national survivor networks we support, and the scope of our support. In addition to continuing accompaniment of networks in CAR, Nigeria and Ukraine, we extended our support to national survivor networks in Ethiopia, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar/Bangladesh, Nepal, South Sudan and Uganda.

In this strategic plan period, we aim to sustain support to the current networks and foster a new national network in Burundi.

We will continue to create learning opportunities between the different networks and SEMA members and support national survivor networks in their advocacy around the Call to Action and collective memory.

### How and what is needed

- We will further develop a toolkit to capture, standardise where possible, and improve the various strategies and tools/trainings/lessons learned related to our survivor-centred approach to support national survivor networks.
- We will maintain a close working relationship with the Global Survivors Fund to identify synergies and potential opportunities to facilitate survivor participation in reparations initiatives.
- We will continue to facilitate exchanges between national networks. For this purpose, we will organise two regional retreats connecting local, national and regional survivor networks for mutual support, inspiration, learning and growth.
- We will strive for a strong role of the survivor networks in the implementation of and advocacy for holistic care and the Red Line Initiative.



# Strategy 3: Justice and Accountability

Our objective for the previous strategic plan period was to develop a well-considered, coordinated, coherent advocacy strategy, which has legitimacy for the survivor membership of SEMA, and sets out a framework for survivor-led advocacy to hold governments and individuals accountable for conflict-related sexual violence. In particular, SEMA survivors made it clear that the current accountability mechanisms are a) lacking, b) often unsuccessful, and c) not responsive to survivors' needs. This commitment led to the development of the Red Line Initiative, and in 2023, SEMA members made their demands concrete in **their Call to Action**.

## The Red Line Initiative

Following Dr Mukwege's call at the 2021 G7 annual summit, the Mukwege Foundation and SEMA decided to build a global campaign for the elimination of the use of sexual violence in conflict and as a method of warfare: the Red Line Initiative. In order to break the cycle of violence and culture of impunity, there needs to be a strong response from states and the international community. We believe that real change requires three elements:

- Evoke a clear moral rejection and outcry against the use of conflict-related sexual violence in all its forms, including as a method of warfare;
- Strengthen and clarify the legal obligations on states to not only not use sexual violence in conflict, but to also prevent and punish it, as well as to repair the harms it causes;
- Build political will to ensure a more robust and timely response by states in line with their international obligations.

We recognise that decades of work have been put into efforts seeking to end conflict-related sexual violence and that a great deal of important progress has been made. Despite these efforts, we firmly believe that more can and must be done. Scoping identified two key barriers to compliance with existing accountability frameworks: an awareness gap regarding the existing legal frameworks addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and a lack of political will to implement these existing obligations or to take a firm stand when they are violated.

We believe that if more people really understood all the ways in which sexual violence is used in conflict, its patterns and scope, what its profound harms and devastating consequences are, and that these crimes are allowed to continue with absolute impunity, this could catalyse a widespread moral outcry which is currently lacking.

During the previous strategic plan period, and based on these insights, the Red Line team mapped the international legal obligations and standards relevant to conflict-related sexual violence into one comprehensive resource — the Guidebook — as a reference for states and a tool for advocacy by survivor groups and other civil society actors. The team forged key partnerships with FIGO, The Elders, the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Women, and the PSVI Global Alliance, and participated in advocacy opportunities to raise awareness, strengthen political will, and build a global coalition of survivors, willing governments and civil society actors against the use of



conflict-related sexual violence. This included support for survivor-led advocacy, including the creation of SEMA's Call to Action.

Impressive progress has been made towards the objectives of the Red Line Initiative. In the upcoming strategic plan period, we aim to build further on these successes with the following objectives:

- Transform the information in the Guidebook into dynamic tools and activities which will take that information off the page and enable key actors and stakeholders to implement meaningful change and advocate for improved state compliance.
- Strengthen survivor-led advocacy by supporting SEMA members to develop national, regional and international advocacy strategies and supporting activities and tools based on the SEMA Call to Action; and
- Increase awareness about conflict-related sexual violence, its impact and the need for increased compliance with existing international state obligations through strong partnerships, outreach and awareness-raising activities.

