

**Voice of the Voiceless**  
People who have been abused, tortured and traumatised

a project of



# **Our Journey as the Voice of Voiceless: A case study**

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## 1. Introduction:

Before we discuss our community work of awareness raising about torture and Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment (CIDT) with non-nationals in Johannesburg, we must first come to a common understanding of the term community. The term community is more complicated than many people think as it is used in many different ways to indicate different things to different individuals and groups. In this report, we define the term community; discuss the history of this project to raise awareness about torture and CIDT, the formation of an action group, challenges encountered in forming this group, activities undertaken by the group to raise awareness about torture and CIDT, and challenges encountered in this regard. Furthermore, we also discuss key theories that informed our interventions, the support and skills that community facilitators need in order to raise awareness in diverse communities.

## 2. What is a community?

According to Hawtin, Hughes and Percy-Smith, (1994) the term community may be employed to describe locality as a basis of social organisation or it may be used to refer to a local social system or set of relationships that centre upon a given locality . The term community can also be used to describe a relationship which produces a strong sense of shared identity, or common interests which is not dependent on physical location .In addition, Langa (2010) asserts that communities can be geographical spaces but they can also be social groups having common identifying characteristics, for example, immigrants, a student community on a campus, the aged, or the gay community. The Trauma and Transition Programme<sup>1</sup> (TTP) uses the term community to denote geographical place as well as groups of people living in one geographical space.

It is clear thus far that the term community may be employed by various stakeholders to serve various interests and can mean different things at different times. It seldom signifies a homogenous, harmonious group of people (Bantjes, 2011b). A reflexive stance must be taken when the term ‘community’ is used. For example, people sharing values, beliefs, practices and cultures also constitute a community, such as a religious group. In the current project, a group of men and women who have been recruited to raise awareness about torture and CIDT could also be referred as a community as they share a common vision and interest, which is to eradicate the scourge of torture and CIDT in South Africa. The majority of these

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<sup>1</sup> This programme was formerly known as the Trauma Clinic at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

group members were non-nationals from different countries in Africa, namely Zimbabwe, Congo DRC and Somalia.

Most of the recruited group members were already activists in their own capacity, but they then formed an action group to be able to raise-awareness about torture and CIDT in Hillbrow and the inner City of Johannesburg. The group members gave themselves the name, Voice of Voiceless (VOV). The name means that the action group wants to encourage vulnerable groups, such as torture survivors, to be their own spokespersons in advocating for their rights and needs. Their target groups in terms of raising awareness about torture and CIDT are vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers, refugees and hawkers who are more likely to be harassed by the South African law enforcement officials (e.g. Police and Metro Police) (Langa, 2012).

In this section below, I discuss how the action group (VOV) was formed and the challenges encountered in forming this group, and activities undertaken by this group in raising awareness about torture and CIDT in Hillbrow and the inner City of Johannesburg.

### 3. Background information about the history of the project

CSVSR has been doing a lot of community work with vulnerable groups, such as refugees, and ex-combatants over the last 6 to 8 years. In 2010, a community project of working with unemployed young black men on the streets of Kagiso (a black township in the West Rand area of Johannesburg) was formed. It emerged in this project that young black men were more likely to be tortured and harassed by the police (Langa & Merafe, 2011). It also emerged that many of these young black men did not know much about their rights and where to go once they have been tortured and harassed by law enforcement officials. A project was then formed to raise awareness amongst members of this group about their rights and places that they can go to for medical, psychological and legal assistance if police harass them. This form of intervention was found to be very effective (see Modiegi and Kindiza report for detailed discussion of this group).

It is against this background that we also wanted to form another group that we will work with non-nationals in Hillbrow and the inner City of Johannesburg, as research by Dissel et al., (2008) and Langa (2012) shows that non-nationals like unemployed young black men are also more likely to be harassed by law enforcement officials. CSVSR then decided to start another project which will only look and work with the non-nationals in Hillbrow and the inner city of Johannesburg. It is important that rights of non-nationals are protected as the

South African government has signed and ratified various treaties and conventions, such as the Convention of Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which prohibit discrimination against non-nationals or subjecting them to any form of inhumane or degrading treatment, such as unlawful arrest without fair trial, detention in unhygienic repatriation centres and prolonged denial of rest, sleep, food or medical assistance by a public official or any other person acting in an official capacity. Section 9 of the South African constitution also obliges the state “not to unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, sex, gender, marital status or nationality”. Rights of non-nationals are also protected in terms of the Refugee and Immigration Act.

