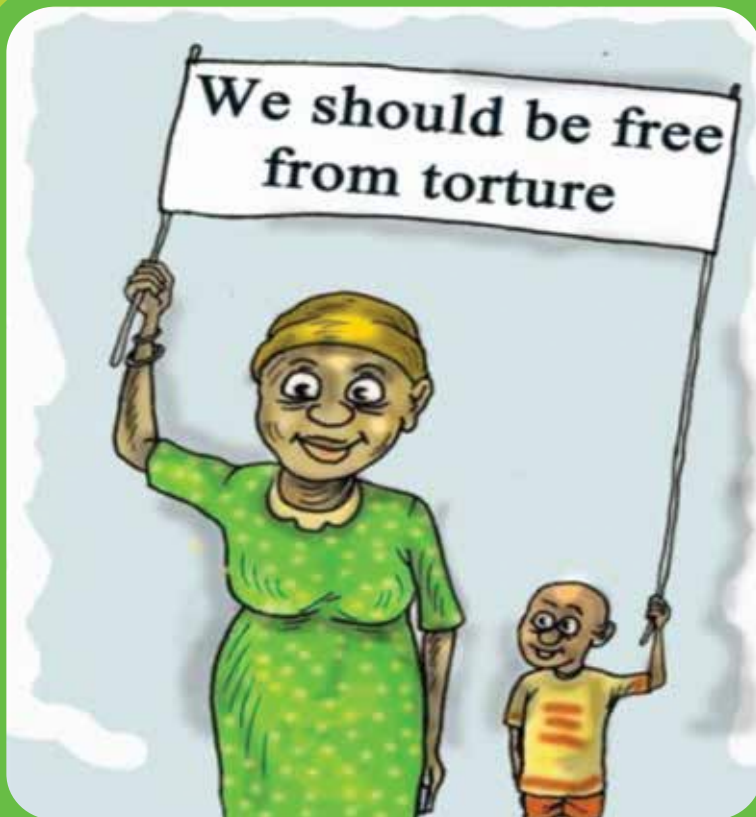




## **AFRICAN CENTRE FOR TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE VICTIMS**



**THE RECOVERY JOURNEY OF  
A SURVIVOR**

## THE RECOVERY JOURNEY OF A SURVIVOR

### Introduction:

African Center 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 of torture. ACTV has a multidisciplinary team comprising of Lawyers, Medical doctors, Clinical Psychologists, Physiotherapists, Nurses and Social workers who provide treatment and rehabilitation services including legal advice to torture survivors. ACTV is the only NGO in Uganda that provides no cost holistic care in Uganda to both Nationals and Non-Nationals. We do advocacy against acts of Torture among state and non-state actors. We also chair the Coalition against Torture (CAT) in Uganda. The latter was instrumental in the passing of the Prevention and Prohibition of the Torture Act (Anti-Torture law) through a private members' bill in 2012 and the passing of the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Regulations of 2017 by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

The 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 that they have undergone. These stories and the torture undergone are real coupled with the effects of torture.

This booklet is 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.

The stories captured in the booklet were documented with the consent of the clients

<b>MR. LAUBEN AGABA</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>SINGLE</b>	<b>Tortured in police,detention center</b>
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Lauben was a healthy energetic young boy of 13 years of age who had completed his primary seven when his father died. His mother who was looking after six other siblings could not afford to pay his school fees but fortunately, a lady who was a family friend approached his mother and offered guardianship to Lauben. The lady brought him to Kampala so that he could continue with his education but unfortunately this was short lived because of the tragic incidents that followed.

One day as Lauben was cleaning the house, he discovered peculiar items that he identified as “black magic and witchcraft” in the lady’s bedroom. Later in the night when the lady got to know that Lauben had cleaned her bedroom, she called him to the room and instructed him to wash his hands in blood poured in a bowl to which he objected. He was beaten which made him to run away from home in the morning to an aunt’s place who stayed nearby from where he managed to get transport back home.

Four days later, six cars with over 30 armed unknown men including the lady attacked their home and started beating everyone including his mother. He was blindfolded and driven back to Kampala and throughout the entire journey he was severely beaten to a point that he could not walk;

*“I only got to know where I was after two days upon reaching Kampala. I was dumped in an unknown house and to date I still cannot remember the exact house that I was detained in even when I am taken to that particular location.”*

After a few days he was brought to Kabalagala police station and to his dismay found out that his entire family including his mother had been detained. The beating commenced and he was forced to confess and make a statement that he had ran off with 30 million shillings to his village. He was later transferred to Kireka police station where he was beaten daily for four months.

