

# the storycloth

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• [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org)

## Joseph's Story: A Profile of Healing

A brutal war raged in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 1998-2003. During the conflict, nearly 4 million people died, 1.7 million were displaced and countless individuals were tortured. The conflict continues to simmer to this day.

Men, women and children who survived sexual violence, beatings and other torture perpetrated by all sides of the conflict, are in need of healing. For three years CVT has provided desperately needed care to torture survivors in the southeastern province of Katanga. "Joseph," (not his real name for confidentiality reasons) is among the many individuals CVT has helped.

**"I don't understand how CVT came to my village . . . but I understand that CVT helps us to get humanity back."**

*— Joseph, CVT Client in the DRC*

During the war Joseph lived on the run for several years. Moving from village to village, he tried to avoid being forced into service by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), the state military.

Eventually, though, he was captured and beaten repeatedly for days, often to the point of unconsciousness. He was forced to watch kidnappings and rapes. "I was so scared because I was separated from my wife, who was pregnant, and I imagined how she would go through the same agony as the women I saw being raped by the FARDC," said Joseph.

"When they finally let me go, I started looking for my wife and found her after a couple of weeks. But she died two months later while giving birth. We could not get near a hospital due to the fighting and she died with the baby in her womb. I felt so incredibly helpless watching her die."

Like many torture survivors, Joseph was traumatized for years by his experiences during the war. He could not sleep and experienced intense periods of anger. He felt



PHOTO © EDIE LEWISON

**Congolese mental health counselors Arlette and George lead counseling groups for torture survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

overwhelming sadness, a sense of uselessness and guilt.

At a community event Joseph learned about CVT and soon joined a counseling group. After ten weeks of therapy, Joseph is more optimistic about life. "I am happy to report that I sleep much better. The terrible images of the war bother me less and less and let me do my work in peace. And most of all, I understand that I am not guilty for my wife's death."

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## *Letter from the Executive Director*

This has been a year of incredible change for the country and for CVT. When President Obama, on just his second full day in office, issued an executive order banning torture and cruelty, our nation turned a page. We took a step away from the brutal tactics that had marked our nation's counterterrorism practices for the past eight years.



**Douglas A. Johnson**

As the first human rights organization to call for this Presidential directive, we were thrilled. There is plenty of credit to be shared for this extraordinary accomplishment, because so many human rights groups came to support the concept of an executive order. But there are some who recognize CVT as having made the key contribution to this successful campaign.

Across the world, in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Jordan, our healing centers continue to help torture survivors heal from their deep wounds, reclaim their lives and rebuild their communities. And there is more good news: soon CVT will extend care to Iraqi torture survivors not only in Jordan, but in Syria as well. We'll also begin working in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Reflecting back on this year, I'm encouraged by the healing capacity we've built by providing technical assistance and training to more than 50 torture survivor rehabilitation centers in the U.S. and abroad. And I'm inspired to note that CVT has now helped more than 18,000 survivors recover from the devastating wounds of torture. Your support has made this fine work possible; please accept my deepest thanks.

But despite our success, CVT is feeling the same financial pressures as all nonprofit organizations. Earlier this year we reduced our budget by \$350,000. Sadly, we were forced to lay off several staff members.

This is the time of year when we ask you and our other donors to make special year-end gifts. The amount of financial support we receive before the end of the year will determine what we're able to accomplish in the year ahead. I hope we can count on your support again.

Thank you for being our partner in healing. May you and your family have a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Douglas A. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Douglas A. Johnson

### **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](http://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.

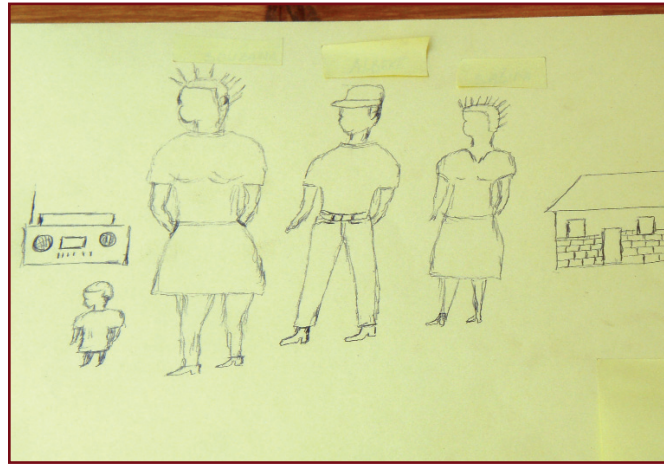
# Joseph's Story: A Profile of Healing

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Joseph's story is not unique. In the DRC, large numbers of men have been savagely beaten, some to the death. Tens of thousands of women and girls have suffered barbaric sexual attacks—some endured irreparable mutilation during rape and will never be able to have children. Looted homes, “disappearances,” theft of crops and food, arbitrary detentions and extortion, and violent rampages were widespread.

Survivors of these attacks are virtually paralyzed by their post-traumatic reactions which include flashbacks, panic attacks, intense and incessant nightmares, and powerful feelings of hopelessness and despair. They are frequently unable to function normally within the community or care for their children and are in desperate need of mental health services.