## How and what is needed

### Legal Guidebook on State Obligations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

- Improve accessibility of the Guidebook by improving the website as well as increasing the number of language versions.
- Increase awareness of the existence of the Guidebook through participation in legal conferences, UN side events, and civil society events.
- Develop trainings and advocacy tools based on the Guidebook for both country specific workshops as well as specific target groups.

### The SEMA Call to Action

- Define the next concrete advocacy steps and push forward the Call to Action

### Increase awareness

- Strengthen global civil society support for the Red Line Initiative by deepening the collaboration with FIGO, The Elders and through the Thinking of You project.
- Identify Red Line champions including champion states.



# Cross-cutting issues

## Closer integration of our three strategies

We will continue to implement our work through our three interconnected strategies — holistic care, survivor-led activism, and the pursuit of justice and accountability. However, we acknowledge that there's room for improvement in integrating these pillars more seamlessly. The development and implementation of cross-cutting country strategies will help us to address this challenge, fostering deeper collaboration across our programme teams.

In particular, we will ensure that holistic care, encompassing all four pillars, is accessible to every survivor we encounter. This has been particularly challenging in national network support programmes where the focus on peer support and activism has taken priority over access to medical care, mental health, justice, and socioeconomic support for survivors. We will address this challenge through advocacy with donors, to make the case more forcefully to support survivors' needs, and by close collaboration with partners to close this gap.

## Survivor-centred approach

The Mukwege Foundation has taken a survivor-centred approach as its central value since it was founded. It runs through every aspect of our work. Adopting a survivor-centred approach reflects our commitment to accompany survivors in their healing journey, to transform trauma through compassionate holistic care and to create opportunities for survivors to become agents of change.

While we celebrate the increased recognition of the survivor-centred approach as best practice, we recognise the need to define and articulate what this entails. We will document and describe our practices and the impacts of this approach more clearly — not only to ensure we apply this approach systematically in all our programmes but also to be able to advocate more effectively for this approach.

## Implementation models

During the previous strategic plan period, we identified and developed three models of implementation:

- direct implementation by Mukwege Foundation staff in-country;
- remote accompaniment (partnering with a national NGO as implementing partner or with national survivor networks); or
- a consultant role, bringing specialist expertise in survivor-centred approaches to projects implemented by other (I)NGOs.

In reviewing the previous Strategic Plan, we took stock of these intervention models to evaluate the opportunities, challenges and costs of each. Specifically, direct implementation with a staff presence on the ground allows us to test our Theory of Change in practice, to learn from direct experience, and to build a stronger evidence base; however, this model has serious cost implications.

In terms of the model of remote accompaniment, it is essential that we select reliable and compatible implementing partners with a commitment

to the survivor-centred approach. We will need to place more emphasis on scoping to improve our contextual understanding and to co-create projects with survivors and our implementing partners.

For all these models, it will be crucial to standardise the operational methods and tools in this strategic plan period, and to document lessons learned, for ongoing improvement. Additionally, the country strategies need to include a clear justification for the selected model, or a combination of various models, appropriate to the context.

We have identified actions which will be crucial to ensuring the quality of our programme implementation, including:

- Scale up and further improve the functioning of the Panzi Pool of Experts to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of efforts to replicate the Panzi-inspired model. It is envisaged that the Pool of Experts will not only serve the purposes of the international holistic care programme, but will also be an opportunity for learning, exchange and development for Panzi Hospital and Foundation and the individuals selected to participate in the pool.
- Ensure the timely availability of a wide range of specialists. The Mukwege Foundation created a pool of specialists and the first results of the functioning of this pool are positive. We will continue to build and further strengthen this.
- Improve the tools to support capacity assessments and gap analyses of implementing partners and develop a support plan (with the necessary resources) to ensure the high quality of project delivery.

- Implement regular reviews with MF in-country teams and/or our implementing partners to ensure a survivor-centred approach and improve overall programme implementation.

