

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/news-events/press-releases/cvt-offering-healing-care-south-sudanese-trauma-and-torture-survivors>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

ST. PAUL, Minn. The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) is now extending rehabilitative care to South Sudanese refugee trauma and torture survivors in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement of Uganda.

CVT's new healing initiative in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement joins the organizations existing initiative in Gulu, northern Uganda, serving victims of the Lords Resistance Army, where CVT has operated since 2009.

To most effectively serve vulnerable refugees in the settlement who are struggling with torture or trauma, CVT is now offering both psychological first aid to those in need of immediate stabilization and 10-week group counseling sessions for adults who would benefit from longer-term mental health care. CVT will also eventually incorporate basic physiotherapy along with mental health care in Bidi Bidi to assist clients with pain management and physical coping skills.

We just wrapped up the first group counseling cycle in Bidi Bidi and the excitement of the clinical staff is palpable. In session 10, the clients reported significant improvement in their symptoms, functioning, relationships and overall well-being. The clients were so appreciative of being treated with dignity and given the skills to help themselves and their families. Many had been isolated previously and the support of the group meant a lot to them, said Veronica Laveta, international services clinical advisor for mental health.

Clients and potential clients are identified through community sensitization efforts in the Bidi Bidi settlement which increase awareness of CVT's services, making it possible for women and men who have survived trauma to find the help they need to begin healing. In addition, CVT's clinical staff have trained members of the refugee and host communities in torture and trauma awareness, increasing referrals to CVT.

In tandem with rehabilitative care extended to clients, CVT also offers staff care workshops for humanitarian workers in the Bidi Bidi settlement, to improve and maintain staff effectiveness and decrease risk of burnout and secondary traumatization.

The refugee crisis is felt in only a few places on earth as acutely as in Uganda, a country which hosts more than one million refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, said Curt Goering, CVT's executive director. It is because of the tremendous need for healing care among those who have survived unspeakable trauma that CVT is now operating in the Bidi Bidi settlement. CVT is on the ground in Bidi Bidi because the refugee crisis is a torture crisis, and our mission is to heal the wounds of torture.

CVT's Bidi Bidi staff includes psychosocial counselors, counseling supervisors, psychotherapist/trainers, and support and administrative staff.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org

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