



International Capacity-Building Workshop for Human Rights Defenders and Clinicians (Forensic Doctors and Psychologists/Psychiatrists) on Techniques for Collecting Physical and Psychological Evidence of Torture

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Center project is to organize a capacity-building workshop for human rights defenders and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) on techniques for collecting physical and psychological evidence of torture cases; techniques for monitoring, documenting, reporting and redressing cases of torture; and the modalities for referring cases to international mechanisms for the fight against torture. Workshop participants are trained in monitoring, documentation, reporting, and prosecution, as well as techniques to collect physical and psychological evidence in torture cases to enable them to fully understand the value of these techniques.

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to contribute to the improvement of the performance of human rights defenders and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) on techniques for collecting physical and psychological evidence of torture cases; techniques for monitoring, documenting, reporting, and redressing cases of torture, and the modalities for referring cases to international mechanisms for the fight against torture.

In order to achieve this objective, an international capacity-building workshop for human rights defenders, judges, lawyers, elements of the defense, security forces, and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) on techniques for collecting physical and psychological evidence of torture cases; techniques for monitoring, documenting, reporting, and redressing cases of torture; and the modalities for referring cases to international mechanisms for combating torture was organized in Yaoundé-Cameroon.

OBJECTIVES

This Project's Goal:

Contribute to the improvement of the performance of human rights defenders and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) on techniques for collecting physical and psychological evidence of torture cases; techniques for monitoring, documenting, reporting, and redressing cases of torture; and the modalities for referring cases to international mechanisms against torture.

This Project's Objectives:

SO1: Strengthen the capacity of human rights actors to monitor, document, report, and prosecute acts of torture, as well as efforts to provide redress to victims.

SO2: Strengthen the skills of clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) in the techniques of collecting physical and psychological evidence and providing adequate support to victims of torture cases.

SO3: Provide human rights organizations and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists) with a clear understanding of the legal provisions contained in the international legal instruments on human rights and specifically on torture, ratified by Cameroon; the need to prevent acts of torture; and the assistance of victims of torture in the reparation process.

METHODOLOGY

This training was given by a team of national and international experts, including members of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, through several PowerPoint presentations, each followed by a phase of exchanges and discussions for a more in-depth understanding. Group work was organized on specific aspects requiring sustained reflection in small committees. For optimal transmission of essential knowledge, the following andragogical methodologies were used:

- o A theoretical presentation session;
- o Practical case studies to understand the reality of the situation;
- o Group work followed by a plenary session to allow for interaction of the different experiences; and
- o An evaluation of the participants' knowledge of the theme before and at the end of the training session as well as a knowledge validation test at the end of the training session.

GLIMPSE OF THE WORKSHOP



RESULTS/INDICATIONS

Indicators:

35 people, including human rights defenders, members of the defense and security forces, lawyers, journalists and clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists from credible medical facilities), working in the areas targeted by the project were trained in how to refer cases to international anti-torture mechanisms during a 2-day workshop held in Yaoundé.

More specifically:

- o 15 representatives of some of the most credible human rights organizations operating in the field of torture in Cameroon now have the technical capacity to monitor, document, report, and prosecute acts of torture.
- o 20 people have been trained and are now operational in monitoring, documenting, and reporting cases of torture, and in assisting victims to obtain compensation for the harm they have suffered.
- o 15 clinicians from national medical structures are trained in techniques for collecting physical and psychological evidence of cases of torture.
- o 15 clinicians are trained to document evidence of torture.
- o 18 people are trained to implement a centralized structure to combat torture.

Products:

- o 1 bilingual guide to intervention in places of deprivation of liberty (French and English).
- o 1 collective of civil society organizations against torture, composed of organizations working in the field of torture, possessing the technical and institutional capacity to become operational and carry out its mission in accordance with international standards.
- o 1 centralization structure is operational in Yaoundé, with coordination structures in the other regions of the country.
- o 1 pool of clinicians (forensic doctors and psychologists/psychiatrists), specialized in the collection of physical and psychological evidence in cases of torture, is available to assist victims of torture before national, regional, and international reparation mechanisms.

FUTURE PROJECTION

The sustainability of this project is based on a plurality of complementary pillars, the synergy of which will ensure continuity of the main achievements:

- **Capacity-building of various parties:** The various capacity-building actions are focused on the primary beneficiaries in a manner that allows a multiplication of skills among these main parties.
- **Involvement of administrative authorities:** These authorities were involved throughout the process and made a commitment to include such activities in their action plans to ensure their promotion and, by extension, their continuity.
- **Collaboration with other structures specializing in human rights issues:** Mandela Center International already collaborates with certain organizations specializing in human rights

- The activities that were carried out consisted of setting up and strengthening community structures with a view to sustaining the achievements. The progressive transfer of skills to these structures was permanent during the implementation of this project.

- The awareness materials produced as part of this project are made available to community structures and municipalities for the continuity of actions to raise awareness about torture.

- Meetings to share experiences on locally developed sustainability mechanisms and their effectiveness were organized to facilitate mutual learning.

- Reports of trainings and other organized activities were given to the involved parties for later use as sources of inspiration and reminders.

CONCLUSION

This workshop greatly met participants' expectations. Some of them had four main concerns: knowledge of human rights, mastery of techniques for documenting cases of torture, the Istanbul Protocol (new version of July 2022), and the procedures for referring cases to international mechanisms for combating torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, or punishment. The participation of the consultants was just as active and welcomed by the participants. This augurs a better future in the field of prevention and repression of acts of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, or punishment in Cameroon, especially with the establishment of a dynamic network of defenders and clinicians to prevent torture and support potential victims.

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