

the storycloth

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International Services Create Healing Resources

When the Center for Victims of Torture begins a new international services program, the immediate goal is to heal survivors of torture and begin restoring the community. But a longer-term vision also exists. Through the work of healing survivors and rebuilding communities, CVT builds a knowledgeable and skilled set of local professionals who can continue to serve survivors and speak out against torture even after the completion of the project.



PHOTO © SCOTT HWIZDOS

CVT began working with Sierra Leone refugees living in Guinea in 1999. As those refugees returned home, CVT followed, providing community-based mental health services in Sierra Leone beginning in 2001. CVT staff provided individual and group counseling and educated the community about the effects of torture. Because CVT works in postconflict situations where mental health resources are limited, a significant aspect of its work is the hiring and training of local paraprofessionals to facilitate the healing process and counseling sessions. Professional psychologists, social workers and other experts in the field of torture and trauma rehabilitation train the psychosocial counselors (PSCs). The PSCs receive weeks of training, beginning by

A woman stands outside of her father's house in Kailahun. The home was severely damaged during the civil war. She is restoring a smaller building to live in until the house can be repaired.

observing counseling sessions and ultimately leading group sessions.

At the completion of a project, PSCs might find work with another nongovernmental organization where they can use their new skills and continue to provide healing services.

But with the completion of CVT's tenure in the Kailahun and Kono districts in Sierra Leone, PSCs have created their own new nongovernmental organization. The Community Association for Psychosocial Services (CAPS) will offer many of the counseling services CVT provided and continue reaching out to and educating the community on the effects of torture.

CAPS was founded in Kailahun in 2005 by CVT-trained counselors who recognized the on-going need for counseling and psychosocial services after the completion of CVT's project. PSCs in Kono also realized that healing the wounds of torture would continue for many years. With hard work and determination

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*Our mission: To heal the wounds of
torture on individuals, their families
and their communities, and to
stop torture worldwide.*



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Letter from the Executive Director

Recently, CVT joined a coalition of concerned citizens and organizations to bring attention to the plight of millions of Iraqi refugees. Uprooted because of violence, many have fled to Jordan and Syria or are displaced inside Iraq. Their vast needs for food, medicine and shelter are not being met.

This humanitarian crisis comes at the same time CVT is asking Congress to increase funds for the Torture Victims Relief Act. For years, funding for torture treatment has remained static, while the need for care has not abated. Indeed, the United States has pledged to resettle 12,000 Iraqi refugees this year, a number expected to increase in the coming years.

Sources indicate a high percentage of torture survivors within the Iraq refugee population. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that one in five of those registered with the agency in Syria since January 2007 are classified as “victims of torture and/or violence” such as rape, beatings and burns.

For these new arrivals, torture treatment centers are a vital link in their new homes, helping them rebuild their lives and heal from the wounds of torture. We also know torture treatment is effective. CVT’s clients show meaningful improvement between intake and 3-months for all classes of symptoms: depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, somatic and quality-of-life indicators.

We have always believed that torture treatment is not just a humanitarian act. It is a strategic investment to break cycles of violence, rage and revenge.

The unique structure of the Torture Victims Relief Act means an increase in funding will support torture survivors in the United States. Please join this effort to increase healing services to torture survivors. You will find more information to help you get involved on our Web site at www.cvt.org.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Johnson



Douglas A. Johnson

Fund CVT with Each Phone Call You Make

Help fund the Center for Victims of Torture by voting for us on the 2008 Working Assets Donations Ballot. To cast your ballot, visit www.workingassets.com/vote.

Working Assets offers credit card, long distance and mobile phone service, and donates a portion of customers’ charges to nonprofits organizations, at no extra cost.

The more votes we get, the more money we get. Each time you make a purchase with your Working Assets credit card or a phone call using your CREDO long distance or mobile service, CVT will receive a small donation. It’s that simple.

Since 1985, Working Assets has raised over \$50 million for worthy groups like ours. Thanks to their

efforts, CVT was awarded \$56,235 for the 2006 campaign.