Lauben was referred to the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) as per the recommendation made in court in order to receive treatment. Upon release he was immediately brought to ACTV and he started receiving services. He was given regular facilitation to enable him access the ACTV centre and was also provided with upkeep that enabled him to get some basic requirements like food, beddings and hygienic supplies like basins. Additionally, Lauben received legal services and his case was being followed up at the Uganda Human Rights Commission.

*“The doctor I found at ACTV was so supportive to me; she was there for me as a mother and father which I deeply appreciated because I had lost hope in life and did not know that I would ever walk again”*

Unfortunately, during the course of the treatment he was re-arrested and he spent seven months in prison. Upon his release in 2014 he came back to ACTV to continue with rehabilitation and was in a terrible state;

*“I came back to ACTV in a helpless state, I did not feel my life anymore and I had lost sense and hope in living.”*

His case was keenly followed up at the Uganda Human Rights

Commission by the legal officer and expert evidence was given by the ACTV doctor at the tribunal. This contributed to the court's decision to award Lauben compensation. Lauben experienced two more arrests and subsequent torture experiences in Luzira and Nalufenya prisons. He however disclosed that the torture experienced at Nalufenya prison was what broke him;

*"I will never forget what happened to me in that place, I had been tortured before but the torture I experienced in Nalufenya was so excruciating and painful that it surpassed all the earlier experiences that I had been through. My nails would be out on daily, nails were hammered into my fingers and my toe was cut off."*

Lauben has greatly benefited from the rehabilitation received from ACTV and there is a clear and significant improvement in his life. The pain has greatly subsided, he can now ably walk with no difficulty, freely move his toes and can move longer distances than before. He can sit for more than five hours and can easily swallow food which was not the case before due to the immense pain in his throat. Lauben's case has been finalised at the Uganda Human Rights Commission and has been awarded eight million shillings.

*"From the bottom of my heart I want to thank ACTV for the care, love and support that they have given me and to know that all the services I have received have been free always leaves me speechless because if it was not for the free rehabilitation, I would now be lame."*

Currently Lauben is 26 years old and has ambitious plans for the future. He plans to invest the money that he has been awarded to lay a firm foundation for his future. He has plans to marry and start a family of his own. Lauben is confident

that he is going to make it in life and with a smile on his face concludes;

*“Despite what I have been through, I still have faith that I will make it in life. I feel that I am now a useful member to the community because I can ably do something on my own.”*

MR. ERIDAD MUWONGE	MALE	20	SINGLE	TORTURED IN THE FOREST
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Eridad was self-employed and derived his livelihood from making chapattis and other snacks which he would sell at a school together with some refreshments. He also had a Chapatti stall at home where he would work with his mother to sell his products and through this he was able to look after himself and support his family.

9th August 2017 is a day that Eridad will live to remember, it was around 10am and he was at home with his mother working when two men on a motor bike appeared in his compound.

They had pangas, sticks and these men who were identified as staff of National Forestry Authority accused him of illegally cutting down trees and selling charcoal. He was taken to the bush and severely tortured; he was beaten with a big stick on the hand and it cracked, they kicked him on the head with gumboots, he was also kicked hard in his private parts and whipped numerous times with sticks until he lost consciousness. He doesn't remember what followed after until he woke up in hospital with blood coming out of his body. Eridad was

found half dead lying down with insects coming out of his ears and had a faint heartbeat.

As a result of the torture, Eridad started urinating blood with blood flowing out of his anus. He lost appetite and as result became so weak which led to the collapse of his business. He survived at the mercy of the community who supported him with a few coins. Eridad's mother was deeply saddened by the pathetic situation of her son and what the torture had reduced him to, his sister broke down into tears because to her, Eridad will never be the same again.

*“Before my son was tortured, he was an able, hardworking man who could look after himself and his family but I feel very sad because ever since he was tortured everything has been put on a standstill and he cannot do anything for himself anymore, the hope that I had in him to look after me has gone. I also worry that he may also not be able to give birth. “the mother narrates.*

After the torture Eridad was admitted in hospital within the community but the mother could not afford to effectively nurse him due to the expensive medication. She sought help from the police after which a community member directed her to the Uganda Human Rights Commission who then referred Eridad to ACTV.

