



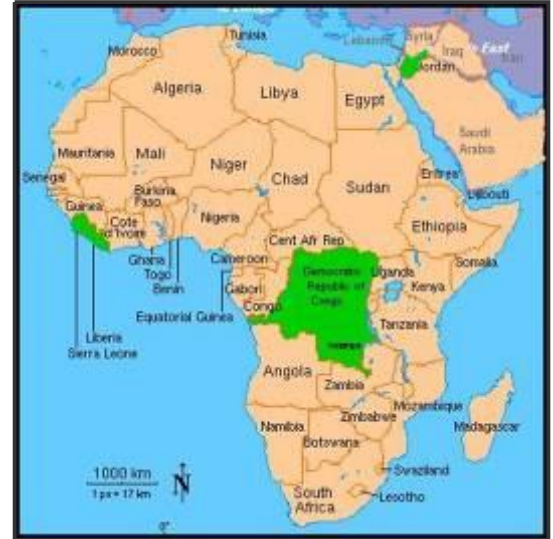
CVT International Services

*Restoring the Dignity
of the Human Spirit*

BACKGROUND

For more than a decade, brutal civil wars have ravaged the world including Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and of course Iraq. Thousands of people have been tortured, killed, and millions fled their homes. The atrocities of torture committed during these conflicts are almost beyond comprehension. Now the violence in some of these areas has subsided, refugees are returning home, but the devastation to individuals and communities remains. But some still wait for peace in their home country. Such is the case for the men, women and children of Iraq. The war launched in 2003 has resulted in tremendous suffering and millions have fled their home and sought refuge in neighboring Jordan and Syria.

The prevalence of torture among survivors of these conflicts has been documented by numerous sources including surveys carried out by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) International Services. One such survey conducted at the request of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) revealed an extremely high prevalence of torture among Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone. Ninety-one percent of the respondents reported they had experienced one or more of the following: beatings, being shot at, abduction, or forced to witness killings, rape or forced labor. Similar findings were also reported among Sierra Leoneans. And one in five Iraqi refugees was tortured according to a recent survey done by UNHCR on incoming refugees in Syria.



Survivors of torture such as these also suffer debilitating physical problems including chronic pain in muscles and joints; recurring headaches, reduced mobility, insomnia, weakness, balance problems, and low energy levels; as well as illnesses or medical conditions that result from prolonged imprisonment or internment in refugee camps. Psychological problems that result from torture and war trauma include severe depression and anxiety; intense and incessant nightmares; panic attacks; guilt and self-hatred; and suicidal thoughts or tendencies. Torture can result in posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression disorder, and a combination of both disorders. This affects an individual's ability to resume daily activities and rebuild their lives, which can end up incapacitating a whole community. Despite the widespread need, especially in post conflict areas, very few resources are devoted to addressing the mental health problems caused by torture.

Healing the effects of torture is integral to the process of rebuilding a post conflict society

When political violence intentionally destroys a community, the society itself must heal before peace and democracy can flourish. CVT International Services clinicians (experts in torture and trauma rehabilitation) heal the effects of civil conflict by providing mental health counseling to survivors of torture. CVT also trains members of the community and refugee population to be skilled group counselors, advocates, educators, and trainers; in effect, sustainable mental health resources. CVT International Services clinical staff helps rebuild the lives of refugees and restore those post conflict areas where services are few by treating survivors of torture and war trauma so that individuals can resume their life and rebuild their community.

CVT, Restoring the Dignity of the Human Spirit

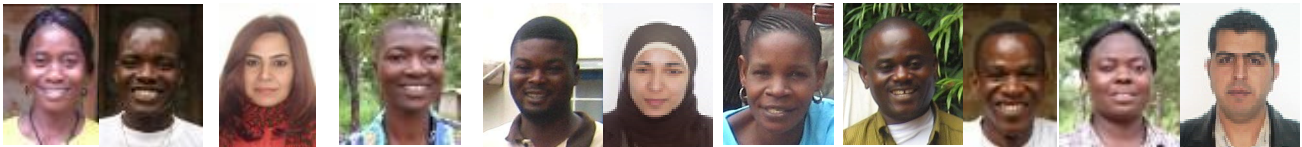
CVT works to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families, and their communities and to stop torture worldwide. CVT is based in Minnesota with offices in Washington D.C., Sierra Leone, Liberia, Jordan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



The U.S. State Department Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration, and the European Union help finance CVT's International Services

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GOALS OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

CVT International Service's overarching goal is to address the mental health needs of tortured adults and children where few mental health resources are available and to facilitate recovery from the massive violence perpetrated during conflict. At the same time CVT is developing the local capacity for the community to meet the mental health needs beyond the tenure of this project.

CVT International Services

- Provides immediate counseling and community mental health activities to men, women and children who have suffered torture as a result of civil conflict.
- Trains paraprofessionals - Psychosocial peer Counselors (PSCs)- who can act as counselors and advocates, and eventually be integrated into the community structure, the government health system or national NGOs as mental health providers.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CVT first started in 1985 as a small organization, one of the first of its kind, dedicated to providing care and rehabilitative services to survivors of torture in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In our clinic there, a multi-disciplinary approach is used to heal the physical and psychological wounds of torture for survivors from over sixty countries including Iraq. CVT expanded internationally with the first International Services Program in Guinea, West Africa with a project (1999-2005) which provided mental health counseling to refugees who were suffering from torture and trauma due to the multiple conflicts in the region. The American Psychological Association recognized the quality of CVT's services in Guinea by awarding CVT its International Humanitarian Prize in 2006.

