

Torture, livelihoods and rehabilitation

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Key Points of Interest:

- Torture and livelihoods are intrinsically linked
- There are numerous challenges for torture treatment agencies in integrating livelihoods into programming
- Following principles of care for torture survivors, livelihoods can be included as part of holistic rehabilitation.

Abstract

The understanding of torture has evolved to encompass a complex interplay of factors including poverty, politics, health and psychosocial factors which increase vulnerability to torture. In response to this evolving understanding, rehabilitation efforts for torture survivors have expanded beyond medical and psychological care to encompass broader socio-economic dimensions, including livelihoods support. Livelihoods are not only a means of making a living, but also a source of purpose and identity. This article explores the intersect between livelihoods loss and torture, exploring where livelihoods loss co-occurs with torture, is a consequence of torture, or may be an act of torture in itself. The importance of documenting livelihoods losses in torture assessment and the integration of livelihoods into rehabilitation programs is considered. Although research in this area is sparse, existing evidence suggests that combining livelihoods rehabilitation with psychological and physical interventions, alongside long-term support are important components. For livelihood restoration to be effectively integrated, it must be survivor-centred, holistic, evidence-based and focused on safety. While the field is to date underexplored, this article provides a foundational framework for torture treatment centres and stakeholders to consider the role of livelihoods in both conceptualising and treating survivors of torture.

Introduction

Torture is held as exceptional and at the pinnacle of human rights abuse – but it is also accepted that torture is widespread and occurs across most regions of the world (Hamad, Patel & de C Williams, 2019; Milewski et al., 2023; Nowak, 2010). Torture also intersects with myriad other human rights abuses and a lack of attainment of basic human rights. Poverty, politics, activism, detention, and particular backgrounds and geography are all known as risk factors which come together in many and varied ways to increase vulnerability to torture. Torture has been described not only in terms of acts against individuals, but rather as overlapping forms of violence from many sources, and torture is deeply engrained in broader patterns of violence (Jensen & Kelly, 2022; Kimari, 2022).

As our understanding of torture adapts and changes, so must our responses to it. Rehabilitation is also no longer viewed as exclusively providing medical care or psychological care, or improving access to justice processes despite the disturbingly low number of investigations and successful prosecutions (Edwards, 2023). Torture rehabilitation is increasingly recognised as a response that also takes place in the same country or region where the torture occurred, rather than being confined to a post-conflict state or refugee resettlement. This shift acknowledges that many torture survivors are unable to flee the country where they were subjected to torture.

Rehabilitation is evolving to meet the range of complex needs of torture survivors and is based in the reality that the majority of torture survivors continue to exist in the same

structures and with the same vulnerabilities that were risk factors to begin with. One important aspect of rehabilitation is the role of livelihoods, both in the experience of torture and the rehabilitation following torture. Livelihood programs have been defined as seeking to “...increase the capacity of households and individuals to provide for themselves by protecting or enhancing their income, skills, and access in ways that support their own priorities and goals” (Jacobson & Fratzke, 2016, p. 4), and may refer to a wide range of educational, asset-based, or employment based activities that may range from one-off actions to activities spanning years.

The IRCT Strategy 2022-2025 recognises the goal of better livelihoods, and that supporting the establishment of survivor-led initiatives for stable income not only sets a strong foundation for healing, but also empowers individuals, ultimately aiding in their recovery from the trauma of torture.

Engagement or re-engagement in livelihoods is frequently an aim of survivors. Chambers and Conway (1991) present a frequently utilised definition, where a “livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living” and has qualities of sustainability, namely the ability to cope with stress and shocks, be maintained over time, provide opportunities for the next generation, and contribute to other livelihoods long and short term (p. 6). However, just as rehabilitation encompasses more than health, livelihoods are more than simple economics and are “...even more as a way to give meaning to life.” (de Haan, 2017, p. 3). Whilst the term livelihoods has these distinctive features, there are also strong relationships with other descriptors of a means of living, such as economic agency, employment, or financial stability. It is also distinct from other activities which may provide meaning but do not generally create, or have potential to create, a means of living, such as many social, creative or sports activities.

Article 14 of the Convention against Torture states that “Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible”. Rehabilitation seeks to restore what has been lost, acknowledging that a return to life before torture may not always be achievable. Instead, the aim of rehabilitation may be based on attaining the highest possible quality of life, often within individual or systemic constraints.

However, centres providing torture rehabilitation have highlighted a key limitation in realising this, agreeing that the difficulties in meeting basic needs severely hampers the delivery of as full rehabilitation as possible (IRCT, 2022a).

