

the storycloth

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Building a Healing Network in Africa

Early in 2009 CVT expanded on the healing services in the Democratic Republic of Congo by launching a broad initiative in central Africa. Through the Trauma Healing Initiative-Africa (THI-Africa) project we're caring for more survivors, training new mental health professionals and bringing additional resources to three African torture treatment centers.

Healing survivors

Since 2006, CVT psychotherapists have been training Congolese psychosocial counselors to lead counseling groups for torture survivors. Working first in Pweto in the southeastern province of Katanga, we later expanded our healing services to Moba. With the THI-Africa project we hired 10 additional counselors so we can help even more men and women rebuild their lives. This spring, three of these counselors will begin working with urban refugees and survivors in the provincial capital of Lubumbashi.

With the new counselors, we were able to help 400 additional torture survivors rebuild their lives

last year. The men and women who attend the group counseling sessions learn to manage their feelings of deep depression, anxiety, anger and hopelessness. With the skilled care of our counselors and psychologists, these survivors are able to find new meaning to life and become a part of their communities again.

Building the psychology community

While we are able to bring healing to many torture survivors in the DRC, the legacy of torture will remain for years to come. To help develop psychologists who can continue to bring healing to survivors, we're working directly with the clinical psychology program at the University of Lubumbashi.

Like many buildings in the area, the psychology building is old and run-down. Students meet in classrooms without electricity, desks or chairs. Because they cannot afford to buy their own books, the students share a dozen clinical psychology texts in the library.

Through THI-Africa, we work in partnership with the psychology faculty to develop educational



PHOTO © SUZANNE PEARL

Congolese counselor Ilunga Wa Kulwala Guillaume and Carlos Aceves work in CVT's Pweto healing center. In 2009 CVT helped 1,169 Congolese torture survivors rebuild their lives.

modules that will teach students the counseling skills needed to help torture survivors rebuild their lives.

In addition, twelve clinical psychology students will participate in internships with CVT in Pweto, Moba and Lubumbashi. Through their internships students will learn key counseling techniques.

"Because of extremely limited resources, the faculty hasn't been able to develop the program as

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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



Douglas A. Johnson

This year CVT will commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary.

We've grown from a small nonprofit in America's heartland into an international organization with healing centers in the U.S., Africa and the Middle East.

We're strengthening 38 colleague groups in the U.S. and 12 in other countries, through technical assistance, training and small grants.

Our work has made the United States the largest international donor to torture survivor centers.

And we have changed the lives—saved the lives—of more than 18,000 torture survivors.

Your support makes this vital work possible. Thank you.

The occasion of our 25th anniversary is in some ways a cause for celebration—a celebration of the new lives our clients have built in the aftermath of their torture. They've walked the path to healing.

But it's also a cause for reflection, because there is still so much work to do. More than 500,000 torture survivors now live in the U.S., and countless thousands await the care they so urgently need. Around the world, untold millions have nowhere to turn.

And every day, survivors of unspeakable cruelty come to our healing centers. People like Rita, George and Elizabeth.

The sound of male laughter reminds Rita of her torture by guards.

George remembers his torturer laughing and telling him "Oh, but this is just the beginning!" every day in the shower when he sees the scar where his thumb used to be.

Elizabeth, a former judge, now works in a library shelving books because whispers are the loudest noise she can tolerate after her interrogation and torture.

With expert care from our extraordinary, professional staff, Rita, George and Elizabeth will heal from their deep wounds and reclaim their lives. Just like the 18,000 survivors who have walked this path before them.

On the occasion of this 25th anniversary, I thank you for being our partner in healing and rebuilding lives. And I thank you in advance for helping people like Rita, George and Elizabeth—in ever-increasing numbers—find the gift of hope and healing at the Center for Victims of Torture.

Sincerely,

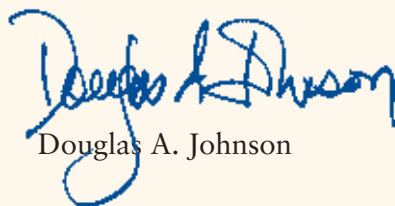

Douglas A. Johnson



PHOTO © CVT



PHOTO © C.C. STROM

From our first center on the banks of the Mississippi River to healing huts in Africa, the Center for Victims of Torture has cared for over 18,000 torture survivors.

Building a Healing Network in Africa

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they'd like to," explained Suzanne Pearl, CVT's International Services Program Manager. "We're able to provide invaluable support to the students and faculty who are committed to helping their country and fellow Congolese heal from the devastation of the war."

Strengthening torture treatment centers

The THI-Africa project is bringing additional clinical training and supervision to the torture treatment centers in Kenya, Cameroon and Uganda. CVT psychotherapist Gabriele Marini is coaching and training the staff at the Independent Medico Legal Unit in Nairobi, Kenya. Gabriele will also travel to Uganda to work with the staff of the African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims. A second psychotherapist will begin working with the Center for Rehabilitation and Abolition of Trauma in Cameroon this spring.

