

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/what-we-do/survivor-stories/fevens-story>

Campaign and Advocacy

The girl with the bright eyes. She was barely 12 years old. A child alone in the refugee camp.

She was the smallest in the group of female minors attending one of CVT's group counseling sessions for Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. She was hesitant to speak or participate in the initial group activities. She dressed in old, dirty clothes, her hair was unkempt and her skin was very dry.

At first, the other girls in the group would not call her by name and instead just referred to her as So and So. Because of this, CVT counselors paired her with the most vocal and active girl in the group. This is when things began to change. The vocal girl told the group they needed to start calling this little one by her name. The small girl with the bright eyes stood up and said My name is Feven. Call me by my name.

During the next session, Feven* turned up in clean clothes with her hair done. The counselors could not tell it was the same girl. They learned that as an unaccompanied minor, she had been living with distant relatives in the camp who were mistreating her and making her their babysitter.

The other girls in the session lived together as unaccompanied minors in a group home. When Feven shared her problems with them, they invited her to stay with them. They shared the food and clothes that they had. Feven's life changed completely because these children came together to do something for her.

One month after the group sessions ended, Feven returned with a friend to CVT's healing center to check on the tree the group planted at the end of the sessions. She said she brought her friend to see CVT's healing center, where she got her strength back.

*Name and some details have been changed to protect anonymity.

CVT's work with Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

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