



# AFRICAN CENTRE FOR TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE VICTIMS (ACTV)

## Newsletter

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### Message from ACTV

Dear readers!

Greetings from the African center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture victims (ACTV)!

We hope you are keeping safe, adjusting to the demands of social distancing, wearing your masks and coping up with the uncertain times caused by covid19 pandemic. We are working hard to prevent and fight against torture and other forms of violence in the public as well as delivering holistic care services to survivors and victims of torture.

In this issue, you will read about what ACTV was able to implement in quarter one in the month of January to march 2021, with support from different partners despite of challenges that were involved.

Therefore, we encourage you to read our newsletter and also follow us on all our social media platforms for updates and any help concerning torture and any form of violence incidences.

Remember to always report any acts of torture and any other forms of violence to the authority near you.

## Launch of an Awareness Booklet on Documentation of Torture Experiences



Photo L-R Dr. Rafik Robert (ACTV Medical Doctor), Miss. Esther Nabwire (ACTV Head Of Programs), Mr. Herbert Nsubuga (ACTV CEO), and Miss. Aidah Naava (Journalist Pearl FM Radio) During the launch of the Awareness Booklet at Sky Hotel Naguru on 12th January, 2021.

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# The Importance of Professional Documentation of Torture Experiences



ACTV CEO Mr. Samuel Herbert Nsubuga, addressing the journalists during the launch of the Awareness Booklet on documentation of Torture Experiences

## Why is it important to document your experience?

Having professionals documenting your experience and health consequences may improve your chances in the pursuit of justice – whether through going to court, create political awareness of the problem, or treatment and rehabilitation.

You do not need to know every detail of the law or the processes to effectively do this. Yet, it is important to know that the success of pursuing justice depends on establishing what happened through evidence.

## The importance of time if one wishes to document torture experience and health consequences.

Physical injuries, like bruises and wounds, quickly disappear. Your recollection of the events may also become poorer with time.

Therefore, documentation of physical injuries, psychological consequences and testimonies should preferably be done as soon as possible to ensure that the evidence is preserved.

## How secure is the information you share with us?

Your information will be documented by professionals and stored safely and will not be shared with any third party without your consent.

## Are there any potential risks of having my experience documented?

It is important to understand that your actions may put you at risk of being targeted by the authorities. You may also put other people at risk, if you choose to involve them.

## Where can one go for further assistance and documentation?

After experiencing ill-treatment, it could only be expected that you are both physically and psychologically affected and might need to seek care. If you need assistance finding medical or psychological support you can contact us, ACTV.

## ACTV Offers the Following Services

- Effective documentation of torture and violence
- Medical treatment to include physiotherapy
- Psychological and Social Care Counselling
- Legal Aid Services



ACTV Head of programs Ms. Esther Nabwire, addressing the journalists during the media breakfast meeting at Sky Hotel in Naguru, Kampala district.



# Training of community counsellors trained in the basic psychological counselling

From 30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> march 2021, a team from ACTV lead by ACTV mental coordinator Ms Leila Wakabi conducted a two day training was held at Uhuru50 Hotel in Kasese district and 10 community counsellors from the sub counties of Maliba and Bwesumbu were trained on the basic psychological counselling.

The skills were to enable them to be able to provide psychological counselling to torture survivors under the community support network model.

The Training was Opened by Ms. Kabuo Brenda CDO Bwesumbu Sub County, and Closed by Ms. Ruth Labong CDO Maliba Sub county.

At the end of the training, the participants were awarded certificates of participation.



Participants engaging in a group Exercise during the training of the community counsellors at Uhuru Hotel n Kasese district



Participants illustrating the meaning of torture during the training.



The CDO of Maliba Sub county Ms Ruth Labong and ACTV Mental Health Coordinator Ms. Leila H. Wakabi awarding certificate to participants after the training.



