Organizational development with torture rehabilitation programs: An applied perspective

Kristi Rendahl, DPA*, Pamela Kriege Santoso, MPH**

Key points of interest

- Funders and torture rehabilitation programs are wise to invest in organizational development as an essential aspect of sustainably supporting torture survivors.
- Torture rehabilitation programs benefit from developing staff care policies to prevent burnout, secondary trauma, and turnover that each threaten the viability of the sector.
- Collaboration between varied domains within the organization is necessary for successful organizational development assessments and interventions.

Abstract

Torture rehabilitation has emerged as a field over the past several decades and much of the literature has focused on clinical interventions, related evaluation, and documentation of torture. Less discussed are organizational development initiatives that seek to strengthen organizational effectiveness in order to improve mental health outcomes for torture survivors. Based on applied experience in organizational development with torture rehabilitation programs in post-conflict contexts, the authors explore key organizational development needs in the field of torture rehabilitation, areas of future consideration for international agency donors, and additional future considerations for torture rehabilitation programs themselves. A case is made for organizational development efforts that prioritize time for strategic thinking that includes participation from stakeholders across the organization's functions; staff care policies that prevent secondary trauma and promote wellbeing and retention; clarity surrounding organizational structure and roles; financial management systems that position the organization for growth and fund diversification strategies beyond the project-based international agency funding model. The work requires long-term commitment in terms of technical and subgrant assistance, including an ongoing process of assessing and adjusting approaches. The case examples included are representative of certain key challenges

*) Assistant Professor & Director, Nonprofit Leadership Program, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Organizational Development Consultant, The Center for Victims of Torture
Correspondence to: Kristi.Rendahl@mnsu.edu
**) Project Manager, Partners in Trauma Healing (PATH) Project, The Center for Victims of Torture
Correspondence to: psantoso@cvt.org

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that may be addressed to some degree within the parameters of a similar project. While the work of torture rehabilitation is urgent by nature, the authors emphasize the need for practical approaches for the important (but not always urgent) work of organizational development.

Keywords: torture survivor, torture rehabilitation, organizational development, NGOs, capacity building, international development

Problem statement

The field of torture rehabilitation has emerged over the past few decades. During that time, much of the focus of both academic literature and capacity building initiatives has centered on the technical skills and structures involved in providing torture rehabilitation services, the evaluation of varied clinical interventions, and the documentation of cases of torture. Absent from the literature is an examination of overall organizational development needs and approaches. This article, informed by applied experience in organizational development, is intended as a modest contribution to the conversation about the future of torture rehabilitation programs around the world.

The following observations and reflections are from practice with the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), based in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, the mission of which is to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities, and to end torture worldwide. CVT's Partners in Trauma Healing (PATH) Project collaborates with torture rehabilitation programs globally to design and implement capacity building plans with the overarching goal of strengthening organizations' capacities to serve torture survivors. One of CVT's contributions to the torture rehabilitation movement was drafting the language for the U.S. Torture Victim Relief Act (TVRA), which passed in 1998 and financially supports torture rehabilitation programs through the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of Refugee Resettlement for U.S.-based organizations, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for international programs.

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Capacity building, increasingly referred to as capacity development, became an area of interest for CVT because the organization recognized that it cannot and does not need to work in every country that is home to survivors of torture, as there are over 140 torture rehabilitation programs operating around the world. The programs are frequently run by medical professionals, whose elevated status is critical for speaking against torture, and who are interested in developing their administrative, mental health, and evaluation capacities. As such, in 2000, CVT established its first capacity building project to strengthen organizational viability and delivery of services of select torture rehabilitation centers around the world. Since that time, CVT has supported torture rehabilitation programs in over 30 countries.

Historically, the core of CVT's capacity building work was to develop the clinical capacity of organizations to provide quality mental health services. Due to the broader organizational needs that are key for the development and sustainability of clinical capacity, the PATH Project hired program evaluation and organizational development (OD) advisors in 2011 who focus on these areas.

PATH identifies as a capacity building project with a heavy emphasis on the

capacity of staff and processes in the organization that are related to torture rehabilitation programming, while organizational development necessarily takes a higher-level view of organizational structures and systems. As a general rule, the project prioritizes systems over individuals in order for the impact to be longer lasting in the event of staff turnover.

