



ENHANCED ACCESS TO REHABILITATION SERVICES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY MODEL IN KASESE DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION:

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1993 with a mission to advocate against torture and provide holistic care to survivors. ACTV has been working in partnership with the Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY) since 2018 to strengthen access to quality and timely rehabilitation for survivors of torture and other forms of violence in Uganda.

ACTV has concluded implementing a two-year project titled ***“Enhancing access to timely and quality rehabilitation to survivors of torture and violence in local communities of the Sub counties, Bwesumbu and Maliba in Kasese District of Uganda”*** that employed the Community Model.

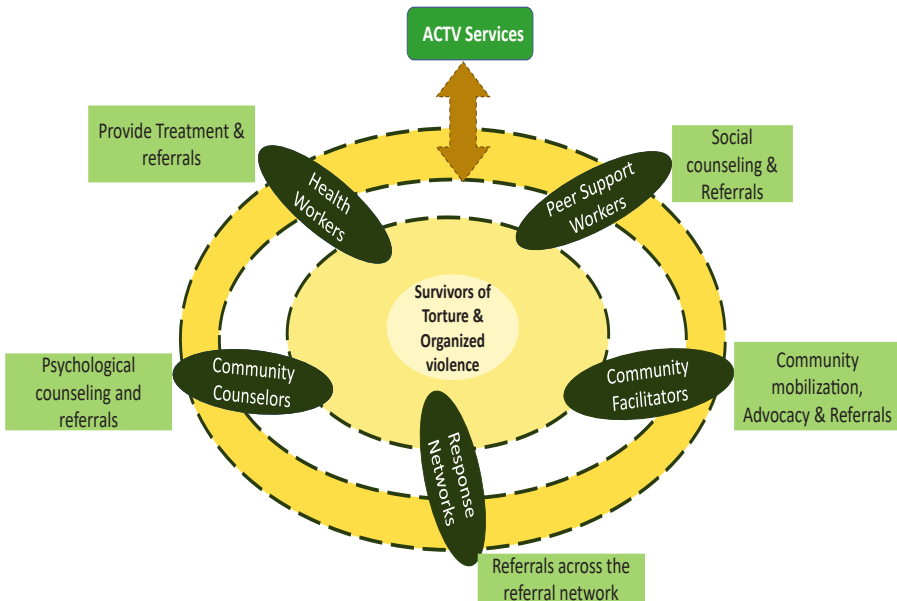
The ACTV Community Model is a network of community volunteers who work as front-line responders on issues of torture and violence within Kasese District. This is done through provision of basic services to survivors of torture and violence and making appropriate referrals for further management.

The key actors of the network include; Community Facilitators, Peer Support Workers (PSW), Community Counselors, Health Workers and the Rapid Response Network. These all have particular roles they carry out and make appropriate referrals within the Network.

The role of the Community Facilitators is to create awareness on torture and the availability of rehabilitation services; Health Workers provide medical treatment, Peer Support Workers and Community Counsellors offer social and psychological counselling respectively. The Rapid Response Network responds to cases of torture and violence within their communities.

ACTV's role is to provide technical supervision to the Network, and specialized services to severe and complicated cases that are referred by the Network. Below is an illustration of the Community Model;

The Community Support Network Concept



Why the Success Story Booklet?

The success story booklet highlights the key successes and achievements realized from the project implementation of the ACTV Community Model approach in Kasese District. It paints the picture that there is hope for survivors of torture within their communities. This booklet is further meant as a call to the general public to shun and report torture; the government of Uganda to implement the Prevention and Prohibition of the Torture Act (PPTA) 2012, which provides for the rehabilitation of torture survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

Summary of project successes

Project successes were collected through various approaches that included outcome harvesting, documentation of success stories, and capturing stakeholders'/ beneficiaries voices during the implementation of the project activities

CASE STORY FROM OUTCOME HARVESTING.

Outcome harvesting was a key approach used to track the project's outcomes. Outcome harvesting focuses on changes in behavior, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution as a result of an intervention. The implementation of the project contributed to a significant change in Kasese district.