# Training of Human Rights Defenders on Stress and Anger Management



ACTV Program Manager Mr Alex Kigoye presenting on the concept of torture during the HRDs workshop on stress and anger management at Essella Country Hotel

On 11th March, a team led by the Mental Health Coordinator Ms. Leila Wakabi, conclude a 2-days training of human rights defenders on stress and anger management skills at Esella Country Hotel in Kampala. 15 HRDs were trained 9female and 6 male on concept of torture,

The purpose of the training was to equip Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) with skill to cope with stress and anger that arise during the course of their work so as to enhance self-care.



ACTV Counselling psychologist Ms Baker Isabirye presenting on concept of Anger and how to manage stress during the HRDS workshop at Esella country Hotel in Kampala.



Participants engaging in a practical exercise on communication



Awarding of certificates to participants after the training led by ACTV's HOP Esther Nabwire.



Participants engaging in group discussions



# Training of Journalists on Psychosocial wellbeing

A two days residential training of Journalist on psychosocial wellbeing was conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2021 and was attended by 18 (10male and 8female) participants.

The main objective of the training was to train journalists on torture and their psychosocial wellbeing and also to help them appreciate the do no harm principle while reporting issues of torture.

The Journalists that attended were drawn from print media, broadcast and online media in Uganda.

*"Reality is never as bad as a nightmare, as the mental tortures we inflict on ourselves." ~ Sammy Davis, Jr.*



Participant during a group discussions as part of the training. And awarding of certificates after the training was done.



ACTV CEO Mr. Samuel Herbert Nsubuga giving a closing remarks after a 2days training of journalists .



Awarding of certificates after the during lead by ACTV CEO Mr Samuel Herbert Nsubunga.



Journalists in a mental health session during the training.

# **Special Feature; Law Enforcement with respect to the right of freedom from torture and other human rights violations.**

**By ACTV Legal unit**

**T**orture as a human rights violation has been in existence all over the world since time in memorial. This has been majorly perpetrated by those in political authority for purposes of punishing their opponents as well as imposing political ideologies.

In Uganda, the fundamental rights and freedoms are stipulated and provided for under Chapter 4 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution. However, previously there was a gap in concerns relating to acts of torture as provided for under Article 24, only being addressed using the Penal Code, until about mid 2000s when Civil Society Organizations and international bodies realized there was a need for a specific law against torture. It was not until 2012 that the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA 2012) was eventually passed, after a long process of engagements by ACTV, with a number of CSOs, stakeholders, advocates as well as Parliament. This act was enacted as an answer to Article 24 of the Constitution which states that, “Everyone has a right to freedom from torture, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.” And the act was accompanied by its Regulations in 2017.

With the implementation of the PPTA 2012, though still limited, the current human rights wave in Uganda, and the intervention of Civil Society, there has been a significant level of awareness on torture and notable reduction on the trends of torture.

However, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown in March, 2020, the trends of human rights violations and torture significantly began to rise particularly under the hands of law enforcement officers in the guise of enforcing SOPs for the Covid-19 guidelines. Mid 2020 came the political season characterized by political rallies and campaigns which also gave rise to a new series of human rights violations including enforced disappearances, incommunicado detentions, unjustified arrests and acts of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment among others. The election days did not get any break from these unlawful acts which are still on-going during the Post- election period .

Allegations have continually been made by primary and secondary survivors, communities, local leaders, the media among others and although there have been cases of private individuals as perpetrators, the allegations against law enforcement and security agencies have been significantly high which is a matter of major concern. This is essentially because the officers are always at the forefront of all situations which are most likely to involve the acts or result into torture.

As a result, the same security agencies have on many occasions expressed their dissatisfaction towards civil society and human rights organizations claiming that they only defend the civilians and often times criminals at the expense of the law enforcement sector.

However, we emphasize that ACTV, human rights defenders and other human rights organizations aim to serve all people regardless of which side of the law they are or their political affiliations. And much as Law enforcement is meant to protect, serve, promote, fulfil human rights, it is also important to note that human rights are for all, ought to be enjoyed by all, just as the law is meant for all.