The concept of quality of life for torture survivors extends beyond physical and mental health, encompassing other social determinants of health including economic security, employment and education as articulated in IRCT Global Standards on Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (paragraph 15). This is consistent with the definition of rehabilitation, defined in the Convention against Torture’s General Comment number 3 (article 14) as “...the restoration of function or the acquisition of new skills required as a result of the changed circumstances of a victim arising from torture or ill-treatment” and as seeking to maximise self-sufficiency and function and to restore “their independence; physical, mental, social and vocational ability; and full inclusion and participation in society.” (Committee against Torture, 2012, p. 3).

Considering these definitions, addressing livelihoods can be considered as an important, or even crucial component of torture rehabilitation, in terms of the role it can play in realising independence, physical and mental health, and inclusion in society.

To date, there has been limited attention to the intersection between livelihoods and torture, particularly in considering this in the context of the global south. This paper considers this intersection, particularly in considering loss of livelihoods for those who experience torture. It examines the role of torture treatment agencies in addressing livelihoods loss, proposing ways to integrate livelihoods into rehabilitation. Specifically, it emphasises the restoration of livelihoods as a crucial consideration in recovery. In exploring these areas, learnings from multiple disciplines are utilised, including development and poverty, psychology and health, psychosocial approaches and law, as well as knowledge from the professional experience of the author. The breadth of the topic is certainly a limitation, in that no area is exhaustively covered nor all viewpoints and empirical studies included. However, this article presents as a starting point in bringing these areas together for consideration for torture treatment centres and other interested readers to begin to discuss and integrate livelihoods into torture conceptualisation and treatment.

Loss of Livelihoods and Torture

Livelihoods can be lost or impacted by the taking away of resources, the taking away of capabilities, or the taking away of opportunities and access. The following list (whilst by no means comprehensive) details such losses:

- Loss of property including land, businesses, homes, livestock and goods. Property can be destroyed, stolen, acquired or owners can be denied access
- Loss of physical or mental capacity required for work

- Deprivation of liberty (particularly where extended) which involves the removal from most livelihood activities, and raises additional challenges on return to activities when and if released
 - Refusal of licenses, registration, or any other permissions required to engage in livelihood activities (eg to run businesses, build, trade or utilise natural resources)
 - The killing, disappearance, imprisonment or severe injury of a providing family member to the detriment of remaining family members
 - Threats or acts of violence against people if or when they engage in work and other livelihood activities
 - Inability to attain or maintain employment due to having been tortured and/or in line with the reasons for the torture (eg activism, political party membership, cultural background, status of relatives). This can include a lack of access to government employment, and can also include fear to employ such persons, as it may draw attention or repercussions for the employer
 - Introduction of a societal stigma which impacts employability or engagement in activities, such as for those with a history of imprisonment, of having experienced sexual torture, of living with a disability, or generally having a reduced social capital
- Most losses will not occur in isolation, and multiple livelihood impacts can occur at the same time. Impacts can also be compounding, such as where a lack of livelihoods limits capacity to access medical care, and health and social consequences limit job opportunities which create further financial impacts (Aon, 2015). These complexities are not only at an individual level. This list of livelihood losses emphasises the systemic nature of that loss – that it is often not individual factors, but rather the instruments of society or authorities that make a return to livelihoods difficult or impossible.

Losses from torture may also go beyond what is tangible, including human rights-based concepts captured in instruments such as the Convention against Torture and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA, 1948). The loss of dignity and worth, the affront to the human spirit, and the loss of role, of place, of hope and of future are often of equal, and sometimes more importance than the more concrete list above. Loss can be even more profound where livelihoods are collective and deeply embedded in history and cultural identity.

Empirical and philosophical works have explored the nature of meaning and purpose in life, and the importance to well-being. George and Park (2013) summarised meaning as the sense of comprehension, significance and experiencing of life as making sense, and purpose as a sense of having core goals, direction, and enthusiasm for the future. Unsurprisingly, suf-

fering has been demonstrated to impact life meaning (Edwards & Van Tongeren, 2019), and traumatic loss, such as through the refugee experience rips away much of what may have formerly given life meaning and purpose (Matos, Indart, Park & Leal, 2018).

The following sections explore how loss of livelihoods can be conceptualised within a torture framework, considering the possibilities of this loss as a consequence of torture, as co-occurring with torture, and whether livelihoods loss could be considered as an act of torture in itself. Whilst distinct categories are presented, it is acknowledged that overlaps may exist.