SURVIVORS OF TORTURE IN KASESE, UGANDA GET BETTER ACCESS TO QUALITY AND TIMELY REHABILITATION



Outcomes: In December 2021, Kasese District Health Officer accepted the use of record book for torture in all Health Centres in Kasese District to be used for the recording of torture and violence which increase the quality of medical, mental health and psychosocial services provided. This followed the Kasese District Health Committee adopting the record book for survivors of torture for use in Health Centres. This was as a result of the Health Workers at Maliba and Bwesumbu Health Centers III in Kasese District from October 2020-December 2021, creating an extra column in the 105 outpatient records book, where they would write 'torture' if the patient was a survivors of torture.

Significance in Uganda and for survivors of torture: Previously, there was no specific detailed recording of survivors of torture in the Health Centers in Kasese District. Cases of torture would be recorded in the official medical records as assault. The health system in Uganda has no streamlined system of identification and documentation for survivors of torture. The process for a survivor to get services starts with getting identified. The documentation then helps identify the specific needs of the survivor, which increase the quality of medical, mental health and psychosocial services provided. Effective documentation of torture cases enables proper assessment of the needs of torture survivors which enhances quality provision of rehabilitation services. This further ensures appropriate referrals to service providers' thus increasing quality and timely rehabilitation services to the survivors.

Why this change occurred: From 15th - 17th September 2020, ACTV conducted a 3 day training of 12 Health Workers in Kasese, Uganda. These were trained on identification, management and documentation of survivors of torture. A follow-up refresher training was held on 14th September 2021. After the training, the Health Workers created a column for documentation of torture in their records book, which

led to the idea of a specific record book for survivors of torture. The Health Workers were supervised by the ACTV medical team during medical outreaches.

In addition, on 15th September 2021, ACTV held a meeting with 11 members of the District Health and Sub County Committees within the District of Kasese. The meeting discussed the relevance and content of the record book, after which both Committees adopted the record book for use in the Health Centers of Kasese District. This was further reinforced by a meeting between ACTV and the District Health Officer in Kasese on 14th December 2021 on the utilization of the record book for the Health Centers. ACTV shared the content of the records book and he agreed it was a good idea that could be adopted. In addition, he requested for a copy for his office so that he could also be able to utilize and popularise it.

Specifically, ACTV did the following key set of activities:

1. Training of Health Workers
2. Meetings and networking with the District Health Committee and District Health Officer in Kasese, Uganda

SURVIVOR SUCCESS STORIES.

Among the primary beneficiaries of the project were survivors of torture and violence. Stories of change that captured the most significant changes that occurred in the lives of the beneficiaries were documented.

COMMUNITY FACILITATORS IDENTIFYING AND REFERRING SURVIVORS OF TORTURE AND VIOLENCE



Mr. M is a 39 year old resident of Kibota cell Maliba Sub-County. In May 2020 Mr. M suffered brutality at the hands of government security personnel as they were enforcing the presidential guidelines to curb the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic. Mr. M was beaten non- systematically by over 10 security persons using gun butts, batons. He was kicked and left by the roadside half dead because he had violated the curfew time. The following morning he was helped by a good Samaritan who took him to a nearby drug shop where he was given drugs which he described as pain killers and because he did not have money he never received proper treatment despite of the situation he was in. He went back to his home, remained bed ridden for several months battling multiple body pains and could not provide for his family.

After the training of Community Facilitators by ACTV, one of them conducted an awareness session at Buhunga Parish on torture. The story of Mr. M was brought to his attention by one of the participants. He visited him at his home, evaluated his condition and the cause, which he identified to be torture. He informed the ACTV team who were conducting a medical outreach in the area. Mr. M came to the outreach centre, he was assessed by ACTV medical team and was found to require further investigations and specialized management.

He was referred to Kilemba Hospital where he was attended to by Specialist Doctors. He was diagnosed with ‘Superficial thrombophlebitis’ (inflammation of the veins due to blood clotting under the skin), was given treatment, and after a month the prolonged pain ceased. He reported being in a better condition, resumed work and is now able to support his family.

SURVIVORS OF TORTURE ACCESS COUNSELLING SERVICES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY MODEL



HOPE	FEMALE	MARRIED	INCIDENT: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	PERPETRATOR: HUSBAND
				

Hope(not real name)was married with 13 children. She used to live a happy life, would interact well with her relatives and generally enjoyed having a good time with her family. She derived her livelihood from operating a small-scale business.

