The GATE Project

INNOVATE. EMPOWER. IMPROVE
Introduction

We believe that by mobilising clinical data about torture we can empower torture rehabilitation centres to create positive change in the lives of individual victims and in the global fight against torture.

We do this through the innovative Anti-Torture Database (ATD), which enables torture rehabilitation centres to collect and analyse the information they receive from torture victims about patterns of torture, its impact on victims and their corresponding needs for reparation.

The Global Anti-Torture Evidence (GATE) Project will support 15 rehabilitation centres from around the world to (1) improve their data collection and analysis through peer support networks, (2) analyse patterns of torture in their own contexts, and (3) use their data as evidence in strategic advocacy interventions.
The IRCT and Data Collection

The IRCT is the world’s leading health-based association working on torture rehabilitation, with more than 160 members in over 70 countries. It is governed by its members and aspires to be the global unified voice of the torture rehabilitation movement.

Our vision is a world without torture. However, as long as torture exists, our overall objective is to improve the quality of life of torture victims by guaranteeing access to health-based rehabilitation services. The IRCT’s Strategy 2018-20 has identified the promotion of global standards and evidence-based approaches to rehabilitation as a key priority.

Each year, IRCT member centres support hundreds of thousands of victims to rebuild their lives after torture. Throughout the rehabilitation process, clinicians receive and record an immense amount of information about victims and the context in which they were tortured.

To ensure that this information is used to support victims and to help eradicate torture, the IRCT membership has enacted a data collection initiative that aims to advance the movement’s ability to collect reliable, consistent and comparable data. Through data, the movement will be able to better evidence its work, hold States to account and improve the quality of services offered to victims.

In 2014, the IRCT developed a standardised clinical record-keeping system known as the Anti-Torture Database (ATD) to allow torture rehabilitation centres better capture, store and analyse data, within strict ethical and safety standards. The ATD is particularly unique as it lets users take clinical information and generate aggregated and disaggregated data reports and presentations, which can be used for various human rights outputs.
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To ensure that the highest possible quality of services are provided, health workers must have reliable information to assess their treatment programmes. Similarly, to advocate for positive changes in the fight against torture, they must be equipped with robust data that can effectively convince decision-makers. Taking these objectives as its point of departure, the GATE Project aims to further the global fight against torture, by using the clinical information collected by rehabilitation centres and stored in the ATD to help victims rebuild their lives.

Generously funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the GATE project began in 2017, when five centres already using the ATD from Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Europe and the MENA regions came together to act as regional hubs and trainers to a further 10 centres (two per region).

Over a two-year period and through peer-to-peer training, these Regional Hubs will instruct and support the 10 new centres in how to use the ATD as well as in responsible data management, digital security and data analysis. The data collected from these centres will then be applied to a range of strategic advocacy initiatives, nationally, regionally and internationally.

The three main pillars of the GATE Project are to provide rehabilitation services, to strengthen data collection and to carry out evidence-based advocacy for victim’s rights.

The GATE Project is being implemented in Turkey, Nepal, Uganda, Bolivia, Palestine, Kosovo, Hungary, India, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Tunisia, Lebanon, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
Rehabilitation

Torture inflicts devastating consequences on victims, their families and the broader community. Its severe effects disrupt lives and makes it extremely difficult to maintain social relations, work and simply continue daily tasks. These issues do not go away by themselves and if left unaddressed are often exacerbated.

Under the GATE Project, clinicians in the 15 centres are supported in the provision of a range of services to thousands of torture victims. The aim is to empower victims, help them recover from their injuries and rebuild their lives after torture.

The services the centres provide include individual therapy between a psychologist and a patient, group counselling sessions, physiotherapy, support groups, legal and welfare advice, assistance in asylum claims and general medical examinations.

When a torture victim seeks rehabilitation, IRCT member staff aim to create a supportive environment and, through empathy, dedication and care, create the space and build the rapport necessary for victims to begin the healing process.

Importantly, the GATE Project recognises that vulnerable groups such as women and girls often struggle to access rehabilitation services. Studies reveal that a significant number of torture victims are female, yet, torture remains underreported among this group. Women are less likely to seek support or redress, often due to complex legal, societal or cultural reasons. To ensure that female victims of torture have equal access to vital services, the GATE centres have adopted a gender-based approach that takes active steps to ensuring that no female victims are left behind.

"Rehabilitation not only helps victims restore their physical and mental wellbeing, but also supports them to take control and rebuild their lives."

— TPO Nepal
Data Collection

While providing holistic rehabilitation, caregivers build a close relationship with their patients and learn important information about the circumstances in which they were tortured. The GATE project offers IRCT centres a standardised record-keeping system that allows them to record and store this information - under the strictest ethical and safety standards - in the Anti-Torture Database (ATD).

The ATD provides rehabilitation centres with the means to quickly and easily analyse, anonymise, aggregate and disaggregate their clinical information into specific datasets.

Data from the ATD can be used for a variety of purposes such as monitoring internal service provision, comparing trends across centres and national borders and generating health-based knowledge on the positive effects of rehabilitation.

Specifically, under the auspices of the GATE project, centres use the ATD data to identify local patterns of torture through information about victims, perpetrators, the context of the violations, methods of torture and related damage. The centres aim to use these patterns to advance their ability to evidence their work and to ultimately contribute to a robust, international capacity to eradicate torture.

"The ATD offers comprehensive and detailed data that can be well integrated in advocacy, research, analytic studies and contribute to the scientific and humanitarian community at large, with maximum confidentiality for the victims."

— TRC Palestine

These graphs demonstrate some of the types of data generated by the Anti-Torture Database.
Using Data to Fight Impunity

A central element in IRCT’s global strategy is to advocate for torture victims’ rights and for the global eradication of torture. The fight against impunity is therefore a key component of these efforts to ensure systemic change.

The GATE Project recognises the centrality of evidence-based advocacy in attempting to secure this systemic change. It does this by supporting centres to analyse the data generated by the ATD and use it to present decision-makers with input for concrete steps to influence laws, public policies or jurisprudence.

Under the GATE Project, the centres will use their ATD data to direct strategic interventions at the national, regional and international level. On the local level, the centres will use ATD data analyses to develop national advocacy strategies and implement local advocacy activities. Where relevant and opportune, they will engage with regional and international mechanisms such as the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review to reinforce these national efforts.

"The ATD has allowed us to assume leadership in the fight against torture in Bolivia. It has been instrumental in pursuing positive change."

— ITEI, Bolivia