Eridad was received at ACTV when he could not walk, he was in so much pain and all he could was cry. He feared being around people especially those that he did not know and he looked at everyone as an enemy. Eridad received medical treatment and mental health services.

The treatment that Eridad received contributed to his recovery



and had a great impact in the restoration of his physical health; he stopped urinating blood, the blood that was oozing from his anus also stopped, his appetite was restored and he can now effectively eat something without throwing up.

Eridad is very optimistic about the future and has high hopes of acquiring a motor bike to boost his income so that he can develop as a person. He has hopes of marrying in the next two years and giving birth to children that he feels he can afford to take care of.

MR. GERALD HABIMANA	MALE	58	MARRIED	TORTURED IN DIFFERENT UNKNOWN PLACES
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Gerald was happily married with seven children; he was a pastor in Burundi with a lot of friends. However, there was a conflict at that time in his country which led to the torture experience that he went through. Gerald was approached by the present government who requested him to join their political party (CNDDFDD) which he declined because he was a pastor and thus wanted no involvement in politics.

During a Sunday service, Gerald was preaching when government police men surrounded the church. The attack proceeded inside the church and the congregation was shot at which shooting claimed the life of his three children. He was arrested with his wife, blindfolded and taken to an unknown place after which he was separated from his wife. During detention, Gerald was subjected to severe torture; stones were tied on genitals and left to hang, he was also subjected to electric shocks, denied food and water, was only allowed access to



maize husks which would in turn cause thirst and yet he was denied water. He was forced to drink the dirty water that had been used by his perpetrators to shower in order to quench the uncontrollable thirst, he was also denied access to toilet facilities and would urinate in bottles, in some instances he was forced to drink his own urine when the thirst was unbearable.

Gerald alongside others that had been captured were locked naked in metal containers and these containers were connected to electricity therefore they could not sleep or stand due to the fear of the electric shocks. They would also be rolled in mud which was mainly done during rainy days, they were forced to look in a basin of water for long hours which was infected with a chemical that would cause a severe irritation in the eyes. Gerald was tortured in different places and spent three months in detention.

*“All I can remember is that I kept being moved from one place to another, I was tortured in very many places that I even lost count. The pain was too much and unbearable that I prayed for death so that I can get relief.”*

The torture experience that Gerald was subjected to did not leave him the same; he developed a severe backache, his vertebra column was affected which caused a swelling on his back. He was passing blood in his urine, could not bend easily and could not sleep on his back or side, his eye sight was greatly affected and had to adopt spectacles to date. As a result of the experience, Gerald would always have constant and consistent flashbacks of the shooting in the church that killed his children.

Gerald was referred to ACTV by Refugee Law Project in 2016; he received medical and mental health services. At the time Gerald

was having sleepless nights, he could not sleep however much he wanted to, he was having flashbacks and would have hallucinations of policemen chasing him. He was uncomfortable and hated the sight of policemen, the sight of them would trigger flashbacks.

*“I hated men in uniform whether it was a security guard, army or police man and however much I was in another country; to me they were all the same.”*

Gerald attended ten sessions with the clinical psychologist who walked with him through his fears. He has now reached a point where he has come to accept security personnel as members of the community, the flashbacks have ceased and he can now even greet some security personnel when he comes across them. He has opened up a church in his community and police officers are part of the congregation. Gerald is deeply grateful for the services that he has received at ACTV.

*“I was happy and felt at home because I was welcomed warmly by the ACTV team and that alone gave me some sense of peace, I would also like to appreciate my counsellor who has worked and walked this journey with me.”*

Gerald is currently living with his wife and children in Uganda and earns a living through farming for people so that he is able to take care of his family and support his children to complete their education. He has also opened up a church in his community and has hopes of it growing so that he can preach the gospel far and wide. He has applied for resettlement to a third country and is hopeful that he will be resettled.

**MS. JAMILA  
NANDAWULA**

**FEMALE**

**06**

**CHILD**

**TORTURED AT  
HOME**

Jamila was a happy and normal child who was staying with her grandmother. She was attending nursery school in baby class and according to her teachers was doing well in class. She was the best in writing in her class, fluent in orals and a social girl who interacted well with her friends.