Despite all these conventions and laws, non-nationals in South Africa continue to be subjected all kinds of abuses, including torture in the hands of law enforcement officials (Dissel, et al, 2008; Langa, 2012). Non-nationals find living in South Africa as a challenge due to limited protections and other resources i.e. medical, legal and social resources.

#### **4. How the action group was formed**

Firstly, we conducted a research study by interviewing non-nationals in the inner city of Johannesburg about their violent encounters with law enforcement officials. It is emerged in this research that it is very common for law enforcement to abuse and harass non-nationals (see Langa, 2012 for more discussion on the key findings of the study). Given the findings of the study, it was seen as necessary to form an action group of men and women who will be agents of change in terms of going out in non-national communities to raise awareness about torture and CIDT and where people can go for psychosocial, medical and legal assistance once they have been tortured by law enforcement officials. Some of the interviewees were invited to come and join the action group.

We also recruited individuals who work for various migrant organisations in Hillbrow and the inner city of Johannesburg to also come and join the action group. Forming an action group helped group members from various migrant organisations to work together including interviewees who were recruited from the study to advocate for the rights of non-nationals in Hillbrow and the inner city of Johannesburg.

In 2012, the action group was officially launched. After going through the first phase of recruiting group members, we managed to have about 24 participants at the first workshop held. The workshop was just an introduction of a bigger picture to what we wanted to achieve

with the project. The workshop was held on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012 and was attended by 24 people. 60% of the attendees were Zimbabwean, 20% from the DRC and smaller proportions of Somali and South African participants were present (20% in total). As mentioned most people belonged to small grassroots organisations or were currently or previously associated with similar projects run by large organisations. Only a handful was ordinary community members not affiliated to an organisation.

During the workshop, it was seen that the participants have been yearning for something of this magnitude, where the people are their own advocates of change since they are all concerned about the way in which law enforcement officials abuse and harass non-nationals in South Africa, which some group members have personally experienced such treatment in the hands of police. The benefit of forming an action group like this is that it is led by non-nationals themselves who know about the lived experiences of other non-nationals because they also live in communities where many other non-nationals reside and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials.

The group members were keen to start immediately with the implementation of the project to the larger community, but we as community facilitators at CSVR saw this as premature action. We wanted the group to think clearly about the programme of action. By the end of the workshop, it was agreed that the group will meet every Thursday and Saturday to discuss possible activities aimed at raising awareness about torture and where people could go to seek assistance once they have been tortured or harassed by law enforcement officials. Some of these key activities will be discussed later in the report.

The section below discusses some of the challenges encountered in the formation of this action group and how they were resolved.

## 5. Challenges in forming the action group:

### 5.1. Confusion about what constitutes torture

During the first meeting of the group, it was found that most of the group members had no clear understanding of what constituted torture in terms of the United Nations Conventions Against Torture (UNCAT) definition and how this differed from CIDT. It was therefore important for the group to learn more on what torture is and its effects. Training workshop was held to discuss definitions of torture as discussed in the UNCAT, the Robben Island Guidelines, Universal Declaration on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In this workshop, we also discussed the definition of torture as



discussed in the Prevention and Combating of Torture Persons Bill (which has recently been enacted by the President of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma). On the whole, this workshop helped the group to clearly understand torture and how it differed from CIDT.

### 5.2 People coming with their own agenda

It is important to mention that members of the action group were drawn from different organisations. This was a challenge as members were struggling to agree on the agenda for the action group as each member wanted the action group to reflect the key objectives of his or her organisation. Inevitably, this created some tension amongst the action group members. It was not an easy task to try and find a common understanding for all the action group members. Eventually we had to guide their thinking, whereby we needed to make our point that the reason that we have gathered here and the main reason why we wanted an action group to be formed was to raise awareness about torture and CIDT in the Hillbrow and Johannesburg. In terms of this, we learned resolving the tension is not an easy thing when working with people of different backgrounds.

