

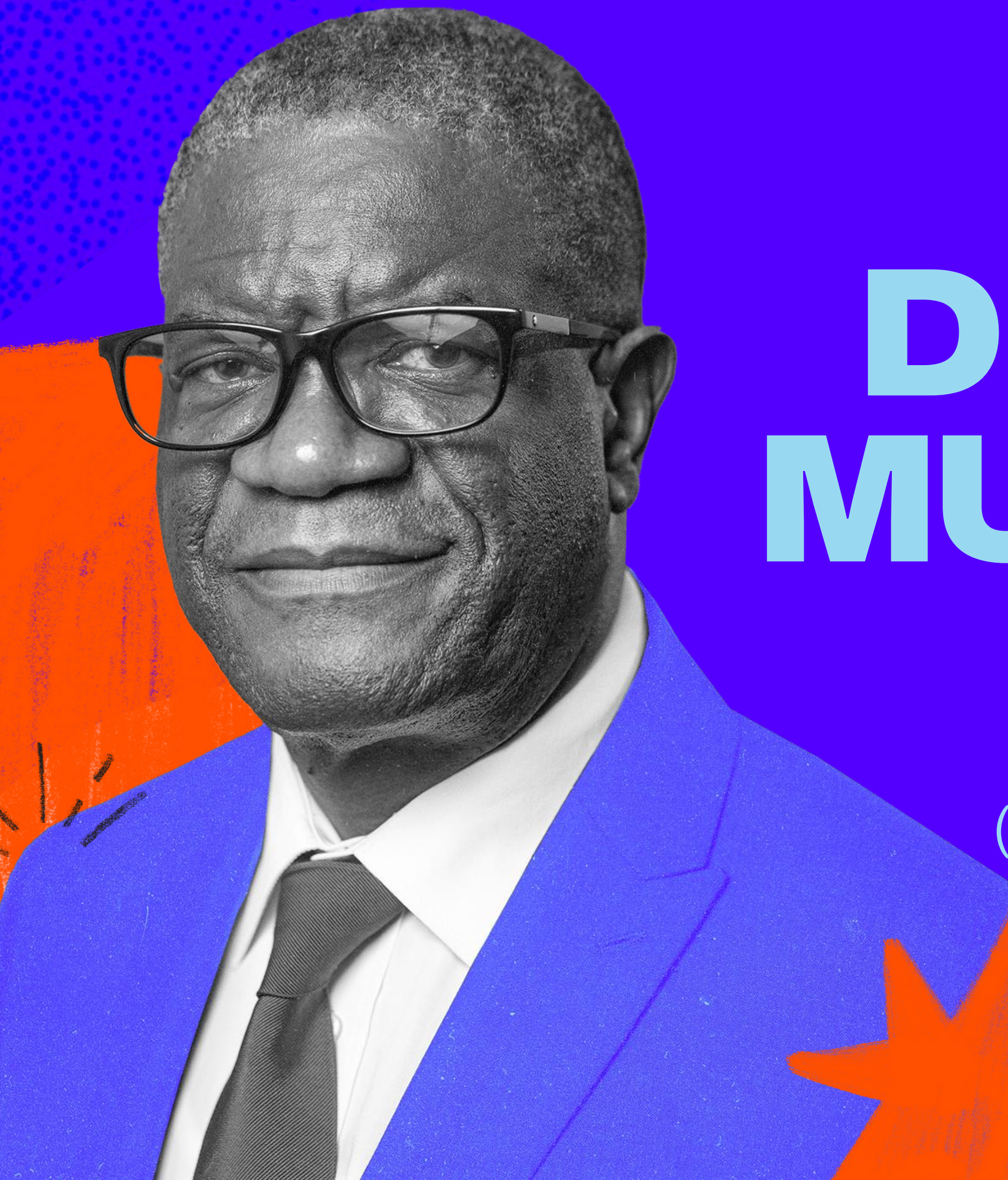


UN
TRUST
FUND TO END
VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS



DR. DENIS MUKWEGE

PANZI Foundation
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



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They were carrying wounds that surgery could not reach. Many had been raped in front of their husbands, their children, their communities. The violence had affected not only their bodies, but their relationships, their place in the community and their ability to rebuild their lives. That changed what healing had to mean.

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The women were not leaving.

Soon after I founded Panzi Hospital in 1999, a woman arrived and told me she had been raped, then shot in her genitals. I thought it was a made-up story. I didn't yet know I would spend the next twenty-six years treating this form of violence.

At first, I thought success was something I could see in the operating room. When a woman recovered physically, I felt proud.

But the women were not leaving.



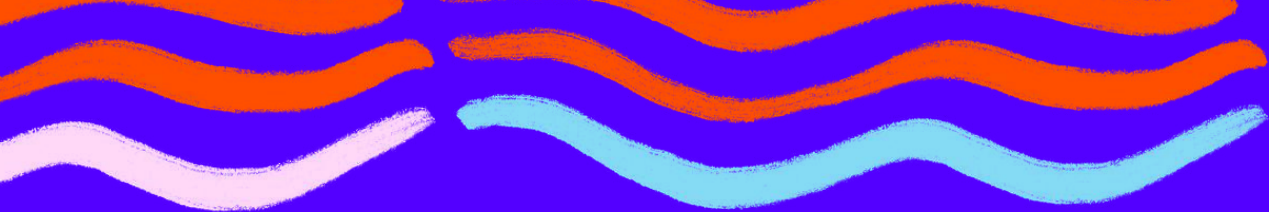
It changed something in me too. Many of the patients were the same age as my own children. I noticed I was losing my own focus as a surgeon, carrying too much of what they carried. We brought a psychologist into the hospital, for both staff and patients and, as we listened to what women needed, our response kept growing.

By 2008 it had become four interconnected pillars: medical, psychological, legal, and socioeconomic, so that a survivor's healing meant a woman leaving Panzi able to stand on her own and rebuild a life.

Our partnership with the UN Trust Fund came at a moment when the Panzi model was beginning to be requested elsewhere, and we needed the resources to take it further. Many donors wanted to know how many survivors we had reached; the Fund understood that what mattered equally was whether the systems behind those numbers were strong enough to sustain the work over time.

What I valued most was its willingness to listen, to hear what survivors needed before deciding what support should look like. Good partnership means co-creating the response, not imposing a model. That is how you build something that lasts.





Its support helped us invest in structure and capacity. I had started as the only gynecologist in the region. Today, Panzi has ten. It funded the training that led us to replicate the model at Mulamba, our first scale-up hospital. It also backed Dorcas House, our shelter for women and girls with nowhere safe to return to, and the mobile teams who are now reaching patients far from the hospital across Congo. Today, with sexual violence in eastern Congo rising by nearly seventy percent in a single year, and increasing requests to take the Panzi model beyond Congo, we need that capacity more than ever.

I think often of a young woman who arrived at Panzi bleeding, barely alive, after surviving an attack. She went on to train as an anesthesiologist. When I asked why, she told me it was the moment someone eased her pain that gave her hope again, and that she wanted to give that hope to other women. She transformed my life. What survivors have taught me, more than anything, is never to give up.

When women have the care, justice and opportunity to rebuild, they can become a force for rebuilding society.

Dr. Denis Mukwege is a Congolese physician, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and founder of Panzi Hospital, where he has spent more than 25 years supporting survivors of sexual violence. A global advocate for women's rights and justice, he has helped transform the international response to conflict-related sexual violence through both groundbreaking care and tireless activism.