Not a Working Assets or CREDO member? Sign up so you can participate in this special election. Go to www.workingassets.com where you can link to CREDO Mobile or CREDO Long Distance.



CVT International Programs

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the PSCs fulfilled the necessary paperwork and administrative tasks of forming a new NGO.

CAPS began working independently in Kailahun in October 2006, when CVT's program was complete. In Kono, CAPS began operating in April 2008. With a staff of 13 and an independent board, CAPS is now developing itself as a fully-independent torture treatment center.

"The CAPS psychosocial counselors clearly understand the nature of trauma and its effects on individuals and communities. They are compassionate and motivated to make a difference," said David Gangsei, Ph.D., who recently completed a clinical assessment of the organization. "Given the scarcity of mental health resources in Sierra Leone, CAPS is already a de facto leader within the country."

CVT continues to work in Freetown, providing individual and group counseling to survivors. This allows CAPS employees to draw on CVT's expertise, as needed.

CAPS is now in the process of becoming a partner in CVT's International Capacity-Building (ICB) Project. As an ICB partner, CAPS will be in contact with torture treatment centers around the world. With this affiliation, the CAPS staff

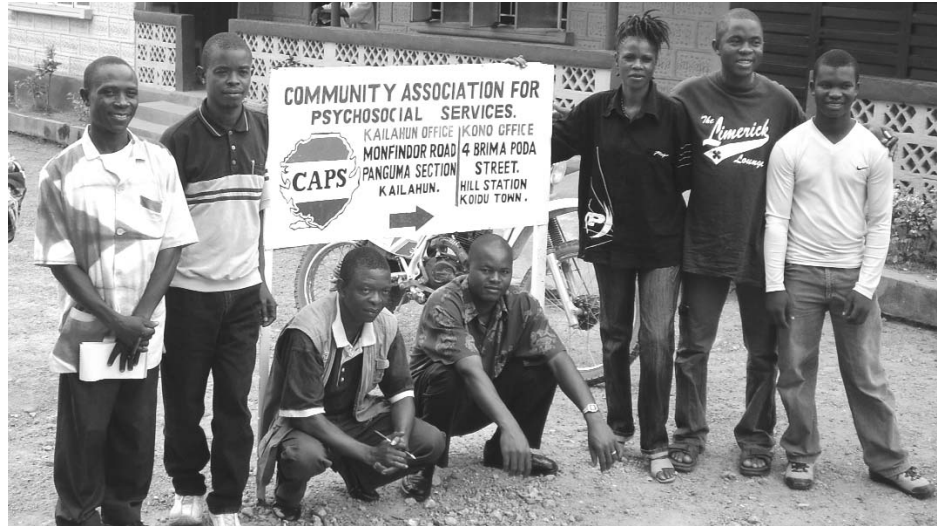


PHOTO © DAVID GANGSEI

The CAPS office in Kailahun, Sierra Leone

will continue to develop their clinical skills and build a strong organization to continue to heal the wounds of torture in Sierra Leone.

The Liberian Association of Psychological Services (LAPS) is another example of how CVT's work has a long-term effect on the healing of communities. Incorporated in September 2007 by former CVT paraprofessional counselors, LAPS is providing support services in 15 counties throughout the country. Through a contract with the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) the organization offers psychosocial support to witnesses in the TRC process. With experienced professionals, LAPS plans to provide mental health services and raise awareness of the effects of torture and war trauma to restore their country and heal survivors.

In addition to forming new torture treatment programs, CVT

employees often continue to promote healing by working with other non-governmental organizations. As a refugee of the Sierra Leone war, Neneh Binta Barrie was hired by CVT to work as a psychosocial counselor and worked in refugee camps in Guinea and then in Sierra Leone. Barrie was then hired by The Special Court for Sierra Leone to conduct assessments of torture and war trauma survivors who testified before the international war crime tribunal and trained court employees on the results of torture.

"Whether they are starting a new NGO or using their experience and skills with another organization, it's exciting to see the PSCs' ambition and commitment to healing survivors and their own community," said Neal Porter, CVT's director of international services. "CAPS and LAPS have taken on big projects. By continuing to provide counseling services, they will both make a big difference in healing survivors and rebuilding their communities for the long-term. That's really what we want to do with our international programs."

