



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

2023-2025

Strategic Plan



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“

CVT helped us remove fear of one another and fear as an individual. I used to feel like I am not worthy and I don't matter. I feel better. I have hope. I see myself as a person among people again.”

- Survivor and service recipient

INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to share with you the Center for Victims of Torture's 2023 – 2025 strategic plan. This plan builds upon CVT's current work and proud history and will ensure that we maximize our impact as we adapt to changing circumstances, seize new opportunities, and continue to build an increasingly global organization.

For almost four decades, CVT has worked toward a future in which torture ceases to exist, human rights are universally respected and protected, and survivors have hope for a new life. The organization not only supports the healing of survivors of torture, persecution, and extreme conflict-related trauma, but also works to promote human rights and prevent torture through training, research, and advocacy.

Since its founding in 1985, CVT has grown from a small Minnesota-based clinic to an increasingly global organization with an annual budget approaching \$30M, more than 400 staff located across three continents, and a broad spectrum of impactful programming and activities.

This plan outlines how we will prepare ourselves to embrace the challenge of the next decade. Over the next three years, we aim to:

- Maximize impact: increasing CVT's impact on the torture survivor community, on the humanitarian sector and on global debates regarding the future of human rights
- Strengthen partnerships: enhancing the collective power of those we work alongside
- Grow strategically and sustainably: ensuring organizational growth happens where we are best placed to have a unique and meaningful impact
- Improve systems and structures: creating an increasingly global CVT requires putting the building blocks in place for greater efficiency and increased capacity within our own organization

CVT is an organization that focuses on providing healing and hope. Regardless of your relationship to CVT, we are all working to advance human dignity and universal rights. Let's commit to using this strategic plan to truly transform our organization over the next three years.

Sincerely,
Dr. Simon Adams
President and CEO, Center for Victims of Torture

CVT Values

We believe a better future is possible.

We commit to respecting the humanity of all people.

We commit to holding ourselves accountable, ensuring honesty and transparency.

We commit to dismantling barriers to justice and advancing opportunities for all.

We commit to listening to, working with and learning from survivors and each other.

HOPE

HUMAN DIGNITY

INTEGRITY

EQUITY

COLLABORATION

CVT Mission

The mission of the Center for Victims of Torture is to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities and to end torture worldwide.

CVT Vision

The Center for Victims of Torture's vision is a world without torture.

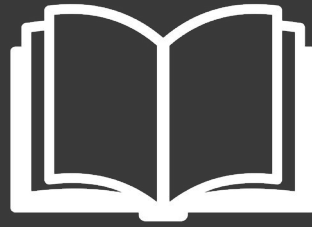
A photograph of a traditional thatched-roof hut, possibly a prison cell, with a large tree in the background. A sign on the door reads "Session in progress". Several pairs of shoes are lined up on the ground in front of the hut. The scene is outdoors and brightly lit.

“

Today torture and ill-treatment continue to be practiced with almost complete impunity throughout the world, and victims of such abuse or their relatives rarely obtain the redress, reparation, and rehabilitation to which they are entitled under international law . . . A growing number of States seem prepared to restrict accountability for torture and ill-treatment by adopting such measures, which operate in effect as a license to torture and ill-treat in complete impunity.”

- Professor Nils Melzer, United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment

OUR STORY



The Center for Victims of Torture was inspired by a son's question to his father. Rudy Perpich, Jr. asked "What are you doing for human rights?" to his father, Rudy Perpich Sr., then Governor of Minnesota. Inspired by his son's challenge, Governor Perpich directed a committee of human rights, health, human services and faith leaders to research various initiatives. The most ambitious proposal was to establish a rehabilitation center for survivors of torture. Governor Perpich embraced the idea. He went to Denmark to visit the first treatment center in the world, the Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims, and appointed a task force to determine how to establish such a center in Minnesota.



1985



2022 and beyond

Nearly four decades ago in 1985, CVT was founded in Minnesota, the United States of America, as an independent nongovernmental organization dedicated to healing the wounds of torture survivors. Since that time, CVT has evolved into an increasingly global organization that works with partners around the world to support the recovery of torture survivors and end torture worldwide.