## Partnerships

Partnerships play an essential role in the work we do on multiple levels — enhancing our programme implementation, amplifying our advocacy and communications, increasing our visibility and abilities to influence policy, and providing opportunities to participate in tenders and other joint fundraising. We are developing strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations who possess specific knowledge on transitional justice and legal issues, as well as technical and implementation capacity related to holistic care.

### How and what is needed

Based on our partnership achievements to date, our plans for the upcoming strategic plan period are as follows:

- Further strengthen our partnership with Panzi and the Mukwege Chair.
- Strengthen partnerships with long term Panzi holistic care partners, i.e. Enfants de Panzi et d'Ailleurs, The Common Threads Project.
- Further develop the strategic partnership with ARQ and other specialist organisations.
- Enhance our relationship with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- Continue to strengthen the partnership with the Global Survivors Fund.
- Develop the existing partnerships with LAW, ICSC and PHR.

- Further develop the relationship with IICI around the next steps of the Murad Code.
- Leverage the potential of our membership of the PSVI Global Alliance to explore opportunities and linkages that benefit our work.
- Further deepen the partnership with The Elders and FIGO as part of the Red Line Initiative.
- Strengthen our existing partnership with the International Center for Transitional Justice and continue to build on the opportunities presented by this 4-year partnership, financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Evaluate our partnership with Nadia's Initiative and IOM in Iraq.

## Continuing support for Panzi's work in DRC

**In the past 25 years, Dr Denis Mukwege and his team at Panzi Hospital in DRC have treated more than 50,000 victims of sexual violence. The impact of their work on individuals, the country and the region as a whole inspires us to take these best practices to a global level.**

As the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo continues, Panzi Hospital remains a crucial actor in dealing with the immediate needs of survivors, and in keeping the problem of systematic rape in Eastern DRC on the international agenda. The Mukwege Foundation will continue to share a percentage of the unrestricted funds it raises with Panzi Hospital and Panzi Foundation DRC.



# Organisational development

## Strengthening the backbone

As noted above, the fast-paced growth in our programme portfolio during the last strategic plan period necessitated an expansion of our team. We are aware of a need to strengthen our onboarding processes and guidance for new staff and to re-emphasise the importance of our internal procedures to avoid losing institutional knowledge. At the same time, the increase in our programme portfolio and team has not been matched by a comparable growth in operations staff and management capacity, and this warrants our attention in the coming period.

Our dedicated and motivated team is our strength, sharing a common set of values and a strong commitment to the survivor-centred approach. Our organisational and staff development is key to ensuring the Mukwege Foundation can realise its objectives and continue to grow in a sustainable manner. This includes supporting and strengthening our staff development and organisational backbone, strategising our communications and fundraising, and ensuring strong governance to support the implementation of everything we do.

## How and what is needed

We believe the below priorities will ensure that our human resources and operational capacity matches and supports the growth in our programmes in the new strategic plan period:

- Ensure implementation of our HR vision and policies – including a staff care policy and a standardised reward package for international staff and national staff based in programme countries.

- Ensure timely and regular internal communication – including implementing an agreed team meeting schedule and storing minutes/action points in an accessible way.
- Develop, pilot and implement staff support and stress management policy with support from our partner ARQ.
- Further develop the MF pool of specialists that we will work with on a regular basis to develop our internal capacities and tools and enable us to implement projects. This pool will give us the flexibility and capacity needed to scale up as and when needed.
- Finalise and implement a standard mission operation manual and guidelines for our offices in MF programme countries.
- Finalise and implement our data protection policy.
- Upgrade the global security policy.
- Further standardise and support the implementation of the admin/finance tool, including procurement, for our in-country offices to ensure better budget control and project management.
- Continue regular internal dialogue on the integrity policy and ensure the implementation of our safeguarding policies, including feedback mechanisms in country programmes.
- Ensure implementation of pre-departure security/safety preparation.
- Further automate and professionalise tools for HR and project management and control, including implementation of the upgraded Exact project and HR modules.
- Ensure increased staff capacities in office management, HR, and senior management to reflect the continued planned growth in programmes.

