



NEWSLETTER
JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2025



Key Highlights of the Quarter



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- Trainings and collaborations.
- Community engagements with duty bearers and rights holders.

issue #3



Message from the Chief Executive Officer



Dear Friends, Partners, and Stakeholders,

Welcome to the third issue of our ACTV Newsletter, marking the close of the July to September 2025 quarter. This period has been one of intense activity and profound strategic engagement, deeply focused on ensuring Dignity and the Prevention of Violence and Torture during this critical pre-election cycle in Uganda. Our commitment to a torture-free society has never been more vital, and in response, a cornerstone of this quarter's work has been the impactful deployment of our Election and Violence Prevention Projects. This strategic focus is designed not only to rehabilitate survivors but, more importantly, to proactively build a culture of prevention. We are particularly proud to report on the formation of the Historic Alliance to Combat Election Violence—a significant milestone bringing together key stakeholders to unify our advocacy efforts and create a formidable, amplified front against impunity across the country.

A major focus this quarter was capacity building among both duty bearers and rights holders. We successfully conducted crucial training for Police Officers on Human Rights and a Trauma-Informed Approach, fostering a police force that serves with greater respect for dignity and the law. Parallel to this, our refresher training for journalists ensures that media professionals are equipped to report responsibly and accurately, protecting themselves and the narrative of human rights. Furthermore, we launched regional youth dialogues in Masaka, Jinja, and Gulu, specifically aiming to foster a culture of peaceful electoral processes and the prevention of torture. Given that youth are often the most targeted victims, this direct engagement empowers them with the knowledge and tools to safeguard their rights and actively participate in building a peaceful democratic future.

At the grassroots level, our team delivered tangible support and awareness to communities. We conducted a critical Community Awareness Session in Maddu Sub County, Gomba district, mobilizing 73 participants under the theme "Torture-Free Communities for All, By All." Simultaneously, we held a targeted Medical Outreach in Isingiro to provide essential treatment and rehabilitation services directly to survivors of torture and related violence.

These activities are not merely statistics; they are tangible steps toward realizing our vision where every citizen can live without fear of torture. As we look toward the final quarter, we remain resolute. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, board, volunteers, and all our partners whose unwavering support makes this essential work possible. Let us continue to be vigilant, proactive, and united in our mission.

Samuel Herbert Nsubuga
Chief Executive Officer, ACTV

ACTV Joins Historic Alliance to Combat Election Violence



A group photo featuring key signatories of the "Declaration of the Alliance Against Electoral Violence." From left to right: Gen. Mugisha Muntu, President of the Alliance for National Transformation (ANT); Eddie Nangulu, ULS Council Member - Eastern; Asimwe Anthony, Vice President of the Uganda Law Society (ULS); Pauline Nansamba Mutumba, Director at the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC); and Paul Kirya Mukalere, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator for the African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV).

The African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) has taken a significant step in promoting peaceful and fair elections by joining a historic, multi-stakeholder alliance dedicated to preventing electoral violence. On July 3, 2025, ACTV's Communications and Advocacy Coordinator, Paul Kirya Mukalere, represented the organization in signing the "Declaration of the Alliance Against Electoral Violence."

The alliance, an innovative move led by the Uganda Law Society, brings together representatives from the government, media, civil society, and human rights organizations. The formation of the alliance comes on the heels of reported targeted attacks on journalists during recent by-elections, underscoring the urgent need for a collective response.

The declaration, which ACTV proudly signed, condemns electoral violence in all its forms

and outlines a clear set of commitments to build a culture of peace and respect for human rights. The alliance members have pledged to:

- Promote peaceful elections through advocacy, education, and community engagement.
- Support victims of electoral violence by providing legal aid, counseling, and other forms of assistance.
- Hold perpetrators accountable through robust investigations, prosecution, and sanctions.
- Strengthen institutional capacity to prevent and respond to electoral violence, including through training for law enforcement and judicial officials.

By joining this alliance, which includes high-level signatories such as the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and representatives from the Uganda Police and the media, ACTV reinforces its commitment to preventing human rights violations and ensuring that the upcoming 2026 elections are conducted in a safe and secure environment for all.

