

2019 IMPACT REPORT

RESTORING THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE



A letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends,

I'm pleased to present our 2019 impact report, which takes a look back at our many accomplishments from last year. Because of you, in 2019 CVT rebuilt the lives and restored the hope of nearly 30,000 survivors and family members. We also commemorated 10 years of work in Uganda with survivors of torture and other gross human rights violations; expanded our healing services in Kenya and Ethiopia to respond to the refugee crisis in South Sudan; and we continued to grow the online Tactical Mapping Tool designed by our New Tactics in Human Rights program team.

Our work continued to make an impact right here in the U.S. through our unwavering advocacy work with refugee and asylum communities, fighting discriminatory laws that we know are grounded in racism and xenophobia. In 2019 our team published *Eight Facts about Refugees and Asylum Seekers* to serve as a resource for advocates working on these issues. And we launched a new digital advertising campaign to support our asylum policy advocacy.

Last year we released the first set of results of a five-year randomized controlled trial, the most rigorous evaluation mechanism in existence. This study measured mental health and social functioning outcomes, and health utilization costs, for a group of refugees suffering from depression; the project was a partnership with two very high-quality primary care clinics. We compared the CVT intervention (weekly psychotherapy and case management) with "treatment as usual" at these two clinics, and the results were staggering. Compared to treatment as usual, study participants who received the CVT intervention experienced significant decreases in mental health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and somatic complaints, and significant increases in their ability to meet their basic needs, general stability, access to employment, social support, adjustment, and community engagement. They incurred significantly lower health costs. A paper on health and functioning outcomes was submitted to the *BMC Family Practice Journal* mid-2019 and was later published in January 2020. A paper on health cost reductions will be submitted for publication in 2020.

2019 was a year of exceptional growth for CVT, furthering our reach to some of the world's most vulnerable people through our projects in the U.S. and abroad. And that growth and contribution has continued into 2020. Already in 2020, we've launched a new capacity development project with displaced human rights defenders (called IDREAM, or Incubator for Defenders Remaining in Exile to Advance Movements) and a new research project to advance positive outcomes in mental health care (called EQUIP, or Ensuring Quality in Psychological Support). We've conducted an assessment on both the U.S. and Mexico sides of the Southern Border, and have launched a secondary trauma and resilience training and support project for legal services providers on the U.S. side who work with asylum seekers.

And despite the COVID pandemic, with your generous partnership we'll again help the nearly 30,000 survivors and family members rebuild their lives and restore their hope.

This work is only possible because of you. Thank you.



Curt Goering



OUR HEALING WORK

Across the world from Kenya to Minnesota, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) empowers survivors of torture to heal from the violence that destroyed their lives. CVT provides rehabilitative care to survivors of torture, advocates to end torture worldwide, and builds the capacity of organizations and individuals to do the same. In 1985, CVT was founded as the first torture rehabilitation center in the United States, and today, we remain the largest organization of our kind in the world. CVT maintains a Research department staffed by nine masters and doctoral level social scientists. They are experienced in designing and executing evaluations in a diverse range of geographic areas, cultural and linguistic groups, and complex settings while ensuring that vulnerable populations are protected.

WHAT IS TORTURE?

Torture is the intentional and systematic infliction of physical or psychological pain and suffering in order to punish or intimidate. Torture is often thought of as an interrogation tool, but in reality, it aims to destroy individuals and shatter communities. It is most often employed by repressive governments and paramilitary forces to instill fear—and thereby gain control over—entire populations. Worldwide, torture is frequently used as a way to repress ethnic and cultural minorities, deny or destroy political opposition, or suppress free speech.

Survivors of torture typically suffer from chronic pain in muscles and joints, recurring headaches, reduced mobility, insomnia, low energy levels, and numerous medical conditions that resulted from prolonged imprisonment, being beaten or hung, sleep deprived or confined to small places, and other untreated torture related injuries. However, most notably, survivors of torture often tell us the psychological impacts of torture are even more challenging than the physical ones—impacts such as severe depression, anxiety, PTSD, somatic symptoms and frequent thoughts of suicide.