## Communications

Currently, the Mukwege Foundation has a sizable, engaged audience, as well as a strong and growing relationship with the media. We are increasingly approached as experts in our field. We seek to maintain this position and to expand our reach and increase engagement. We also aim to strike the important balance between the positive and dignified stance portrayed in our current images and identity, and the gravity and urgency of our mission. Our Theory of Change and the survivor-centred approach make us unique and should be at the centre of our communication and marketing.

The media is a powerful tool to amplify survivors' voices and break the silence surrounding sexual violence in conflict. We will work with journalists, advocating for the publication of survivor's stories.

As our reach steadily increased in the previous strategic plan period, for the upcoming period we will have a specific focus on increased engagement through our social media channels.

We also acknowledge the importance for our branding, awareness raising and fundraising communication to be aligned. We launched a new website in early 2024 which enables us to provide different and more up-to-date content. We will continue to optimise the website SEO and use our engagement data to improve the site.

We will reliably communicate with our supporters, including a quarterly Mukwege Foundation News Update as well as advocacy updates.

We will maintain visible linkages with our trusted partners that appropriately represent our mission and vision and will promote one another's causes.

We will plan for at least two communications campaigns per year to increase awareness of the work of the Mukwege Foundation, increase our supporter base and/or to support our advocacy strategy.

In our quest to amplify survivors' voices, we will encourage their storytelling and creative advocacy initiatives. We will explore additional communication tools including, but not limited to, podcasting, filmmaking, app development, arts exhibitions and other interactive events.

### How and what is needed

- Strengthen our positioning by disseminating our Unique Selling Points (Theory of Change and survivor-centred approach) across communications channels and content
- Test the user experience of the MF website and the SEMA website and adapt if necessary
- Update our database of journalists and strengthen our contacts with them. Each year, we will pitch stories and articles based on current events or survivor activism, promoting local and fair journalism inspired by survivors.
- Produce content, including audio-visual material.
- Promote the Red Line website and the Guidebook across our communications channels and campaigns.
- Maintain current social media exposure and increase engagement.
- Articles on MF projects/priorities in two relevant expert/scientific journals per year.
- Develop and implement communication training to support staff in MF country offices.

## Fundraising

As noted above, fundraising has been identified as a key strategic challenge for the upcoming strategic plan period. While project funding has been instrumental in allowing the organisation to grow its programme portfolio, it has become clear that it is impossible and undesirable to be over-reliant on earmarked project funds. To truly work in a survivor-centred way means that our projects are labour-intensive, and strict donor rules often do not allow for sufficient coverage of staff time and overhead costs, resulting in an unsustainable income situation. This is aggravated by the fact that we are implementing multi-annual projects with fixed budgets, where the inflation correction is often not sufficiently covered.

In addition, most of our project funding currently comes — directly or indirectly — from Western governments, and the uncertainties in the political climate in Europe and the US pose a risk for the future availability and priority setting of this funding stream. We also note that, despite greater recognition of the importance of addressing gender inequality, including sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, we do not see this reflected in an increase in available funding opportunities.

Based on the above assessment, the need to further diversify our income streams and increase the percentage of unearmarked funding in relation to our total income is paramount. This will not only allow us to maintain our core mission and values, but also to run our organisation in a responsible and sustainable way. Over the next strategic plan period, we will therefore strive for increased diversity of donors for project-based funding while aiming for a minimum of 25% of our total

income to be unearmarked. We realise this will be a challenge with the overall increase in projected income and will need significant investment in both senior management as well fundraising time to achieve this during this strategic plan period.

### How and what is needed: Foundations and Governments

- Make better use of all scoping visits and missions to reach out to embassies and EU delegations.
- Sustain and/or increase funding from the governments of the US, UK, Netherlands, France and Germany.
- Establish relationships with four new government donors, including two non-Western governments.
- Establish/explore closer relationships with government development agencies in programme countries.
- Capitalise on our presence in CAR, Burundi and Ukraine to access localised funding opportunities.
- Build on relationships with INGO partner organisations for joint fundraising (LAW, PHR).
- Strengthen our relationships with different UN agencies and make the case for our added value as an implementing partner.
- Identify and ensure that MF is represented at key events and conferences where institutional donor organisations are present and where there is a possibility to present our work and approach.
- Invest in external capacity to scope and develop relationships with key donors/donor contexts.
- Develop two new relationships with larger endowment or corporate foundations, e.g. in the US.

