

The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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Restoring Hope and Childhoods

Ahmad, an 11-year-old Syrian boy, was having a hard time managing his anger. In Syria, he had survived a grenade attack when he was mistaken for a soldier. His family sought safety in Amman, Jordan, but life was still not peaceful. Ahmad had violent outbursts. He was aggressive and hit his siblings. He had internalized the violence from his experiences in Syria into his own young body.

Increasingly, our staff in Jordan is seeing children and young people like Ahmad who need mental health and physical therapy care to cope with their traumatic experiences. Now, more than a third of our clients in Jordan are under the age of 18. Syrian adults report that the well-being and potential of their children constitute their greatest source of stress. Parents worry constantly about what their children have seen and experienced.

Children like Ahmad have survived targeted torture and random violence. Family members have been

abducted or killed. Boys and girls as young as nine have been raped. These children and young people now struggle with debilitating nightmares, fear and anxiety.

Few children are able to attend school because of safety concerns or family obligations. Those who attend school may be marginalized by teachers. They may be bullied — or become bullies themselves. Syrian children also often express overwhelming responsibility for protecting their family. While still young, they may stand guard at apartment doors or resist sharing their feelings with their parents.

To help heal these young survivors, the counseling and physical therapy staff developed ten-week joint physical therapy/counseling groups that provide age-appropriate activities. “Young children can’t verbally express themselves very well. They don’t have the vocabulary to explain their feelings,” said Veronica Laveta, clinical advisor. “And they typically don’t have the ability to sit still for long periods of time, so the combined groups address both physical and emotional concerns.”



After receiving care from CVT, survivors report increased hope, better coping skills and improved relationships.

PHOTO © CVT

“On the counseling side, we’re helping the children understand that their feelings of anger and sadness are normal,” said Veronica. “Then they are learning to identify those feelings in themselves and find appropriate ways to express those feelings.”

“We have many fun activities that reinforce the counseling,” said MaryAnn de Ruiter, physical
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● Client’s name has been changed to protect his identity.

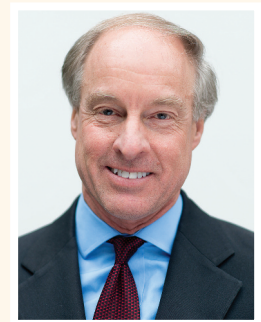
Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

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Letter from the Executive Director

Earlier this fall, our two training projects, Partners in Trauma Healing (PATH) and the National Capacity Building (NCB) project, both hosted training conferences. While our healing and advocacy work often headlines our news, our training work is essential to sharing what we've learned and building the torture survivor rehabilitation movement worldwide.



Curt Goering

Through PATH and NCB, we're strengthening torture survivor centers with in-depth skills training and tools to expand treatment to survivors. This allows even more torture survivors to receive the high quality healing care they so desperately need.

Job Onyango, who is profiled in this issue of Storycloth, was part of a previous training project in eastern and central Africa. Through this project, he developed his counseling skills and now will be training new counselors at our Ethiopia project.

At the NCB institute in St. Louis, therapists deepened their understanding of complex trauma in torture survivors. Complex trauma can be thought of as layered and prolonged trauma resulting from a series of events such as exposure to violence, separation from family members and revictimization. It can result in the disruption of a child's development and attachment to others, and lead to serious mental health problems.

As you'll read in the lead article, nearly 40% of our clients in Jordan are under 18. The vast majority of these boys and girls have experienced ongoing trauma that can lead to complex trauma. They have endured torture, witnessed horrific violence (including torture and deaths of family members), and suffered from the destruction of their homes and forced relocation during their most formative years.

In the coming year we'll help more than 2,000 survivors, including children and their parents, rebuild their lives and restore their hope. Support from individual donors is a key component of all our healing projects, and as you consider your year-end charitable giving, I hope you'll help these survivors reclaim their lives. Whether you use the enclosed envelope or respond to a separate mailing, please help with a contribution and please give as generously as you possibly can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering".

Curt Goering
Executive Director

Clinical Advisors Amber E. Gray, David Gangsei, and Veronica Laveta welcomed participants to the Partners in Trauma Healing conference in Cambodia in September.



PHOTO © EDIE LEWISON

Restoring Hope and Childhoods

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therapy advisor. “But physical therapy itself promotes healing through greater body awareness. The children learn how to use their bodies to interact more positively with peers or improve their self-confidence.”

During a typical meeting, leaders discuss an emotion such as anger, fear or sadness. Then, through a story or role-play, the children learn healthy ways to manage their emotions.

“Trauma happens just as intensely in the mind through thoughts as it does in the body through physical reactions,” said Ilona Fricker, physiotherapist/trainer. “We teach children to recognize that when they feel sad that it’s not just in their minds, but also in their bodies. Their posture changes. Their heads hang low. They walk slowly. During the groups, we talk about sadness and act it out. Then we talk about happiness and act that out. Finally, we teach them how they can use their bodies to make themselves feel better. For example, lifting your head up and straightening your back will stimulate positive emotions when you’re feeling bad.”