On this note, we wish to point out to Law enforcement officers that they do not have to be stuck in situations in which they feel compelled to commit offensive and unlawful acts of torture because the law clearly safeguards them from such.



**S**ection 4 (2) of the PPTA 2012 states that, “A person shall not be punished for disobeying an order to undertake actions amounting to torture, cruel or inhuman treatment.”

According to Article 44 of the 1995 Constitution and Section 3 of the PPTA 2012, the right to freedom from torture is **non-derogable** and therefore cannot be limited under any circumstances be it a state of war, political instability, public emergency not even an order from a superior officer or public authority.

According to Section 10 of the PPTA 2012, a superior officer can also be held liable for wrongful/torturous acts committed by a subordinate. This in turn indicates that both the party that gives orders and the one that carries out the orders, if unlawful will both be held accountable and therefore any officer, superior or junior needs to understand that there will always be consequences for any actions committed which should be a reason to desist from such temptation.

This therefore serves as an awakening for our forces that, they do not have to take part in such unlawful acts but should instead always strive to maintain order, protect and defend their rights as well as those for the citizens because the law is on their side. Such unlawful orders can always be declined for good by **RESPECTFULLY** educating the superior in question about the provisions of the law on such acts and their potential consequences on all the parties involved.

There are Human Rights Standards, Principles and Safeguards that are meant to be applied and used by law enforcement during arrests and detention. These are guidelines that are aimed at protecting not only the rights of suspects at the time of arrest, their stay in detention but also act as guides to the general conduct of officers and the nature and amount of permissible force in executing their duties varying with the circumstances. The same guidelines are also respectively captured in the governing laws of the Prisons, Police and the UPDF Acts and we implore the forces to adhere to the same guidelines and in turn avoid the wrath that comes with being perpetrators of human rights violations.

### **Personal Liability**

The PPTA 2012 [Section 6 (2)] being complemented by the Human Rights Enforcement Act of 2019 (Section 10) have come out to clearly show how any person who takes part in any form of human rights violation whether in private or public capacity, will be held personally liable and any award given in this case will be satisfied by their personal assets, notwithstanding the state being vicariously liable for actions of the public officials.

There are already precedents of cases where this law has taken course and perpetrators have been held personally liable for their actions and such rulings have been aimed at serving as eye-openers and deterrents for the other potential perpetrators especially those that may be tempted to move by the slogan “*Orders from Above*”, even when they can avoid it.

**“Punish persons guilty of Torture and compensate survivors as prescribed by the Law”**





# HOME VISIT INTERVENTIONS

Home visit is a major intervention done by ACTV; It is done regularly to assess client's recovery process and also to map out structures in their communities that can help them recover from trauma resulting from torture .

From January to March 2021 ACTV conducted six (6) home visits in 8 districts of Kampala, Mbarara, Wakiso, Jinja, Buikwe, Isingiro and Mayuge in Uganda and over 86 (62 male and 24 female) survivors of torture were reached out.

During these home visits, survivors of torture visited were offered services that include medical treatment, legal services, mental health services and psycho social services.



**ACTV team and the clients during a home visit in Mayuge district.**



**ACTV team and the client during a home visit in Isingiro district.**



# Social support and economic empowerment of SOT



ACTV Head of programmes handing over a VSLA kit to one of the social support group.

## Social Support groups

ACTV social worker team, enrolled 30 ACTV survivors of torture into 03 social support groups. They were trained in VSLA skills and each received VSLA kits. This was to help them work as a group to support each other, and develop better coping mechanisms to overcome effects of torture.

## Economic empowerment to SOT

05 clients (Survivors of torture ), were supported with business inputs. The inputs were according to the skills of the survivor and the nature of business one wanted to do. The clients who benefited majority were Human rights defenders that had lost their source of livelihoods due to torture related to their,, and these came from; Jinja, Hoima, Bombo, Kira and Bulenga among others



A survivor from Hoima, Kyarwabuyamba village setting up her business after receiving business inputs (An assortment of Clothes) from ACTV.