Livelihoods Loss Co-occurring with Torture

The co-occurrence of livelihoods loss and torture is mutually reinforcing: changes in capacity to work and loss of engagement in employment structures are common, and are often part of the objective of those who torture in breaking down and depleting the person. The disproportionate vulnerability of people in poverty to torture has been declared in the London Declaration on Poverty and Torture (IRCT, 2011), and an increasing focus on this nexus has been recognised in empirical research, in shifting approaches by human rights organisations, and in UN bodies such as the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (Oette, 2021). Whilst torture can impact people across divides, a clear link has been established between torture and poverty. Poverty has been determined as the leading risk factor for torture, and IRCT's Global Impact Data found that 40-50% of survivors receiving treatment live in poverty (IRCT, 2023; 2022a). The same structures which have been causal in poverty are often the same structures that allow torture to occur with impunity, and the already existing powerlessness of a person marginalised by poverty is exacerbated where torture occurs (Oette, 2021).

Asset loss, such as theft or destruction of property may occur at the same time as other acts of torture, and part of psychological impact can include being told of or witnessing assets being removed or destroyed, or being subjected to physical acts of torture at the same time as theft and destruction.

In addition to acts of torture, abuse of police power, lack of State protection, and violence against women and children are all intrinsically linked to extreme poverty (Alston, 2017). Within these vulnerabilities, the loss of livelihoods or the inability to secure them at all is a frequent co-occurrence.

Thus, in country contexts of conflict or authoritarian states, there is frequently a cluster of rights abuses which can co-occur: poverty, loss or lack of livelihoods, torture and other protection risks. Decisions for people in such situations may mean livelihoods are pursued only at a great risk to safety (Jasper, 2010).

Livelihoods Loss as a Consequence of Torture

Where physical or psychological harm results in lasting impacts, it is likely that there will also be impacts to livelihoods. Physical injuries may limit employment or work capacity, including for home-based income such as subsistent farming.

Psychological injury may result in mental health conditions or symptoms which limit livelihood engagement. For example, depressive symptoms may reduce motivation and life meaning, or PTSD may result in fear and avoidance which make moving around physical spaces difficult.

The change in social status for the person who experiences torture may also lead to them being ostracised and excluded from employment opportunities or community activities. This may be due to the stigma of trauma, or buy-in to structural causes of torture such as support for torturing governments, or excluding people belonging to marginalised groups. Employers or community members may also shun tortured individuals, in fear that they may be similarly targeted if they are seen as being supportive.

This loss can be further compounded where it is as the result of reprisals. Reporting torture can lead to further rights violations, including the direct loss of livelihoods, or of stigmatisation and community alienation, both of which can further reduce access to livelihoods (Tegal & Piyadasa, 2022; Towers, 2022). For those who do engage in legal action against perpetrators, there can be heavy financial costs (Tegal & Piyadasa, 2022), and the time and finances involved in seeking justice can be a livelihood loss in and of themselves.

If we consider this in addition to the co-occurrence between torture and livelihoods loss, a torture consequence is to add to the already vulnerable situations that many may already be in, and increasing issues of poverty, marginalisation and stigmatisation. This speaks to the creation of a torturing environment, where the environment has been intentionally created to attack basic needs, safety and individual and collective identity (Pérez-Sales et al., 2021). Integral to this is the economic marginalisation and discrimination heightening the vulnerability to torture (Oette, 2021).

Livelihoods Loss as an Act of Torture

Given these linkages between torture and livelihoods, it is worth consideration as to whether livelihoods loss could be considered an act of torture in itself.

To explore this, we can first return to the CAT torture definition, whereby torture is considered as any act causing severe physical or mental pain or suffering, intentionally inflicted for a purpose and in an official capacity.

Livelihood loss could be considered against the benchmark for severe pain and suffering, particularly where it is extreme and creates a risk of further harm. The material loss itself can be considered, but more so the meaning behind that loss. For example, loss of livestock or crops may be financial, as well as loss of family heritage, family role, status, pride, and future. As with other forms of mental suffering, severe suffering typically involves high perceived uncontrollability and stressfulness (Başoğlu, Livanou & Crnobaric, 2007). It also considers the cumulative impact of co-occurring violations (Başoğlu et al., 2007), may be accompanied by symptoms of mental health conditions (most notably PTSD and Depression symptoms), and should be understood within the cultural and localised context. Livelihood loss may also be part of building a larger picture of torture, where it may be any combination of physical, psychological, and livelihood impact (amongst others) which, when taken together, meet the threshold for suffering as being severe.

For a loss of livelihoods to be considered an act of torture in itself, it would also be inflicted by a public official with intentionality, where a person or persons are targeted for that act resulting in livelihoods loss. It would further be for a purpose, including such examples as retaliation, punishment or discouragement from engaging in political membership, for the purpose of 'breaking' the person through loss of identity or sense of self.

Evidence of livelihoods loss has the potential to contribute to a case of establishing torture and ill-treatment. This can subsequently contribute to forensic assessments, ideally to trigger the obligation of the State to investigate, as well as having the potential to influence areas such as securing rights and reparations, addressing impunity and substantiating asylum claims (Huminuik, 2016).

