

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

## NEWSLETTER

**JULY-SEPTEMBER  
2020**

### Message from ACTV

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our ACTV quarterly issue of July - September 2020.

ACTV is a Non-government organization that protects and promotes human rights, with focus on treatment and rehabilitation of survivors of torture.

The Newsletter focuses on the services that ACTV has provided to survivors of torture, and her efforts towards prevention of the vice through awareness creation in a bid to hold perpetrators accountable..

This issue comes amidst the challenging times of the COVID19 pandemic where the entire world has had to adjust to the new normal. These challenges have led to an increase in human rights violations like; torture, sexual gender based and other forms of violence.

All ACTV interventions during the period have been premised on overcoming these challenges through innovations and professionalism. Therefore I encourage you to read and visit our pages on our different social media platforms (Website, facebook and twitter) for regular updates.

### Inside stories

1. COVID19 pandemic and rehabilitation of torture survivors.
2. Holistic Rehabilitation of SOT
3. Capacity building and Trainings conducted.
4. Awareness creation activities .
5. Networking and collaboration meetings.



A GROUP PHOTO OF THE ACTV MANAGEMENT WITH THE UPDF DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS LT COL DEO KALIKONA DURING A VISIT AT ACTV OFFICES

## Challenges faced by survivors of torture due to COVID19 pandemic and the holistic services given to them;

### Special feature

As the country was subjected to a total lockdown due to the COVID19 pandemic, perpetrators of torture were out violating the right of freedom from torture. This meant that survivors who faced security brutality due to the violation of the COVID19 SOPs needed to access rehabilitation services. However, accessibility of services was difficult at the time as the government had put in place drastic measures to curb the spread of the pandemic.

Survivors of torture are one of the marginalized groups who require specialized care and attention to help them rebuild their lives and be productive. During the lockdown, survivors of torture faced various challenges that negatively affected their lives.

Limited access to services was a key challenge that was faced by the survivors of torture and this is because the majority of the known organizations that provide rehabilitation were temporarily closed which worsened the situation of the survivors who could not easily access the services.

When the COVID19 prevention measures put in place were relaxed, ACTV opened up her centers to provide services to the survivors of torture. However it observed that most of these survivors had spent 1 –3 weeks without accessing treatment for the wounds and other infections generated by the torture effects.

The situation was worse for those in prisons and other places of detention because they were closed due to the COVID19 pandemic. This hindered the continuous monitoring of these places by ACTV and other human rights organizations, as well as providing rehabilitation services to survivors of torture. Additionally, a number of survivors who had registered improvement in their symptoms, reported major psychological relapses. This was largely attributed to the social isolation which limited social support, lack of income to meet the daily needs of their homes, the abrupt halt in counselling sessions, and anxieties brought upon by the fear of contracting the virus.

Due to the lockdown that was imposed on the country and the subsequent closure of public transport, survivors of torture who depended on the daily income from their small scale businesses were affected. These could no longer carry out their daily business activities thus could not continue working. Therefore survivors of torture were unable to meet the basic needs of their families like food, water, soap, medical care among others which was highly required during that time. Furthermore, survivors of torture who had started rebuilding their lives and engaging in active work lost their employment and were left with no other means of survival. As a result, survivors faced continuous stress, self guilt, anger that gave rise to violence in homes which led to the increase of torture and gender based violence and major psychological torture.

In order for ACTV to continue reaching out to SOT and fulfill her mandate, a number of mitigation measures were undertaken which included; use of tele services, home visits, training of peer support workers to identify and refer survivors, awareness creation through social media and radio talk shows on effects of torture and where to seek services.



Majority of the survivors that interacted with, reported to have been tortured as a result of enforcement of presidential directives to curb COVID19 pandemic, and others faced sexual gender based violence mainly from their spouses. The survivors were able to receive medical treatment, mental health services, physiotherapy, social support, and legal advice. There were also continuous follow-ups that were made to SOT through home visits, phone calls and video calls.

In the period; July - September, ACTV was able to provide holistic rehabilitation services to 309 (175Male and 134Female) new survivors of torture who accessed services from our offices; Kampala, Gulu, Kasese and

## HOME VISITS

Some effects of torture (sustained injuries, disability, and insecurity among others) affect clients' ability to travel far distances and yet they are in need of services, this was worsened by the restrictions put in place to fight the COVID19 pandemic.

This therefore led ACTV to conduct home visits to offer holistic services to SOT and their families in their homes. 14 home visits were made in; Buddo, Bombo, Hoima, Mbarara, Isingiro, Namugongo, Kisoga in Mukono and Jinja. During these visits, 23(15 male and 8 female) clients were reached out with their family members.



*ACTV Physiotherapist, Psychologist & a Social worker during a home visit In Hoima.*

## SUPPORT-GROUP ADJOURNMENT

03 social support groups; Hope group in Katwe, Family group in Kampala, and Twekembe group in Kitayunja. These groups were formed in 2019 and they each constituted 10 members. They were trained and empowered with skills in Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) and were later provided with kits. Through the social support rendered to the groups, members were able to utilize the groups to rebuild their lives again. These groups were adjourned in September 2020 and members shared their savings.

## Social-Economic Empowerment

06 Human Rights Defenders whose livelihoods was destroyed during and after the torture incident were empowered to start their livelihoods a fresh with new business ventures.



