

Center for the Victims of Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.cvt.org/where-we-work/past-projects/guinea>

Campaign and Advocacy

CVT's first international project providing direct mental health services to survivors of torture and war trauma began in Guinea. Working in four refugee camps in that country, CVT provided mental health services to adult and child refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. These refugees endured some of the most horrific and violent atrocities in human history.

There were 20,000 refugees in the Albadaria region of Guinea, nearly all survivors of torture and war-related trauma. The model created by CVT's Guinea team continues to provide the framework for all our direct [mental health service initiatives overseas](#).



The enormity of the trauma among refugees meant individual psychotherapy could not be the primary approach. So we used a combination of group counseling, community empowerment, and training of community and religious leaders, teachers and health care workers. We also trained and supervised Sierra Leonian and Liberian paraprofessional mental health counselors so they could serve their compatriots and develop into a permanent human resource both in the camps and when they returned to their home country.

CVT closely monitored and evaluated our work. After receiving services from CVT, survivors showed significant improvements in mental health, including lower levels of anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, and increased social support.

We provided care to over 4,500 torture and war-trauma survivors, and 15,000 other refugees received supportive services.

CVT closed operations in Guinea in 2005 after successfully establishing community mental health services in [Sierra Leone](#) in 2001 and [Liberia](#) in 2005 following the return of refugees to their home countries.

In March 2005, CVT held a closing ceremony in the refugee camps in Guinea.

As part of the ceremony, CVT staff marched through the camps inviting anyone who felt that he or she had benefited from CVT's services to join in. Hundreds of men, women, teenagers and children ran to join the march. Together, a massive crowd of united survivors of torture and war reached the area of the camp where a Speak-Out was scheduled. For several hours, person after person of all ages, both genders and diverse ethnic backgrounds spoke to a large gathering of community members. They shared what CVT's services meant to them and about their own experiences of trauma and recovery. These brave souls overcame feelings of shame, isolation and stigmatization in order to speak their truths.

In doing so, they discovered they were not alone, but were among the thousands of survivors of torture and war all over the world who are working to rebuild their lives and communities.

Primary funding for CVT Guinea came from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

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We **advocate** for the protection & care of torture survivors and an end to torture.

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