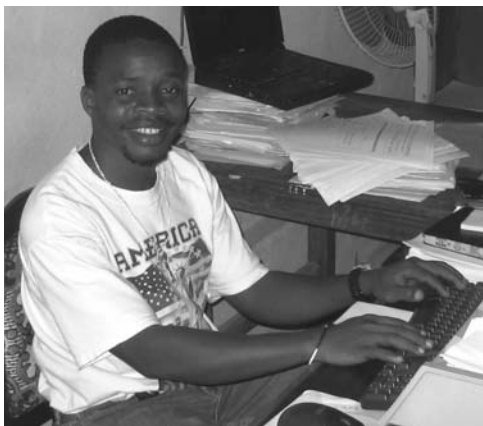


PHOTO © SCOTT HVIZDOS

Former CVT employee Ibrahim Kaku was involved in the creation of CAPS in Koidu, Sierra Leone

Skilled and Talented, CVT Volunteers Become Employees

As the first torture treatment center in the United States and one of a few human rights organizations in the Upper Midwest, CVT draws volunteers with a range of talents and interests. Volunteers share their time working with clients and in support roles. These talented and committed people make great employees, as proven by several employees who began their work with CVT as a volunteer.

Kristin Antin interned with the International Capacity-Building (ICB) Project in 2005. She worked on several projects, including a New Tactics workshop on U.S. torture. Kristin then interned with an ICB partner in Uganda before being hired as the Online Community Builder for the New Tactics in Human Rights project.

As a student at the University of Minnesota, Wendy Diedrich provided outreach, support and research for the New Tactics in Human Rights project. Wendy also volunteered as

the receptionist at the Minneapolis Healing Center before being hired as the Friday receptionist in January.

Grants Accountant, Nancy Holladay, began her volunteer career in 1995 helping with the garden tour. She also served as a driver and befriender for clients and was “on call” for various projects until being hired in 2003.

Scott Hvizdos, Assistant Director of Development, began volunteering in the fall of 1992 serving as a tutor to a client and writing for the newsletter. He was a founding member of the CVT Speakers Bureau and served as the coordinator. Scott spoke to groups about the effects of torture and CVT’s healing services before being hired in 2001.

A long-time supporter, Ann Lundberg began volunteering for administrative projects in the 1980s when CVT was located in a small house behind the Minneapolis Healing Center. Her work evolved through several volunteer and part-



Former volunteers Nancy Holladay, Scott Hvizdos and Kristin Antin now all work at CVT.

time positions before being hired full-time with the National Capacity-Building Project.

Sara Phillips volunteered as the Friday receptionist at the Minneapolis Healing Center in 2005 before holding a temporary position in Development. After a brief hiatus, Sara returned to CVT full-time as the Client Services Coordinator for the Minneapolis Healing Clinic.

Providing Hope Every Month at CVT

Each month, more and more Friends of CVT choose to participate in our *Circle of Hope* monthly giving program. This special program enables committed CVT supporters to use pre-authorized giving to increase their support for our work through modest monthly gifts—thereby creating a Circle of Hope for torture survivors and their families.

Because CVT can count on this steady and predictable flow of

monthly contributions, we can plan more effectively for the future. And because the pre-authorized gifts are made automatically each month by credit card or electronic funds transfer, the cost of processing gifts is much lower. That means more of every contribution goes to healing and helping those who have endured and suffered so much.

What makes the *Circle of Hope* program so effective is that modest monthly gifts of \$10, \$15 or \$20

add up to become a generous contribution for our work over the course of the year. With nearly 400 Friends of CVT participating in this program, *Circle of Hope* is making a substantial contribution to CVT’s work on behalf of torture survivors.

You can obtain the *Circle of Hope* enrollment form at the Make a Difference section of our Web site www.cvt.org. You’re also welcome to call Lauren Hansen at 612-436-4892 or 1-877-265-8775, or e-mail cvt@cvt.org for more information.