- Identify and contract one multi-year funding opportunity for SEMA , value 350 K.
- Target acquisition: 5-8 M annually.

## Individual Fundraising

**Though not our largest income stream, the Mukwege Foundation has a small but loyal base of private, recurring donors who support us in a sustainable way. We will honour the loyalty of our existing donors and more proactively manage these individual donor relationships.**

Data from donors within our CRM, website statistics and social media channels will continue to be gathered and analysed to better inform marketing campaigns in the future. That data will also, in turn, inform qualitative data gathering as our support base grows.

This stream of unearmarked funding is an important means to realise our ambitions as it creates the necessary space for essential work like scoping visits. We will therefore aim to increase this income through reasonable time and resource investments.

Given we have seen a significant increase in project funding in 2023 and 2024, we need to ensure we also grow our unearmarked funding base.



## How and what is needed: Individual Fundraising

- Test, and if necessary adapt, the user experience of the new MF website.
- Assess the suitability of our current CRM system and adapt or change if necessary.
- Quarterly updates to be shared with our donor mailing list.
- Further improve analyses of recurring and new donors, improve engagement and decrease attrition.
- Identify and further develop our donor engagement strategy and tools.
- Implement one strategic lead generation and one crowdfunding campaign per year.
- Increase regular donations by 15% annually.

## Governance

### International Supervisory Council

In 2021, to better reflect its fast growth and current global reach, and to ensure more efficient and effective management, the Mukwege Foundation adapted its governance structure. Our former Board became a Supervisory Council, deciding on overall strategic and policy matters, while the daily management was formally delegated to the Mukwege Foundation's Executive Director.

The Supervisory Council consists of people of a variety of backgrounds and capacities, including fundraising, financial management and content and field experience in humanitarian programmes.

To reflect the international scope and reach of the Mukwege Foundation, the Supervisory Council will add two Council members with an international profile in 2024.

### Participation of survivors

In the coming years, we plan to expand and institutionalise the crucial inputs we receive from survivors in our operations. We will form a small group of survivors as a formal advisory group to the Executive Director and the Supervisory Council. This advisory group will be involved in all decision-making processes of the organisation, to ensure the Mukwege Foundation follows a truly survivor-centred path.

### How and what is needed: Governance

- Develop and implement the proposal for the creation of a survivor advisory group
- By the end of 2024, the Supervisory Council will have a more diverse membership, reflecting both a gender balance as well as the international profile of the organisation.





# Conclusion

This Strategic Plan for 2024-2028 builds on the successes and insights garnered from the previous period, holding firm on our course while learning from our experience and making necessary adjustments. The plan reaffirms the relevance of our Theory of Change and mission statement, underscoring the centrality of our survivor-centred approach and holistic care. Recognising the pivotal role of survivors in shaping our work, the Mukwege Foundation commits to amplifying survivors' voices and ensuring their agency through its survivor-centred approach. This approach, grounded in the principle of "nothing about us without us," remains a cornerstone of our programmes and advocacy efforts.

Acknowledging and learning from our achievements and challenges, the Mukwege Foundation commits to better align its three interconnected strategies, further strengthen its organisational

backbone, support its team effectively and ensure we capture lessons learned to strengthen our knowledge base and advocacy messages. Moreover, we recognise the imperative of diversifying our funding sources to ensure our sustainability and autonomy. We will leverage our strengths - including the growing recognition as an expertise hub, strong survivor engagement, and the increased acknowledgment of the holistic care model as a best practice - and we will build on the successes of the Red Line Initiative.

**With a dedicated team and a clear vision, we stand ready to navigate the complexities that we will inevitably face in the coming five years and to maximise our impact in the pursuit of a world where conflict-related sexual violence is recognised for what it truly is: a crime that can and must be prevented and responded to effectively.**



## Contact

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