It would be a missed opportunity if we were not to capture the lessons we have learned from organizational development with torture rehabilitation programs, given the lack of resources for this particular mission focus and international development in general. Our hope in sharing these reflections is to elaborate on how organizations that work on torture rehabilitation have additional layers of vulnerabilities and challenges, as well as keen resiliency in a field defined by traumatic experiences, while addressing several questions based on our experiences, particularly since 2011. Our guiding questions are: What are the key OD needs in the field of torture rehabilitation? What should international agency donors consider for the future? What should torture rehabilitation programs consider for the future?

Definition of terms

In addressing these guiding questions, two terms in particular warrant definition. This paper defines organizational development as: "improving organizational effectiveness."

The term capacity building can signal a range of focus areas, methods, and depth of intervention. The PATH Project invests in capacities in the areas of mission and vision, strategic planning, management capacities, communications planning, fund development, and financial management. While capacity building and organizational development are indeed distinct, they are not unrelated.

Organizational development within torture rehabilitation organizations: The PATH approach

Since 2011, the PATH Project has provided organizational development support to more than 15 organizations with torture rehabilitation programs. The design of the PATH Project includes three core domains of capacity building: mental health counseling, program evaluation, and organizational development. The below graphic represents the key components of the process, while also illustrating the iterative nature of the work.

Key organizational needs

Organizational leadership

A critical position within organizational development of NGOs is that of the executive director. In the field of torture rehabilitation, the role of executive director is fraught with challenges. The executive director is responsible for any number of competing demands, which may change and multiply frequently depending on the stability of the external environment in which the organization operates, as well as internal shifts.

In the experience of the PATH Project, those who enter executive director positions often come from a medical or mental health clinical background, and not necessarily a strong background in organizational administration and management. The connection to the general mission of meeting the mental health needs of torture survivors is well-served by this background, and also may necessitate a learning curve in designing and managing torture rehabilitation programs.

Figure 1: *Key Components of the PATH Process*

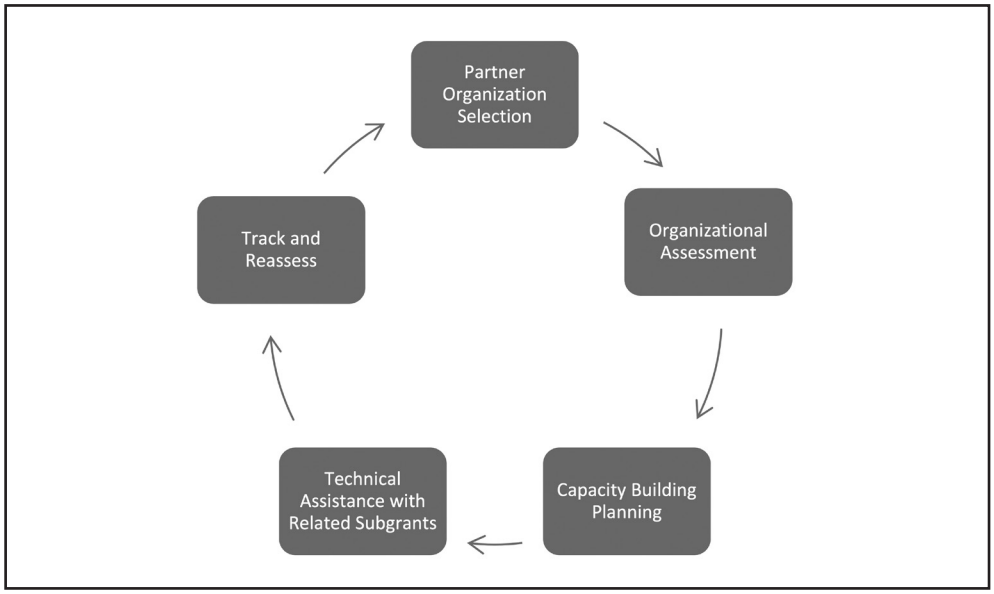

Figure 2: *Key aspects of the PATH Capacity Building Process*

Partner Organization Selection
- Establish criteria for selection
- Distribute call for applications
- Review applications, interview, and finalize selection

Organizational Assessment
- Interdisciplinary advisory team conducts on-site interviews
- Advisory team solicits and incorporates feedback on initial findings

Capacity Building Planning
- Advisory team facilitates capacity building planning process for life of project
- Advisory team facilitates a work planning process for the first year of the project

Technical Assistance with Related Subgrants
- Audit process conducted by CVT finance department
- Assignment of risk level determines how subgrant will be distributed (reimbursement only or otherwise)
- Technical assistance with problematic areas of compliance, such as timesheets and cost share

Track, Evaluate, and Reassess
- Monthly coordination meetings among advisors and project administrators
- Trip reports by advisors and post-visit surveys to partners
- Quarterly reports from partners

Our work in organizational development has also exposed us to the enormous responsibilities on the shoulders of executive directors of organizations with torture rehabilitation programs, both in terms of the programs and their extended families and communities. This appears particularly acute among female leaders who continue to carry the larger share of domestic responsibilities for their families while also steering their respective organization toward financial and programmatic sustainability.