CVT began by providing clinical services to support victims of torture, and it soon expanded to provide training. The training is designed to develop capacity and build networks of healing professionals, especially where few exist, so that recovery services can be locally owned and can remain after CVT leaves a location. In 1993 during the war in the former Yugoslavia, CVT travelled to Bosnia and Croatia to train care providers in the specialized treatment of torture survivors. In 1995, CVT partnered with organizations in Turkey to strengthen the skills of medical professionals and nongovernmental groups that support survivors, work against torture and advance human rights.

Recognizing the growing need among refugees fleeing West Africa, and in response to a request from the U.S. Department of State, in 2000 CVT launched a direct healing program to support Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. These services were later expanded to extend care to returning refugees in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo; refugees of the Somali and Sudanese conflicts living in the Dadaab refugee camps in northern Kenya; urban refugees in Nairobi, Kenya; survivors of atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance

Army in Uganda; Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Jordan; and Eritrean refugees in northern Ethiopia.

Seeking to increase global funding for the treatment of torture survivors, in 1992 CVT worked with faith-based groups and the human rights community to secure US funding for the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, an agency that provides financial support to torture survivor rehabilitation centers worldwide. In 1993 CVT wrote, with then-Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN), the Torture Victims Relief Act and cultivated bipartisan political support for healing survivors of torture. This Act, which was passed by the Congress in 1998, authorizes federal support for torture survivor rehabilitation programs in the U.S. and globally through bilateral and multilateral support. This legislation, and CVT's effective annual appropriations advocacy, has made the United States the world's largest donor to torture survivor rehabilitation. CVT also played a central role in the campaign to end the United States' post-9/11 torture program and is a leader in efforts to ensure humane prisoner treatment and close the prison at Guantanamo Bay.

CVT's work continues to evolve as its role around the world grows to meet the challenges for ending torture; treating the survivors of torture and other extreme conflict-related trauma; working with human rights defenders; and developing collective capacity to confront the global crisis that has resulted in 100 million people being displaced by conflict, persecution, and atrocities for the first time in history.



OUR APPROACH

Through research, training, advocacy, and rehabilitation programs for survivors, CVT plays a key role in building a larger vision for the torture rehabilitation movement.

Healing & Clinical Programs



We help survivors of torture heal through unique programming and professional care. We provide or organize mental health, case management, legal services, and medical care for survivors of torture and extreme conflict-related trauma – to meet their needs and support their recovery.

Training & Capacity Development



We strengthen partners around the world through training so that individuals, communities, and organizations can learn new and improved ways to provide healing care to torture survivors and advance human rights. We work locally to develop capacity and ensure continuity of support over the long-term.

Research



We measure the effects of rehabilitative care on the well-being of survivors. We conduct rigorous evaluation and monitoring to ensure the work we do is effective, and we share this data to influence policy and improve knowledge about evidence-based approaches that work.

Advocacy



We work to end torture worldwide, ensure the protection and care of survivors, and amplify the voices that the perpetrators of torture have tried to silence. We work with human rights defenders to promote accountability and international justice. We work for humane and trauma-informed treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. We show perpetrators that their actions have consequences and inform policymakers how they can best support survivors and protect human rights.

OUR IMPACT

Since our founding in 1985, CVT has had an enormous impact on torture survivors and their communities around the world. Our impact includes:

1

Rebuilding the lives and restoring the hope of hundreds of thousands of individuals and family members who endured torture, severe conflict-related trauma, and other gross human rights violations.

2

Enabling exponential impact by training thousands of partners to help heal the wounds of torture on survivors living in their local communities and regions.

3

Pioneering research about interventions that work, with outcomes documenting superior health and functioning outcomes as well as reduced treatment expenses.

4

Authoring papers in peer-reviewed journals, including showcasing perspectives that are typically under-represented in the scientific world, and publishing these papers in open access journals to facilitate greater proliferation of understanding.

5

Increasing our presence to multiple countries around the world and partnering with survivors, local community leaders, and allied organizations to transform lives.

6

Helping to shape public discourse and influence policies at international fora and among governments, explaining the long-term consequences of torture and exposing the evidence of its ineffectiveness.