CVT's International Services Programs currently has projects in Freetown, **Sierra Leone**, to provide mental health services to survivors of torture and victims of trafficking; in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, in communities in the southeastern district of Katanga where CVT helps victims of sexual violence and torture; and in Amman, **Jordan**, CVT provides services to Iraqi refugees, victims of torture. In addition to providing counseling and training local staff, CVT works closely with government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to provide training on identifying and working with torture survivors, to develop best practices in the field of mental health, and by offering referral services to other organizations.

CVT also implements International Capacity Building (ICB) initiatives in addition to direct services. With funding from the European Union, in the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, CVT is improving the clinical capacity of the University of Lubumbashi's clinical psychology program so that graduates will be better able to respond to the mental health needs of torture survivors. In addition, CVT's International Capacity Building Project works with 18 torture rehabilitation centers around the world to improve healing services for torture survivors in their countries.

CVT International Services designs programs to provide mental health and social services in an effective and sustainable fashion by targeting the different levels of the communities with the greatest need, both in terms of number and gravity of trauma treatment needed. At the same time, CVT also creates new capacities for providing treatment services to torture survivors among local populations, so services can continue beyond the end of the project period.

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TRAINING

The heart of CVT's training program is experiential, with para professional Psychosocial peer Counselors (PSCs) learning alongside professional CVT clinicians while working with clients in both individual and group settings. Once selected and hired from the local population, PSCs undergo an intensive two-week orientation and basic training period. Then PSCs observe and assist as the professional clinician runs a 10-week group counseling session. When the PSC is ready, he or she co-facilitates a 10-week session with the professional clinician, and then leads a third 10-week session as the clinician observes and assists. At that point, their performance is reassessed, and, if appropriate, PSCs begin to lead sessions on their own. Every month CVT clinicians also conduct formal trainings to PSCs on a variety of mental health and counseling subjects. In addition to formal training sessions, informal training and supervision takes place on a daily basis, with clinicians modeling, observing and giving feedback to PSCs after every counseling session and activity.



The training for psychosocial counselors is extensive and long in duration because CVT's goal is to develop highly capable local resources for healing and advocacy, based on in-depth knowledge and skills. To date, CVT has trained over 220 paraprofessionals, many of whom originally hired as refugees have been training with CVT since 1999.

Community Sensitization: Training and community awareness raising activities are held in communities in order to bring attention to the prevalence and effects of torture, to help community members such as teachers, religious and local leaders know what they can do to help others, and to help identify potential clients. Over 18,000 people participated in CVT International Services community sensitization activities in 2008.

Small Group Counseling: Small group counseling is one of the core mental health interventions for CVT International Services. The groups take place on a weekly basis for approximately 10 weeks, and are divided into different populations including adults, children, men and women, girls and boys. Clients benefit from the increased socialization with others who share similar stories. It is through these groups that the PSCs participate initially as interpreters, and then eventually learn how to facilitate groups on their own through modeling, coaching and supervisions of the professional clinicians. Each year thousands of clients benefit directly from CVT group counseling.



Individual Counseling: Once a client is identified, they will receive an intake assessment so CVT clinical staff can develop a treatment plan. Individual counseling is provided to clients who are either unable to attend group counseling sessions or have a greater need to address their problems in private. Clients are usually seen for one hour, for 1 – 5 sessions, and then join a small group if they are able. CVT International Service programs typically conduct over 2,500 individual counseling sessions per year.

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Psychosocial Activities/Other Beneficiaries: Non-counseling activities are also provided regularly in the target areas. These activities are designed to engage the community in the healing process, promote positive extra-curricular activities for clients, and to help identify new clients. Activities consist of play therapy, games, drama, arts and crafts, and sports activities. Each year, thousands of community members learn of CVT through these activities.

External Capacity Building and Partnerships

CVT works closely with local government ministries and others to provide training and referral services. In addition, CVT has expanded its links with NGOs working on related issues, including collaborating with International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Search for Common Ground/Talking Drums Studio (SCG/TDS) as part of a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence program in Kailahun and WITNESS program in Sierra Leone to raise the awareness of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. CVT also provides training to other NGOs in refugee camps and communities to help them identify torture survivors and to avoid retraumatization and refer them when possible.

RESULTS

CVT International Services is proud of its success. To measure the effects of the program, PSCs regularly check in on clients who have received services from CVT. They conduct one-month, 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month follow-up assessments to record and measure indicators of clients' improvement. Results are compared to intake assessments and then analyzed statistically. Analysis shows improvement that is both statistically significant and meaningful in indicators ranging from reductions in depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms, to an increase in the number of supportive relationships. Case studies also reflect the success of the CVT program. Clients consistently report having increased hope, better coping skills, and improved relations with others after receiving help from CVT.



BENEFITS



CVT International Services programs reflect both the humanitarian and strategic benefits of healing survivors of the horrific human rights abuses that occur from civil conflict. On the humanitarian side, CVT provides direct trauma counseling services to over 2500 individuals per year, and helps thousands more through training and community activities, that promote mental health through social connections and physical well-being.

On the strategic side, CVT is helping to rebuild community and reclaim civic leadership in post conflict areas. As citizens and decision-makers grapple with difficult issues of justice, forgiveness, reparations, and impunity; the PSCs trained by CVT will be positioned to act as voices that can speak to the truth of the damage, and take leadership in the healing that must occur for the country to rebuild. As they do so, CVT will help keep them connected to more than 200 colleague organizations around the world, whose work demonstrates the importance of providing care and rehabilitative services to survivors of torture and human rights abuses.

CVT would not be able to reach the numerous beneficiaries (over 15,000 to date) without major support from its funders. CVT thanks the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the European Union, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and the U.S. Department of State G/TIP for their generous support over the years.

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