

Development of a global mental health peer support worker training program

Rebecca Nixdorf¹, Ashleigh Charles², Lion Gai Meir³, Paula Garber-Epstein³, Shimri Hadas Grundman³, Ramona Hiltensperger⁴, Arti Kulkarni⁵, Rachel Mtei⁶, Bernd Puschner⁴, Grace Ryan⁷, Mike Slade², and Candelaria Mahlke¹

UPSIDES - Using Peer Support In Developing Empowering Mental Health Services

- In peer support individuals with lived experience of mental health conditions and recovery offer support, hope and encouragement to others who are currently in crisis [1].
- Peer support has shown promising results in various contexts and is now an established intervention in many high-income-countries [2] with increasing dissemination in global mental health [3].
- The UPSIDES project [4] aims to develop, implement, and scale up peer support in different contexts.
- Therefore, an intervention and training manual were developed for peer support across six study sites in Germany, India, Israel, Tanzania and Uganda.
- The training was developed based on recent evidence and experiences, and includes standardized core elements that can be adapted simultaneously for implementation in different contexts around the world.



Study sites and project partners

The UPSIDES project involves

- peer support trainers
- peer support workers
- service users
- mental health professionals
- other stakeholders

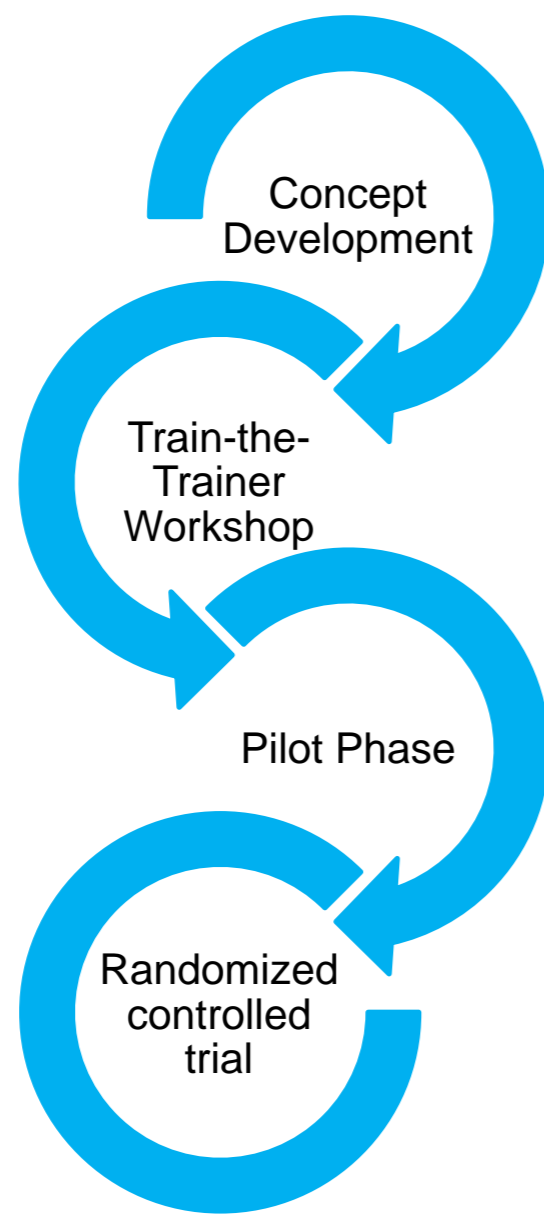
from 8 study sites (6 recruiting sites) in 6 countries:

- Africa (Uganda and Tanzania)
- Asia (Israel and India)
- Europe (Germany and UK)

The training concept

The concept of the UPSIDES training and a preliminary training manual were developed based on