7

Making key contributions to campaigns to end the United States' post-9/11 torture program and to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay

8

Expanding our work and advocacy to states beyond Minnesota.

9

Securing hundreds of millions of dollars to support victims of torture, including funds for the U.N. Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the US Agency for International Development's Victims of Torture Fund, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Services for Survivors of Torture.



Our approach is centered on supporting and strengthening the efforts of torture-affected communities to help themselves. We are proud of our work around the world to rebuild lives and restore hope. We have established our world-class expertise as we have provided direct care for those who have been tortured; and we have trained local partners who can prevent and treat torture. We have successfully advocated for policies that promote human rights and help end torture. Most importantly, we deeply value each individual survivor and appreciate the many partners who have joined us on this journey.

OUR GOALS

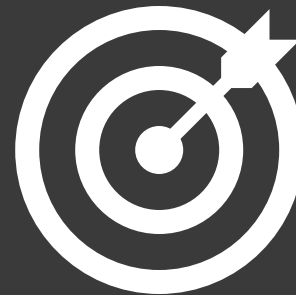
Over the next three years, the Center for Victims of Torture will build on its accomplishments and focus on actions that position CVT to achieve its next phase of global growth and impact. The goals are designed to enable CVT to bridge from being an organization making a difference in the United States and specific regions, to being an organization that has the infrastructure and capacity to sustain and expand a larger global presence and role.

To grow effectively, CVT requires putting in place key elements that are essential for a global organization. This strategic plan provides four inter-connected goals that require a holistic approach for implementation. No one goal stands alone; the goals and objectives are inter-dependent and require communication and collaboration across the organization's departments and regions. The goals and specific objectives set forth a plan for success.



Maximize CVT Impact by Leveraging its Breadth of Expertise

Goal One focuses on ways to increase internal collaboration and unlock the capacity for more efficient and effective complementary working; on strengthening CVT's role in support of survivor voices; and on elevating its role at international fora.



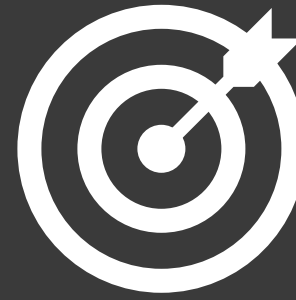
Strengthen External Partnerships and Enhance Collective Power

Goal Two sets a strategy for CVT to work even more effectively with external partners and coalitions, mapping local resources, identifying the unique contributions it can make within those partnerships, and prioritizing work to build the capacity of its partners.



Grow Strategically and Sustainably

Goal Three reaffirms the processes for ensuring the best path for further growth in various regions. The choices CVT makes in the coming years about where to invest resources will do much to define the scope and perceptions of the organization for decades beyond.



Improve Systems and Structures to Bolster CVT's Building Blocks

Goal Four acknowledges that CVT's programmatic work has grown rapidly and that now its infrastructure needs to grow. The focus is on priorities that will enhance staff capacity and well-being; continue to support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) progress; and expand capabilities in a range of infrastructure areas such as information technology, human resources, funding diversification, and communications.



This strategic plan lays a path for CVT to have greater presence across the world; to have both leadership and infrastructure based in various regions globally; and to have more capacity to scale up its interventions where there is need. The implementation of these goals will result in CVT being a more global organization with greater impact around the world.



Goal #1
Maximize CVT's
Impact by Leveraging
Its Breadth of
Expertise

CVT is especially well-known for its excellence and specialization in the clinical field of extending rehabilitative care to survivors of torture and other extreme conflict-related trauma. In practice, CVT engages in multiple forms of interventions to support individuals and their communities and to enhance learning, influence policies, and build capacity. This diverse work often happens in silos.

Goal one focuses internally and emphasizes a more comprehensive grouping of activities. The purpose is to be intentional in combining CVT's work on healing, advocacy, capacity development, and research to enable greater efficiencies and impact. In applying this approach, there are two opportunities of special interest for the next three years: (1) supporting survivors who choose to share their stories as a powerful accelerator for individual healing and societal transformation; and (2) increasing CVT's influence at global, multilateral forums.