"This is truly a partnership," said Gabriele. "We share our clinical experience with the African treatment centers. But we're learning from these frontline centers what it takes to provide treatment while operating in countries where the effects of human rights abuses are



Dinah Kituyi, George Ouko and Eunice Olawo work with the IMLU torture treatment center in Kenya. CVT is partnering with African treatment centers to strengthen healing services for torture survivors.

still extensive. What is amazing for me is to hear these intense stories and be here where people open their lives to us. It is a privilege to work here."

Bringing it all together

The THI-Africa partners will gather every six months for week-long workshops. International Services Consulting Clinician Erin Morgan and consultant Craig Higson-Smith led the first workshop last fall. CVT counselors from the DRC, a professor from the University of Lubumbashi and counselors from the torture treatment centers in Kenya, Cameroon and Uganda attended the conference.



PHOTO © KRISTIN DIENG

International Services Consulting Clinician Erin Morgan and consultant Craig Higson-Smith led African counselors during a workshop. "This training focused on the big picture and all of the clinical tools needed to bring about healing in torture survivors," explained Erin.



International Services Program Manager Suzanne Pearl with Ngoy-Fiama Bitambile Balthazar, Dean of the School of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Lubumbashi. CVT is partnering with University of Lubumbashi faculty to develop educational modules to teach Congolese psychology students counseling skills.

"This training focused on the big picture and all of the clinical tools needed to bring about healing in torture survivors," explained Erin. "We discussed essential clinical skills, how various psychological theories relate to torture and how even the layout of a center or a therapy room is important for healing torture survivors."

"But one of the most important aspects of the workshop, and the whole THI-Africa project, is the professional relationships that are developing. The counselors are learning so much from supporting each other. They're becoming a network of healers who will help torture survivors learn to rebuild their lives."

THI-Africa and CVT's work in the DRC is funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM).



Healing in Partnership

In 2008 60,000 refugees entered the United States. Many of these men and women experienced torture, rape, imprisonment or other war traumas. Too often, they suffer from ongoing mental health problems but don't receive the help they need.

A collaboration between the Center for Victims of Torture, the University of Minnesota and community organizations has developed a valuable tool for screening refugees who might need mental health care.

Through a series of focus groups, University of Minnesota faculty Patricia Shannon, Ph.D., and Elizabeth Wieling, Ph.D., determined that many refugees living in Minneapolis and St. Paul display symptoms of extreme trauma,

including depression, flashbacks and suicidal feelings.

Based on the focus groups, Shannon and Wieling wrote screening questions for public health and primary care providers to use when working with refugees.

"Refugees from Somalia, Burma and other countries don't use terms like 'depression' and 'anxiety,'" explained Shannon, who is also a consultant with CVT. "This screening tool uses simple words for mental health concerns. It's a preliminary assessment to determine if someone should be referred to a counselor for a formal evaluation."

Local primary care clinics and public health workers will begin using the tool and giving feedback



PHOTO BY C.C. STROM

Patty Shannon and Liz Wieling are collaborating with CVT to create a refugee mental health screening tool.

on its outcomes this summer.

"By working with community leaders and health care providers we can create a system to identify the mental health concerns of refugees when they first arrive so they can create healthy, productive lives," said Wieling. "Ultimately we hope that this tool will be a model for other cities and states."

Become a Part of the Circle... *Circle of Hope!*

You have made a real difference in the ability of the Center for Victims of Torture to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities ...and to stop torture worldwide. We are deeply grateful for your commitment and generosity.

In today's uncertain economic climate, we're hearing from many donors looking for creative ways to continue bringing hope and healing to thousands of torture survivors.

In the first four months of 2010, forty people have committed to making a contribution to CVT every month. These dedicated supporters have joined nearly 300 other donors who, with their regular monthly gifts, make up CVT's *Circle of Hope*. Each month, our *Circle of Hope* is

growing because of people like you.

When you commit to making a small contribution each month, you make a big difference in the lives of torture survivors around the world. Your monthly gifts of \$10, \$15, or \$25 generate significant support for rebuilding the lives of torture survivors and preventing the use of torture worldwide. Monthly gifts can be made easily with automatic credit card charges or fund transfers.

If you're ready to join *Circle of Hope*, please contact Ashley at 612-436-4892 or abennett@cvt.org. You can change or stop your contributions at any time. Thank you for your continued commitment to CVT's hope and healing.

CIRCLE
of HOPE

Make a Difference in the Life of a Survivor

Your generous support brings healing to torture survivors worldwide. CVT welcomes all types of donations.

- **Monthly Sustainers** allow for ongoing planning and delivery of healing services.
- **Planned Giving** continues your legacy of support.
- **Gifts of Stock** support survivors while offering tax benefits to donors.
- **In-Kind Donations** of specific items improve the lives of survivors.
- **Tribute Gifts** celebrate events or memorialize loved ones.

Donate online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 717 East River Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55455, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



Restoring the dignity of the human spirit

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