Guidelines for Including Loss of Livelihoods in Establishing a Case of Torture

The importance of documenting torture, and the frustrations of attaining evidence of torture has been recognised (Méndez, 2014). Medical and psychological evidence may be difficult to determine due to sophisticated methods of torture and difficulties in seeking health care. Some of these same complexities also exist in gathering livelihoods evidence, particularly in understanding the meaning of livelihoods for each individual and how this is impacted. However, there is also potential for assessment of livelihoods as part of an act of torture to be an additional source of forensic evidence contributing to establishing a case of torture.

Here, centres that provide torture treatment have a special role to play in establishing all causal/ contributing considerations, acts of, and impacts from torture. Guidelines already exist for establishing physical and psychological injury as an act of torture, through the Istanbul Protocol Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OHCHR, 2022), which particularly focuses on the physical presentation following torture. Currently, no such guidelines exist for loss of livelihoods, though it is common practice for torture treatment centres to make some record of this, as demonstrated through the data collated annually by the IRCT (IRCT 2022a). Livelihoods loss documentation should not be considered as an area to document in isolation, but rather as part of a holistic assessment of torture and its impacts.

Collection of livelihood specific information is in line with Istanbul Protocol recommendations, which encourages collection of data on “Immediate and long-term mental harm suffered, functional limitations and the socioeconomic impact of the alleged torture or ill-treatment on the person and the person’s family” (OHCHR, 2022 p. 54). As with the Istanbul Protocol, the collection of livelihoods data aims to assess the consistency between the individual account of torture, and the findings of the assessment to establish a probable relationship.

Establishing a complete and comprehensive picture of livelihoods loss would be highly complex (noting that the Istanbul Protocol numbers 212 pages and is the result of years of consultation and expert contribution), and likely beyond the scope and capacity of many, if not all, torture treatment centres. However this cannot be an excuse not to encompass this in assessment and practice. Whilst aspiring to a more complete assessment instrument, instituting basic data collection around livelihoods should be a standard area of assessment to ensure a deeper exploration of both losses and their consequences. Assessment of the more practical elements exist in the development field, such as the post-disaster Livelihood Assessment Tool-kit (FAO & ILO, 2009). Whilst in no way designed for a cohort of torture survivors, this does provide a series of inter-related tools in assessing livelihoods assets and capabilities and how these can be assessed at different time points, including the development of a baseline, initial impact assessment, and more thorough livelihood assessment to inform livelihood strategy formulation. This may act as a complimentary document where organisations are developing capacity building skills in assessment and program design.

Data collection needs will be necessarily influenced by country, cultural and political contexts. Decisions as to what

is important in livelihoods assessment should include the context knowledge of each centre or documenting worker, but also be informed by available literature and by client contribution. However, some areas to consider for inclusion in an assessment framework are outlined below.

- Determining the livelihoods loss as part of or as a consequence of torture
 - Tangible losses
 - Loss of assets
 - Loss of capacity (physical, mental, social, occupational function)
 - Loss of access and opportunities (eg to assets, jobs, spaces, licenses, services)
 - Losses in terms of psychological wellbeing and any other pain and suffering expressed due to livelihoods loss
 - Loss of meaning and purpose (since the torture event/s)
 - Challenges in understanding or making sense of torture events or life more generally
 - Loss of goals, life direction, other future plans and hope for the future
 - Determining the state of livelihoods prior to act/s of torture (ie for any loss, determining at time at which that loss occurred, noting that some losses may be pre-existing, relate to previous acts of torture or may be anticipated for the future)
 - Determining the cause of the livelihood loss (particularly establishing if the loss was intentionally inflicted and with a purpose)
- Whilst these are areas for consideration, it must be also considered that the experience for the torture victim may not be easily quantifiable (Patel & Williams, 2019), and this may particularly be the case in working to understand losses, especially in terms of meaning and purpose. An openness to hear the livelihoods impacts without categorisation is just as important as covering the above topic areas for assessment.

Understanding that one has experienced torture as per the legal definition and having this documentation are indeed important in establishing and understanding this violation of an inalienable human right. However, for the survivor, this may not be viewed as overly relevant to their current and ongoing struggles. Whilst establishing the contribution of livelihoods loss to acts of torture is important in a legal sense, it is also a fact that legal cases against torture internationally are rarely successful (Jensen and Kelly, 2022).

It is in the rehabilitation provision where the survivor is most likely to see the value of services, and to experience restoration of what has been lost.

Considering Rehabilitation of Livelihoods

In all, there can be little doubt as to the link between torture and livelihoods, nor to the importance of livelihoods in consideration of as full rehabilitation as possible.