NIA'S STORY

Before my life was very, very bad because all my family have died. Some were killed from the war in South Sudan. Some died from disease. I had a very sad mood and thought to myself, "Why have my people died?" When I thought about how I'm here in the camp alone, I thought it would be better for me to die – to get away from this pain, I should die.

First when I came to Kenya from South Sudan, no one advised me or encouraged me. I was very sick at that time. But when I came to CVT and got counseling, all negativity was relieved. And for my body I got physiotherapy and gained strength.

All the disturbing thoughts have gone far away. Now I am with friends and neighbors – I'm attracting them to me, while before I was just lonely. I first heard about CVT when someone said they were giving counseling

"I feel that CVT gives you hope to concentrate on your future."

for stress and helping people to interact with other people. Because I had such negative thoughts, I wondered, "Is it possible they can help me?" I wanted help to lose stress and thought if they can remove these negative thoughts, it will help. Immediately I went and got service at CVT.

Now I have had changes in my body and in my life. Before CVT my body was very frail – when I got physiotherapy I gained strength. This and counseling helped get rid of the negative thoughts I had. They're gone.

Before when I was still having negative thoughts, I didn't sleep the whole night – maybe for one hour and a half. Then I came to CVT, and now I sleep as much as I want. Now if I feel sick I go to the hospital and get medicine and feel better. Before, even though I took the medicine, it didn't help.

Now I don't have thoughts to end my life. I feel that CVT gives you hope to concentrate on your future. CVT helped me beyond even the way my mother was helping me or my father. CVT has done something so good in my life, and it's very important.

I think CVT is where you can find your happiness and get your future.

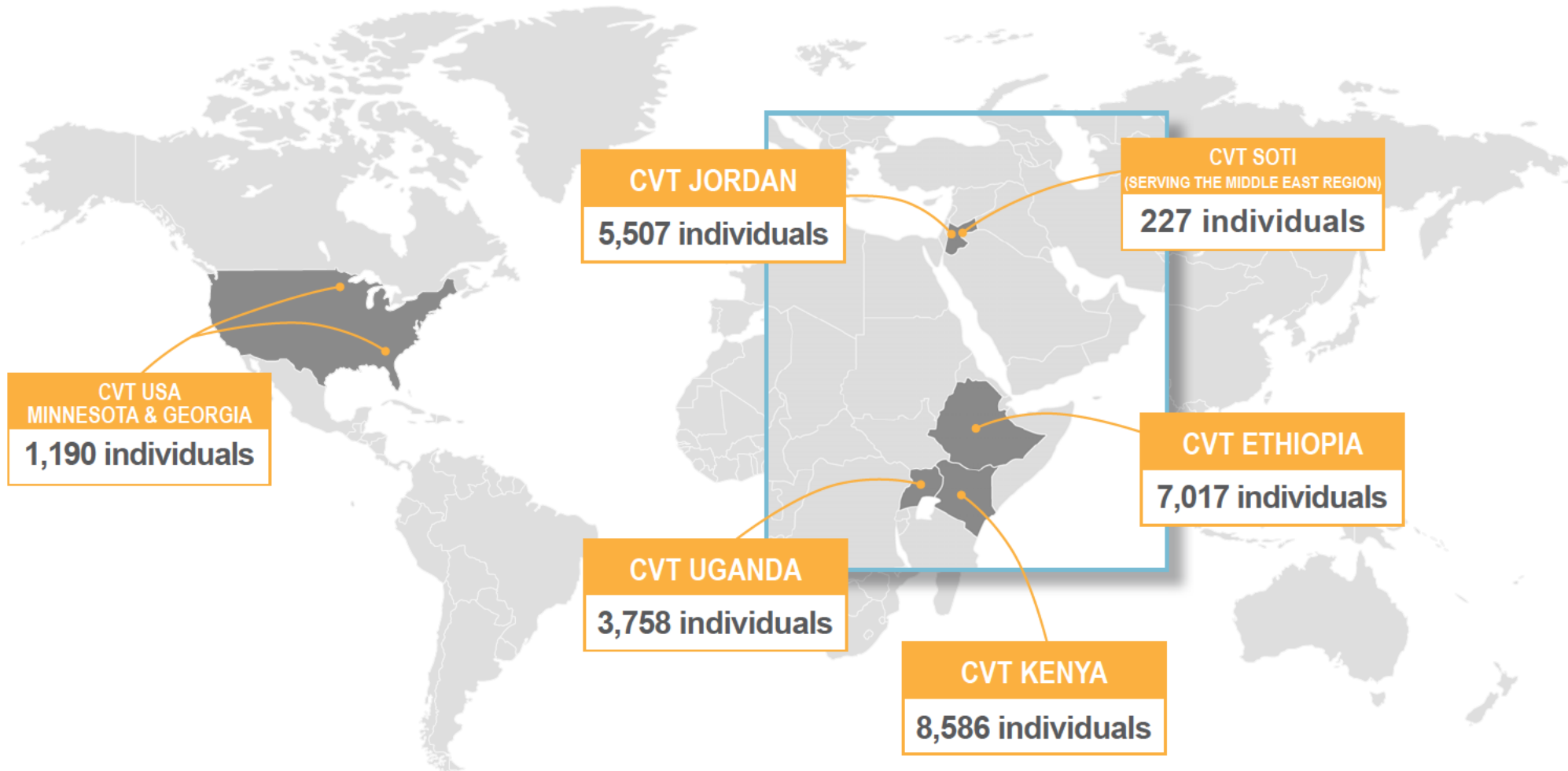
This work is very important for all people, not me alone. CVT is good for our future, good for our life.