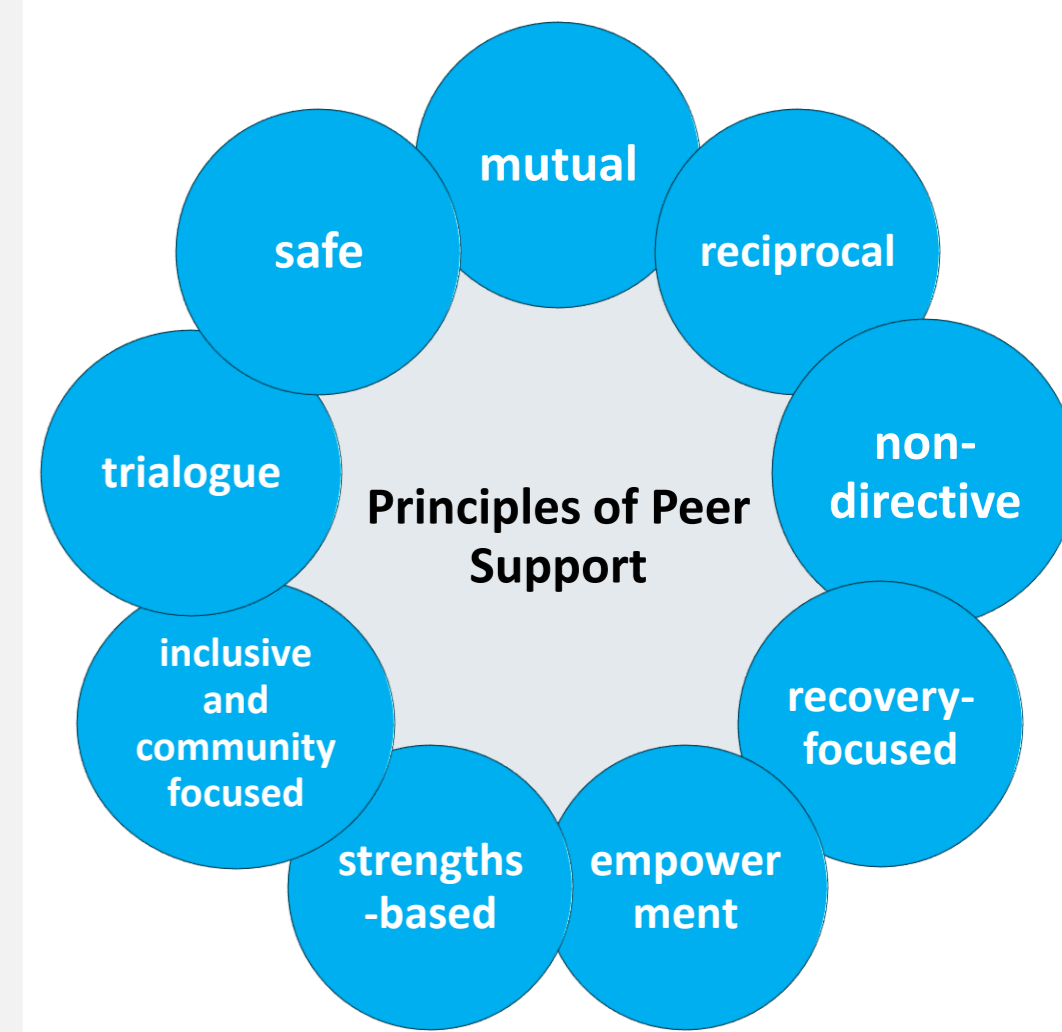
- systematic reviews regarding implementation and training in peer support [5, 6]
- a situational analysis on previous experiences with peer support at the different study sites [6]
- a conceptual framework of key principles for peer support
- peer support training manuals previously implemented in the UPSIDES consortium, e.g. the Brain Gain Project from Butabika, Uganda [7].



Evaluation of the training

The evaluation of the training followed a **mixed-method design**, including a variety of different stakeholders at all study sites:

- Six **focus groups** with service users, peer support workers, mental health staff members and local stakeholders at each study site to discuss initial training concept.
- Implementation of resulting preliminary manual at joint **train-the-trainer workshop** in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania to future UPSIDES trainers from each study site with personal and/or professional experience of mental health conditions.
- Ratings of relevance and provision for each training module and all exercises of the initial training concept on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) and suggestions for local adaptation given by n = 12 UPSIDES peer support trainers.
- Adaptation, manualisation and six-week **pilot phase** of the training at each study site (n = 45 participants trained).
- Feedback from UPSIDES trainers, peer support workers and service users.
- Field version of the training manual finalized.