The IRCT 2022 annual report found that of the 61,823 torture survivors reported to be treated by member organisations, 35% received some form of livelihoods support (an increase from 21% in 2021). This certainly speaks to both the recognition of the importance of this support in rehabilitation efforts, as well as the increasing integration into programming. This is further detailed in the 2023 annual report, identifying 11 member organisations implementing livelihoods support programs with positive impacts.

This also reflects the voices of survivors and those who provide care for them. Economic problems are often expressed as the problem most at the forefront for torture survivors (Aon, 2015) and, put simply, more secure livelihoods are what survivors want and ask for. In providing victim-centred care, this is an important consideration and likely reflects decision making by IRCT member centres in livelihoods inclusion. Livelihoods-based programs and activities may also present an opportunity as an entry point or to increase program retention. Livelihoods based programming may have better retention than programs with an initial focus on psychological care, where retention rates are often poor (Higson-Smith, 2018; Patel & Williams 2019). This may assist in meeting challenges in engaging survivors, developing trust and relationships and increasing overall service engagement.

However, IRCT data does not currently detail all forms of livelihoods support provided by member centres, and compared to studies and reports on mental health programs, there are very few publications reporting torture rehabilitation programs and their impacts in relation to livelihood supports.

Livelihood programming is a large and complex area of study and practice, generally sitting within aid and development sectors. When pertaining to refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) typically designs and implements programs (Jacobson & Fratzke, 2016). However, torture treatment centres are not generally aiming to implement large-scale programs, and generally have neither the knowledge base nor the financial base to consider this.

Instead, it is proposed that livelihoods rehabilitation should be considered as an individualised approach directly related to the torture experience. A comprehensive livelihoods rehabilitation program can be considered one which:

1. Identifies a livelihoods loss which is linked to torture
2. Identifies how that loss is restored through livelihoods rehabilitation programs

3. Provides or restores required assets, capabilities and supports
4. Leads to the provision of an independent means of living
5. Is sustainable over time, even when support is withdrawn
6. Provides a sense of meaning and purpose to the individual

To consider livelihoods in rehabilitation, it is rarely a case of simply replacing the lost job or land, but rather working with the survivor to understand all conceptualisations of the loss and how recovery from that may look. As noted by Etzold, “People’s livelihoods are not static, but rather unfold dynamically over time as people take on and change positions in social fields” (2016, p. 45).

Contributions to Livelihoods Rehabilitation

A comprehensive livelihoods rehabilitation program may not be possible or preferable for all treatment programs. This, however, does not mean that there cannot be other contributions from centres in integrating livelihoods within torture support in a way which is consistent with these ideals.

Complementary livelihoods activities which are not able or aiming to meet the proposed criteria to be considered rehabilitation can still be highly useful in the application of holistic care. Craft, market and other small-scale programs may not always be long term or sustainable, but may provide useful contributions to psychosocial rehabilitation, such as increasing activity levels, engaging in physical activity, as distraction or grounding strategies, or increasing social connectivity. Skills training in technical areas including economics and technology may not lead to enterprises or job opportunities, but they may act to increase interest in a range of areas, be useful in other areas of day-to-day functioning or increase points of entry into other programs or trainings. For example, a small qualitative study of a skills development program of refugee women in Jordan found that barriers to employment were not overcome, but the program did contribute to wellbeing, personal development and social cohesion (Thorne, 2020).

The loss of livelihoods assets may also be addressed directly, particularly where this ensures survival or reduces pressures or risks. Such contributions can be highly varied but may include cash or replacement of items required to engage in livelihoods. As well as providing for needs of living, such contributions may also increase dignity, build rapport, and increase options and opportunity for recipients.

Rehabilitation programs can contribute to large-scale livelihoods initiatives by providing insights on identifying torture survivors and enhancing trauma-based approaches specific to torture. Collaborations may also allow for larger agencies to provide general livelihoods programs but with contribution

from torture treatment agencies integrated in such ways that programs can then be considered as torture rehabilitation. Building partnership with like-minded or complimentary services for cross-referrals and program collaborations may offer greater potential to allow different organisations or actors to focus on what they do best.

Torture treatment centres can also act as advocates for livelihoods programs in their own countries, highlighting the link between torture and livelihoods and principles for best practice, legal action or activism, as well as compelling agencies to include the voices of torture survivors in program design and implementation.

It is vital that centres implementing livelihoods activities know what they are implementing, why and how, and that these decisions have been made with consideration for any risks.