During the first term holiday, Jamila's grandmother had gone to the garden and was going about her daily farming when she saw a crying and frantic Jamila running towards her. Her hands were on fire tied with banana fibres and this had been done by a very close relative. After inquiring why it had happened she was informed that Jamila had stolen soup, "mukene", and that is why she was being punished. Jamila's grandmother could not afford to take her to the hospital and was applying local herbs to the wounds. However, Jamila's state was worrying, her fingers were swollen and barely recognisable. A concerned neighbour offered to take care of Jamila and took her to Kiboga government hospital where she received first aid. Jamila's situation also attracted the attention of the village chairperson and the children's' welfare officer who ensured that the perpetrator was arrested.

As a result of the torture, Jamila missed her second term when school resumed which affected her performance because she was left behind in the curriculum. She could not fold her fingers, could not hold an object which was another setback because she could not hold a pencil to write. The trauma of the incident was very vivid as her teachers observed that she had become very timid, had a lot of fear which would in some situations escalate to tremendous

trembling and shaking when asked a question in class.

Jamila's class teacher; *"Jamila would not respond when she was asked questions in class even if she knew the answers she would just keep quiet and when she would repeatedly be asked she would start shaking because I think she felt a lot of pressure."*

ACTV heard about Jamila's case in the media, the team looked for her and found her in Kiboga government hospital. The caretaker revealed that she was alarmed and suspicious of the team since they were strangers but Jamila's worrying state prompted her to give them audience. Procedures were followed, the police were alerted and Jamila was admitted by ACTV.

*"When I was approached, I was scared, and very suspicious because I did not know these people. But when I looked at Jamila and saw the bad state that she was in, I made a decision to accept the help that was being rendered to us."*

Jamila was referred to CoRSU children's hospital where she received surgery on her fingers. She was closely monitored for a month after the surgery and while in hospital ACTV availed both Jamila and her caretaker with client assistance like food and other basic requirements to facilitate their stay in the hospital.

When Jamila was discharged, a local health centre within her community was identified by the team and Jamila continued receiving treatment from there with all bills catered for by ACTV.

The significant impact of the treatment is visible by just looking at Jamila; her hands have completely healed and they are now flexible. Both the care taker and the grandmother are still overwhelmed by the immense improvement of Jamila as quoted by the caretaker;

*“By the time ACTV found us Jamila was going to lose her fingers, I could see her finger bones when the plasters were removed. But what ACTV did for our girl, to date I am still speechless and it is a story I will forever tell because if it was not for the treatment that she received, Jamila would not be having fingers.”*

Additionally, according to her teachers, Jamila’s confidence has been boosted, she can write for longer hours and has struggled to maintain her position in class. She is also more outgoing and ever since her recovery she is no longer withdrawn and freely narrates her story to her friend. This reflects a steady progress towards recovery.

Jamila has graduated to primary one and has been awarded a gift from the school for being the humblest pupil. She is still staying with her grandmother who is very positive about Jamila’s future even though she is struggling to look after her with no support from both parents.

<b>MR. CHARLES LUBEGA</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>DIVORSED</b>	<b>TORTURED ON THE LAKE</b>
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Charles was a married business man with six children who owned a retail shop on Buvuma Island. He was also a fisherman with two fishing boats, these all were geared towards the well-being of his family.

On 26th August 2012, as Charles was travelling back to the island with his two friends in a fishing boat, their journey was intercepted by the army. At the time there was an operation by

the army for illegal fishing and Lake Victoria was under surveillance. The two friends were arrested and transferred to the police boat, however, Charles resisted the arrest. As a result, he was severely beaten with sticks, punched on the head until he could no longer fight and it is at this point that he was dumped into the police boat alongside his other two friends.

He was tied in a position of 'three piece' with a rope and was subjected to this position for the entire night, a chemical was poured on his private parts and the pain it caused was so severe that he could hear them bursting, he was constantly poked with sticks in his private parts and when he was finally untied the following morning, pus was oozing out of his private parts. He was detained for four days and during this time he would be taken to a local clinic however there was no change and instead his situation became worse.

