

Preface

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This special issue of TORTURE is meant to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Annemiek Richters, Grace Kagoyire and their colleagues present a sample of stories of torture and ill-treatment, but also of rehabilitation as experienced and shared by a small group of women who survived the atrocities of this dark period of history, in which over 800,000 people were massacred. These women who represent only a small fraction of all Rwandan torture victims, took part in a special socio-therapy programme intended for survivors. They gathered regularly as groups, to share, talk, listen and teach each other how to cope and live positively with their past.

Through their narratives, we learn not only of the torture they endured, but also of their feelings towards rehabilitation and its perceived benefits. The Rwandan socio-therapy programme through a community-based approach has set the stage to include experiences of survivors of torture and of their families as part of rehabilitation processes, since it was launched in 2004. In doing so, it has enabled torture victims to reclaim their roles within their families and communities, as well as in rebuilding Rwandan society as a whole.

This Supplementum offers us opportunities for gaining insight on the socio-therapy approach, as well as discovering common themes that may require further research using a variety of methods. Although the methodology used for this issue is relatively uncommon, the compilation of human narratives containing detail and emotion,

from a torture survivor perspective, adds a more concrete dimension to understanding the challenges faced by rehabilitation practitioners in this particular context and worldwide.

The voice of actual victims of torture has its place in a journal such as ours, and we hope this issue serves its intended purposes.