New CVT Healing Center Opens in Ethiopia

CVT has opened a new healing center in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, the latest chapter in our rapid response to the armed conflict that erupted in the country’s Tigray region in late 2020.

When the fighting began, CVT had already been in the region for eight years, providing care to Eritrean refugees who had been driven from their home country by persecution and violence perpetrated by Eritrea’s brutal dictatorship. At considerable risk to their own lives, our team stayed in Tigray to continue providing care to the refugees and to the hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans displaced by the devastating civil war. We also opened a new healing center in nearby Shire to provide services to the swelling number of displaced Ethiopians.

As the fighting intensified, thousands of Eritrean refugees fled to the Amhara region, roughly 120 miles to the southwest. CVT knew we had to do everything possible to make sure they would continue receiving the rehabilitative care they need. The answer was the new healing center in Amhara, which formally opened in January.

The refugees’ journey from Tigray to Amhara was difficult and dangerous. “People told us that they experienced robbery and extortion by smugglers, as well as sexual violence while they made their way to Amhara,” said Firew Kefyalew Mekonnen, country director, CVT Ethiopia. “We knew we needed to find a way to support these people and reestablish a strong program of care.”

The United Nations estimates that 22,000 Eritrean refugees are now living in the Amhara region. Over the past year, the CVT Ethiopia team has been planning to bring trauma-informed counseling and physiotherapy to the area, and began setting up the new center in the town of Dabat.

Once CVT staff established the site, they began spreading the word within the refugee community to raise awareness of the symptoms people experience after trauma, and about the care that CVT provides, as well as administering psychological first aid to people who were in crisis.

Starting in mid-January, the team at the Dabat center began providing intensive mental health counseling and physiotherapy to clients in group

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Dear Friend,

On a recent visit to CVT projects in Ethiopia and Kenya I heard horrific stories of human suffering, but I saw something even more striking:

*The incredible strength, courage and resilience of people who have suffered so terribly … and the determination of our staff members to make sure those survivors get the caring support they need to rebuild their lives.*

In Ethiopia, for example, I spent time with our team from Tigray, who have worked through two years of devastating civil war to continue providing healing care to survivors of conflict-related trauma. It’s impossible to overstate their commitment to humanitarian service. As the lead article in this issue of *The StoryCloth* describes, CVT recently opened a new healing center in Dabat, in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. We now have about 140 staff in Ethiopia making it our largest country team.

In Kenya, I visited the refugee camps at Kakuma and Kalobeyei, where more than 240,000 people live after escaping conflict in nearby South Sudan and elsewhere. A small CVT team of fewer than a dozen people are overwhelmed by requests for our intensive psychotherapy and physiotherapy programs for survivors of extreme conflict-related trauma.

I also visited with our team in Nairobi and saw firsthand the impact of CVT’s unique program for LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers. Diverse sexualities and gender identities remain deeply stigmatized in many African countries and, in some, are legally punishable by death. Since authorities in Kenya do not aggressively enforce their anti-LGBTQ+ laws, the country has become a sanctuary for persecuted members of the LGBTQ+ community from across East and Central Africa.

For example, Matumaini* (not using her real name for her safety) grew up in a neighboring country where she was ostracized for being a lesbian. Her family accused her of being a witch, tried to kill her and expelled her from her home. Matumaini eventually fled to Kenya where she spent months sleeping on the streets and contemplated suicide, before reaching out to CVT.

With intensive therapy, Matumaini began to heal and grow, and is now a community worker, helping others with similar experiences. These days, she often has a smile on her face that lights up any room she is in.

That smile is one of the best measures of the impact of your caring support for CVT. On behalf of Matumaini, and so many others … Thank You!

Sincerely,

Dr. Simon Adams
President and CEO

P.S. If you’d like to help more survivors like Matumaini, or the Eritrean refugees and displaced Tigrayans that CVT serves, you can return your caring contribution in the enclosed envelope, or see page four for other ways to support our mission. Thank you for everything you do.
CVT Helps Lead Fight for Torture-Free Trade Treaty

Although torture is illegal everywhere, there are virtually no international laws that ban or regulate the trade in the tools of torture. That includes not just legitimate law enforcement products that can be misused but also items like spiked batons and electric shock belts that have no legitimate use whatsoever.

That’s why CVT is teaming up with Amnesty International, Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic and a handful of other prominent human rights organizations to lead the fight for a Torture-Free Trade Treaty.

In January we co-convened a summit in the Shoreditch district of London, which was attended by more than 30 other civil society organizations from around the world. CVT was represented by Dr. Simon Adams, president and CEO, and Scott Roehm, Washington director, who emphasized in a panel discussion that “states have a responsibility to prevent torture. And that means they should regulate the manufacture and trade of the tools of torture.”

