# EVALUATION REPORT

## Evaluation of the Livelihoods Project for Torture Survivors, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims

FINAL REPORT – 30 June 2025

*Charlotte Ørnemark, External Consultant*

CQ Consult

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ACTV | African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (Uganda) |
| ARCT | Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture Victims (Albania) |
| FRO | Family Rehabilitation Centre (Sri Lanka) |
| HDO | Human Development Organization (Pakistan) |
| IMLU | Independent Medico Legal Unit (Kenya) |
| IRCT | International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims |
| KRCT | The Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (Kosovo) |
| LNOB | Leaving No One Behind |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| OMCT | Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture |
| PVCR | People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (India) |
| RESTART | Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture (Lebanon) |
| STARRS | Supporting Survivors of Torture and Trauma (Australia) |
| TPO | Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (Nepal) |
| TRC | Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (Palestine) |
| TOL | Tree of Life (Zimbabwe) |

# 1) Introduction

## Background, purpose and scope of the evaluation

1. The **overall objective** of the evaluation was to take stock of results and assess the implementation of the IRCT Livelihoods Project for Torture Survivors. The initiative was conceptualized in 2021 in response to a strong demand from Member Centres[1], especially in the Global South, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to torture rehabilitation that includes livelihoods approach to complete and boost psychosocial and medical services. Meeting the basic needs of survivors are particularly important given that IRCT's Global Impact Data since 2020 shows a strong link, and a vicious circle, where you are more likely to be tortured if you are poor and marginalized, and where being a torture victim often leads to exclusion from both economic and social life. Additionally, economic hardship following torture and/or death of family members often hit others in the family hard on top of other trauma.[2]

2. In practical terms, and as part of **'Healing' component of IRCT's strategy** for the 2022-2025 period, IRCT supported its members to apply for sub-grants in the range of EUR 10,000 to EUR 20,000 to test how livelihoods support could be integrated with other forms of mental health and psychosocial support. At the same time, IRCT conducted research, facilitated monthly peer exchange among members and established a knowledge base on the topic through a series of webinars and a special section on livelihoods in the Torture Journal in 2024.[3]

3. Initially piloted in 2022 by five Member Centres who also formed the first Steering Group for the initiative[4], livelihood subgrants have since then been extended to **19 Member Centres** by the end of 2024 with two new (and partly pending) approvals for support in 2025. These initiatives formed the main evidence-base for the evaluation along with supporting documentation.

## Evaluation approach and methods

4. **The evaluation** covered all activities under IRCT's livelihood component to date (since 2022). It was undertaken for one month (15 May – 15 June 2025) with some additional time for report writing. Done entirely remotely, except for a face-to-face meeting with the IRCT Secretariat in Copenhagen, key informant interviews were conducted with 10 of the 19 implementing Member Centres. Additionally, the evaluation could attend a live webinar on the subject held on 21 May, with a chance to further interact with members.

5. In addition to interviewing representatives from more than half of the implementing Member Centres, one **global peer organization** in the anti-torture movement was consulted[5] along with the consultancy firm IMPAKT who conducted a recent review[6] of IRCT for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which also is the main funder of the livelihood component as part of its core support.

6. One remote **focus group with torture survivors** was organized by the implementing member People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR) in India for a chance to also record, first hand, the stories of survivors. Other testimonials were reviewed as part of the project documentation across the 19 Member Centres, and as recorded by IRCT.

7. The evaluation had, to a large degree, the nature of a **portfolio review**, drawing extensively on existing self-reporting, published materials in IRCT's Torture Journal, and validated through key informant interviews and a focus group discussion as described above. As such, it was both summative and formative in nature with one aim being to feed lessons and recommendations into the implementation of IRCT's next strategy.

8. The **overall approach** of the evaluation was to identify patterns and key lessons across the subgrants provided to individual members, while also seeking to keep a 'helicopter view' across the portfolio of projects and the role

[1] IRCT is the international umbrella organisation for over 170 torture rehabilitation centres in 77 countries, with its Secretariat located in Denmark.
[2] https://irct.org/livelihoods/
[3] Torture, 2024, 34(2)
[4] ACTV Uganda, PVCHR India, Restart Lebanon, TRC Palestine and TPO Nepal.
[5] World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
[6] 2024

of IRCT in generating knowledge that could be shared across its wider membership base and be fed into the global anti-torture movement. A strong emphasis on the experiences of implementing Member Centres was considered important given that the IRCT acts as a global secretariat and does not itself implement activities on the ground.

