



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



SUCCESS

Story Booklet

FIGHTING TORTURE IN UGANDA

STORIES OF TORTURE SURVIVORS

Introduction

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) has since 1993 provided treatment and rehabilitation services to include; medical treatment, psychological counseling, legal advice, social rehabilitation and livelihood support to torture survivors. This is what is referred to as holistic care. It is this that forms the backbone of the advocacy interventions conducted in a bid to seek accountability for torture and further end torture in Uganda.

This success story booklet highlights the reality of torture in the region and Uganda in particular. We share with you the journey of the survivors of torture and the rehabilitation they have undergone. The personal battles they have faced as a result of torture and the effects torture has not only on the primary torture survivor but also on the secondary survivors. These stories are real, the torture undergone is real and the effects of the torture are also real.

This booklet is meant as a call to the general public to shun and report torture and the Government of Uganda to implement the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA) 2012, which provides for the rehabilitation of torture survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

TORTURE SUSPECTS AWARDED COMPENSATION BY THE COURTS OF LAW

22 Suspects arrested in Connection with murder of AIGP Andrew Felix Kaweesi

On 22nd May 2017, five out of the 22 suspects arrested in connection with the murder of Assistant Inspector General of Police Andrew Felix Kaweesi with the support of ACTV sued the Attorney General citing torture by police personnel during their detention at Nalufenya police station in Jinja District. The suspects alleged that they were gruesomely tortured and eventually promised huge sums of money if they confessed to the murder of the AIGP.

In response, the High Court ordered that all the 22 suspects remanded be immediately subjected to an independent medical examination to ascertain whether or not they were tortured while in custody. A court order was issued to ACTV by Hon. Lady Justice Margaret Oguli-Oumo to carry out examinations of the suspects after which a report of the findings would be presented in court.

ACTV acted on the court order and conducted a medical and psychological assessment of the suspects. The findings clearly showed that the suspects had been tortured. As a result of the report, the High Court Judge Oumo Oguli ordered the State to pay Ushs. 80m (\$22,000) to each of the suspects.

Mr.Jasper Natukunda

Jasper was among hundreds of people that were carrying a petition to the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC), Rukungiri District on 12th September 2012 to protest the sorry state of Mitano Bridge, Rukungiri Municipality. As the congregation marched peacefully and unarmed with the petition in hand, the police dispersed the procession by spraying tear gas at the demonstrators and battering them with gun batons. In the melee, the police arrested Jasper who was carrying the petition and detained him. He was gravely tortured in custody and his bladder shattered as a result. He carried a catheter with him that helped him urinate in a polythene bag.

ACTV supported this case not only to prosecute the individual but also the state since the individual was not in position to fully pay for the costs of the case and damages that might be awarded to the complainant. The case though filed in Kampala was transferred to Kabale over Court's jurisdiction.

The High Court on 20th December 2017 in Kabale District awarded Jasper 270 million shillings as compensation for the torture by Police.



Mr. Twesigye

Male

35yrs

Married

UPDF training grounds

Mr Twesigye was born in Uganda in Gagonji SubCounty, Mbarara District, Kashari County,. He is 35 years old and currently lives with his wife and children. Twesigye was living a normal life before the torture; he was a plumber, owned cows and acres of land. He was physically and mentally fit which was the basis for his recruitment in the army for a basic training course. He saw the recruitment as an opportunity to better himself and had big dreams. However his excitement was cut short as he faced gruesome torture in the army which crippled him and this was the beginning of his woes as the future he had hoped to have became dim.

Twesigye joined the UPDF in February 2008; was recruited from Ibanda had his first training at Kaweweta training School in Nakaseke and he was later deployed at Kasenyi training school in 2008. He narrated that the training was tiresome and much effort and patience was needed. One day their commander came back to the barracks and called for an assembly. Unfortunately he and his colleague were away and missed the parade. The next day the commander sent for them (Twesigye and his colleague) and gave them a punishment to be caned by their fellow trainees (108 people) and instructed every member to cane him 3 strokes each with all their strength. He was caned until he became unconscious after which he was taken to a room where no first aid was given; neither was he taken to the hospital.

