

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/blog/healing-and-human-rights/clients-gain-and-i%E2%80%99m-gaining-too>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Geoffrey Samal is a counseling supervisor at CVT Kalobeyei.

In my work with clients, I follow their progress from the time they first come to us for an intake meeting, through their counseling sessions, and then through follow-up sessions. And when I follow up, I see that they are still being assisted. Its remarkable. One client said to me, If you see me today, and see a smile on my face, know it wasnt there at intake.

Words like these are very meaningful to me. Before I joined CVT, I worked as a counselor in business settings and governmental organizations. I had the opportunity to work with refugees in several roles, and I came to understand their needs and challenges. When I came to CVT, I began to focus on care for survivors of torture, and I learned about the reasons they fled from home and then what they face as part of life in the camp here in Kalobeyei. It made a difference to me to hear from survivors themselves each individuals story is unique. And I get the chance to help.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to stop meeting with clients in person. However we have reached out via phone to make sure clients are able to continue with care.

Photo: sign at the CVT Kalobeyei healing center.

I always wanted to be able to offer service to people in need. I had a habit to look at advertisements for open positions at NGOs which were helping refugees, and when I found CVT, I was very interested. Here, its different from the care at other NGOs. At CVT, we give service to torture survivors, not to those who have experienced various forms of trauma. Trauma is very difficult for people, but torture has its own category. It didnt take long to learn this when I came to CVT, and it didnt take long to see what a difference the support brings to survivors. I see them begin to feel that they fit into the community again.



In order to spread the word about our work, part of my role as a counseling supervisor is to do sensitization in the refugee and host communities. Through sensitization sessions, people learn what we do at CVT, and they get basic information about mental health, suicide awareness and the impacts of torture. When they are interested and come to CVT, we conduct an intake session. In this session, we let them know we extend psychosocial support for torture and war trauma.

When the people join the program, I then support the counseling team and help facilitate group counseling sessions and do individual counseling. In addition, we do the follow-up sessions and hold special events to commemorate World Mental Health Day and 26 June, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Now that we are dealing with the pandemic, many of these activities are done remotely or with distance. In one way or another, we are always working to help people understand what they are feeling and know that they can get help.

The work is very rewarding. I remember a client I met last year the first time we met, I shared with her the CVT message and did an intake assessment at our center. When the 10-week group counseling sessions began, she attended, but I noticed that she was not opening up with the others. She was keeping everything to herself. I could see fear in her face. She always complained of pain in her back and legs, and she could not walk or sit for long.

But she kept coming to the group. As we went through Session 6, having talked about safety, stabilization and the opportunity to narrate some of her experiences, she started opening up. Each client is important to me. I follow the cases; I watch the progress. And this is where I see the transformative effect on clients from the time they come in for intake through the last Session 10 when we say goodbye, there is such a change. In Session 10, we usually share what we got out of the sessions, what changed. She said, For me, missing a session was a big loss to me. I could not miss any; I did all 10. She was able to gain so much. She came out from the sessions a strong woman with a smile on her face.

Seeing clients transform, seeing that change in their lives, is very meaningful. When we work with someone from the intake through the full group cycle, that positive change, that transformation of life is the most important thing I do. This gives me compassion, supporting someone and seeing the transformation.

I find many aspects of my work rewarding, including having the opportunity for professional development in my field. With this work, Ive gained a lot professionally, building upon everything I learned in college. And I appreciate the contribution of team building we get training as a team on many clinical topics. I feel a lot of hope at CVT, with my own personal growth, professional growth, and also in

transforming the lives of clients. For that I say clients gain and Im gaining, too.



Funding provided by the United States Government.

We **heal victims** of torture through unique services and professional care worldwide.

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

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