9. The evaluation approach **used a simplified version of outcome harvesting** where outcomes are defined as "changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of the people, groups and organizations that a program works with directly". In IRCT's own proposed monitoring and evaluation strategy for livelihoods support, effects from interventions were expected in three main areas: (i) improved earnings, (ii) enabled social empowerment, and (iii) psychosocial empowerment. However, the reporting format (provided by IRCT to implementing members) did not follow these 'groupings' of outcomes and focused more on undertaken activities. Monitoring and results reporting across subgrantees therefore varied greatly among sub-grantees, even if they typically included (to some degree) results in all of these categories. In addition to targeting only the torture victim, many activities and successful approaches also involved, to a large extent, the whole ecosystem surrounding the torture survivor which either enabled or blocked an entry into economic life.

10. Results at outcome level were therefore identified in projects' reporting and validated through key informant interviews and categorized and logged in an Excel table as to whether they were (largely) more **formal and tangible** in nature (built skills, increased household income etc.), or more **informal and intangible** (hope, positive outlook, etc). At the same time, results were perceived to be at a more **individual level**, or experienced **collectively** in groups such as the family, community or in the broader anti-corruption movement. (See findings section). The key informant interviews also served as points of validation for such harvested results and inquired into how IRCT had contributed and managed the support. In addition to funding, it was noted what other partnerships contributed to the noted results as/if applicable.

11. The evaluation focused on **three main evaluation questions**:

    a. What is the **impact** of integrating livelihoods support on mental health and trauma recovery?

    b. What is the **effectiveness** of IRCT's support in implementing this approach?, and

    c. What is the long-term **sustainability** of this model in resource-limited settings?

12. For the first evaluation question, it was understood to look at outcome level effects or **impact to date**, given that some of the initiatives were very recently undertaken and the full impact may not yet be visible or possible to track. In looking at effectiveness of IRCT's implementation, the efficient used of funds by Member Centres also felt relevant to add. Given that livelihood activities were new to many members (and IRCT), many also wanted to talk more about relevance – even if the full impact was yet to be seen. In other words, most of the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria (see figure below) were covered to varying degrees, even by just looking at a more limited set of overarching questions. Following good evaluation practice, a gender perspective was also considered in the analysis, following UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group) guidelines on gender and human rights.

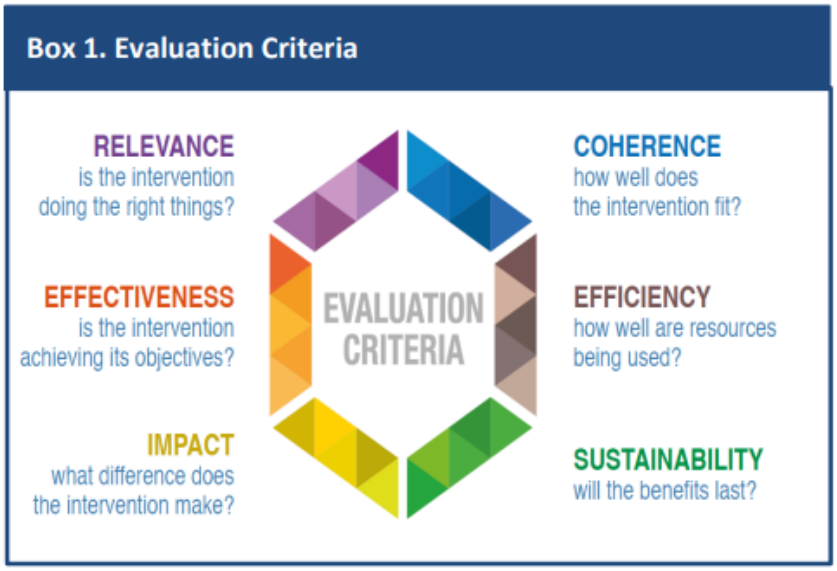



**Figure 1. OECD-DAC Evaluation criteria as quoted in UNEG Guidance Note, Jan 2024**

13. **Limitations** included the limited timeframe for the evaluation and the fact that harvested outcomes could not be discussed and prioritized in more participatory workshops. This means that many of the results had to be drawn out of self-reporting (validated for 10 members by key informant interviews), which could have introduced a reporting bias. Member Centres and survivors may also have downplayed challenges in the hope of continued future funding. However, for an evaluation of this nature and scope, such limitations were sought to be overcome by speaking to as many implementing members as possible from different contexts and with varying approaches, and to conduct interviews on a rolling basis so that emerging issues could be further inquired into along the way. Some of the initial projects finished already in 2023 with no apparent continuation, which may have introduced a recall bias when speaking to those in charge of project implementation at Member Centre level. While most organisations had retained main staff, consultants and other short-term personnel providing technical support were typically only hired for a limited period of time and could therefore not be interviewed.