Considerations for Livelihoods Rehabilitation

Integrating livelihoods rehabilitation into torture rehabilitation programs is not without risks, or areas for further consideration. Whilst not exhaustive, some of these areas for consideration are explored here. The capacity and capability of existing programs to include livelihoods rehabilitation programs may be a major limiting factor. Torture treatment centres supply a variety of services, and some may have specific expertise in areas such as medical or psychological treatment. There may be a range of practical barriers to increasing organisational capacity to address livelihoods including a lack of interest from organisations or staff, or a lack of available expertise to supply this service.

There are also risks of diverting time and funding from other needed rehabilitation services in medical, psychological and legal frameworks. Torture treatment centres are frequently already stretched thin, and may be limited in their ability to further expand services. If programs are not well considered and implemented, there is a risk that programs which aim to become holistic are instead piecemeal, or start to move away from the global goals of rehabilitation. There is also a risk that ‘everything’ becomes rehabilitation- where the multiple, complex needs of the person are all considered as needing to be addressing. Whilst the interconnectedness of the torture and the human experience are not denied, an all-inclusive model risks losing what makes torture rehabilitation centres special: the recognition of the inalienable right to live free from torture and to receive rehabilitation as part of reparations if that right is breached.

Client preferences are also a risk area for consideration. Whilst it is vital to promote the agency of torture victims in their choices regarding rehabilitation, there may be a risk associated with offering livelihoods rehabilitation, in that victims may wish to engage only in this area of programming, even

where physical and psychological support needs are indicated. This can be common in torture treatment centres, where participants may not wish to pursue mental health treatment due to fear or retriggering, cultural reasons, or needs which are seen as more vital or immediate. This has organisational risks with the potential to reshape services away from other care needs. There may be greater complexities to explaining the service to people in poverty who do not meet the criteria of torture survivors, and at its most extreme, there may be a risk of fabrication or exaggeration of experiences to be able to access services which have the potential to alleviate poverty. Similarly, there are additional complexities in program evaluation where livelihoods rehabilitation is included. Programming with economic outcomes is likely to be reviewed favourably by clients due to gratitude in an environment of limited resources or fear of discontinuation of services, and clients may be less likely to scrutinise or give unfavourable feedback.

As outcomes for such programs have not as yet been empirically established, there is the discomfort of engaging in work which does not have a research basis. The link between livelihoods for people in poverty and mental health has certainly been demonstrated (Schininá et al., 2016; Renzaho et al., 2020), but the link between livelihoods rehabilitation and torture has not to the same level, and programs may have unanticipated or counter-productive outcomes. Whilst there are other areas of research and knowledge that can be borrowed from to build best practice, it should also not be assumed that the context and needs are the same for torture survivors as for those who have suffered other human rights violations, or even from one torture survivor to the next.

Risks to client safety must also be considered. The purpose of torture is often to dissuade dissent and political participation, or to ensure that individuals or groups remain marginalised. Where survivors increase their economic stability, recover assets or return to previous roles, this may draw attention of perpetrating authorities. Survivors have been shown to be targeted due to their involvement in activism (Hapal, Gante, Ibarra & Rombaon, 2022; Higgins-Smith, 2017; Kimari, 2022; Wangari & Priyanthi, 2022), and resuming such activities may also increase risk.

What Might Livelihoods Rehabilitation Look Like?

Livelihoods rehabilitation would ideally incorporate in full the 6 components outlined above (establishing links to torture; establishing links to restoration; providing assets and capabilities; leading to independent living; sustainable over time; providing a sense of meaning). Rehabilitation may also be in part, where there has been consideration of the links to torture and resto-

ration and then a considered decision as to what is achievable, logical and ethical. For example, a displaced family may not be able to achieve sustainable livelihoods, but the gain from daily routine and short-term economic relief means an activity is worthwhile. Another survivor may be unlikely to achieve independent living due to resulting disabilities, however a long-term low-income activity may give a sense of life purpose and meaning.

Some guidance can be taken from the diverse literature on the topic, though the majority of research from both the global north and south is focused on refugee and displaced populations, rather than torture survivors specifically.

Where employment is the outcome goal, one review by Lai and colleagues (2022) found that across 72 quantitative papers on the topic an overall positive impact on mental health for employment for resettled refugees in western nations, with not only the increased economic stability recognised, but also the productivity from meaningful work engagement. However, within the small set of four identified studies of people who experienced torture that were identified in this paper, the authors' review findings suggested that employment did not impact mental health, and that torture impacts are not mitigated solely by employment, though it was noted that further studies are needed in this area (Lai et al., 2022). Additional research studies found a lack of occupation to be a predictor of mental health concerns for torture survivors (Carlsson, Mortensen & Kastrup, 2006), and economic problems being the biggest concern as well the biggest barrier to seeking medical care (Aon, 2015).