Staff retention is an area of concern that also arises frequently. Quality staff members may leave a torture rehabilitation program for the same reasons as anyone might leave a job. More specific reasons may include in addition to less competitive salaries, unstable funding, and unclear expectations due to a lack of performance management, struggles with secondary trauma, burnout, and security concerns in high-risk environments. Successful torture rehabilitation programs prioritize staff care, non-monetary benefits, and clearly thought-out and disseminated security plans to demonstrate their commitment to creating and sustaining a healthy organization.

A key contribution of the PATH project is how the advisor visits to the partner organization create (or provide an excuse for) time and space dedicated to strategic and evaluative thinking. The people who lead and work within the field of torture rehabilitation frequently work on issues of both high importance and high urgency. Within the important-urgent matrix popularized by Stephen Covey (Covey et al, 1994), constantly working within this quadrant is a recipe for burnout and ultimately results in an unsustainable organization. Another quadrant in the same matrix emphasizes high importance, but low urgency, which includes efforts such as strategic planning, problem solving, and managing change. This is the area of focus for PATH as a capacity building project.

Funding sustainability

A perennial issue for torture rehabilitation programs, and international NGOs in general, is the over-reliance on one or a handful of grants from international agencies. The temptation to continue doing so is understandable: international agencies can provide large sums of money that are difficult to replace in full through alternative funding sources, such as individual donors, social enterprise, corporate sponsorship, or foundation grants. In western contexts, these types of organizations may receive support from their respective governments, but this is not a realistic solution for most of CVT's partner organizations due to low-resource governments, competing priorities, limited interest in the field of torture rehabilitation and mental health in general, hostility toward the work, or insufficient trust in state funding. Despite the obstacles, if these programs are committed to working into the future, beyond the life of the development sector's interest in their particular context, then organizations are wise to engage in strategic thinking on this topic, and donors are even wiser to support them in doing so.

The diversification of funding is not simply a matter of finding a different organization to provide funding. Each type of funding necessitates its own set of knowledge, skills, and relationships. Preparing a grant proposal in response to a clearly articulated Call for Proposals from the U.S. Government, for example, differs wildly from building a broad base of individual donors or advocating for local government support of torture rehabilitation. The process of cultivating those relationships, too, is distinct. Other potential sources of funding include

fundraising from diaspora communities, fee for service from clients, crowdfunding, and social enterprise or earned-income activities, such as fee-for-training or other services, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Each approach requires significant investment to meaningfully engage.

For years, torture rehabilitation programs have invested their energies in understanding the systems and meeting the requirements of international agencies in the Global North. These agencies are based in low-context cultures where expectations are explicit, but typically shift priorities according to the emergence of conflict in other parts of the world. When the geographic or content interests of those agencies change – and they inevitably do – torture rehabilitation organizations are left without a plan to sustain their work, even at a less intensive level. These organizations benefit from ongoing conversation about that eventuality, so they can make a conscious decision about their vision beyond the life of international agency funding.

Torture rehabilitation programs must also educate donors about what it takes to do this work effectively and sustainably. In order to avoid burnout and secondary trauma, organizations must pay attention to the number of clients per care provider and provide clinical supervision for staff working directly with torture survivors. The costs of meaningful program evaluation may seem high, unless you consider the necessity of good data for improving services, helping clinicians see the impact of their work, and communicating to donors how the interventions change lives. This, of course, is all in service of improved health and functioning of torture survivors.

Organizational structure and systems

Organizations with torture rehabilitation programming struggle to structure the organization around a shared mission and vision. Organizations often take the shape of several small projects housed near each other, each with its own team, sets of activities and indicators, and administrative support. Though it is certainly possible to function this way, and in some ways, it is easier to meet donor requirements, it does not bode well for a collective organizational identity. As a result, organizations may seek ways to create shared management systems and develop a unified organizational identity to better serve the mission.