One favorite activity is “Kings and Queens.” One at a time, each child walks into the room wearing a crown and sits in a chair decorated

as a throne. The other children then compliment the king or queen. The activity teaches the children how to carry themselves and to recognize feelings of pride and confidence.

The children learn other simple techniques to help them manage their feelings, such as focused breathing, counting, self-talk, guided imagery, singing and dancing. When practiced in the group and then at home, children do a better job managing their fears and anger.

Parent Education

Because of the nature of the Syrian conflict, many families are fragmented. Frequently, mothers are left to parent and provide for their children alone, while also dealing with their own grief and trauma. For parents and children alike, managing emotions is extremely difficult.

Through education groups, parents learn about typical child development issues, as well as common behaviors of children who have experienced trauma. The classes also provide suggestions to help both parents and children heal from their experiences, such as alternatives to physical discipline, speaking quietly, relaxation techniques, soothing rituals and having



Parents are very worried about their children. Young children have a much harder time regulating anxiety, fear and anger.

PHOTO © CVT

physical exercise. Parents also learn the physical therapy techniques their children are learning so they can do them together to strengthen the family bonds.

“Both the parent education groups and the child physical therapy/ counseling groups have been helpful in bringing a little peace to Syrian families,” said Veronica. “With more peaceful homes, these children have more hope for healthy, productive lives.”

After Ahmad’s group ended, his mother reported to CVT staff how much he had improved. Ahmad taught his mother breathing exercises and they now practice breathing together. Instead of hitting his siblings when he gets angry, he puts on the radio and dances. “He has changed and is almost back to normal before the war,” she said.

CVT’s activities in Jordan are financed by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and the support of the American People through USAID.

“My children have been psychologically very affected [by the war] — they are anxious, scared and feel like there is no safe place. I came to CVT to get help for my children. I have one daughter who is a client, but I wish all of my children could meet with CVT and benefit from their services.”

— Syrian torture survivor and father of seven daughters



Job Onyango: From Kenya to Ethiopia

Earlier this fall CVT employee Job Onyango relocated from Nairobi, Kenya, to Shire, Ethiopia. He's the newest expatriate psychotherapist trainer at our Ethiopia project, but he has a long history with CVT.

A Kenyan citizen, Job worked for several nongovernmental organizations in AIDS/HIV work before joining the Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU) as a consulting counselor. At IMLU, he was introduced to CVT and torture rehabilitation. IMLU documents torture and provides access to counseling and was a partner in one of CVT's training projects.

"At IMLU, I got training on

working with torture survivors, and my interest in the work deepened," said Job. "I decided to focus my work on the torture and trauma field and saw CVT as the experts. So when CVT Nairobi opened, I joined the team."

As a psychosocial counselor (PSC), Job continued his training, eventually leading counseling groups. When there was an opening for a psychotherapist/trainer at our Ethiopia project this summer, Job applied and beat out the competition for the position. Job is now working as a psychotherapist/trainer. In this new role, he's training and supervising PSCs and providing individual

counseling to the most traumatized survivors.

Job embodies CVT's goal of hiring and training local counselors as a way of building a local infrastructure for healing torture survivors. "I'm excited to have this opportunity," said Job. "It's an honor to be part of the team and see people who have lost hope and dignity be transformed. That gives me the passion and drive to continue working with victims of torture and trauma."



Job Onyango

PHOTO © C.C. STROM

Year-End Gifts Bring Hope and Healing

As we near the end of the year, we find that many of our donors choose this time to make their tax-deductible contributions to support CVT's work. These year-end gifts are particularly important in allowing us to care for survivors of torture and war atrocities and to drive our advocacy to end torture. Gifts that we receive before December 31 will also help us more effectively plan and allocate our resources for 2015.

If you have yet to send a gift to CVT this year, please do so now. Or, if you've already supported us, but can make an additional tax-deductible donation, we will be particularly grateful. Your annual support is an inspiration to us — and gives hope to survivors around the

world.

Once again, you have the opportunity to make a Gift of Hope as a holiday gift. Your friends and family members will appreciate knowing that a survivor's life is being restored in their names. With each Gift of Hope you send, we'll send you cards you can use to announce your thoughtful gifts.

Thank you for your ongoing generosity and commitment to helping torture survivors around the world. Please make your tax-deductible gift by check, credit card or online at www.cvt.org by December 31, 2014. If you'd like to discuss a gift of stock or a bequest gift, contact Michelle at 1-877-265-8775 (toll-free) or at mwoster@cvt.org.

Make a Difference in the Life of a Survivor

Your generous support brings healing to torture survivors worldwide. CVT welcomes all types of donations.

- **Monthly Sustainers** allow for ongoing planning and delivery of healing services.
- **Planned Giving** continues your legacy of support.
- **Gifts of Stock** support survivors while offering tax benefits to donors.
- **In-Kind Donations** of specific items improve the lives of survivors.
- **Tribute Gifts** celebrate events or memorialize loved ones.

Donate online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 649 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



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