### 5.3. Power of language in meetings

Moreover, the tension with members of the action group was also as a result of language barrier amongst group members. Some spoke (e.g. French, Ndebele, Arabic), while others were fluent in English. It became evident that those who were fluent in English marginalized those who were not fluent in speaking the language. This created some power dynamics and tension in the group, particularly for those who were not fluent in English. They felt excluded in some of the discussions in the meetings. Ideally, it would have been better to work with translators or interpreters in the meetings but this was not possible due to financial constraints of the project to hire interpreters or translators. Despite this, we encouraged group members to speak their home languages and asked those who can translate to do so. One of the CSVR facilitators is also fluent in both French and English and played an important role in translating some of the discussions.

### 5.4. Group members dropping out

In the beginning we had about 24 group members who came after the first workshop meeting. It was agreed that meetings will be held every Thursday and Saturday to discuss their plans to raise awareness about torture and CIDT, but this proved to be difficult as some

group members due to other commitments were not able to attend meetings regularly as expected. We therefore decided to reduce a number of meetings to Thursdays only. Despite this, we continued to lose group members as some relocated to other places, some found permanent job opportunities, while others lost interest in the group. Currently, the remaining group members are seven in total and continue to work hard in planning and undertaking all activities aimed at raising awareness about torture and CIDT.

#### 5.5. The action group wanted to do things without planning

It was evident at the beginning that the group was not able to plan its activities properly. Their plans were not very clear on how they wanted to deal with the problem of torture and CIDT in South Africa. This delayed the group's progress until a one day planning workshop was organized to decide on activities to be undertaken for 2013. During workshop, a year plan was developed on activities to be undertaken by the group (see appendix for the year plan).

The section below discusses some of the activities which have been undertaken by the group thus far.

## 6. Activities undertaken by the action group

Despite all challenges as discussed above, the action group has managed to implement activities aimed at raising awareness about torture and CIDT in Hillbrow and the inner city of Johannesburg.

### 6.1. Awareness raising about torture and CIDT in Hillbrow and the surrounding area

Why was Hillbrow chosen as a site to raise awareness about torture and CIDT? Historically, Hillbrow was the only 'white residential area' in Johannesburg under apartheid, but many white people started leaving the area in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, many buildings have become dilapidated and the area has entered a state of decay. Today, the majority of Hillbrow's inhabitants come from rural areas in South Africa and from neighbouring African countries, such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This part of the inner city is characterised by high levels of crime and drug dealing. In a general survey conducted by the Institute of Security Studies, Leggett (2002) asserts that the residents of Hillbrow described the area as a "crime hotspot." In light of these facts, it is reported that police raids are very common, but residents noted in

Leggett's study that such raids have not been successful due to the police's corruption and abuse of power. 16% of the respondents in Hillbrow admitted to having being illegally arrested at some point, and 21 percent claimed that the police had in the past asked them for money (Leggett, 2002). Leggett contends that it is common for police in Hillbrow to harass people or arrest them illegally in search of drugs or stolen goods. The research conducted by Langa (2012) also found that harassment of non-nationals in the hands of police was very common in Hillbrow. Given these findings, Hillbrow served as a good site to raise awareness about torture and CIDT and where people could go to get medical, legal and psychological assistance once they have been tortured.