A survivor from Mukono district receiving an assortment of Motorcycle repairing equipment for him to utilize his mechanical skills to rebuild his life. .



# Partnerships and collaborations Pictorial



**CSO Dialogue meeting to share and discuss the ACTV key findings of the research study about the psychosocial needs of human rights defenders arising from their nature of work at Jfrigh Hotel in Kampala on 12th March, 2021.**



**CAT meeting at Dove's Nest Hotel in Gulu on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> march . The meeting was intended to discuss the challenges being faced by the Coalition members in the fight against torture.**





Meeting between ACTV team and the CEO of St Kizito Matanyi hospital in Napaka District discussing about an MOU between the two Institutions for better rehabilitation services of SOT in Karamoja Sub region.



Group photo after the Workshop on human rights based approach on the implementation of Laws facilitated by HRCU and ACTV Gulu team on 11th march at Boma Hotel in Gulu.



Members of Century Boda -boda Association paid a courtesy visit to ACTV on 24th February; Strategic issues including collaboration and partnerships were discussed .



## Community dialogues

**T**he community facilitators in junction with the field officers in Kasese organized the community dialogues in the month of February and March in Bwesumbu parish and Bikone Parish in the sub counties of Maliba and Bwesumbu sub counties in Kasese district.

The meetings were attended by Local council leaders, Police officers from the area which gave an opportunity to the community members to ask questions and answers were provided. Each of the leaders highlighted their role in prevention of torture and violence and asked community members to utilize their offices wherever cases of gender based violence arise.



Pictures of Field officer in Kasese district conducting community dialogues in communities of Maliba and Bwesumbu sub counties.



Pictures of Field officer in Kasese district conducting community dialogues in communities of Maliba and Bwesumbu sub counties.