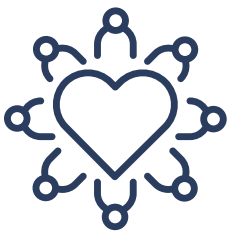
OBJECTIVE 1.1



Support survivors to share their experiences, engage in advocacy work and campaign for change by developing best practices and processes for increasing therapeutic documentation, supporting survivor decision-making, and facilitating survivor engagement in advocacy and other possible forms of public engagement.

Not all survivors want to share their stories, but for those that do it can be a vital part of their recovery and an exceptionally effective means of changing the world by educating societies, increasing support for survivors, changing policy, and achieving justice. Survivors should also be encouraged to shape CVT's clinical and research work, which augments and underpins CVT's advocacy.

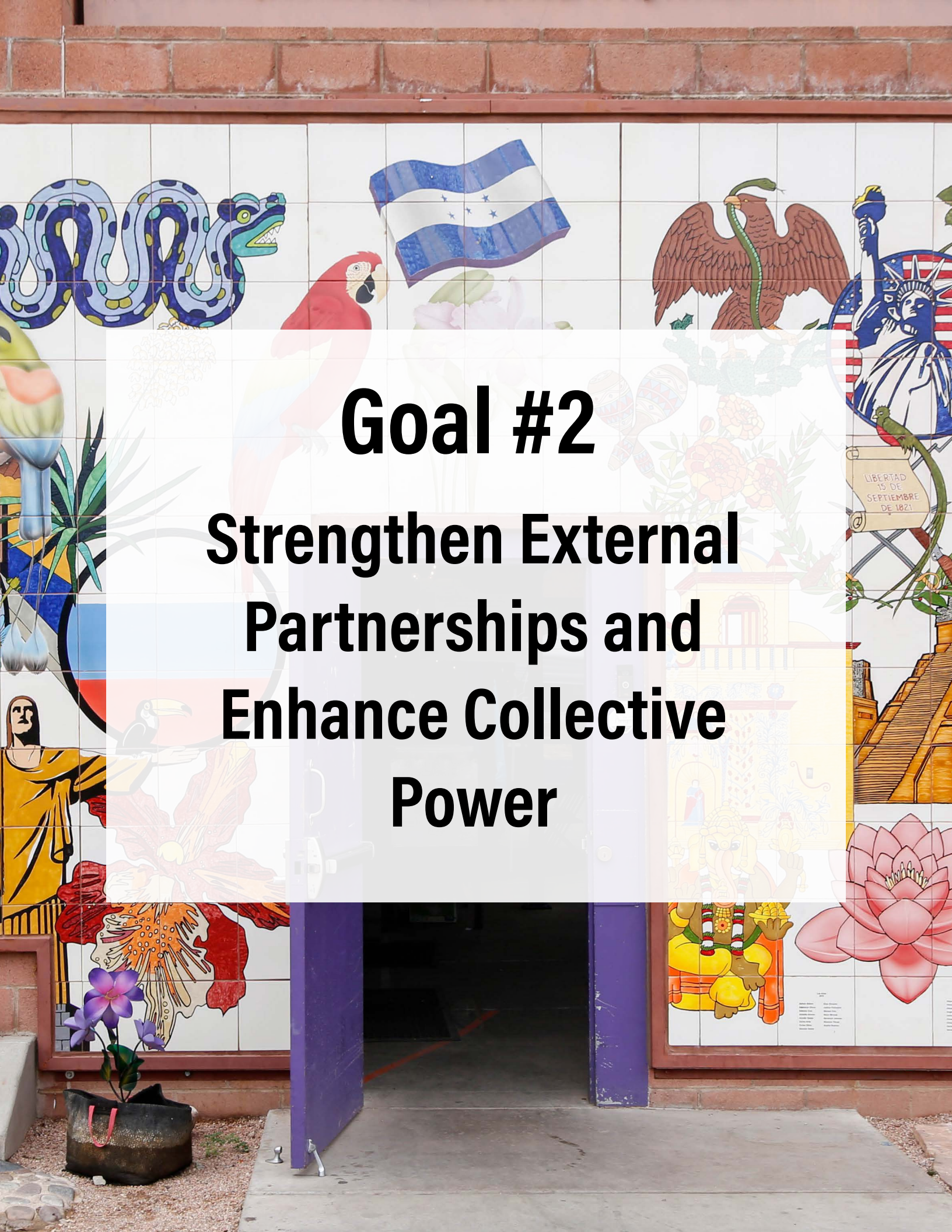
OBJECTIVE 1.2



Increase global influence on discourse, decision-making, and policies by bringing evidence-based research and learning to bear on issues of torture and trauma prevention, response, healing, and rehabilitation at international fora such as the United Nations, and possibly the European Union and African Union; academic and research institutions; and civil society organizations.