Related to this is the development of a broad set of systems, including financial, human resources and performance management, monitoring and evaluation, technology, and security. While organizations typically develop a set of policies and procedures out of general necessity, most organizations also find themselves documenting systems at the behest of funding agencies and their specific requirements. This is a particular area of concern for programs that are competing for new types of funding, since their systems may not match the requirements of the funder and thus, they must develop them in order to be considered for an award.

Succession planning for the sake of sustainability

Another complicated topic that organizations in the field consider—or ought to—is that of succession planning for executive and programmatic leadership. The sustainability of the torture rehabilitation movement cannot be discussed without acknowledging two realities: 1) The significant number of founders or founding executive directors who currently run the organizations; and 2) concern about burnout as well as secondary trauma. Without intentional development of staff within the organizations, an exodus

of founders would seriously impact the sustainability of the sector. Similarly, if organizations are not attentive to staff care needs, there is a risk of losing the very staff members who would be well qualified to lead the organization in the future.

The topic of succession planning as relates to executive directors, in particular, intersects with the priority issue of staff care. In our observations, it is not at all uncommon for executive directors of organizations with torture rehabilitation programs to experience negative health impacts that are at least partially related to stress. These impacts lead to decreased effectiveness in their positions and extended absences to recover from illness. In many countries, someone who develops their professional skills to this level is relied on by immediate and extended family for financial support. Additionally, the people in these roles have additional domestic responsibilities at home and leadership roles in the community. It is necessary to recognize and acknowledge such multiple levels of responsibilities and related stresses when working in this field.

Program evaluation

The area of program evaluation within torture rehabilitation programs is an additional challenge for organizations. Many organizations have limited their implementation of program evaluation to that which satisfies funder requirements, including basic outputs such as numbers of clients, sites, and services. Increasingly, donors have asked for outcome data to better understand how clients' lives are improved through services, though they do not necessarily fund it at the level necessary for meaningful data. When evaluation is conducted in a perfunctory manner, or when the results are not communicated back to those implementing the interventions, evaluation is viewed as unnecessary work of little value that does not contribute to their roles.

Developing a culture of evaluation with an organization requires will, leadership, and vision of how evaluation can better serve clients. This includes the facilitation of discussions around how the organization would like to impact the lives of clients. They must answer the basic question: What does success look like for our clients? As part of this, organizations must allocate resources accordingly, since a budget is ultimately a statement of values. If the stated value is for program evaluation, yet the budget does not reflect that, then that unstated value will sabotage the success of program evaluation.

It takes careful thinking to strategically build the capacity of an organization's program evaluation efforts. At the outset, there may be a gap in understanding of what the components of program evaluation even are. Rather, organizations jump to the notion of buying or designing a database before elaborating its theory of change, tools, and data collection methodology, storage, and analysis systems. The lifecycle of a piece of data, after all, begins long before it is entered into a database, and involves the efforts of program managers, program evaluation officers, and executive staff members.

Additionally, in learning to establish and cultivate donor relationships, there is a temptation for torture rehabilitation programs to over-promise success indicators for a project or program. Sometimes targets are too high, outcomes are ill-defined, or are not readily measurable. Organizations must resist the urge to promise unrealistic data when donors make direct requests, because it sets them up for failure or the temptation to misrepresent results in their reports. Over-promising can also result in tension between the proposal writer – who is often the

executive director – and those charged with implementation of programming who may or may not have had a voice in the proposal development process. Rather, organizations should engage in thoughtful dialogue both internally and with donor agencies to create a shared understanding of the purposes of program evaluation, reasonable progress within the given context, life stage, and constraints of the organization, and true costs of doing it well.

Case examples

Following are three anonymized case examples from PATH's experience conducting organizational development with torture rehabilitation in varied contexts.

Case example 1

An organization had over a decade of experience in the field of torture rehabilitation, but remained challenged in various aspects of sustainability. As is the case with many small NGOs, this organization faced two key challenges related to financial sustainability. Chiefly, the fundraising expertise and experience was held almost exclusively by the executive director, instead of a team of people meaningfully engaged in the process. Secondarily, the organization received project-based funding without any general operating support to implement activities.