** Names and some details have been changed for safety and to protect confidentiality*



CVT'S 2019 HEALING REACH

In 2019, CVT's healing care made it possible for **28,071** survivors and family members to rebuild their lives and restore their hope. Our healing centers around the world help survivors and their family members receive the care they need.



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CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

NEW TACTICS

New Tactics in Human Rights is a capacity development program based on the understanding that human rights problems are too complex to yield to a single approach. Our solutions must be as wide and comprehensive as the problems are complex. In 2019, New Tactics facilitated 12 face-to-face trainings, engaging 167 human rights defenders (HRDs) from 92 organizations spanning 12 countries. These HRDs then trained an additional 484 people from 104 organizations in their networks. In addition, New Tactics provided 25 face-to-face and virtual mentoring sessions for HRDs in six countries. The New Tactics Arabic and English websites (www.newtactics.org) saw more than 150,000 users engaging in conversation or accessing resources.

The Tactical Mapping Tool (TMT) is an online platform launched in October 2018 to help HRDs visually map stakeholders, develop strategic action, and collaborate with multiple activists working on the same human rights cause, and it now has 577 accounts created by activists. Building on the success of the online TMT launch, New Tactics developed an e-learning course in English and Arabic for the Strategic Effectiveness method centered on use of the online TMT. The course was tested in August and September and includes five modules with video tutorials, PDF how-to guides, and instructional videos that explain how to interact with the TMT.

NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

CVT's National Capacity Building (NCB) organizes training and technical assistance for U.S. based torture rehabilitation centers and clinical staff. In 2019 the program conducted 71 training activities to reach 42 core survivor of torture programs and 144 other programs nationwide. HealTorture.org reached an average of 4,578 hits per month, sent out 155 certificates of completion from modules in our Fundamentals of Providing Services to Torture Survivors eLearning series, and reached 956 members via the NCB listserv.

PARTNERS IN TRAUMA HEALING

The Partners in Trauma Healing program (PATH) strengthens the capacity of international torture survivor centers and programs. It is funded by USAID's Victims of Torture Fund, and has enabled work in 28 countries, impacting 42 organizations, since 2000. PATH uses mentorship and training to help international treatment centers enhance their service delivery, improve their monitoring and evaluation, document human rights abuses and the use of torture in their communities, and develop sustainable management and fundraising practices.

