



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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CONTACT: Jenni Bowring-McDonough
612.436.4886
jbowring@cvt.org

Center for Victims of Torture Commemorates 10 Years of Healing in Uganda

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) is marking 10 years of healing in Uganda, where the organization has cared for survivors of torture and war, as well as conducting in-depth training of partner organizations to develop specialized skills in trauma rehabilitation.

CVT's healing work in Gulu began in 2009 to meet the mental health needs of Ugandan survivors of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In CVT Uganda's 10 years of healing, we have rebuilt the lives and restored the hope of 1246 individual survivors in Uganda through direct services.

"Our clients in North Uganda are survivors of torture and trauma, taken by force from their families to be used as soldiers and sex slaves. Called 'crazy,' they are denied their existence as individuals. Carrying children born in the 'bush' as a result of rape, deprived of education, it is difficult to say which is heavier—the impact of the trauma they've endured or the impact of their poor social status in the North Uganda society," said Gabriele Marini, psychotherapist/trainer with CVT Uganda.

"Beyond labels, our clients are human beings who long to be recognized in their unicity. CVT's group counseling experience offers the opportunity of satisfying both the need of being recognized as unique, and at the same time, a chance to belong," Marini continued. "I describe CVT's services as a bridge for the client to walk over the idea of 'impossibility,' carrying them farther along the journey they began when they sought to reclaim their lives."

Since its inception, CVT Uganda has focused on two fundamental areas: delivering comprehensive mental health care and training local counseling professionals. In 2014, CVT Uganda staff also began mentoring graduate students from the Makerere University Department of Psychology in Kampala. For many years, CVT worked closely with partner organizations to offer counseling while simultaneously empowering fellow organizations' clinical capacity in northern Uganda. CVT continues to provide ongoing support to our partners in and around Gulu, and since 2015, CVT Uganda has extended healing care to its own clients.

"We have been privileged to work in Uganda for these 10 years, where the effects of torture and war are still felt acutely today," said Curt Goering, CVT executive director. "There is no denying

the impact that mental health care has in the lives of survivors of torture and war, when that care is combined with survivors' resiliency. We are humbled to witness the reclamation of hope on a daily basis."

As of 2019, CVT is also extending rehabilitative care to South Sudanese refugee trauma and torture survivors in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, where our work includes psychological first aid for men and women in urgent need of stabilization and 10-week group counseling sessions for adults who seek longer-term care.

CVT Uganda got underway in Gulu with a single psychotherapist/trainer in country and the support of CVT's headquarters in Minnesota. Today, international staff, refugees and Ugandan nationals comprise the 45-member staff serving Gulu and, in recent months, Bidi Bidi, including the country director, drivers/logistics assistants, office coordinators, psychosocial counselors, psychotherapist/trainers, administrative and support staff.

"CVT has helped thousands of victim survivors in Uganda to recover from the trauma and the depredations of unimaginable atrocities to rebuild their lives with dignity. Our partnership with CVT has enabled thousands of victims to regain a contributory life within their communities," said Pieter W. I. de Baan, executive director, Trust Fund for Victims.

See more information about CVT Uganda's work [here](#).

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CVT's program in and around Gulu, Uganda, is supported by the Trust Fund for Victims and Fondation d'Harcourt.

CVT's work in Bidi Bidi, Uganda, is supported with funding from the United States Government.

The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa

and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org