As a response to the challenge of limited fundraising capacity, and as a way of contributing toward succession planning, the organization sought PATH assistance in developing the structure, processes, and skills of a newly formed fundraising committee. PATH facilitation of the fledgling body resulted in a draft mandate, structure, role descriptions, and steps for key processes. The language emerged from the group's discussions to ensure ownership, rather than adapting an external resource that would be more likely to remain unused on a figurative shelf. As a result, the fundraising committee has a clearly articulated, shared understanding of its function in the organization.

Case example 2

This organization lacked clarity regarding organizational structure and roles. This resulted in problems developing clear processes, including those that impacted clients, such as a suicidality protocol. It also added to divisions between groups of staff, falling roughly along lines of seniority in the organization, and damaged staff morale. The implicit way of doing things was no longer sustainable as it grew from a grassroots organization to a professionalized model.

PATH worked with a core group of staff, including the management team, representatives from various departments, and a mix of both long-time staff and those newer to the organization, in order to make explicit an organizational structure and reporting lines. This provided a clearer way ahead with respect to roles and performance assessment. These challenges were not unique to this organization and the general approach has in fact been undertaken with several organizations.

Case example 3

Several organizations struggled with donor communication about issues that greatly impacted their work. In particular were problems conveying the importance of funding for clinical supervision and program evaluation in order to improve outcomes for clients. Due to pressures to work more with less money, project budgets did not reflect the true cost of carrying out the work well, and also contributed to demotivation of

staff, burnout and secondary trauma, and reduced clinical competence.

Interventions in this area are both singular and cross-cutting. Organizational development efforts consistently included these key voices from management, program evaluation, and clinical domains, in discussions and presentations to counter the tendency to consider them separate and unrelated to the core mission. In meeting with donor agencies, PATH modeled an emphasis on these areas lest they be overlooked by donors as the simple result of unawareness. Finally, these topics are frequently discussed with respect to the subgrant process and during coordination meetings of interdisciplinary advisor and administration teams.

Recommendations and the way ahead

In considering the above, what does this mean in practical terms for donors and torture rehabilitation programs? To answer this, we return to our original questions about organizational development in the field of torture rehabilitation.

Our first question was: ***What are the key OD needs in the field of torture rehabilitation?*** While there are many needs within the field, we base our conclusions on key themes that have emerged through our practice, and which can be addressed through both short- and longer-term interventions. The geographical distance between the PATH project staff and the partner countries is considerable, remote support is not a replacement for in-person collaboration, and the low number of technical assistance visits means that capacity building momentum ebbs and flows; yet, there are ways to build capacity through even short-term (e.g. one week per year) interventions.

These needs can be met only with the corresponding level of support from donor agencies. In order to engage in organizational development – which was defined as improving the effectiveness of the organization – torture rehabilitation organizational development initiatives should prioritize support for **creating space for and facilitating strategic thinking and problem-solving** with a broad representation of staff members, including the executive director. Our experience suggests the power of bringing people together with facilitation to plan, explore, learn, and problem-solve for even short, infrequent periods of time.

Additionally, in order for the torture rehabilitation movement to continue, organizational efforts should further promote the development and implementation of **staff care policies**, including regular clinical supervision. This reduces the expense and disruption of burnout, secondary trauma, and staff turnover. It also supports the possibility of cultivating the management and leadership potential of staff within the organization, thus contributing to succession planning. Organizations are wise to explore and address the barriers to individual self-care practices and organizational approaches to staff care. In many cases, organizations may hold certain conflicting values that sabotage the oft-repeated emphasis on self care. Organizations may expect constant availability of staff members, be unclear in staff roles, provide insufficient training, lack transparency about decision-making, validate a "martyr complex" approach to the work, or struggle with realistic expectations overall. While the notion of work-life balance may not be realistic due to the urgency of the needs that arise in the normal course of operations, the goal could be articulated as work-life integration.

Financial management should be an area of focus, as small, early-stage

organizations often require development in terms of both systems and skills. Often, they are missing critical policies, such as conflict of interest, petty cash, and procurement. Budgets are typically developed and tracked by project and there is no global organizational budget with an indirect expense line across programs and projects. Financial management efforts may also be plagued by other common issues, such as a lack of data security, challenges in collecting timely and quality documentation from field offices, computer viruses, database issues, and staff turnover. There are no simple fixes for these problems and others, but not addressing them can lead to financial malfeasance or elimination of support from funders. It is a matter of identifying and prioritizing the problems as they arise, as well as anticipating those that are inevitable.