He however managed to get some first aid from his friend who would massage the swollen parts using a cloth with hot water. This took 3 days after which he resumed his training. However his health kept on deteriorating day by day. In October 2008 he was recruited into the Presidential guards brigade, a unit within the army, but his life was never the same again. He started experiencing body itches. He was taken to Kasenyi for training but could no longer perform assignments as expected, jogging became a problem, he would get muscle pulls instantly all of which he attributed to the severe caning he had received earlier.

He was later posted to the Democratic Republic of Congo for three months and returned on 21st March 2009, but his condition only got worse. He also started complaining of constant fever. He was taken to the hospital but no disease was found in his body, instead his superiors started saying he never wanted to work and thus started giving him punishments like being locked up in the cell.

"I thought of opening up to my boss about what had happened to me during the training so that I could get his favor and help in seeking justice but when I did so, I was ignored and instead was resented by him." "I felt like I was dying inside with no one to run to for help"

At this stage the family members became concerned and asked him to come back home for treatment which he did. However he was hurt that nobody from his work place followed him up and instead said he deserted work.

Mr.Twesigye was physically crippled and could not move, most of his body parts could not function, he lost the sense of feel from his waist to the toes, and he could not control his body waste. He was receiving extremely expensive treatment which compelled him to sell off his belongings; he sold his land and cattle. His dreams and hopes were shattered as he saw himself losing everything that he had acquired over a period of time.

"My family received me and tried their best to treat me, but as you know sickness, it comes very fast but goes slowly. It took years for someone to feel hope in my healing. My family members started pulling out one by one until I remained with only my wife by my side that has treated me to date. My parents were even angry with me as to why I joined the army despite of their advice"

Mr.Twesigye came to know about ACTV through the Uganda Human Rights Commission who referred him to the Centre. He was deeply touched by the warm reception that he received at the Centre and in his own words he said; "it's like I had found a second family to share with who were willing to understand and listen to what I was going through." He further expressed himself in his words that a ray of hope was restored to his life as he thought he had lost everyone when his family members deserted him after seeing that his situation was getting worse with each passing day. He received medical treatment, which relieved the intense pain, counseling, physiotherapy among which he received accessories like clutches and lubricants and this played a big role in managing the pain and discomfort of his disability. He also received specialized medical treatment for the paralysis, was given social support in form of rent and livelihood support were he started a charcoal business since he had sold all his belongings, could not work and thus had no means of taking care of his family. Mr.Twesigye expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the rehabilitation that he has received from the center, "this has made me have value for my life and I feel like I can embrace life again."

Mr.Twesigye's case is currently in court and he is very optimistic about the outcomes of his case. The charcoal business is doing well even though there is competition but with this he has hopes of making it bigger so that it is adequate to look after his family. In the same vein he narrates that with each passing day he sees improvement and he thanks God for his wife that never left his side even when he was deserted by the rest of his family.



Jackie (not real name)

Female

36

Divorced

Tortured in Congo

Jackie was born on 7th April 1980 and is the youngest in her family. Her father died when she was two years old so she never got to know him. After the death of her father, life was hard for them as a family and the mother decided to take her and her sister to the grandmother who raised them. They never saw their mother again. In 1994, war broke out in the Democratic Republic of Congo, her grandmother was killed and she was separated from her sister. In 2012 she gave birth to her first born but the family of her husband did not like her because she came from a different tribe which they considered to be “a dirty tribe.” She was grossly mistreated during her marriage and eventually her husband left her and she never saw him again. She then went to stay with her sister who was at the time working for a human rights organization.