Within papers focused on program evaluations, there are some more positive findings. Where training and support has been over years and led directly into apprenticeships or employment, positive outcomes have been shown, such as long term evaluations in Jordan and Palestine (Jabbar & Zaza, 2016; Hilal, 2012). Though not specific to torture, Kumar and Willman (2016) reviewed program outcomes for 12 programs for people in fragile and conflict-affected locations in Africa and Occupied Palestinian Territories. They considered programs that provided psychosocial support, livelihoods support or both. Findings suggested that asset building and longer-term livelihood support were important in contributing to a psychosocial well-being, as well as providing some evidence that psychosocial support alone can have a positive influence on securing livelihoods. Receiving psychological care and physical therapy were also linked to some improvement on employment and income outcomes in a pilot study in Kosovo (Wang et al., 2016).

In considering the wide range of livelihoods losses that are possible, an equally non-exhaustive list of possible livelihoods rehabilitation programs can also be formulated:

- Direct provision of access to jobs or education training required to obtain work. Training may range from brief up-skilling through to formal qualifications
- Provision of assets required to restore previous livelihoods. This could include access to capital, land, work and business spaces, and goods such as seeds, livestock or saleable items.
- Provision of assets required to adopt new livelihoods
- Provision of training and support for small business or micro enterprises
- Provision of programs that directly link physical and or psychological rehabilitation to livelihoods, where there are specific barriers which are causing ongoing difficulties in engaging in livelihoods
- Programs which identify specific vulnerable populations and provide opportunities, such as survivors of sexual torture, people with disabilities, people released from detention, or families where the person in the provider role is not longer present or able to work
- Advocacy or justice processes which address systemic barriers such as exclusion from licenses and registrations

The impacts on local environment and economy must be key considerations, as must equitable access, particularly for women, people with disabilities and other groups who may be discriminated against, marginalised or vulnerable. In line with ensuring sustainability, provision of any assets, capabilities and supports must include a period of maintenance and review.

The IRCT Standards on Rehabilitation were adopted in 2020 and represent a set of internationally agreed best-practice standards for rehabilitation. Relying on these standards, some of the goals for livelihoods rehabilitation integration are further explored below.

Survivor contribution

Survivor contribution to design and delivery of programs is vital, and the linchpin of a victim-centred approach. Contribution from victims is best achieved through survivor engagement, defined by Einolf and colleagues as “the meaningful involvement of torture survivors in the direction of treatment centres, advocacy work, and the design, implementation and evaluation of programs” (p. 46). The need for increased inclusion of client voices has been often recognised as a severe limitation of current torture rehabilitation programming (Einolf et al., 2023; Higson-Smith, 2017). Where survivor engagement is lacking, this heightens the risk of programming which is unsuccessful or does not otherwise meet the needs and expectations of clients, and may create further disempowerment. Programs where training and development areas are predetermined and which neglect to consider the differences between individuals are less

likely to result in meaningful change (Dagar, 2024; Lumley-Sapanski, 2019). The lack of inclusion of survivor-focused problem conceptualisation is a pressing limitation in current research on treatment outcomes for torture survivors (Hamid et al., 2019).

As noted by Patel, Kellezi and Williams (2014), “We have much to learn from consultation with torture survivors, both treated and untreated” (p. 21). This view has a particular resonance with working on improved recognition and responses to livelihoods loss, as we seek means to increase the limited knowledge base.

Holistic

The need for rehabilitation which considers the whole person is well recognised. In terms of livelihoods rehabilitation, this not only includes development of a means of living, but also rehabilitation of physical and psychological injury which may impact ability to engage in livelihoods activities. Both treatment and assessment which is considered overly westernised and medicalised has been critiqued (Hamid et al 2019; Lordos et al., 2021; Patel et al., 2014). As aptly stated by Lordos and colleagues (2021), “It is reasonable to assume that efforts to restore mental health in affected communities through a purely biomedical approach would likely fall short of the objective due to not addressing the social determinants of psychological distress, such as extreme poverty social isolation, and ongoing community polarization” (p. 107). Just as poverty and torture risk are linked, economic empowerment and psychosocial well-being have been demonstrated to have an impact on one another (Kumar & Willman, 2016).

The need for holistic care justifies the inclusion of livelihoods programming. However, it must also be ensured that any programs with livelihoods are also formulated and implemented with a whole-of-person approach. As such, it should be clear to both the organisation and the individuals as to how livelihoods fit in with their overall care, and how other forms of support are necessary to their livelihoods journey.