Refresher Training Equips Journalists to Combat Torture and Violence in Uganda's Elections

On Thursday, July 24, 2025, refresher training was held for 16 journalists at the Casa Miltu Hotel in Kampala to equip them with the tools needed to combat torture and violence during Uganda's upcoming 2026 general elections. The training was organized by ACTV. Journalists from 12 media houses across Uganda, including UBC radio, Daily Monitor, Bukedde TV, and NTV, participated in the one-day training. The participants came from various districts, including Bukomansimbi, Gulu, Karamoja, Masaka, Gomba, Mukono, Wakiso, and Kampala.

The training focused on several key areas, including the concept of human rights, the legal framework surrounding torture, and the physical and digital safety of journalists during elections. Sessions were facilitated by ACTV's Communications and Advocacy Officer, Paul Kirya Mukalere, and Communications and Advocacy Assistant, Brenda Mary Kemigisa, as well as an external facilitator from the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), Alfred Oryem.



Alfred Oryem from the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), facilitating on the physical and digital safety of journalists during elections

A major highlight of the event was the collaboration with other organizations, which ACTV noted as a key to success. The African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) provided an external facilitator who led a well-received session on the digital and physical safety of journalists.

The Electoral Commission was also on board, with its Head of Public Relations and Spokesperson, Julius Mucunguzi, serving as the chief guest. In his closing remarks, Mucunguzi noted that "elections in Uganda have become a battlefield" and that violence and torture should not characterize the electoral process.



A group photo of Journalists, ACTV and Electoral Commission spokesperson (Mr. Julius Mucunguzi) after the training of journalist at Casa Miltu Hotel In Kampala

He emphasized the critical role journalists play in the process, including analyzing manifestos and informing the public. Mucunguzi also expressed appreciation for ACTV's collaborative approach and for ACME's work in helping journalists adhere to their ethical code of conduct.

As a follow-up, the journalists committed to submitting at least three properly investigated and documented cases related to torture and elections by December 2026.

Message from the EC Spokesperson Mr. Julius Mucunguzi,

"The safety of journalists is linked to the safety of all stakeholders in the electoral process, i called all of you to denounce any form of violence, on the understanding that torture often takes place in an environment of violence, where criminals hide behind violence to commit unlawful acts."



Police Officers Trained on Human Rights and Trauma-Informed Approach ahead of Elections

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) held a one-day training session for 29 police officers from the Field Force Unit (FFU) of the Kampala Metropolitan Police to address violence and torture during elections. The training, which took place on July 31, 2025, at Nican Country Resort in Kajjansi, Wakiso district, aimed to enhance the officers' understanding of human rights and equip them with a trauma-informed approach to public order management.

SP Cornelius Beyanga led a session focused on a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to policing during elections. The training emphasized that the police's role extends beyond maintaining order to protecting the rights of all citizens, including political candidates and their supporters.

Some of the key principles covered included: Legality: All police actions must align with human rights standards and Ugandan law, specifically citing the Constitution and the Police Act. Additionally, another principle was about Equality and the Officers were argued to treat everyone equally, regardless of political affiliation or gender.

Paul Kirya Mukalere, ACTV's Communications and Advocacy Officer, clarified the definition of torture as any intentional act that causes severe pain for purposes like punishment, intimidation, or coercion. The session highlighted that torture is a crime punishable by law and is a "non-derogable right," meaning it cannot be suspended under any circumstances according to Article 44 of the Ugandan Constitution. Mukalere stressed that a police officer's primary duty is to protect life and property while respecting human rights.



The ACTV Program Manager Isaac Ogwal, introduced the concept of a trauma-informed approach. He explained that trauma from violence, chronic stress, or torture can manifest in various ways, such as a person's silence during interrogation.



A photo of ASP Denis Mangeni representing the Commander Kampala Metropolitan Police (KMP), Commissioner of Police Ecega Richard, officially opening the workshop training at Nican Resort Hotel, in Kajjansi Wakiso District

The training encouraged officers to look beyond surface-level behavior and outlined principles like ensuring safety, building trust, and recognizing power imbalances. The session also acknowledged that police officers are susceptible to vicarious trauma and burnout, recommending that the police force implement mental wellness checks.