Her sister received threats on several occasions from the government soldiers who accused her of housing a munyamulenge which was considered a dirty tribe. They were later attacked by the government soldiers at home and her sister’s husband was killed, her children were burnt and both of them were raped; She was tied up, beaten and raped by the soldiers. Her children managed to escape and she did not see them again, the threats against her and the sister continued until they decided to leave the country in 2014 and she entered Uganda on 4th April 2014. After the torture that she was subjected to, she lived in a lot of fear, lost trust in men, withdrew and opted to keep to herself and on several occasions she would get anxious, restless and scared when she saw men in uniform. Upon reaching Uganda she was referred to ACTV from Jesuit refugee services due to the complaints that she presented with and in April 2016 she got re – united with her children. With tears of joy flowing down her cheeks she narrated how she was ecstatic to see her children again though her joy was cut short when she found out that her daughter had been raped and as a result had contracted HIV.

She received medical treatment and mental health services from ACTV. The counseling that she received has helped her a lot to cope with herself and come to terms with what happened to her, the self – blame has stopped and through the counseling she has been equipped with knowledge which has enabled her to be a pillar of support to her seventeen year old daughter who is still battling with the effects of rape. Jackie is however positive about the future; she has hope, faith and is trusting God to continue giving her strength to go through the huddles of life.



Mabirizi

Male

26

Married

Tortured in prison

Mr.Mabirizi is married with a wife and one child. Prior to being tortured, he was a taxi driver and the breadwinner of his immediate family, mother and younger brother who were staying with him since his father was deceased. On the fateful day when he had gone to work and was waiting for his taxi at his work station, he was rounded up by police on grounds that he was idle and disorderly. He was then remanded to prison leaving behind his family and a young child. He narrated that he was handcuffed and severely beaten by the prison warden; a big stone was placed into his mouth to prevent him from screaming. In the process, his teeth were weakened leading to the loss of a few of them. He was then forced to eat chicken feed. In addition, the inmates were subjected to hard labour on the prison farm where they worked from morning to evening with only one cup of porridge as a meal for the entire day. . Due to the beating that he sustained upon arrest, he had pain in his joints and knuckles and thus found it very difficult to work. However when he attempted to rest, he was hit with a gun butt on his head, ankles and back by the prison officer which caused him to writhe in pain. During his stay in prison he was also denied communication with his family and since he was the breadwinner, he was worried about his family and how they were coping and specifically kept thinking about his young son whom he had left at home.

Due to the torture that was inflicted on him, Mr.Mabirizi sustained physical injuries; he could not lie down on his back, his leg was paralyzed and he could not do anything on his own leaving him vulnerable. Upon release from prison, Mr.Mabirizi resumed his work as a taxi driver, however the torture meted out on him affected his ability to drive because of the back pain sustained and thus he was worried about his livelihood and ability to ably take care of his family. He however persisted in order to provide for his family. Mr.Mabirizi was referred to ACTV by Muslim Center for Justice and Law and he received comprehensive treatment and a rehabilitation package. The Legal Officer is still following up on his case with the Uganda Human Rights Commission and he is very optimistic that justice will prevail and his perpetrators will be held accountable. He expressed his gratitude as captured in his words;

"The medication that I have received from ACTV has helped me to recover especially the physiotherapy which has enabled me resume my work as a taxi driver. However I still want to get justice for what was done to me."



Chris

Male

30

Divorced

Tortured in a safe house

Chris joined the UPDF in 2010 as a pharmacy technician after undergoing training that he successfully completed. He had the zeal to serve his country and worked as a medical personnel in the army. He had many friends, was married with two boys, had no financial problems and generally life was good.

Unfortunately this bliss did not last long when on 30th April 2014 he was implicated in a fraud of 800 million dollars. He was arrested and forced to make a statement confessing to the crime. He was put in a vehicle, blind folded and driven around for approximately one hour. After, he was put in a room with one chair and table and inside was the intelligence officer who had arrested him. He was questioned however he did not know the answers to the questions hence he did not respond and as a result his fingers were hit with a gun but, he was kicked, slapped and flogged by two men.