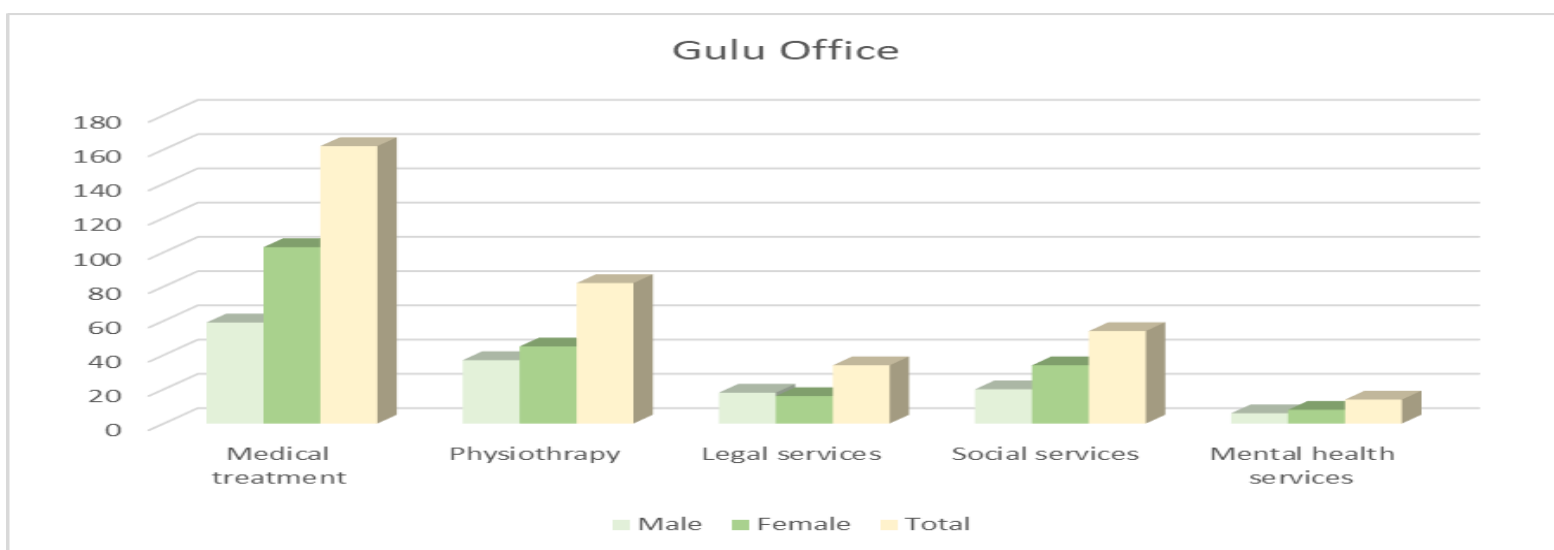
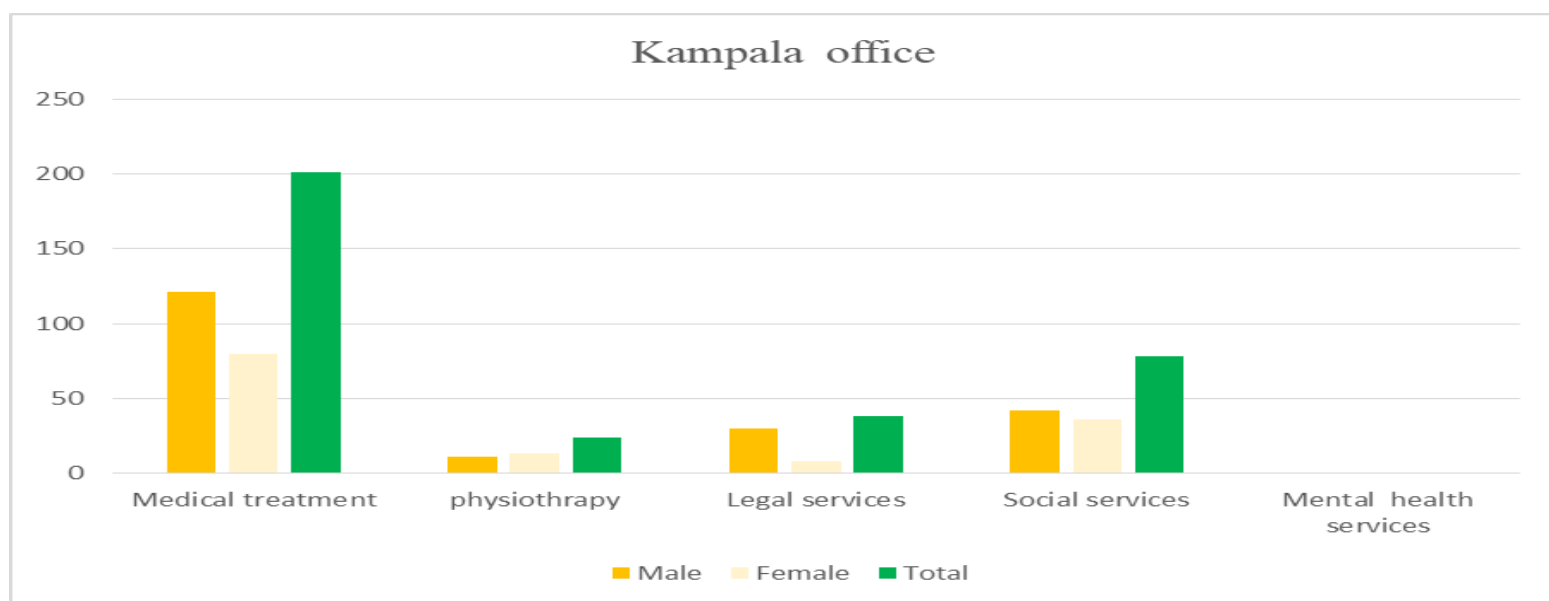