We got a permission to use a Cathedral Roman Catholic church for this awareness raising meeting. Firstly, pamphlets were distributed in Hillbrow and surrounding area advertising the workshop (see appendix for the advertisement pamphlets). On the whole, 21 people attended the workshop. Out of this, 14 were Congolese, 4 Zimbabweans, and 3 South Africans. In terms of gender, 15 were women and 6 were men. A presentation was made by two facilitators about trends and patterns about torture and CIDT in South Africa. Following the presentation, there was a dialogue in which participants were invited to ask questions and raise their views about this topic of torture. Some of the participants shared experiences of being tortured and harassed in their countries of origin and in South Africa as well. Here are some of the stories shared by the participant in the workshop:

*Martha<sup>2</sup> narrated that while working in Berea was once stopped by the police and asked all kinds of questions and told to go back to her country of origin. She felt harassed and humiliated as police were calling her Lekwerekwere. She was too scared of being arrested.*

*Lizo also mentioned that he was once arrested by police in Hillbrow and threatened to be taken to jail if he did not pay bribe. They threatened to be beat him in the process.*

Similar stories were shared by all other participants in the workshop, confirming findings of other research reports that it is very common for law enforcement officials to harass non-nationals in Hillbrow and surrounding area. In the process of sharing all these stories, some were very emotional. Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness were shared in the group, particularly in not knowing where to go and get assistance and report.

*Gregory spoke about feeling helpless that once he was harassed he did not know where to go to report his case of torture. Till today he feels angry that those police officials who harassed and tortured him have not been arrested. He wishes to open a case against them but does not have money to pay a lawyer.*

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<sup>2</sup> These are pseudonyms to protect participants' identity

The VOV facilitators used this workshop to raise awareness that South Africa is a signatory of UNCAT, that constitution of South Africa does not allow torture to happen in its territory and no one should be punished or ill-treated in a cruel and inhumane manner. Participants were also told about places that they can go to seek help if they have been tortured. Some of the places included Probono (for legal assistance), Wits Law Clinic, Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), IPID (Independent Police Investigative Directorate, which deals with cases of police brutality), and CSVR Trauma Clinic (for counseling). Pamphlets which included contact details of all these places were given to the participants. At the end of the workshop, the participants were happy about the meeting as they now know where to go to get help once they have been harassed by law enforcement officials. Here are some of the comments made by the participants after the workshop:

*I wish to say to the facilitators keep up the good work. We really need meetings like this because people are suffering here. Hope you will come back too soon to give us more information.*

*Thank very much for the pamphlets and will keep them safe for in case police harass me I know where to go.*

*I'm happy with the workshop because now I know my rights that police do not have right to abuse me.*

It is evident in the quotes above that the participants were happy with how the workshop went and the information received. It was agreed that it is important to continue with meetings of this nature in other communities. It is on the basis of this that another workshop was held with street vendors or hawkers in the inner city of Johannesburg.

## **6.2.** Awareness raising about torture and CIDT with hawkers in the inner City of Johannesburg

Why hawkers? South Africa has a high rate of unemployment. Statistics South Africa (2012) estimates unemployment to be in the region of 26%. However, the accuracy of this estimate is disputed by other researchers. Due to this high rate of unemployment, many people sell on the street of big cities, such as Johannesburg. Some of these hawkers are also non-nationals. Non-nationals seem to be self-reliant in starting their own small businesses by selling goods on the streets, which contradicts the dominant public discourse that foreign nationals are taking South African citizens' jobs. This allegation appears to be unfounded as many non-nationals are actively involved in an informal economy in the inner city of Johannesburg and surrounding neighbourhoods. Their major stumbling block is metro police officials who continuously confiscate their goods. Clearly, this makes it difficult for them to

achieve any economic independence and support their families. Metro police officials also expect hawkers/street vendors to pay a fine once their goods have been confiscated. Langa (2012) also found that hawkers are also more likely to be tortured and harassed by metro police officials in the process of confiscating their goods. Given these findings, it was important for us as VOV to go and raise awareness about torture and CIDT and where people could go to get medical, legal and psychological assistance once they have been tortured.