See next page for our PATH and National Capacity Building Programs' global reach.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

UNITED STATES
CVT PARTNERS WITH
41 U.S. ORGANIZATIONS

LEBANON

Restart Center for Rehabilitation of Victims
of Violence and Torture

TURKEY

Union of Medical Care and Relief Organization
(UOSSM) & Hope Revival Organization

IRAQ

Wchan Organization for Victims of Human Rights
Violation & Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights

LIBERIA

Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services
(LAPS)

SOUTH AFRICA

Center for the Study of Violence
and Reconciliation (CSVR)

ZIMBABWE

Tree of Life

CAMBODIA

Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
(TPO) Cambodia

PHILIPPINES

Balay Rehabilitation Center

OUR MISSION

*The Center for Victims of
Torture heals the wounds
of torture on individuals, their
families and their
communities and works to
stop torture worldwide.*



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



The Partners in Trauma Healing (PATH) program is funded by USAID's Victims of Torture Fund.

The National Capacity Building program is funded by the Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

SURVIVORS OF TORTURE INITIATIVE

Launched in 2016, SOTI is an initiative to expand trauma rehabilitation, staff support and access to justice for Syrian survivors and civil society throughout the region. In 2019, a small specialized team based in Amman, Jordan provided far-reaching support to Syrian organizations throughout the region. Collaborating closely with the New Tactics Program and local partners in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region, this team has been advancing innovative approaches to healing and human rights. This has included trauma-informed trainings, capacity-building in rehabilitation services, and resilience support for activists. This team has a particular focus on hearing survivor perspectives on healing as well as engaging survivor-led groups that are transforming Syrian civic space and shedding light on atrocities committed over the past decade.

“I was able to see resilience in myself and colleagues, we are like a mirror to each other’s strengths and determination.”

- Participant from activist workshop



2019 Key Policy Accomplishments

CVT advocates for policies that prevent torture and ensure humane prisoner treatment; maintain or increase funding for torture rehabilitation; and preserve access to resettlement for survivors.

Refugee Advocacy Days, May 8-9, 2019

In May, CVT's Washington, DC and Georgia advocacy teams came together at the Capitol to participate in the annual Refugee Advocacy Days. CVT convened groups comprised of constituents of state refugee resettlement and service agencies along with refugee leaders from the local community. CVT helped educate Members of Congress about the challenges that refugees, including torture survivors, face in their states and led to positive legislative action. This included an unusual show of bipartisan support from the Georgia delegation for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in the following months.

The Business & Immigration for Georgia (BIG) Partnership

At our program in Georgia, CVT was the catalyst for creating the Business and Immigration for Georgia (BIG) Partnership, the first and only partnership of its kind in the state, which brings together business and civic leaders who are committed to strengthening Georgia's economy by tapping the potential of the state's New Americans. CVT Georgia is building political support for refugees and immigrants by cultivating partnerships with business leaders and facilitating their engagement in policy advocacy. This approach has begun to produce dividends, with the introduction of Republican-sponsored legislation in the 2020 legislative session that sought to create a first-ever study committee to expand economic opportunities for foreign-born Georgians.

Joint Advocacy against Detention of Asylum-Seekers

Advocates in CVT's Washington, DC and Georgia locations combined efforts to advocate for a more just and humane asylum system and an end to the indefinite detention of asylum-seekers in the U.S. Georgia is home to some of the nation's largest and most notorious immigration detention facilities, and CVT Georgia's team bears witness daily to the suffering these facilities inflict on clients and others. Insights from CVT Georgia continue to strengthen CVT's asylum advocacy on the federal level, including through jointly-prepared statements to U.S. Congressional Committees.



WORKING TOGETHER TO REBUILD LIVES

CVT's holistic approach to healing takes many shapes. Our programs in the United States and abroad all contribute to those critical touch points. Whether it be walking alongside an individual's journey to rebuilding their life or fiercely advocating for better protections for survivors, CVT is committed to working toward a world without torture.



The New Tactics Arabic and English websites saw more than **150,000 USERS** engaging in conversation or accessing resources.

119 PEOPLE participated in 10 week parenting courses in both Kenya and St. Cloud, Minnesota.

CVT staff from around the world participated in **395 TRAINING SESSIONS**.

CVT strengthened the work of torture survivor rehabilitation centers and human rights organizations by providing **132 TRAININGS**.

More than **190 VOLUNTEERS** donated **7550 HOURS** of their time to help survivors with tutoring, rides, using public transportation and offering friendship and support.

343 PEOPLE were given referrals and information services at the St. Paul location.

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The United States Agency for International Development

The United States Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement

The United States Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

The United States Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

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