One of the human rights defender that was empowered with sewing materials to start up her tailoring business



## Brief Family Therapy

Psychological trauma suffered by individual torture survivors has transference effects to the family members. The mental health department offered a series of brief family therapy to 2 families in Jinja and Kampala and these helped them to cope with the effects of torture.



Mental health coordinator during the Brief family therapy session in Jinja.

## Community Medical Outreach Conducted

As a means of reaching out to survivors of torture, ACTV organized community medical outreaches to reach out to Survivors of torture in the communities who could have failed to access her services. This may have been because they did not have information about ACTV or their ailments were bad and they therefore could not move long distance to our treatment centers.

A medical outreach was conducted in Maliba sub county in Kasese district from 28<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020. 37 (10Male and 27Female) survivors of torture and violence were offered medical treatment and referrals were made appropriately.



ACTV Nurse and the health centre nurse interviewing a SOT during the Community outreach at Maliba Sub County.



## Physical Health

The Physiotherapist noted great improvement on the condition of the client since in the previous visit he was moving with crutches, using Taylor brace, and now moving with no support. He has minimal pain.



# Trainings Conducted

## Training of the community support network

The community support network comprises of groups of community volunteers that are trained to respond to issues of torture in their communities through; awareness raising, provision of basic services, and make appropriate referrals. To this effect, 39 (22 Male and 17 Female) community volunteers were identified from Maliba and Bwe-sumbu Sub counties Kasese District and trained with support from DIGNITY. These included 12 health workers, 10 community facilitators and 17 members of the RRN.



*ACTV Communications and Advocacy officer Kirya Mukalere Paul training Community facilitators at Uhuru50 Hotel in Kasese district .*



# Pictorial of community support network trainings



ACTV Legal Assistant during the training of the rapid response network in Kasese at Sandton Hotel.



ACTV physiotherapy training the health workers at Uhuru50 Hotel in Kasese district.



ACTV Dr. Rafiki Robert training the Health workers at Uhuru50 Hotel in Kasese district



ACTV Program Manger during the training of community support network at Uhuru50 Hotel in Kasese district



# Networking And Collaboration With Partners

## Courtesy visit by the Director of Human Right- UPDF to ACTV.

The newly appointed UPDF Director of Human Rights Lt Col Deo Karikona on 10th September paid a courtesy visit to ACTV offices and held a strategic discussion with the ACTV management.



ACTV management in a meeting with the UPDF Director of Human Rights Lt Col Deo Karikona at ACTV offices in Kampala

## Coalition Against Torture Meeting.

A meeting with CAT members was held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020 at Nob view Hotel in Ntinda. during the meeting members evaluated and reflected on the work of the coalition and came up with concrete measures on how to strengthen on the collaboration of members during the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020 UN International Day in support of victims.



A group photo of the coalition against torture (CAT) member after the meeting at Nobview hotel in Ntinda, Kampala.

## Dialogue Meeting with Kasese Local Leaders

The dialogue meeting with the Kasese leaders was conducted on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 at Verina Gardens. The intention of the meeting was to dialogue with sub county leaders on; their role in the prevention of torture and violence, ways through which survivors of torture can be supported. 30 leaders from Maliba and Bwesumbu sub counties among which was the Resident State Attorney, District Community Development Officer attended the meeting.





*ACTV program manager interacting with district officials during a dialogue meeting in Kasese district*



*Dialogue meeting with the Kasese district Leaders at Verina Gardens hotel.*

## SERVICE PROVIDERS FEEDBACK MEETING

On 04<sup>th</sup> September 2020, ACTV held a service providers feedback meeting with 12 service partners. This meeting was held to provide a platform for service providers to brainstorm on the services provided to survivors of torture and how it can be improvised.



*ACTV Head of programmes taking to partners during Service providers meeting at Nobview hotel in Ntinda, Kampala*



*ACTV Social worker coordinator engaging the partners during the service providers meeting at Nobview hotel in Ntinda, Kampala*



# High Level Breakfast Meeting



A high level breakfast meeting was held on 27<sup>th</sup> August at Protea Hotel in Kampala with Representatives from Office of Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and from the Uganda Police Force Criminal Investigations Department (CID).

The purpose of the meeting was to dialogue on challenges hindering effective investigation and documentation of torture cases; forge away forward so as to have successful cases of torture prosecuted in courts of law.

In her presentation, the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions reminded the participants of their role in ensuring that survivors of torture get justice.



Assistant DPP Ms. Barbra Kawuma presenting during the meeting.



Mr. Tinka of the CID Headquarters made a presentation during the meeting at Protea Hotel in Kampala.



ACTV HOP engaging with the MDAS during the meeting.



ACTV legal officer engaging with the MDAS during the meeting.



# Media engagements



ACTV team with journalists during a media press conference at ACTV offices in Kampala.



On 24<sup>th</sup> September, ACTV held a press conference at her Head offices in Kampala on torture prevention and accountability in Uganda amidst the election period and enforcement of the covid19 guidelines and directives.

Given that August 2020 to February 2021 is an election-eering period, issues of torture are prone to occur and ACTV usually registers an increase in cases during the election period. Therefore, ACTV responded to such occurrences through a press conference and advised the security agencies to desist from acts of torture and ill treatment during the process of enforcing COVID 10 directives and election .

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ACTV**

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