## Number of survivors of torture reached between January—March , 2021

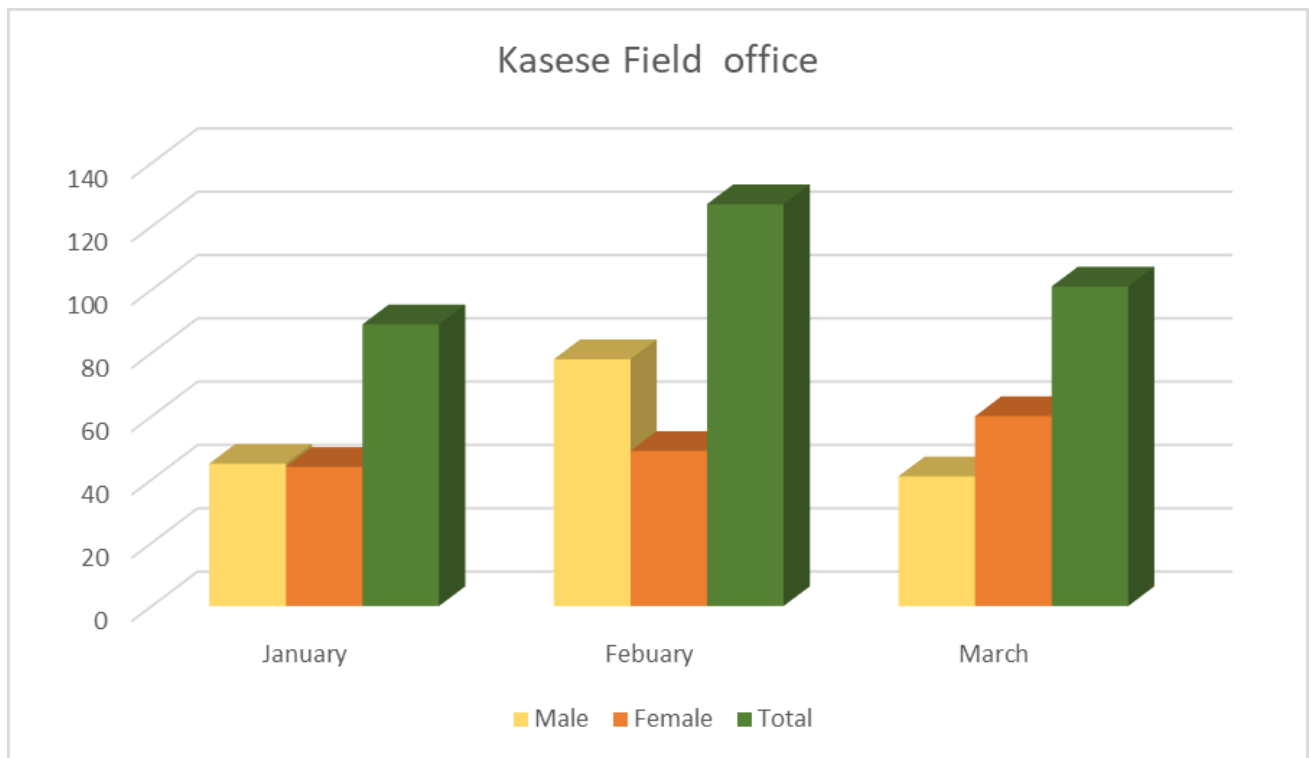
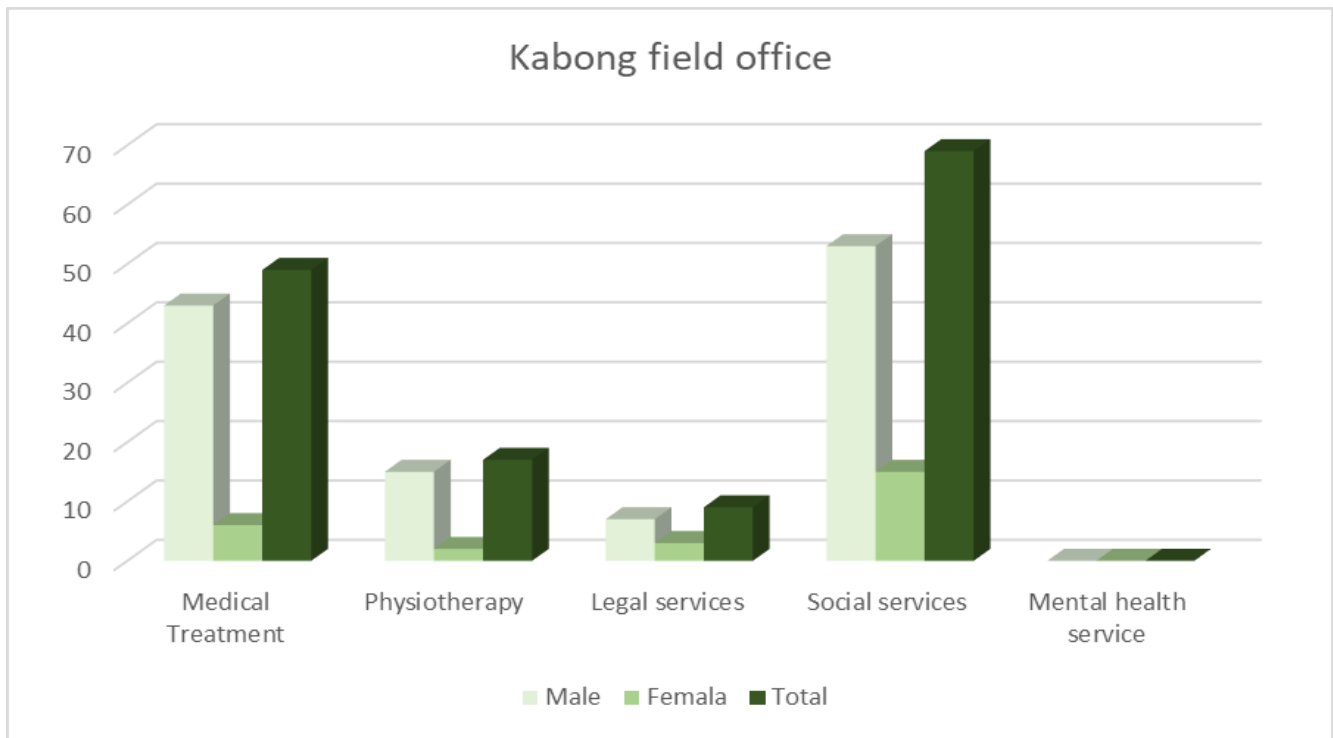
The graphs below shows the number of clients who received holistic care( medical treatment, physiotherapy, legal services, social and mental health services) from different ACTV offices that is in Kampala, Gulu , Kasese and Kabong from January to march 2021.

From the Kampala office 341 clients received the services, 137 female and 204 male. Gulu office 346 clients received the services, 206 female and 140male and Kabong office 144 clients received services, 26 female and 118 male.

In Kasese office number of clients received are 317,153 male and 164 female. These clients were seen through community dialogues, home visits, referrals and walking's among others











**African Centre for Treatment and  
Rehabilitation of Torture Victims  
(ACTV)**

### **Kampala head office**

**Block No. 207, Plot No.2756 Kanyanya  
Gayaza Road, Just after Gaz Petrol Station  
As you head to Green fields Gardens**

### **Gulu office**

**Layiba A&B Village  
Left hand on Gulu-Kampala road 1/2 km after  
railway crossing  
Plot 16\*18 Olanya Tony road  
Next to pope Francis college**

## **Contact Us**

Give us a call for more information about our services or visit our social media pages.

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