Around October 2021, Hope lost her brother-in-law and culture dictated that the brother to the deceased inherits the widow. In that regard, her husband was subjected to pressure by his clan to inherit the widow of the deceased which he did. He started spending days away from home and this deeply saddened her as she was always left alone with the children. He occasionally came back to insult and threaten her to leave the home because he wanted to bring his new wife. He would also verbally abuse and threaten her children at every opportunity that he got. One day he came home, started insulting her, beat her several times, kicked and punched her all over her body. The severe beating that she sustained that day led to her admission in hospital.

Due to the constant fear, Hope separated from her husband and left her children behind. This compelled the clan members of the husband to intervene and mediate their case. They resolved that she should be left in the home so that she can look after their children. As a result of the resolution, the husband stopped supporting her, the children dropped out of school due to lack of school fees. In addition, her children were deeply affected by the verbal insults subjected to them by their father.

"After my husband beat me, I started becoming forgetful; I was very sad and depressed. Thoughts of leaving him would come to me, I just wanted to leave home even if it meant abandoning my own children."

Hope heard about ACTV at a burial ceremony, she later identified the Community Counsellor in her community who enrolled her for lay counselling services. The Counsellor sensitised her about the services of the organisation and educated her about the importance of psychological counselling. She received six counselling sessions where she would spend two hours per session with the Counsellor. The Community Counsellor also held one family session with her and the children. Hope acknowledged that she benefited from the counselling because she felt relief in her heart and stopped being depressed about the departure of her husband. The family session also strengthened the emotional connection between her and the children, improved their relationship and brought unity in the home.

Hope described that there are similar cases to hers in the community and has so far referred one person to a Peer Support Worker. The Peer Support Worker enrolled the referred person in a social support group.

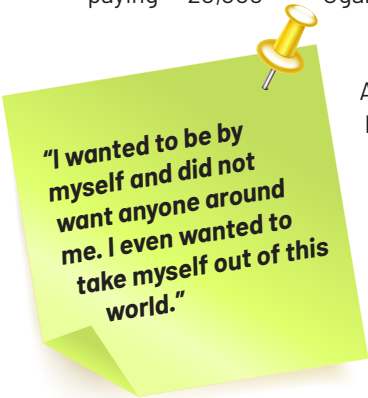
Currently, Hope feels much better and has since built a strong relationship with her children. She testified that the counseling has also helped her to cope with the death of her best friend who used to provide her with emotional support during her trying moments. She thanked ACTV for the continued support and requested the organization to extend services in the community so that more clients can benefit.

MR X	MALE	MARRIED	INCIDENT: TORTURE	PERPETRATOR: POLICE
				

Mr. X is 23 years old and is happily married with two children; he narrated that he had a good relationship with his family and would also associate well with his friends. He derived his livelihood from farming and carpentry.

In January 2021 at around 12:00 am, Mr X was sleeping when he heard police knocking at his door. He recalled that nine policemen forcefully made their way into his house and switched off all the lights because they did not want to be identified. They threatened, slapped, kicked and beat him with a stick on the legs and ankles. According to the policemen, Mr X was hiding sticks, pangas and catapults that he intended to use during the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2021. The policemen threw his property outside as they searched his house for the items. On finding nothing, he was handcuffed and made to move around the neighbourhood in circles as they searched for other people. During the search, he recognised that all the arrested people were campaign agents for the opposition parties whom he had been working with. These were all arrested in a similar manner to his and were also subjected to the same torture during the arrest. All bound in handcuffs, they walked for about two hours to the police station. During the journey, the policemen kept interrogating them, and would periodically put them at gunpoint while demanding that they confess to hiding the weapons in question. They were further threatened to be sent to Nalufenya detention centre if they did not confess.

On reaching the police station, he was put inside a filthy cell where he spent the night. During his arrest, he was subjected to poor conditions where he was forced to eat food inside a dirty cell that was wrecked with urine stench and jerry cans of faeces. He was forced to make a statement in which the policemen coerced him to accept the allegations upon which he had been arrested. When he refused to do so, he was further threatened that he would be taken to Nalufenya. He was later released after paying 20,000 Ugandan shillings.

A yellow sticky note is pinned to the page with a gold pushpin. The note contains a quote from Mr. X.

"I wanted to be by myself and did not want anyone around me. I even wanted to take myself out of this world."

As a result of the torture experience, Mr X suffered from body pains for almost three months and sustained wounds and marks around his hands due to the tight handcuffs which had been used on him. During that time, he stopped working and would spend his entire time sleeping.