A pre-test administered to participants revealed a significant knowledge gap. Out of 29 officers, the highest score was 58%, and nine officers scored just 25%. Post-training, nine officers scored above 50%. However, limited knowledge about the definition of torture persisted, with no one answering that question correctly in the post-test.

ACTV Empowers Ugandan Youth to Champion Peaceful Elections

In a proactive effort to prevent electoral violence and torture, the African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) launched a series of regional dialogues with youth leaders across Uganda. Supported by the Swiss Embassy in Nairobi, under a project titled "Torture and violence prevention and response for youth during election in Uganda."

A total of 99 youth leaders from Greater Masaka (31), Jinja (30), and Gulu (38) participated in the dialogues held on September 16th and 18th. The meetings were strategically timed ahead of the upcoming NRM youth elections, aiming to foster a culture of peaceful electoral processes, which ACTV views as essential for protecting the fundamental right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment.

The dialogues provided a crucial platform for youth to voice their concerns and experiences. In Greater Masaka, participants identified a lack of adequate voter and civic education as a major issue. They also expressed concern over politicians exploiting youth unemployment and their limited understanding of their role in ensuring peaceful elections.

Similarly, in Jinja, youth leaders highlighted a range of factors contributing to electoral violence, including: A gap in mental health awareness, misinterpretation and misapplication of laws. The spread of misinformation and disinformation, particularly through media outlets owned by politicians. They added that limited civic awareness programs and intolerance and the recruitment of youth by politicians for harmful ideological indoctrination have been factors leading to election violence and torture.

Following the discussions, the youth leaders in both Masaka Gulu and Jinja signed declarations and commitment forms pledging to promote peaceful elections. They were joined by representatives from the Uganda Police Force, the Electoral Commission, and religious leaders, signifying a multi-stakeholder approach to the issue.

The Jinja City Electoral Commission's Returning Officer underscored the importance of this engagement, stating, "If I had capacity, I would bring you on board for the Youth.



A photo of ACTV Team with the Youth leaders of Jinja in the Eastern part of Uganda after the region youth dialogue on peaceful election in Uganda

Youth engagements should be consistent. There is need to walk together in all this. Free and fair elections are the bedrock of peaceful elections in Uganda.”

ACTV extends its sincere appreciation to its key partners, the National Youth Council (NYC) and the Swiss Embassy in Nairobi, whose financial and technical support made these vital dialogues possible.

The success of these dialogues reinforces ACTV's core belief that such safe spaces are crucial for good governance and democracy. Let us all always begins with a dialogue to Plant Peace and Harvest Democracy.



A photo of ACTV Team with the Youth leaders of Masaka District and City in the Eastern part of Uganda after the region youth dialogue on peaceful election in Uganda

The Role of Culture-Aware Initiatives in Promoting Access to Justice for Survivors of Torture

Abstract

Access to justice for survivors of torture is often undermined by systemic barriers such as stigma, language gaps, fear of reprisals, limited awareness of rights, and institutional mistrust. Culture is defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group”[1]. Culture-aware initiatives address these barriers by embedding cultural sensitivity into the design and delivery of legal, medical, and psychosocial interventions. This approach recognizes that survivors’ perceptions of justice are shaped by their cultural identities, community norms, and historical experiences with authority.

Technically, culture-aware practices involve: (i) integrating local languages and traditional communication forms into legal procedures[1]; (ii) engaging trusted community leaders and faith actors as intermediaries to build credibility; (iii) adapting psychosocial support to reflect cultural understandings of trauma and healing; and (iv) aligning statutory justice mechanisms with community-based dispute resolution practices where possible, without undermining human rights standards. These strategies create entry points for survivors who may otherwise remain excluded from formal systems.

The impact of such initiatives is multifold[2]. They enhance survivor participation and trust, reduce re-traumatization, and strengthen institutional legitimacy. Importantly, they promote survivor-centered justice that balances universality of rights with contextual realities. By anchoring access to justice in culturally resonant frameworks, culture-aware initiatives contribute not only to individual redress but also to broader social healing, reconciliation, and community resilience.