CVT's excellence in clinical work and experience with therapeutic documentation are significant resources to increase knowledge and influence policies and practices. CVT research, data and analysis in this area could be deeply impactful to share learning and inform decision-making in multiple influential spheres.

CVT is well-positioned to broaden its reach and influence multilateral organizations by accessing and leveraging its myriad expertise including its clinical excellence, breadth of research and data, and track record of capacity development and advocacy; by supporting survivors who choose to engage in advocacy and influence decision-making; and by tapping into its leadership networks, advisory councils, and regional partnerships.



Goal #2

**Strengthen External
Partnerships and
Enhance Collective
Power**

Supporting the healing of survivors and preventing torture worldwide is too great a task for any one organization. To ensure excellence of services and sustainability in the long-term, partnerships with local organizations and communities are critical.

Goal two focuses externally on strengthening collaboration with existing partners and cultivating new partners in order to enhance a holistic approach for service recipients and to promote locally led, sustainable support for survivors and communities.



OBJECTIVE 2.1

Enhance Capacity Development to increase collaboration and expand training to country teams, local partners, and service recipients with the goal of increasing the availability of expert capacity, strengthening programming, and building a sustainable model that permits eventual downsizing or conclusion of CVT's direct role.



OBJECTIVE 2.2

Map and assess partnerships that CVT needs to be able to provide survivors and their communities with a more holistic approach and ensure sustainability. Understanding what services survivors need and what partners exist and their capacity to provide services is critical to addressing unmet needs and developing local capacity. This should not be a one-time mapping, but rather an ongoing process.



Goal #3
Grow Strategically and
Sustainably

CVT is proud of how rapidly we have grown in recent years, a clear testament to the value that people place on our work. Given the sheer number of survivors of torture and of violent conflicts globally, the case for CVT to exist and increase its work is self-evident. At the same time the reason CVT is so valued is because of CVT's clear focus and specialist expertise. CVT needs to maintain this focus by growing thoughtfully and strategically so that its work remains highly effective and retains what makes the organization special.

Goal three focuses on articulating CVT's criteria for evaluating growth opportunities. The purpose is to support and encourage growth that is strategic and sustainable.

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Articulate criteria for growth. CVT decisions regarding where to grow have been carefully considered. With an increased role and new opportunities on the horizon, it is important to review and restate the organization's criteria for growth so that CVT can continue to retain its focus and identity. While CVT pursues suitable opportunities, the organization should ensure that its processes for analyzing opportunities consider these essential questions:



- What is an expanded role and presence seeking to achieve? How should growth opportunities be prioritized?
- What scale is CVT able to operate at and what improvements to CVT's impact will stem from working at that scale?
- Does the potential new role provide opportunities to leverage technical expertise across departments: clinical, advocacy, research, and capacity development?
- Does the potential new role offer opportunities to diversify fundraising and to secure funding that can sustain the program/project over the longer term?
- Does the opportunity and funding level support the administrative investment (infrastructure needs) of CVT over the long term? Are there opportunities to partner locally and to provide capacity development that increases the ability of local partners to sustain programmatic work over the longer term (and eventually permit CVT to transfer its resources to other locations, when appropriate)?

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Establish regional hubs to facilitate complementary work and planning throughout the geographic region with achievable priority goals, to support strategic growth, and to ensure greater collaboration among CVT global and country teams. The hubs focus and, where necessary, provide infrastructural resourcing to strengthen information technology, human resources, fundraising and other key areas, and to support staff collaboration, communication, and planning across CVT departments including clinicians, researchers, advocates, and trainers.