A street corner approach was used, which entailed going to the market place and meeting hawkers individually as they were busy selling their goods. This is because it would have been difficult to invite them to one central place for a workshop. We therefore opted for the street corner approach in which we fully engaged with each hawker about their experiences of harassment by law enforcement officials. We also gave hawkers pamphlets, which include information about places to report torture, such as Probono (for legal assistance), Wits Law Clinic, Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), and Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID which deals with cases of police brutality). In addition, the pamphlet includes information about the effects of torture and CIDT and where people can go if they need counseling. On the whole, hawkers were happy about our informal individual conversations as reflected in the quote below:

*John<sup>3</sup>, one of the hawkers who has a stand in JHB CBD Market said that he is happy that we have to come to them as some of the issues are not raised to the hawker's association as they do not even know them and they only see them when they come and hand-out some pamphlets. We as the hawker's sometimes we feel unwanted especially if you not a South African, we know that our rights are not recognised by the JMPD and the SAPS. Sometimes they just come randomly and take our good and right there they sell them to other hawkers and you cannot even do anything. When you sometimes decide to lay a case against them it will be a waste of time as you have to go through a lot of procedures.*

It is evident in the quote above that it is common for hawkers to be harassed by law enforcement officials. It is important this vulnerable group is assisted in getting help to lay charges against law enforcement officials who harass them and confiscate their goods on a daily basis. Clearly, SAPS and JMPD are taking an advantage of this vulnerable group. It is on the basis of this that the action group has also decided to go to Mayfair also to raise awareness with the Somalis in that area. This is because Langa (2012) also found Somalis are an easy target to be harassed and abused by the South African public, JMPD and SAPS.

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<sup>3</sup> All names used in the report are pseudonyms to protect participants' identity.

## 7. Challenges encountered in activities undertaken by VOV so far

It has not been an easy task to implement some of the above activities as the group encountered all kinds of challenges discussed in the section below:

### 7.1 Lack of human resource

The challenge of human resource relates to the issue of the number of VOV group members. We currently have less than 10 active group members which is a great challenge to the successful implementation of the interventions planned. We aim to build the capacity of the group by trying to mobilise and recruit new members during our awareness campaigns in communities. The group requires funding in order to carry out its interventions. As funds are limited within CSV, the group has considered generating additional funds through external fundraising initiatives. As the active VOV members are investing a lot of their personal time in VOV initiatives, a stipend may provide dedicated group members with much needed financial assistance. Training is also needed in order to improve the effectiveness of their awareness raising campaigns. This includes information on the correct legal procedures that victims of torture need to follow when their rights have been violated as their lack of knowledge in this regard was found to be a major limitation in some of the activities undertaken. Furthermore, it is also important that action group members are provided with basic counselling skills to contain victims of torture before they are referred to appropriate counselling centres, such as CSV Trauma Clinic.

### 7.2 Torture as too restrictive

South Africa has a history of state sponsored torture particularly during the apartheid era where torture was actively used as a tool against political opponents (Pigou, 2002, cited in Sideris, 2010). In an effort to distance itself from this dark past, the post-apartheid government has actively taken steps to comply with international standards on human rights and prohibit torture. Currently, it is a constitutional right not to be tortured or subjected to CIDT in terms of section 12 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution (1996). Furthermore South Africa signed and ratified the UNCAT in 1998 and drew up the Robben Island Guidelines to prevent torture in Africa. In 2006, the government also signed the OPCAT but has not yet ratified this agreement.

The most followed definition of torture is that of UNCAT, but in our awareness campaigns action group members found this definition to be too restrictive in capturing daily

experiences of non-nationals being harassed and abused by law enforcement officials as these experiences do not allow or meet the classical definition of torture in terms of severity and the purpose of state officials' violent actions. We had some discussions about this challenge as the group, and agreed that the term 'torture' is not used restrictively in our campaigns but rather expansively to include cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (CIDT). We spoke about Article 16 of UNCAT which acknowledges that actions which do not meet the criteria of torture should be considered CIDT. UNCAT provides illustrative examples that ill-treatment of and discrimination against certain individuals based on their personal characteristics (e.g., immigration status) could constitute torture or CIDT, which is what often happens in South Africa with the way law enforcement officials treat non-nationals. In South Africa, it is very common for law enforcement officials to harass non-nationals because of the latter's powerlessness position in society (Masuku, 2006). According to Nowak (2006), the powerlessness of the victim is also something important in determining whether an act constitutes torture or CIDT. This includes acts that could be humiliating in nature, such as being called derogatory names (e.g., *makwerekwere*) or threats of deportation against those who refuse to pay bribes to a public official or another person acting in an official capacity, such as Home Affairs Department.