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ACTV Rallies Communities for Torture-Free Uganda a Head of the 2026 General Elections



The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) is proactively championing a peaceful electoral environment ahead of the 2026 General Elections in Uganda. On July 23, 2025, ACTV successfully conducted a critical awareness session in Maddu Sub County, Gomba district, mobilizing both officials and citizens under the UN Day in support of torture survivors theme: “Torture-Free Communities for All, By All.”

A total of 73 participants attended the awareness session, strategically comprising both duty bearers and rights holders.

Key attendees included students of voting age, local community leaders, and a significant presence from law enforcement, represented by the Officer in Charge of the Police Station in Kigezi trading Centre.

The session underscored the vital role of citizens in upholding human rights, with ACTV emphasizing that Rights Holders are key stakeholders in advancing the possibility of torture and violence-free elections. In-terms of strengthening community resilience, ACTV highlighted its long-term strategy of building local capacity through a dedicated community support structure designed to sustain awareness and provide essential aid. They include; community Facilitators responsible for raising awareness on torture and violence and guiding survivors to appropriate referral institutions for treatment, rehabilitation, and access to justice. Peer Support Workers: Individuals who have previously experienced torture, offering crucial peer-to-peer support to help others cope with their trauma.



ACTV - Communications and Advocacy Officer during awareness session in the Community of Gomba Maddu subcounty

ACTV Delivers Holistic Care in Isingiro

In July 2025, the ACTV multidisciplinary team, led by the medical team, conducted a critical five-day medical and psychosocial outreach in Ruyanga Sub-County, Isingiro district, responding to reports of severe violence during the recent NRM party primaries.

The intervention aimed to provide urgent, integrated care to survivors in communities gripped by widespread fear and trauma.

The outreach began with essential but challenging stakeholder engagement. The team first coordinated with the police, eventually obtaining a list of 22 reported survivors. However, upon arrival in Kyehuna II a violence hotspot where a civilian death had been reported the team faced significant community reluctance. Residents, fearing retaliation, arrest, or abduction, had locked themselves indoors.

Success hinged on patient relationship-building. After securing the cooperation of a local defense leader, the team was able to mobilize a small group for an initial awareness session, emphasizing ACTV's



ACTV holistic in Ruyanga Subcounty in Isingiro during the medical outreach.

neutrality, confidentiality, and the availability of free medical, psychosocial, and legal services.

Despite the initial challenges, the team successfully reached and served 15 clients (9 male, 6 female) across two days of direct service provision. The care delivered was holistic, treating not just physical wounds but the deep psychological injuries of trauma:

Injuries treated included blunt trauma, burns, and lacerations, which were common results of the election violence. A total of 10 individuals were screened for psychological distress. Crucially, three of them were diagnosed with psychiatric conditions including Major Depressive Disorder and Acute Stress Reaction and were immediately enrolled for structured psychotherapy.



ACTV holistic team with the Police officers in Ruyanga Subcounty in Isingiro prior the medical outreach.

Additionally, four clients received tailored legal guidance concerning their rights, justice processes, and referrals to appropriate institutions.

The team noted the remarkable resilience and willingness of survivors to seek help, even in a volatile environment. The outreach successfully strengthened collaboration with local police and leadership, facilitating better access to vulnerable communities.

However, the intervention also highlighted ongoing challenges, including misinformation, limited medical supplies, and serious allegations of collusion between perpetrators and certain authorities.

The willingness of survivors to engage in care, despite the initial fear, was truly notable, reflected the outreach lead. This mission underscored the urgency of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approaches in volatile settings and the need for early peace building efforts ahead of the upcoming election year.

ACTV will conduct follow-up visits to reinforce trust, continue service provision, and advocate for greater transparency from law enforcement, ensuring survivors receive the long-term support and justice they deserve.



ACTV's practice of conducting home visits is a crucial component of its commitment to holistic rehabilitation and support for survivors of torture and violence. These visits ensure that essential care reaches those who are most vulnerable, isolated, and face significant barriers to facility-based treatment.