*"I tried so hard to fight during the torture until I gave up because the pain was too much, I surrendered and got ready to die because I did not see myself coming from this alive."*

The torture affected him immensely; he developed severe back, chest pain and was urinating blood. His head always felt like it was on fire and when he tried to look for relief, he was given Chinese medication which caused pus to burst out of his ears and nose *"I felt like my head was on fire, I had burning sensations all over my face, in my nose, ears and mouth. The feeling was unbearable."* As a result of the torture experience Charles also lost all his property following his long absence from home while he was away receiving treatment. *"When I went back to the village I found when all my property had been destroyed, I started begging from people who used to beg from me. I felt so helpless and I withdrew from the community, I would not talk to anyone and I would close myself in my house for an entire day."*



Charles was referred to ACTV by the Uganda Human Rights Commission and he could barely walk when he was received at the centre. He was admitted and offered a comprehensive package of medical treatment. He was referred to Kadic (now UMC Victoria) hospital where he was admitted for two weeks. While there, he was given client assistance to ensure that all his basic needs were attended to during his admission. After his discharge Charles was reviewed for six months until he completely healed.

Charles acknowledged that the treatment he received brought him relief which was felt through the significant reduction of the body pains that he had. Additionally, Charles has been trained as a peer supporter worker which has greatly boosted his confidence and self-esteem.

*“I thank God for ACTV because they have worked hard to ensure that I regain my dignity and self-worth as a man. I am now more confident because I also feel like I can help someone out there who may have gone through what I did because I have been trained.”*

Currently Charles is farmer and has a plantation of coffee, however he also wants to resume his former business by utilising his earnings. He has high hopes that the business will effectively educate his children which will fulfill his life dreams of having educated children in his family.

*“I also want to have educated children in my family so that in future they can also competently serve in an organisation like ACTV”*



<b>CLAUDE AND SHANTAL</b>	<b>COUPLE</b>	<b>CLAUDE – 27 SHANTAL - 25</b>	<b>INTERVENTION</b> ➤ Couple Therapy ➤ Medical and mental health services	<b>TORTURED IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.</b>
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Claude and Shantal had been married for one and half years with a beautiful baby girl. They were living in the homestead of Claude's father who owned a farm of cows.

One ill-fated night Claude's fathers' homestead was attacked and they were ambushed by government soldiers who shot dead the foreman of the farm. After hearing the scuffle Claude and his father tried to run towards the rescue of other occupants of the farm and in the process his father was shot. The soldiers then turned towards Claude and started chasing him, he tried to escape but fell down hard on his left side, damaged his eye which started bleeding profusely and he could not stand up. When the attack subsided, Claude made his way back to the farm and on his way found when his father had been cut into pieces and was lying lifeless with his intestines out of his body.

He proceeded home and found that both his and the father's house had been broken into by the soldiers and his wife and mother were missing. He took refuge at a friend's house nearby and informed them of the death of his father and when the friend returned to the scene to trace for the body, he found that his mother had also been killed.

During the attack, Shantal, her four months' old baby and Claude's little sister escaped through a window upon hearing the frightening screams. Unfortunately, during the process, her baby cried which drew the soldiers' attention to her. They were found and she was raped, she tried to fight and was stabbed in

the process which left her unconscious. She later awoke with profuse bleeding in her vagina.

Claude and Shantal re-united in Uganda in 2016 and this happened through Facebook on social media. Claude escaped to Uganda and upon reaching took refuge in a saloon which was owned by a Kenyan that warmly welcomed and accommodated him. The saloon had Congolese clients so Claude took the opportunity to learn how to shave hair. One day as he was shaving a client, they took a photo together and the client posted it on Facebook, it was through this platform that Shantal was able to find about the whereabouts of her husband, she initiated communication and together they agreed that Shantal should join her husband in Uganda.

However, the unfortunate incidents that had happened in the lives of these two young people did not leave the couple the same. The couple lacked trust and respect for each other; alarmingly Claude had visible contempt for his wife. This was as a result of the secrets that Shantal had not disclosed to the husband upon reaching Uganda. While still in Congo, their baby girl passed away and also on her way to Uganda Shantal was raped again and she conceived. She did not disclose this to her husband at first and finally when he found out Claude could not even stand the sight of his wife. The overwhelming feelings that erupted within Claude affected his state of mental wellbeing that later led to his admission in Butabika hospital. On the other hand, Shantal was also deeply affected by the feelings of guilty as a result of the secrets and she stated that she did not disclose to Claude because she was ashamed and feared rejection from her husband. As a result of all these incidents, the couple had a lot of misunderstandings and did not seem to agree on anything.