With funding from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, CVT began providing care to torture survivors in the DRC in 2006. A grant from



In Joseph's therapy group survivors drew aspects of their lives to depict their grief and loss. For Joseph, sketching his loved ones helped him heal. “Drawing [my wife], the baby and other beloved people I lost during the war, [and] speaking about the good times I shared with her, made me realize that it is time to move on.”

the European Union's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights allowed CVT to hire and train additional counselors to work in the remote communities of Moba and Pweto during the past year. Expatriate psychotherapists conduct individual therapy sessions and Congolese paraprofessional counselors lead therapy groups like the one that helped Joseph.

Alice Behrendt is CVT's mental health clinician and trainer in Moba. “Since mid-June about 8,000 returnees have arrived. It is planned

that 15,000 more will be repatriated from the camps in Zambia by the end of December,” said Alice.

“Moba and surrounding villages have been highly affected by fighting between Rwandan forces, the FARDC and different rebel factions,” explained Alice.

CVT's on-going mental health services will rebuild the lives of many of these traumatized refugees. They will begin to live meaningful, productive lives again, like Joseph has done. “I don't understand how CVT came to [my village], how this place was picked, but I understand that CVT helps us to get humanity back,” said Joseph. “I feel like a human being again.”

## Give Gifts of Hope this Holiday Season

The perfect holiday gift this year may be the one that rebuilds a life.

Instead of shopping for material presents this holiday season, consider making a contribution to CVT and giving holiday *Gifts of Hope* in celebration of your loved ones.

When you make a *Gift of Hope*, you'll receive a card for the recipient that will tell them how their holiday gift is healing torture survivors around the world. Please visit

[www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) to make *Gifts of Hope*, or call us toll-free at 877-265-8775.

Everyone on your holiday shopping list is sure to appreciate the profound impact of giving hope. We don't often get a chance to help rebuild someone's life with a simple gesture, but at CVT, that is exactly what your gift will do.

May these *Gifts of Hope* bring you joy as they bring hope and healing to torture survivors around the world.

CVT's work in the DRC is funded by the European Union's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

(EIDHR) and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM).





# Volunteer Physical Therapist Brings Healing Touch to Jordan

MaryAnn de Ruiter's tools and methods are often simple. She teaches CVT clients how to use rice hot packs to relieve their aches. She helps them find more supportive shoes to alleviate pain in their legs and feet. Yet the effects of de Ruiter's work are extraordinary.

A professional physical therapist, she volunteers to help clients in the Minneapolis Healing Center. Her goal is to soothe the chronic physical pain that afflicts torture survivors.

For ten years, de Ruiter has helped survivors manage the on-going physical effects of torture. From explaining how to tape a damaged knee caused by a beating to demonstrating self-massage to alleviate head or back aches, she teaches CVT clients how to manage pain and pressure.

The results of de Ruiter's work are life-changing. "Clients tell me, 'I was

able to sleep better' and 'I feel like I can manage my own pain' after they have received therapy," said de Ruiter. Some clients need only a few sessions of physical therapy while others might require several months of care before seeing improvement.

In June, de Ruiter traveled to the CVT treatment center in Amman, Jordan to share her skills. She spent a week working with physical therapist Eman Al-Zughbieh, demonstrating techniques and approaches conducive to working with torture survivors.

Together de Ruiter and Al-Zughbieh worked with seven women clients. "In Jordan our clients' torture is quite recent, so we're able to address their physical pain much sooner and in a different way," explained de Ruiter. Al-Zughbieh is now using de Ruiter's lessons in Amman full-time.

Having witnessed how CVT clients



PHOTO © REEM KLOUB

**CVT volunteer physical therapist MaryAnn de Ruiter traveled to Amman, Jordan to help train Eman Al-Zughbieh.**

benefit from her healing touch, de Ruiter wishes she could spend more time working with them. "Survivors are resilient, talented and inspirational. I often feel humbled by them."

## Reaffirm Your Commitment to Hope and Healing with a Gift to CVT

Each year, thousands of torture survivors come to CVT in the hope of rebuilding their lives and healing from the wounds of torture. Generous support from CVT donors like you makes it possible for women, men and children to live without nightmares, fear and isolation. Because of your financial commitment, these brave individuals have a chance to reclaim healthy, peaceful lives.

Your generosity is especially important at the end of the year. The contributions CVT receives before December 31 determine the extent of the healing and advocacy initiatives we can carry out next year.

Making a tax-deductible contribution by [check](#) or [credit card](#) before the end of the year is the easiest way to help CVT. You can use the enclosed envelope to send in your gift, or go to our Web site at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) to make a secure gift online. If you would like to make a gift of stock, we would be happy to assist you. Please call us at the number below.

This year CVT is making a special effort to encourage supporters to give *Gifts of Hope* as holiday gifts. Everyone on your gift list will appreciate knowing that a life is being restored in their honor. CVT will send you cards with messages of

hope that you can send to announce your *Gift of Hope*.

However you choose to support CVT at the end of this year, please know that CVT's clients, Board of Directors and staff are deeply grateful for your commitment to healing torture survivors and stopping torture worldwide. Your support has given over 18,000 torture survivors a chance to rebuild their lives. Thank you for your generosity and your compassion.

*If you would like to discuss your options for year-end giving, including gifts of stock, please call Ashley at 877-265-8775 (toll-free) or e-mail [abennett@cvt.org](mailto:abennett@cvt.org).*