Evidence based

Whilst acknowledging that the evidence base is currently scant, organisations should be aiming to build an evidence base for the adopted methodologies within their organisation, their region and internationally. Ideally this would also include seeking opportunities to develop research for publication or seeking means to capacity build to enable this. However, empirical research is not the only evidence form of value. Evidence may also be established from a number of sources, including feedback from staff and survivors, field experts (primarily within/ from the country of concern) and program evaluations. Wangari and Priyanthi

(2022) highlight the fact that there is not always a clear distinction between human right defenders and survivors, and speak of the role of these survivor-experts in strategy development. Expert and well-considered contributions allow organisations to comfortably commence or continue with livelihoods projects, whilst still keeping a broad goal of contributing to an increased academic research base.

A base of high-quality quantitative research is currently sorely lacking. Cochrane reviews of treatment for torture survivors have found that only psychological studies have met criteria for inclusion in their meta-analyses with only a small number considering other impacts such as quality of life (Patel et al., 2014; Hamid et al., 2019). However, such research methodologies may not be the best way to establish understanding and it should not be assumed that this is the only ‘good’ research approach (Patel & Williams, 2019).

Within a research base, it is important that the meaning and purpose elements are always considered alongside other wellbeing measures, as the intrinsic nature of torture is to break down life meaning and to incapacitate the victim to live a full life. To not consider the impact on meaning and purpose by both the act of torture and the rehabilitation program does not respect this fundamental understanding of torture. In this, qualitative research has an important complimentary role, as do research approaches which are more community-based and participatory (Salo & Bray, 2016).

Suggested areas for further research and consideration are included below:

- Development of assessment tools within torture assessment for establishing loss of livelihoods and the impact
- Consideration of the different categories of the torture/ livelihood loss link, and the application of this to rehabilitative livelihoods treatment (particularly where the loss can be considered as the act of torture itself), including whether and how this should influence the centre’s treatment approach
- Development of a more robust understanding between the differences and similarities between livelihoods loss and rehabilitation for those who are located in the global south versus those who have accessed resettlement in the global north. This development is particularly needed for those who are unable to flee across borders, which is already a severely under researched area in the field of torture care.
- Further exploration of livelihoods development as a preventative mechanism for torture should be developed, given the established link between torture and poverty
- IRCT is well placed to continue to expand the development of livelihoods impact and rehabilitation in seeking additional

information from member centres on livelihoods assessments, approaches and programs.

Safety-focused

Identifying and managing possible safety risks to engagement in livelihoods rehabilitation including protection of asset and considering of risks of further targeting is a vital consideration. Some risks around livelihoods are explored earlier in this paper, being risks of capacity, a limited research basis and client safety.

As such, organisational development and program design should consider these and any other possible risks at all points. Integrating livelihoods loss into documentation, planning, and evaluation and research is an important first step. Supporting victims to document livelihoods as part of the usual process of assessment builds a strong understand of how specifically torture and livelihoods link in each country context.

The organisational capacity risk should also be included in strategic planning and programming. Organisations could consider a livelihoods strategy plan where livelihood activities and programs are explained, justified, and linked to broader organisational goals. In this, bodies such as the IRCT have an important role in promoting relevant materials and expertise to allow organisations to access or develop appropriate trainings and integrate knowledge into existing or new practices.

Conclusion

The loss of livelihoods resulting from torture is a multifaceted issue with profound implications for survivor well-being and recovery. Livelihoods loss can stem from physical harm, psychological trauma, social stigma, and systemic marginalisation, exacerbating the already vulnerable situations of torture survivors. Whilst the link between torture and livelihoods is present in both practice and literature, there have been limited writings into what this link actually is, and where livelihoods fit in the sequelae of torture. Livelihoods loss may co-occur with torture, or may be a more direct consequence or indeed an act of torture in itself where the torture definition parameters are met, contributing to the ever-evolving understanding of torture.

A holistic approach to rehabilitation that addresses not only physical and psychological wounds, but also loss of livelihoods, is a well-established understanding. However, an understanding of what entails livelihoods rehabilitation is well behind these other rehabilitation areas. The proposed framework considers the different facets of rehabilitation in recognising links and making meaningful and lasting change. It is equally recognised that there are a wide range of possible contributions that torture treatment centres can provide to livelihoods development, even where they may not have the capacity for a full

livelihoods rehabilitation program. There may be risks to providing livelihoods rehabilitation or other livelihoods activities, particularly given the dearth of specific literature, however the very nature of torture rehabilitation means the risk exists, as does the need. And torture treatment takes this on with courage.

Torture and the rehabilitation from torture remain complex and evolving. Adding livelihoods rehabilitation conceptualisation certainly does not simplify this, but it represents the reality of the survivor experience and is an important area of work to respond to the expressed needs and indeed the reported actions of torture treatment centres for the survivors who access their services. Moving forward, further research, collaboration, and advocacy efforts are needed to address the gaps in knowledge and practice and ensure that livelihoods support is embedded as a cornerstone of comprehensive torture rehabilitation programs.

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