**Claude;** *“When I got to know about the pregnancy plus the death of my child, I felt an overwhelming sense of emptiness within me, I felt*

*betrayed by my wife and I developed deep anger towards her. I could not stand looking at her and I did not even want to sleep with her because I was disgusted however much she always tried to initiate intimacy.”*

**Shantal;** *“I did not tell Claude about the pregnancy because it was as a result of rape and I also did not tell him about the death of our child because I was scared about his reaction after he found out.*

Claude was referred to ACTV by HIAS and Shantal got to know about ACTV through her husband. The couple received medical services for the physical pains and Claude received eight sessions of the mental health services after which he was referred to the social work unit where they were met as a couple under the couple therapy. The social worker worked together with the couple towards self-acceptance of what had happened in their lives and introduced them to social support groups from which they received social support from the group members who shared their experiences with them, she further linked Claude to a barber shop where he currently works and they learnt other survival skills. They also made savings in the group which enabled Shantal to begin a small children’s shoe business. Together they walked down this journey and found effective and positive mechanisms of coping with the unfortunate life events which has eventually contributed to both their recovery as individuals but also as a couple.

The couple therapy has had a great impact on their lives; the couple has now worked through their differences, they have worked towards self-acceptance and this had boosted their esteem together as a couple, Shantal testified that her husband has greatly changed in so many ways ranging from the way he initially used to look at her to the things he used to do for the family. He has now also started buying clothes for

the child that he once despised.

Currently the couple is living amicably and they have two children; Claude is a barber in a saloon and Shantal sings in a choir. The couple was placed in the same social support group by the ACTV social worker and they are grateful for this because it has given them a platform to save effectively as a family. Despite the social challenges that they are still facing, Claude is hopeful and continuously prays to God to enable him raise and educate their children. Shantal also plans to work hard so that she can support her husband to ably look after their children so that they are able to live productive lives.

### **UNION UMOJA SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP.**

The Union Umoja group is composed of ten members who are refugees from Congo and Burundi. The group would meet after every fortnight on Friday to conduct Village savings and Loans Scheme activity, and share experiences to learn from. The group began in 2017 and has been adjourned in 2018. The main objectives of the group were;

- ▶ To provide emotional support and coping mechanisms to those who are undergoing a difficult time in their lives, and are willing to be part of a support group.
- ▶ To help clients regain control of their life by increasing members' feelings of personal empowerment and mastery in various aspects of their lives with knowledge and skills to live a positive and productive life.
- ▶ To provide information for its members so that they can understand the torture they underwent and the pains they are

going through.

- ▶ To promote group problem solving strategies.
- ▶ To promote an improved social connection among the group members for better social support.
- ▶ To empower members with knowledge and skills to become self-reliant and productive in society.
- ▶ To share information around treatment, care and healing.

The group members pointed out that before joining this group, life as urban refugees was not easy and was characterized by vast suffering. They expressed that they had a lot of fear about the future, anxiety, stress that is associated with living in a foreign country, were oblivious about life and others were still battling with the trauma from their torture experiences.

The group registered successes and the members were happy and fulfilled with the outcome. They expressed that their hope in life was restored, the group united them and now they are a family because the group provided a platform for them to know each other and the group also enabled them to get small loans which boosted most of them to start their own businesses, the group further provided a platform for them to share about their life experiences and this made them stronger together.

## CONCLUSION

The PPTA 2012 criminalizes the violation of the Right to Freedom from Torture and Cruel, Inhumane, Degrading Treatment or Punishment by punishing either a public official or any other person acting in private capacity. Ugandan law allows an anonymous report of torture and the use of electronic communications as a mode of reporting the crime. Besides, amnesty to any person 'accused' of the crime is denied. The duty a rights holder holds is in reporting the crime or violation to relevant authority.

In conclusion, in order to realize the effective implementation of this law in Uganda, the Human Rights Based Approach principles of Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment and Legality in implementing laws need to be utilized not only in law enforcement but also in capacity building of state and non-state actors besides awareness creation in the communities. Great thanks to our development partners, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) for its technical and financial support.

**For more information, please find us at**

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