On a related topic, **fundraising** for torture rehabilitation programs is expected to be an ongoing challenge, as it is for any organization reliant on philanthropic support, but will be especially problematic as long as the sector relies on international development funding. While there is lip service to the notion of funding diversification, the reality of understanding and tracking donor requirements in terms of program design, implementation, and reporting are far too time-intensive and stressful to allow sufficient space for the exploration of other sources of funding or alternative revenue.

The second question was: ***What should international agency donors consider for the future?*** We believe there are several areas that international agency donors would be wise to consider, as some already have begun, moving forward.

As a rule, we advise supporting capacity building initiatives that do not consist only of more training. It is tempting to assume that the capacity of all domains can be advanced at the same pace, but it is a problematic assumption, as the experience of The Center for Victims of Torture has shown consistently. In the simplest of terms, organizations fall into the life-stage categories of startup, growth, maturity, and sometimes reinvention.

A specific area in which most torture rehabilitation organizations benefit from support is that of **financial management** capacity building. As previously mentioned, torture rehabilitation programs tend to rely on one or a handful of international agency donors, each of which has its own set of indicators and reporting requirements. The net result, in terms of financial management, is separate financial management processes that do not feed into a global budget. This reinforces the separation of programming and evaluation, and contributes to a lack of sufficient overall administrative support for the organization.

Both narrow and deep interventions related to financial sustainability would be advisable, but it is unrealistic and unfair for donors to expect organizations to achieve financial sustainability without a dramatic shift in how development aid works, investment in earned income endeavors, support for relationship-building with prospective funders, and support for the development of relationships with their own governments where feasible.

A related area of opportunity is for donors to **support expert market research and business planning for alternative streams of revenue**. Another area is to provide grant opportunities that allow organizations to engage local organizational development consultants, and/or streamline the subgrant process for external capacity building projects to

support local consultants. This would have the dual benefit of strengthening the local consultant pool, providing more income for cash-poor countries.

International agency donors concerned about the vitality and sustainability of torture rehabilitation should **support and advocate for interventions that reduce impact of burnout and secondary trauma.** This support should include organizational structures, systems, and budgetary line items for clinical supervision found to be key for the health and successful functioning of clinicians. Clarifying roles within the organization is also important for this goal. Indeed, staff who do not have clarity about their position both in general and in relationship to others within the organization are at higher risk of burnout.

Finally, **meaningful investment in program evaluation** that helps organizations understand what is working – and what is not – is similarly important for staff to develop and sustain professional confidence in the impact of their efforts.

Our final question was: ***What should torture rehabilitation programs consider for the future?*** This is an intimidating question as torture rehabilitation programs are already juggling so many competing demands for their time. Nonetheless, there are a few items worth noting.

Chiefly, prioritizing any opportunity to **connect and integrate the various domains of the organization** is recommended. This is highlighted this because there are many occasions in which work is carried out in relative isolation by just one or two people, presumably for the sake of speed and efficiency, but at the cost of quality and sustainability. There is not a single function within an organization that can or should be done completely independent from others. In fact, when a key function is excluded from a process, an organization may unwittingly send a message to those staff members that their work is not valuable, and indeed miss a critical perspective when trying to solve problems. When organizations strive to build understanding of all the efforts within an organization, connections are made that produce better results, ideally including better outcomes for torture survivors.

Torture rehabilitation programs should also work to be sure that their **budget reflects their stated values**, rather than enable inconsistent messages. Organizations often say they value program evaluation, for example, but do not budget appropriately for the necessary staff time, printing expenses, and supportive technology to do so. Similarly, organizations may claim to value staff care, but be unwilling to consider salary schedules and alternative ways to compensate for staff time, expect staff to sacrifice free time for the mission, assign excessively high workloads, or set aside good practices such as clinical supervision for mental health counselors.

Another daunting task for torture rehabilitation programs is to **educate donors on what an effective torture rehabilitation program requires.** This is challenging for a range of reasons, including the inherent power-dynamic in donor-NGO relations and significant cultural differences between Western/Global North funders and programs based in non-Western/Global South organizations, as well as frequent staff turnover at donor agencies, necessitating an ongoing process of education about the work.

Finally, while it is risky for financial sustainability to rely on international agencies as the only source of funding and programmatic growth, as long as torture rehabilitation organizations do so there is a need to **develop the capacity of**

financial structures and systems. Even an organization that has gained considerable experience and growth will face increasing expectations for financial management and transparency. The need to manage funds according to funder, client, cost-sharing, in-kind support, and other factors is necessary to retain donors. Relatedly, organizational board governance may become increasingly important as transparency is prioritized by international agencies who are in turn accountable to elected officials and individual taxpayers.