### **7.3** Our focus was on torture, but some participants presented with problems about Home Affairs

In some of the campaigns, the participants raised their problems with Home Affairs. Their interest was not on torture, but they were eager to be assisted with their papers with Home Affairs. Action group members were not able to deal with their problems due to lack of knowledge, which was a major challenge. In future, we will organize campaigns in collaboration with the Lawyers for Human Rights and advocacy person at CSVR to try and assist participants who raise problems with Home Affairs.

### **7.4** Lack of cooperation from leaders of hawkers

Initially, we had meetings with leaders of the Hawkers Association to discuss our awareness raising campaigns, but they did not come on the day of the campaign. Despite this,

we continued with the campaign. The group will continue to engage with hawkers and spreading awareness on the three levels identified in the pamphlet we are distributing: torture, rights and support networks. We will follow up with the groups of hawkers we have spoken to and continue to create awareness and empower them to take action.

#### 7.5 Difficulty to organize one meeting for hawkers:

After the success of the first campaign, the action group continued to venture into the other targeted group which is the hawkers or street vendors. It was evident that more women than men were involved in street trading, confirming Langa's (2012) finding. When we conducted our "street corner campaigns" with the hawkers it was evident that more women were keen to talk to us, than their male counterparts. We also found it difficult and intimidating at times to reach them because they felt unsafe and thought we were from the media or the under-cover cops, even though we went to their market place. The approach we took was to make sure that the hawkers do not feel threatened by us and we do not pose as a threat to them. As an action group our aim is to be the voice of the people of the voiceless.

Some of the block stand leaders were there, but they were quite suspicious of us (possibly as police informers or spies despite our meetings with Hawkers Association leaders to gain an entry and discuss the aim of our project). Despite this, some of the interviewees were very vocal in terms of how they were treated by JMPD in confiscating their goods and assaulted in the process. There was a sense of hopelessness in reporting such cases of abuses or going to Metro Police offices to try and retrieve their goods since they have to go through some long procedures.

#### 7.4 Pamphlets written only in English

We have pamphlets about about their rights and places that they can go to for medical, psychological and legal assistance if police harass them, but the challenge is that these pamphlets are written only in English. The people who may not read and understand English are disadvantaged as a result of this. We need to try and write this pamphlet in different languages, but due to financial constraints.



## 8. Theoretical Framework<sup>4</sup>

According to Gabbard (1990, p.27) “there is nothing practical as a good theory”. This statement suggests that the value of a good theory lies to a larger extent in its practical applicability. In this project, the theory of conscientization based on Paulo Freire was used as a theoretical framework in this project.

Freire’s concept of conscientization was a key idea behind all our awareness raising campaigns. This is because one of Freire’s ontological arguments is that the purpose of life is to be fully human, irrespective of class, gender, race and nationality. So it is clear that non-nationals in South Africa are not able to realize this aspiration of being fully treated as humans. They are often dehumanized by law enforcement officials and called with derogatory names (e.g. *makwerekwere*). As a result of their daily dehumanization, non-nationals constantly live in fear of law enforcement officials. In his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire maintains that liberation from oppression could only be achieved by the oppressed by first recognizing its causes. This was our aim in going to communities where non-nationals live to raise awareness about their rights and places where they can go once they have been abused by the law enforcement officials. Freire talks about three levels of consciousness, namely magical, naïve and critical consciousness.

In the first and lowest level of consciousness, *magical consciousness*, people feel as though they have no power or control over the circumstances in their lives and therefore accept their circumstances (Freire, 2005). In fact, non-nationals feel powerless and helpless in the manner in which law enforcement officials violate their rights. Some reported their cases to the police but nothing was done to arrest perpetrators.

In the second level of consciousness, *naïve consciousness*, people understand their oppressed circumstances, but they still believe that nothing can be done to change their living circumstances. Despite our awareness raising campaigns, many non-nationals were still feeling helpless about the possibility of their circumstances changing.