Mr X did not report his case because he did not know where to go. He revealed that he was still scared of reporting since it was the police that tortured him and he could not even recall the faces of the perpetrators.

"I can talk about my experience with a lawyer but I still do not want to report because I do not even recall the policemen that arrested me."

A month after his release, Mr X was approached by an ACTV Community Counsellor who informed him about the benefits of the services of the organisation. He was enrolled for ACTV community services and received five counselling sessions. He appreciated the services and acknowledged the positive impact that they had on his life. He narrated that he has now

resumed work, interacts with his friends frequently and no longer isolates himself.

Mr X is committed to working hard and growing his business. He wants to become rich so that he can be recognised in his community. He is convinced that he would not be arrested if he was a respectable person in the community.

He recommends that the organisation should provide social support to survivors of torture so as to enable them to recover their lost sources of livelihood.

"The counselling helped me a lot because I had a lot of thoughts."

JOHN	MALE	MARRIED	INCIDENT: TORTURE	PERPETRATOR: POLICE


John (not real name) is married with one child, he had a healthy relationship with his family and a good reputation in the community. He is a farmer and was also operating a small-scale boutique in Kampala that dealt in shoes.

In January 2021, John was awakened by policemen knocking on his door. On opening the door, they forcefully made their way into his house, and started kicking and beating him with a gun butt all over the body while asking him to reveal the items (catapult). After he was put into the police car and taken to Bwesumbu police station. The following day he was made to wash a very dirty police car after which he was offered his first meal of the day in a dirty and smelly cell that was wrecked with faeces and urine. He was later released after paying 20,000 Ugandan shillings.

After the torture incident, John started experiencing immense chest pain and could not carry heavy loads which affected his work. On coming back home, he found that his wife and child had left the home due to fear of also being arrested. All this made him develop anger towards the police and his wife. John sought solace in his mother who tended to him as he could not afford to seek treatment from the hospital.

John was identified by a Peer Support Worker who informed him about the services of the organisation. He was later approached by the Community Counsellor in his community that enrolled him for services. During the counselling sessions, the Community Counsellor helped him address his fear and anger which helped him to work on his relationship with the wife.

John had not yet reported his case although he expressed interest in doing so with the help of a lawyer. He wants justice for what was done to him because to date, he does not know why he was arrested. For now, John is concentrating on his work as a carpenter from which he derives his livelihood.


"I had a lot of fear and even wanted to run away from the village because I thought that these people would come back and kill me."

SARAH	FEMALE	MARRIED	INCIDENT: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	PERPETRATOR: HUSBAND
				

Sarah (not real name) is 34 years old and married with seven children. She is able to look after her children through farming and operating a small-scale business. Sarah disclosed that she has been having marital problems due to her drunkard husband who would always physically abuse her.

The husband would always come back home late and beat her. Her children would also be subjected to the same treatment and verbal insults were the order of the day in her home. She narrated that at times she would get him arrested but his clan members would always get him out. However, the situation went out of hand one night, when the husband came back home drunk, dragged her out of bed and started beating her. He kicked her in the face and chest while hurling verbal insults at her. During the fight, the husband broke all the utensils in the house, woke up the children and also started insulting them.

Sarah sustained injuries and swellings over her body. She developed deep anger towards her husband and was saddened by the fact that her children were suffering because of him.

Sarah heard about ACTV at the police where she had gone to report an incident. She found a ACTV Community Counsellor who enrolled her for services. She received five counselling sessions and through these, she was encouraged to stay at home and look after her children.

In addition, Sarah received medical treatment from a medical outreach that was conducted in her community.

She testified that ever since the counselling sessions, there was a visible change in her home as the beatings and verbal insults have reduced. The husband has also reduced his alcohol intake which has given her peace of mind and is even willing to work on their marriage.

"I no longer have the urge to divorce my husband"

"I thank ACTV for the services I received when I had problems in my life; I was well attended to by the Community Counsellor."

"I was so angry that I would feel physical pain in my heart."

MS. Y	FEMALE	MARRIED	INCIDENT: TORTURE	PERPETRATOR: POLICE
				

Ms Y is 28 years old and married with four children. She operates a bar and a small-scale catering business through which she earns a living. She narrated that life before torture was good as she was in position to ably take care of herself and her family.