The UPSIDES conceptual framework

The UPSIDES core training

- The training consists of **standardized core elements**, which can be adapted simultaneously for different contexts, in order to be implemented in different settings worldwide.
- The core training includes 12 training modules.
- The training has been manualized with an accompanying workbook for the training participants. Each training module starts with a check-in for all participants and ends with a reflection and check-out to review the training module and establish a routine that the participants can rely on.
- During each module, different learning methods are applied. We are not teaching theoretical material or skills, instead we rely on the experiential knowledge of all participants to learn from each other and develop a peer support worker role.
- The core training can be supplemented by **additional modules** (e.g. Stigma; Rights and Advocacy; Trauma, Financial Empowerment). Which additional training modules are included on top of the 12 core modules depends on their relevance to the specific setting and its users in question, making the training easily adaptable to different study sites.
- Length and duration can be amended flexibly to different settings.



In this **video**, the Tanzanian participants from the Train-the-Trainer workshop present their Superhero Peer Support Worker, an exercise from the third training module.



Challenges: Cultural adaptation vs. comparability

- Develop a peer support training that is transferable to different international settings by taking perspective of all study partners into account.
- Maintain comparability across all study sites by identifying important core elements of peer support.
- Account for regional variations by developing additional intervention elements.

Next steps

The UPSIDES peer support intervention is currently under evaluation in a **multicenter randomized controlled trial** [9]. The experiences and results of the RCT will be incorporated in the final training manual. Also, we are working on an **online training platform**.

The field version of the **training manual** and workbook [8] is available at the UPSIDES website.



References.

- Davidson L et al. (2006) Peer support among adults with serious mental illness: a report from the field. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32(3), 443–450.
- Farkas M et al. (2018) Peer delivered services in mental health care in 2018: infancy or adolescence? *World psychiatry*, 17(2), 222–224
- Stratford A et al. (2019) The growth of peer support: an international charter. *Journal of mental health*, 28(6), 627–632.
- Puschner B et al. (2019) Using Peer Support in Developing Empowering Mental Health Services (UPSIDES): Background, Rationale and Methodology. *Annals of global health*, 85(1), 53.
- Charles A et al. (2020) A typology of modifications to peer support work for adults with mental health problems: systematic review. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 216, 301–307.
- Ibrahim N et al. (2020) A systematic review of influences on implementation of peer support work for adults with mental health problems. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 55(3), 285–293.
- The Brain Gain Project. Peer Support Worker Training Manual. Developed by the Butabika East London Link with the support of the Ugandan Ministry of Health. 2018.
- Mahlke CI et al. (2020) UPSIDES Peer Support Training Manual and Workbook: field version. https://www.upsides.org/wp-content/uploads/UPSIDES_Peer-Support-Worker-Training-Manual-and-Workbook_field_version_final.pdf (accessed Oct 22, 2020).
- Moran GS et al. (2020) Peer support for people with severe mental illness versus usual care in high-, middle- and low-income countries: study protocol for a pragmatic, multicentre, randomised controlled trial (UPSIDES-RCT). *Trials*, 21, 1–15.

Acknowledgements.

UPSIDES has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 779263. This poster reflects only the authors' view. The Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



Authors' affiliations.

- University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf
- University of Nottingham
- Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva
- University Ulm
- Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy in Pune
- Ifakara Health Institute in Dar es Salaam
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Contact details.

* **Corresponding author:**
Rebecca Nixdorf
Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf
Klinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie
AG sozialpsychiatrische & partizipative
Forschung

Martinistr. 52
Gebäude West 37
20246 Hamburg
+49 (0)40-7410-58933 r.nixdorf@uke.de

www.upsides.org