The torture continued as they poured water on him, handcuffed him and he was electrocuted sustaining serious injuries. He was put in a car again blindfolded and driven to Entebbe road after which he was asked to confess again but he did not. They pushed a probe into his urethra, tied his legs up and he was severely beaten with a rubber cane. After the beating the rope tying him was cut and he fell on his head, bruised his shoulder and got an elbow dislocation. He was subjected to this kind of torture for five days until he started urinating blood, blood was coming out of his nose and he lost the ability to eat.

The torture that Chris was subjected to affected him immensely as he almost lost everything he had in order to cater for the expensive treatment which he had to get. He had a major setback in his career; he lost his friends and only remained with his family and kids, he was stigmatized in the community and back home his family did not want to associate with him and above all he came out a disabled man and suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Chris read about ACTV in a newspaper extract while he was still in prison which he kept and with this he managed to get the contacts and directions to ACTV. He received a comprehensive rehabilitation package inclusive of medical treatment, psychosocial counseling, orthopaedic services and psychological services.

He is very grateful for the services that he has received from ACTV specifically the psychological counseling which has brought hope to his life and he can now pick up the broken pieces of his life and put them back together. He has started to open up to people which was not the case before; "I would sit in a room from morning to sunset without talking to anyone because I was angry with everyone in my family". The sessions he got from the counseling helped him a lot to deal with PTSD and there is a significant improvement. He has acquired a more peaceful mind as compared to the period before he came to ACTV as he confessed that he was overwhelmed with the urge to revenge;

"Before I came to ACTV I had a very negative attitude towards life and if I had enough resources, I would use all of them and by now some people would be dead."

Currently Chris is trying to mend his relationship with his family and has tried to create work for himself as the founder of a CBO which brings together youth and through this he is able to create awareness among them entailing the protection of their rights. This has helped him a lot in his recovery journey though he still needs a helping hand for his future.



Nazeera

Male

27

Separated

Burundi

Nazeera was born in Burundi, He used to operate a garage with his father and was generally doing well until the war erupted and his parents were killed. He remained with his elder brother who later became a rebel and eventually left him alone at home. Shortly after he was captured by government soldiers who wanted to know the whereabouts of his brother and in the process he was severely beaten leaving him with a broken leg as a result of the torture. He managed to escape to Uganda where he was homeless and due to this state he was repatriated back to his country in 2006. Unfortunately war erupted again in 2006 and he was captured by government soldiers.

He was gruesomely tortured, hit with something heavy on his head and he lost consciousness. As a result he lost his eye and has been forced to live with the deformity up to date He acquired another disability in the leg as he is currently limping and he cannot do heavy work due to the intense pain in his chest. . Nazeera lost his family and to date he doesn't know the whereabouts of his wife and two children.

He was referred to ACTV by Refugee Law Project and he received services among which were; medical services which included an eye operation and psychosocial counseling. The treatment and rehabilitation that he has undergone has had impact as he can now ably take care of himself to some extent. He can now work and currently digs pit latrines for a living which has boosted his capability to buy some things for himself like a shirt and trouser compared to before when he only owned one pair of trousers and a shirt.

Even though he is currently alone with no known relatives, Nazeera has the will to live and he plans to start up a small scale business. He also has plans of looking for his wife and kids and if he does not find them, he plans to marry again, settle down and get another family with children that he can raise.



Katumba
Male
27
Divorced
Tortured in prison

Mr. Katumba was a married man before he was tortured in prison and is now divorced. He has a certificate in guidance and counseling but derived his livelihood through operating a retail shop jointly with his mother before he was imprisoned. At the time of his arrest he had a one year old daughter whom he treasured so much and having to leave her behind was devastating and very embarrassing as he stated.

He was arrested and convicted to spend one year in prison or pay a fine of 300,000/=. During his stay in prison, he was befriended by one of the prison wardens who favored him and would give him light work to do at the prison farm. The prison warden was allegedly a drug addict who started making sexual advances towards him. In exchange for these favors, he would caress him inappropriately on his genitals and eventually when he resisted, he would forcefully insert his finger into his anus which would cause him extreme pain. Katumba continued resisting and he was given an ultimatum by the warden to pay up for all the favors that he had been receiving. This was the beginning of his woes in prison; the sexual harassment continued and he was denied the right to communicate with his relatives and friends and would be subjected to hard labour on the prison farm.