The two-day summit ended with adoption of the “Shoreditch Declaration,” a joint commitment to campaign to get the United Nations to restrict the trade in goods used to torture our fellow human beings.

Our initiative is supported by an “Alliance for Torture-Free Trade,” a group of 63 states at the United Nations that have committed to negotiating a UN General Assembly resolution as a first step towards a legally binding Torture-Free Trade Treaty. Now we need to hold them to their word.

A Torture-Free Trade Treaty can stop the transfers of items to states that consistently misuse them to inflict torture and impose an international ban on goods that have no use other than torture. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights sent a message to summit participants encouraging them to forge ahead: “We must end torture in this century, and your campaign can get us closer to that goal.” CVT will be doing all it can to hasten the day.

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sessions. The sessions incorporate education about the symptoms of trauma, and the connection between the body and the mind. Clients work in a group setting to gain coping skills and process their grief.

According to Alemu Lemma, CVT zonal manager for Amhara, “Once we let people know that psychosocial support will help them feel better about themselves and about their lives and futures, people tell us they begin to see hope. With tools to help cope with trauma, and with hope, people begin rebuilding their lives.”

In addition to our operations in Tigray and Amhara, our staff at the CVT Gambella center in the western part of the country, have been providing care to refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere since 2019.

After a recent visit to Ethiopia, CVT president and CEO Dr. Simon Adams emphasized that establishing a new trauma-focused rehabilitative care center during a time of armed conflict is a remarkable accomplishment.

Dr. Adams added that he is “incredibly proud of the CVT Ethiopia team for doing so much—including risking their lives during an active armed conflict—to make sure these refugees receive the healing care they need. And I could not be more grateful for the caring generosity of CVT supporters who made it possible.”
Monthly Giving Can Benefit Both You and CVT

Many of our supporters choose to join the CVT Circle of Hope by having a gift automatically charged every month to a credit card or transferred electronically from a checking account. Monthly giving ensures CVT has a reliable source of income to provide care at our Healing Centers and respond quickly to emergencies, but it also has important benefits for you:

- As a monthly giver, your membership is always current, so you never have to worry about renewing your membership.
- Your contributions are made electronically, with complete security, so you don’t have to deal with any paperwork or remember to send your contribution.
- Since your total contribution is spaced out over the year, it makes budgeting easier for you (and CVT).
- By cutting down on postage and processing costs, even more of your contribution will go directly where you want it to—helping survivors heal and bringing us closer to a world without torture.

As a member of the Circle of Hope, you will receive an annual statement in January with all of your contributions for the previous year. And, of course, you can change, suspend or cancel your giving at any time. To join the Circle of Hope, contact us at (612) 436-4808 or giving@cvt.org.

Other Ways You Can Support the Center for Victims of Torture

Here are a few more ways you can help even more survivors heal their wounds, rebuild their lives and rediscover joy and hope in the future.

**Employer-Matching.** Many employers will match charitable giving from their employees, doubling or even tripling their contributions. Contact your employer’s human resources department to find out whether this is a way you can leverage your impact.

**Legacy Giving.** Many donors who do not have the resources to make substantial gifts during their lifetimes find it possible to be extraordinarily generous through their estate planning. A gift of this kind will extend your legacy of caring while also offering potential financial benefits to you and your loved ones. There are a variety of options available to you to make a legacy gift to CVT, including bequests through your will or living trust, naming CVT a beneficiary of your life insurance or retirement plan, making a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA and setting up a charitable gift annuity.

**Donor Advised Funds.** If you have set up a donor advised fund (DAF), you can contact its representative to make a grant recommendation for CVT. You will need the following information:

- Organization Name: The Center for Victims of Torture
- Organization EIN: 36-3383933
- Organization Address: 2356 University Ave W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114

If you are interested in learning more about starting a DAF, or need assistance in making a gift from an existing DAF, please contact Laura Kuhlmann at lkuhlmann@cvt.org.

Your Role in Helping Survivors Heal

The number of people CVT will be able to help this year depends directly on how much funding we receive from caring friends like you.

For more information about these and other giving options, please use the enclosed envelope to return your personalized reply form, or contact Laura Kuhlmann at lkuhlmann@cvt.org. To ensure that your gift fits your financial situation you should consult with your attorney, accountant or financial planner.

If you wish to make an immediate gift, you can use the enclosed envelope, visit us online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 2356 University Avenue W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114, or call (612) 436-4808.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.