Regional hubs include leadership positions to help diversify and bring global expertise and to encourage delegating decision making to the local level wherever possible to provide more rapid, nimble, and context-appropriate responses.

To support this increased role, CVT maps its infrastructure resources and programmatic capacities across locations, to identify opportunities for creating greater efficiency and support. CVT also explores fundraising opportunities for specific regions; for example, where governments are increasing their investments to

address large displacement and hardships; or where fees might be appropriate for CVT capacity development expertise, tools and resources.

OBJECTIVE 3.3



CVT determines whether to establish a greater presence in Latin America and the Caribbean. This region has a tragic history and ongoing practice of torture, and current mass migration is exposing more individuals to various forms of violence, persecution, and torture. This is also the largest global region in which CVT does not currently have offices or robust programming.



Goal #4

**Improve Systems and
Structures to Bolster
CVT's Building Blocks**

Over the the past two decades, CVT has enjoyed rapid growth in its programmatic work, regional presence, and staff employment. While these developments enable increased capacity for impact and collaboration, they also require important investments in infrastructure to ensure adequate systems are in place to support CVT’s global operations. Currently, the operational infrastructure needs to catch up with the organization’s other areas of growth.

Goal four focuses on priority areas of investment to strengthen CVT’s infrastructure and better support the work of an increasingly global organization. The areas highlighted in this section are critical to ensure sustainability, greater flexibility, and critical support that allow CVT to maximize efficiency and strengthen building blocks for future growth. They are also vital for supporting and strengthening CVT’s crucial, ongoing work to enhance staff well-being and advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The goal also focuses on strategic investments in information technology, human resources, communications, finance, and fundraising. Investments in these areas now can unlock efficiencies, result in long-term savings, reduce staff burnout, and enable staff and programs to be more cohesive and complementary in their work.

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Continue to cultivate a positive organizational culture in line with CVT’s core values. There is widespread agreement that CVT’s staff is one of its greatest strengths. Staff, service recipients, and external stakeholders alike praise the dedication, quality, and expertise of CVT’s staff and describe CVT as a respected thought leader with deep technical expertise.

Like many mission-driven organizations, staff demonstrate deep dedication and engagement working to prevent torture and to heal the wounds of torture. Many staff feel hugely invested in this intensive work. Staff well-being and the risks of burnout are ongoing concerns. CVT’s ongoing commitment to provide clarity of roles and responsibilities, accountability for performance, and understanding of decision-making processes and authority contributes to a positive organizational culture.



Similarly, the organization’s commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a priority for future success is both important and commendable. As an increasingly global organization, CVT must explore DEI within the context of each location. Consistent understanding of CVT’s DEI policy and practices contributes to staff sense of wellbeing and fosters a culture of respect, fair treatment, and appreciation of individual differences. Bringing new and diverse perspectives to the Board also advances DEI, attracts new networks and funders, and demonstrates CVT’s transformation into an increasingly global organization.

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Enable a robust information technology infrastructure to increase consistency across the organization, with an emphasis on improving operational capacity, cybersecurity, and administration of additional software tools which enhance staff productivity, including tools for program management, data storage, team collaboration, HR administration, and administration of CVT clinical services, among others.



Cybersecurity is critically important given the vast amount of data gathered on service recipients as well as staff working in areas where their safety and security are at risk. Having adequate systems and software in place to support the global and regional teams is not only paramount for security purposes, but also to ensure timely and efficient support to teams when providing laptops, setting up email, etc. Prioritizing this effort requires investments to fill existing gaps in IT operational capacity and deliver the tools staff need to manage their work well. As these investments and structures take place, CVT needs to assess the various systems utilized at different locations to determine other functional needs and practices, and to increase alignment. Staff need to receive training and instructions for using technology, and CVT needs to measure the staff's use and overall uptake of new technology systems.