Lessons learned

Organizational development within the mandate and constraints of this project is replete with lessons learned. While we would be reluctant to state with certainty what from our experiences should not be replicated, there are several areas that have been discussed and debated, reconfigured, and/or kept in consideration for future project modifications.

In the early phases of the work, the various domains that are part of the overall project operated in relative isolation, mirroring what occurs in the partner organizations, including during the planning process. We learned that integrating the domains during planning, implementation, and assessment processes better serves the organization. This approach has been critical in reinforcing the intersections of both structures and systems and promoting a more unified organizational identity, which is important in an environment where project-based funding creates divisions within functions of the organization.

Our approach to hire a psychologist-trainer for an average of a year-long placement with a given organization creates more momentum and day-to-day progress in developing the capacities of the organization. Given the importance of organizational development, we believe it may be wise in some cases to have on-site organizational development and/or program evaluation placements. This modification or addition, though, would introduce additional challenges and should not be made without sufficient contextual analysis.

Organizational development efforts would also benefit from increased in-person visits with partner organizations, beyond the annual visits that have been the norm during the most recent iteration of this work, and more effective use of in-country consultants. While virtual assistance is feasible to some extent, there tends to be greater buy-in and a sense of immediacy during face-to-face visits, perhaps in part due to cultural preferences for relationship-building as well as a human tendency to prioritize what is right in front of us.

Another lesson relates to funding. Some partner organization relationships have been developed for years, but the funding itself has been intermittent rather than continuous. The funding to support staff engagement in organizational development is important for buy-in and sustained effort. Technical assistance without subgrant support is unlikely to be fully utilized, even if we think that organizational learning and development should be sufficient incentive itself. Similarly, technical assistance without long-term commitment will produce little progress due to the relationship-oriented nature of the work, as well as the level of effort necessary to collectively define problems, design solutions, and implement well.

Also related to funding is a lesson regarding the difficulty of working with low-resourced organizations. There is a fine line between identifying organizations that need organizational development support most, and those that have enough capacity to

truly benefit from it. Indeed, if there is not enough general operating or project-based support to work on the core mission, then organizational development efforts are rather beside the point. On the contrary, highly resourced organizations require different types of interventions, including those which are more specialized in a range of areas. As a result, it is challenging to appropriately staff for such varied needs.

Some torture rehabilitation programs have developed within a post-conflict context, while others operate during a time of political instability, current conflict, or as the direct result of a nearby conflict. Organizations operating in contexts of conflict require special consideration, as the instability inevitably impacts the ability of the organizations (and the individuals within them) to think about the medium- and long-term. Additionally, there is the possibility that a greater number of staff members may be directly or indirectly affected by traumatic events.

It would be remiss not to mention the role of culture as a cross-cutting lesson we have learned to date. It would be dishonest to deny the implications of working on a project that is funded by the U.S. Government in a broad range of cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Cultural differences matter in whether there is a preference to make policies and processes implicit versus explicit, for example. Communication styles vary, depending on sometimes cultural distinctions such as directness or power distance. It is impossible to place an individual or organization squarely into a singular culture, but understanding some common areas of distinction is useful for all parties involved.

Ultimately, we have come to understand that organizational development as an external advisor or agency requires ceding control. The organization has the final say in what is changed or not changed, integrated or dismissed, deeply embedded or perfunctorily done. To ignore this reality is to sign oneself up for frustration and disappointment. To accept it is to look for ways in which to listen, offer, collaborate, adapt, and support. The work requires humility over arrogance and patience over imposed urgency.

Conclusions

This article is intended to highlight our experiences in organizational development with torture rehabilitation programs in various contexts around the globe. We endeavored to address three primary questions: What are the key OD needs in the field of torture rehabilitation? What should international agency donors consider for the future? What should torture rehabilitation programs consider for the future?

There are of course more questions and yet more answers, but the preceding pages are a modest summary of our years of experience in this specific field of work. While the challenges are significant, we do not have the option of turning away from them. This work is that of solidarity and optimism. The basis of it requires self-awareness, adaptability across cultures, and an understanding of this unique belief that to heal the wounds of torture globally, we must engage individually. Due to the daily efforts of the torture rehabilitation programs with which we have worked, there is reason to believe that this can be done.

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