ACTV's home visits are crucial because they ensure that services reach survivors directly within their community, effectively reaching the isolated who might be unable to travel to a clinic. This is particularly vital for survivors with physical ailments that hinder their ability to work or travel. By providing access at the community level, the visits serve as an essential mechanism for ACTV to respond swiftly to reported incidents of torture and violence, allowing them to identify and screen alleged survivors for the eligibility of services. Once services are approved, a multidisciplinary team can deliver tailored care, including medical, physiotherapy, psychological, and social services, to those who qualify based on their specific needs.

Beyond initial screening, home visits facilitate a Holistic Assessment and Tailored Support by allowing ACTV staff to enter the client's own environment. This enables a thorough social and progress assessment to identify factors that may aid or hinder recovery. Furthermore, the visits are critical for Addressing Critical Needs that often result from torture, such as lost livelihoods and difficulties in accessing basic necessities like shelter. ACTV directly addresses these challenges by delivering immediate support, including basic needs assistance (food) and client assistance funds to cover costs like lodging or transport for medical reviews and consultations. Finally, home visits contribute to Strengthening Rehabilitation by facilitating case discussions to develop well-coordinated rehabilitation plans and providing crucial interventions like family counselling sessions to promote effective treatment adherence.

In the period of July to September 2025, ACTV successfully conducted two critical home visits in response to community needs and follow-up requirements:

- Namutumba District (July 2025): A team visited the Bulage and Kibale subcounties to respond to reported election violence/torture. The outreach successfully screened and qualified 17 individuals (15 males, 1 female, and 1 alleged child survivor) for ACTV services. Services provided included mental health, medical, legal, and social support.
- Nakaliro-Kayunga (September 2025): A follow-up visit was conducted for an existing client to deliver basic needs support and assess post-operative recovery. This visit reached one male client and one female family member and resulted in the client receiving aid in paying off lodging fees and receiving essential food items.

Across both critical missions, ACTV reached a total of 18 alleged survivors of torture (SOT), ensuring continuity of care and delivering comprehensive, essential services directly to their communities.

Meet our new Staff

We are pleased to announce the addition of the new professionals to the ACTV family, further strengthening our capacity to deliver essential support and care to vulnerable communities. The ACTV team is expanding, ready to dedicate their skills and passion to supporting survivors.



Muhwezi Justus
Physiotherapist

My humanitarian passion drives my career. I significantly increased rehabilitation access at Kagando Mission Hospital (May 2019–Jan 2020) and spent over six years at Humanity & Inclusion (HI) as a Technical Rehabilitation Officer/Physiotherapist (Jan 2019–Aug 2025), empowering conflict/disaster-affected individuals. I thrive in open-minded, transparent teams and look forward to a fruitful time at ACTV.



Kirabo Clare
Volunteer Nurse

Clare Kirabo is a Registered Nurse volunteering at the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV). She specializes in compassionate care and health outreach for vulnerable communities, driven by a passion for helping survivors regain dignity and hope. Her personal interests include painting, reading medical journals, and mindfulness.



Elotu Ernest Daniel
Part time- Medical Doctor

He belief that kindness and empathy are powerful tools in healing. Dr. Daniel is passionate about providing quality, compassionate care and strives to create a calm, welcoming space for every client he serves. Beyond his clinical duties, he is dedicated to mentoring young people and finds great joy in fostering personal and professional growth in others. Dr. Daniel is proud to contribute to ACTV's vital mission of restoring hope and dignity to those in need.



Namoe Rita Lopeyok
Social Work Volunteer

Rita holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and Social Administration from KIU and brings significant community experience, including roles as a Community Anti-torture Ambassador (ACTV), Parish Census Enumeration Supervisor (UBOS), and a NUSAF-3 Community Facilitator in Kaabong District. She is a self-motivated professional adept in computer, communication, research, and administrative skills, dedicated to utilizing her compassionate approach to serve the community.

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FEEDBACK & SUGGESTIONS


Have something to share or suggest?
Email us or drop by our Offices
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