The final and highest level of consciousness is *critical consciousness*, which represents the attainment of conscientisation (Cammarota, 2012). According to Freire, critical consciousness often leads to the search for liberation. He argues that ‘true liberation’ may only be achieved through public activism and action once the oppressed are educated about their own oppression through liberatory education methods rather than the banking methods of education associated with the oppressive system.

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<sup>4</sup> This section was drawn on the report written by Steven Rebello and Cherilee Camara, community psychology students at Wits, who worked on the project with Tsamme Mfundisi.

## 9. Skills for VOV members

For this project to succeed, it was important that VOV members are trained and provided with the following skills:

### 9.1. Workshop facilitation skills

VOV members were expected to facilitate workshops and meetings with torture survivors in communities. It was therefore important that they are provided with relevant trainings about workshop facilitation skills. These workshops were facilitated by CSVR community facilitators.

### 9.2. Administration and organisational skills

The project entails various administrative duties such as writing invitation letters, memos, pamphlets and sending emails. It was therefore that VOV members are provided with trainings to develop all these skills, including basic report writing skills. These workshops were also facilitated by CSVR community facilitators.

### 9.3. Advocacy and lobbying skills

VOV members were expected to advocate for the needs and interests of tortured non-nationals in South Africa. It was therefore important that workshops and trainings are organized to train VOV members on advocacy and lobbying skills. Again these workshops were also facilitated by CSVR community facilitators as well as staff of Black Sash (an NGO with strong advocacy background in legal matters), Probono (another legal organisation that provides legal assistance free) and Lawyers for Human Rights (an NGO that also provides legal assistance to non-nationals).

### 9.4. Community work skills

VOV members were expected to work in the inner City of Johannesburg and Mayfair. It was therefore that they are provided with basic trainings and workshops on community work skills. These workshops were facilitated by CSVR community facilitators knowledgeable in community work.

On the whole, it was evident that providing VOV members with all these skills contributed to the success of this pilot project. In the last section below, I discuss ways in which this project could become sustainable over a long period of time.

## 10. Sustainability of the project

“Sustainability” refers to the continuation of a project’s goals, principles, and efforts to achieve desired outcomes as discussed in the report beyond CSVN support and guidance. It is hoped that in the long-term VOV will become an independent action group in communities. In this way, the project will become sustainable beyond CSVN’s involvement. For the last few months, current VOV members were encouraged to recruit more other community members to come and join the action group. We are hoping that the group will grow in leaps and bounds once public campaigns and rallies are held. It is hoped that once the group grows, it would become more effective and sustainable in advocating for the needs and interests of tortured non-national survivors in South Africa. Our long-term goal is to create small action groups with individuals who want to see changes in their community. CSVN’s role in creating that space is to continue with the support to the communities, whilst the formed small action groups are the agents of change, whereby they lobby and advocate for interest and needs of marginalized groups such as non-nationals.

## 11. Concluding remarks

It was clear in this project that the practice of torture against non-nationals by law enforcement officials was something common in South Africa. This is because non-nationals are a vulnerable group due to factors, such as xenophobia, language barriers, lack of access to documentation, law enforcement officers’ tendency to target them and struggles to access the justice system when they do have legal problems. It was therefore important an action group (VOV) is formed to advocate for the needs and interests of tortured non-nationals in South Africa. The formation of this group was not easy process at the beginning as they were problems highlighted in the report, but the support and guidance by CSVN facilitators helped the group to deal with all these challenges until it was ready to start project activities of raising awareness about torture and places that they go to for assistance once they have tortured. The theory of conscientisation was of value in providing some insight in the conceptualization of the project, but it is important that the project moves beyond awareness raising to social activism and action.

In the next phase going forward, the VOV plans to hold massive public campaigns to raise awareness about torture of non-nationals in South Africa as part of its *critical consciousness* phase in terms of Freire’s work. These public campaigns will involve marches/rallies to submit memos to

all police stations in the inner City of Johannesburg and Mayfair, writing opinion letters in local newspapers, conducting media interviews on TV and Radio about the need to stop torture of non-nationals in South Africa and submitting policy briefs to parliament about the need to properly implement the Torture Persons Act of 2013, which criminalizes torture in South Africa and advocate that perpetrators of torture be arrested and punished.

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