In 2021 during the second lockdown, Ms Y was subjected to torture during the enforcement of the COVID 19 guidelines. On a date that she does not remember at around 6:00 pm, a policeman found her outside her house lighting a charcoal stove. He asked her for her mask and started beating her because she did not have one. He beat her with a stick on the head and she started bleeding.

As a result of the torture experience, Ms Y sustained a wound on the head which gave her frequent headaches. In order to receive treatment, she had to cut off her hair so that the wound on her head could be treated. In addition, she developed feelings of anger towards her husband whom she believed had done nothing to help her as she

was being beaten. Ms Y further lost her business because her equipment had been destroyed during the incident.

Ms Y reported the torture incident to the police. It was resolved that the perpetrator pays her damages and also caters for her hospital bills. However, the responsible Officer only paid for the hospital bills and was transferred to another station before he could fully compensate her for the injuries sustained.

"I turned against my husband because I was beaten when he was around and he did not do anything to defend me."




"I could not even walk and had to be helped by my brother who would escort me to the hospital; my head was very swollen."

"I would reflect on the words that the Community Counsellor would tell me in the session which later gave me hope."

"I appreciate this organisation and I would still like to keep interacting with the Community Counsellor."

Two weeks after the torture incident, Ms Y was identified by the Community Counsellor in her community. She started receiving counselling sessions and the Counsellor would routinely follow up on her as they worked together to address the negative feelings.

Ms Y greatly appreciates the counselling sessions and acknowledges that she would always receive words of hope and encouragement.

GEORGE	MALE	SEPARATED	INCIDENT: VIOLENCE	PERPETRATOR: FRIEND
				

George (not real name) is separated from his wife and has five children. He derives his livelihood from farming and associates well with his friends with whom he has a good relationship.

In 2021 during the second lockdown on a date that he did not recall; George was walking with his four friends going back home when they met a son of one of his friends. The son frantically informed them that his wife was in the house with another man. Upon hearing this, they decided to escort his friend home to see if they could support him with the issue at hand. On reaching home, they found the man in the bedroom with his friend's wife. The culprit negotiated with the friend who suggested paying him in exchange for his silence. George advised his friend to arrest the culprit so that he could be exposed in the community. The friend and his family instead turned against him accusing him of sabotaging their efforts to get money. They beat him with a wooden stick and firewood on his lips and ribs and even chased him from their home.

George reported the incident to the Local Council leader in his community but nothing was done. He did not report the incident to the police at that time because he was still sick and thought that his parents would follow up on his case which they did not.

Following the unfortunate incident, George experienced chest and back pain and could no longer lift heavy things during his work. Due to the gossip in the community, his wife left him with the children whom he is struggling to look after since he can no longer work as he used to. He also developed feelings of resentment towards his friend because of his betrayal; he was deeply hurt that he was beaten when all he was trying to do was support him.

"I no longer talk to him or even want him as a friend; I even changed the path that I usually use because I do not want to ever meet him."

George was approached by the Community Counsellor in his community who found him sick at home. She referred him to the ACTV Field Office which referred him to Maliba Health Centre.

He was attended to by the ACTV-trained Health Worker and ACTV paid his medical bills. In addition, he received six counselling sessions which guided him and helped bring his life back on track. He testified that he is now a productive member of the community as he cut off all the negative peer influence.

"I stopped being idle and now go to the garden to dig." "Thank you so much ACTV for the support, I thought that I was going to die but you rescued me."

BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNITY MODEL IN THE COMMUNITY (MALIBA AND BWESUMBU SUB-COUNTIES)



In addition to providing services through the community model, the organization also conducted other activities during the implementation of the project. Some of these included; trainings, community dialogues, community outreaches and dialogue meetings with relevant stakeholders. The community (Maliba and Bwesumbu sub-counties) in Kaseke District had a great appreciation of the Community Model as witnessed below;

Voices/comments from stakeholders and beneficiaries

TRAININGS

"The session on grief has really made me see what exactly happens to us when we lose people, it really happened..... now I understand it more, thank you ACTV."

Community Counselor

"Thank you staff of ACTV, and we thank DIGNITY! Am willing to be the best and to deliver best counseling services to my community"
Community Counselor

"As a result of training, I now know how to do self-care to myself. My parents cannot understand the transformation I have undergone. I now live positively with my parents, my before I never liked my parents, my father is a Reverend but I would do things contrary to the preaching's. We never had a normal relationship with my parents, but right now they are very proud of me. Nzamuhiki Agabus
Community Counselor
Maliba

"The training was very relevant and valuable I was even given copies of the PPTA which I always refer to while doing my work" Legal Officer UHRC Field Office Kaseke.