He would work for long hours and although his fellow prisoners saw this mistreatment that he was being subjected to, they kept silent for fear of losing favor before the prison warden. On 14th December 2013 as he was working in the fields, Katumba was isolated from the rest of the prisoners and the warden tried to forcefully penetrate him in the anus with his genitals while one of the inmates kept guard. The pain was excruciating that he put up resistance and as a result he was severely beaten, cut with a panga and left for dead.

In order to cover up, a statement was issued by the prison authorities that he had been involved in a fight with his fellow inmates through which he sustained injuries hence the prison warden was not implicated. The Officer in Charge refused to take accountability for the torture which he had been subjected to and was denied medical treatment and yet he was in a critical condition. He opened a file with the Uganda Human Rights Commission who came to see him seven months after his gruesome torture,

However he was told by the prison authorities to withdraw his case after which the alleged case against him would be dropped to which he refused. He was released from prison on 7th July 2015 with a lot of scars from the injuries that he sustained from the torture. Upon seeing him with the gruesome scars, his wife left him leaving him traumatized, frustrated, depressed with the urge to revenge against his perpetrator.

He came to ACTV one month after he had been released from prison after reading about the organization in the New vision of 7th July 2015. Upon arrival he was received, screened and received holistic care to include; medical treatment inclusive of physiotherapy, legal services and psychological counseling. In addition the team conducted a home visit to assess his progress after receiving services from ACTV. In his own words,

"The team came to see me at home, I was very glad to see them and I eagerly shared with them my progress after which we took a group photo. The team helped me cope with depression, rejection, frustration and bitterness"

The treatment and rehabilitation that he received from ACTV helped him attain physical, spiritual and mental health well being as a result of the sessions that he underwent in psychological counseling. In addition he also received legal advice on how to handle his case with the Uganda Human Rights Commission. He expressed his gratitude for the continuous support that he received from the team.

Katumba is optimistic about the future despite what he has gone through; he still has the will to live and has chosen to draw important lessons from the torture that he underwent. He is determined to move on, wants to develop himself so that he can ably take care of his family and raise his daughter.

Recommendations

Although strides are being taken to address torture in Uganda, torture is still a reality. Based on the case stories above there is need for intensive advocacy and lobbying initiatives to be conducted in order for the PPTA law to be implemented. Timely release of compensation to Torture survivors should be prioritised.

If torture survivors are to benefit from the compensation received, they should be paid immediately in order to address some of the challenges they are facing. In most cases, the survivors have lost their livelihood and depend on handouts or support from families. The timely release of the money would enable them to rebuild their lives.

Implementation of the PPTA

Implementation of the PPTA through holding perpetrators accountable and proffering criminal charges would act as a deterrent measure. Criminal charges need to be brought against those who torture if the law is to bite. Survivors of torture would like to see the perpetrators held accountable through the courts of law in addition to them receiving compensation for the torture meted out against them.

Duty to investigate all allegations of torture

Allegations of torture are reported to relevant institutions such as police but investigations are very slow or not conducted at all. It is important that the duty to investigate acts of torture is taken seriously and clear guidelines provided including clear time frames for the investigations with regular updates about the process.

Livelihood support

Livelihood support is a key component of holistic rehabilitation of torture survivors. Most of the survivors are left disabled, unable to resume work and support their families. Livelihood interventions should therefore be prioritized to enable survivors of torture lead productive lives.

Monitoring of police stations as places of detention

Uganda has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against torture. OPCAT was created in 2002 in terms of Article 2 of the UNCAT to establish independent national prevention bodies to monitor places of detention, such as prisons, police cells and police stations to prevent acts of torture.

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