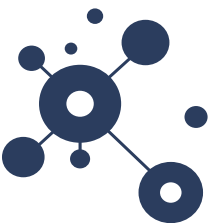
OBJECTIVE 4.3



Strengthen the human resources systems to meet the needs of an increasingly global organization. As CVT has increased its role globally, the demands on the human resources team have grown and evolved. To enable staff support and consistent excellence around the world requires: building the capacity of HR staff; implementing a global HR system that makes hiring more efficient and enables all staff to be located anywhere in the world by appointing a Professional Employers Organization; establishing standard employment policies, performance expectations, updated job descriptions, evaluation processes, employee support, management roles and accountability; and providing appropriate and timely resolution of breaches of conduct. These reforms not only enhance HR capacity to meet the needs of the organization, but they also help maintain a positive workplace culture.

OBJECTIVE 4.4

Diversify CVT's funding sources to safeguard the sustainability and potential growth in CVT operations, programming, and impact. CVT has significantly increased its financial resource base over the last two decades, thus enabling rapid growth and program impact. Grants that enable greater flexibility and investment in infrastructure are hard to come by.



CVT is making an enormous difference by working in close partnership with communities around the world, but more is needed to sustain and grow the work. Private and public funders regularly set new priorities to address priority concerns and respond to global developments, thus providing new opportunities to seek funds.

As CVT becomes an increasing global organization, there may be new opportunities to seek multi-year funding from foundations and government entities in Europe, for example. In addition, private entities and corporations that specialize in infrastructure or that have operations around the world are increasingly investing in organizations that partner locally to support and strengthen communities. A few family foundations also provide grants for operational funds, community organizing, research, and advocacy.

As CVT explores growth opportunities, understanding the funding landscape and funder priorities is essential for success. With growing displacement and hardships, many governmental donors are concentrating grantmaking in especially hard-hit regions. In addition to seeking grant funding, CVT explores other potential models for fundraising, for example fees for CVT capacity development expertise, tools, and resources.

OBJECTIVE 4.5

Enhance internal communications and external brand consistency and product accessibility. CVT's rapid programmatic growth globally has outpaced CVT's communications infrastructure, for both internal and external mechanisms. This strategic plan helps CVT strengthen its infrastructure to have the building blocks for greater growth and impact globally.

The plan requires close collaboration and communication across all departments and regions. Clear understanding about department and regional opportunities, gaps, and needs and close communication helps ensure that workplans are useful and right sized, and that they have the effect of enhancing staff well-being and improving information technology, human resources systems, fundraising strategies, and more. Close coordination and planning by the leadership team is critical, as is communication and cooperation at all levels of staff positions.



By moving toward a more coordinated approach with the regional hubs, CVT can foster greater internal collaboration and cohesion across departments and regions, create opportunities for cross-learning, strengthen accountability, and create efficiencies through alignment.

By streamlining systems and creating centralized access to information, CVT can have information more readily available to share with external audiences. This approach can bolster CVT's capacity to communicate its purpose and impact and demonstrate its value to donors and potential donors, strengthen its advocacy work, and enhance its research distribution. By understanding how CVT information is accessed and shared, survivors can decide whether and how to tell their stories. To achieve this goal requires CVT to implement an internal communications system across departments and regional hubs that encourages more aligned and complementary actions.

PARTICIPATION ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank the many people who contributed to this strategic plan and who inspire CVT to do the work it does every day.

This plan is a consequence of the most inclusive strategic planning process that has ever been undertaken by the Center for Victims of Torture. About 250 CVT stakeholders from countries all over the world provided input through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and by submitting additional materials directly. The data collection and analysis drew from many forms of input, including:

250

global CVT stakeholders participated



**Four all-staff meetings with polling:
60-120 participants**

Three board meetings



179 responses from online survey to staff and board

Five focus groups with torture survivors in the U.S.



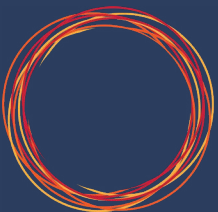
**Questionnaires with torture survivors in Ethiopia,
Jordan, Kenya and Uganda**

**One-on-one interview with 35 staff, board
members and external stakeholders**



Desk research

We especially wish to thank the dedicated CVT staff and Board, the courageous survivors and their families, and our generous funders, extraordinary partners, and countless other supporters. We also wish to thank Strategy for Humanity for partnering with CVT to design, facilitate, and complete this highly participatory and strategically focused planning process.



The
CENTER for
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