"From the trainings, I learnt things that cause stress to women, this has helped me to handle my wife, I have found comfort and therapeutic treatment in the words. My wife appreciates the level of association and how to I handle our matters whenever we have misunderstandings. I and my wife lost our parents but the training undertaken helped them during those unfortunate days to manage the depression and stress". Community counselor Bwesumbu

"The content of the training was very good, it helped understand the issues of compensation of survivors of torture, personal liability for the perpetrators, and am now in a position to differentiate torture victims from non-torture" Officer in Charge Bwesumbu Police station

DIALOGUE MEETINGS

"Torture goes to the core of human dignity. The political parties should come up with Memorandum of Understanding with ACTV so that we work together in preventing torture" comment a representative from ANT" Participant from the meeting with political parties

"The police in Bwesumbu police station has reduced the use of torture as a form of extracting information from suspects under their custody, this is a result of the trainings and dialogue meetings which the Officer in charge (OC) participated. Previously, the police used to beat suspects whenever they were in their custody instead of carrying out investigations." Byasyalya Edson Chairperson LC1 Kyabulera Village Bwesumbu Sub County

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

"Most people in this community did not know that there are services for people that have been tortured, and most of them could not afford treatment in the mainstream health care system, most people did not know that after torture, there is life" Community leader

"The dialogues have been helpful they enlighten people on where to report and get services when tortured". We need at least two dialogues per quarter in this sub-county" Community Development Officer, Maliba Sub County

"Panga injury cases have reduced in Bwesumbu Sub county (pangas were previously used as the most common tools during fights) this is a result of community dialogue meetings which have helped in sensitizing communities on human rights violations, violence and torture. Black Saleri Chairperson LC1 Kasanga Village Bwesumbu Subcounty"

The awareness creation on torture and human rights violations has resulted into reduction in incidences of torture and GBV. "There is peace from home level to sub-county, GBV violence cases have tremendously reduced apart from Mbatha Parish where incidences are still prevalent for example there is one lady is who is right now admitted in the Bwesumbu health centre III who was beaten by the husband" LC1 Chairperson of Kasanga Village Bwesumbu Sub-county.

As result of the community dialogues, the number of husbands reporting GBV cases to the community development office in Bwesumbu has increased from 1 to 5 cases per month. Community Development Officer Bwesumbu Sub County

There is a general reduction in the use of torture as a means of extracting information from suspects. One of the LC1 Chairpersons had this to say for emphasis “the police no longer beat suspects as they used to in the past. In fact, if the Officer in Charge (OC) sees a policeman beating a suspect you see him intervening to stop any culprit doing the torture”.

COMMUNITY OUTREACHES.

“ACTV medication is the one making me survive, otherwise I am supposed to have died a longtime given what I passed through. My children were affected; they too need medication” Survivor of Torture from Kasangali Parish Bwesumbu.

“I have received free medication for the first time in my life, am going to take as prescribed to determine how effective it is. I am very satisfied with the services received.” Survivor of Torture after receiving medication during the outreach at Bwesumbu Health Centre III.

“ACTV has very good customer service and the use of local translators makes even us who never went to school clearly understand. We are extremely excited, even my wife who was also tortured received treatment yesterday” Survivor of Torture after receiving medication during the outreach at Bwesumbu Health Centre III.

PROVISION OF SERVICES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY MODEL

The volunteer network has offered counselling services, this has minimized cases that are reported to the Community development Office.” Community Development Officer Maliba Sub County

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the community model strengthened the access to rehabilitation services to survivors of torture in Bwesumbu and Maliba sub-counties of Kasese district. This helped to bridge the gap in the provision of rehabilitation services since there were almost non existing formal structures to provide psychosocial services to survivors of torture and violence, and more often survivors resorted to the use of informal structures that included; family members, religious and traditional leaders among others

The model focused its engagements in the community, which facilitated its effective involvement and strengthened the community's ownership of the project interventions. However, there is still a need to extend this approach across the country to ensure that torture survivors get access to timely and quality rehabilitation services. Great thanks to our development partner The Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY) for its technical and financial support



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