# 2) Findings

## Impact & relevance

**IMPACT:** *The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended effects for end beneficiaries and/or at a broader systemic level.*

**RELEVANCE**: *The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to survivor needs in different contexts or levels of operation.*

**EVALUATION QUESTION:** *What is the impact to date/signs of intermediary impact of integrating livelihoods support on mental health and trauma recovery?*[7]

[7] Adjusted from the TORs to better capture intermediary results and lessons, and since a full impact assessment was not feasible under the scope of this evaluation.

### Key finding 1: The 'why' of livelihood integration is clear and well documented, with a high level of motivation and interest among Member Centres

14. Testimonials from across Member Centres point to livelihood support as a key **difference between 'surviving' and 'thriving'** for torture survivors. The single most frequently quoted outcome from across livelihood projects was that it gave hope and self-confidence (and even a documented decrease in suicidal thoughts) to survivors, and how this had positive effects on other rehabilitation efforts. Rehabilitation efforts without livelihood support have been likened with "a car without wheels"[8] that cannot move forward. Even so, this was a relatively new type of activity and approach for most of the (to date) 19 implementing Member Centres and for IRCT.

15. Much of the initial phase, since 2022, therefore seems to have been focused on building a strong case and evidence-base for **the 'why' of livelihood integration**. This is also reflected in the strong motivation that has driven Member Centres to get inovlved in this piloting phase. Key interviews clearly point to the economic losses experienced by survivors and their families, and how economic hardship hinders their ability to follow other forms of psychosocial counselling or medical treatments, contributing to high levels ofstress and anxiety, social exclusion and broken family relations. Yet, their capacity to address or refer survivors to sustainable livelihood options have so far, in most cases, been weak.

16. The Livelihoods Project by IRCT (comprising sub-grants, learning facilitation and building a knowledge base) has therefore been **highly relevant** as a direct response to the expressed needs of members and the torture survivors they serve, particularly in the global south where torture most frequently intersects with poverty and other forms of marginalization.

> *Self-reliance completes the cycle of rehabilitation. But a discussion about livelihood loss, how to regain it or try something new, needs to be part of the healing process from the very beginning as it generates hope and can give a sense of direction to the rest of the rehabilitation journey. (Member Centre interviewee)*

17. Given that the journey towards social and economic inclusion typically is longer for victims of torture, coping also with other forms of rehabilitation and healing, the topic of livelihoods support to torture survivors is also relevant in the context of the transformative principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of **Leaving No One Behind** (LNOB). Social determinants of health, including economic security and employment is captured in the definition of rehabilitation, defined in the Convention Against Torture[9], and in the IRCT Global Standards on Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (paragraph 15). The Leaving No One Behind agenda[10] encapsulated in the SDGs would imply that others working on livelihood support and poverty reduction more broadly, including governments in their commitments to the SDGs, would need to take the livelihood needs and special circumstances of torture survivors into account.

18. The **knowledge base** that IRCT, through its members, has started to systematically build can be a valuable resource in relation to this broader agenda of social and economic inclusion in the context of leaving no one behind. Conversely, how to combine livelihood support with psychosocial counselling and other forms of rehabilitation is a unique, though still relatively new and emerging, skill of Member Centres where they will need continued technical support and facilitated peer learning over some time.

[8] ACTV.
[9] General comment number 3 (article 14).
[10] The LNOB agenda represents "the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole." See: https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind

19. If Member Centres are brought in with **additional funding** (given that inclusion journeys may be longer and more costly for cases of torture survival who also undergo rehabilitation), Member Centres along with the knowledge brokering of IRCT, could potentially play an important role in complementing other 'mainstream' efforts in the area of livelihood support, poverty reduction and local economic development in areas and contexts where individual and social trauma from torture is prevalent (looking at both individual and collective effects of torture and social cohesion). This evaluation found a **high degree of motivation and conviction** among implementing Member Centres[11] to continue to play a role in securing livelihood support for survivors, even in a currently resource scarce environment.

### Key finding 2: The 'how' of livelihoods integration into broader rehabilitation efforts is less clear, but while approaches have differed, all subgrants led to a number of positive results for survivors

20. A **wealth of results and testimonials**, both gathered through this evaluation and earlier recorded by IRCT Member Centres[12], clearly illustrate how the loss of livelihoods by torture survivors and/or their families are critical for moving on – particularly in very resource scarce environments where poverty intersect with multiple forms of discrimination and stigma. Suggestions for how to do that were outlined in the special section of the Torture Journal (2024), starting from systemically documenting livelihoods losses in torture assessment and setting out some key principles for livelihood integration, such as it being (i) survivor-centered, (ii) holistic, (iii) evidence-based, and (iv) focused on safety.[13] These guidelines will be useful going forward, and in drawing up a more comprehensive strategy and change theory for this line of work.

21. IRCT anticipated subgrants to produce outcomes in three main domains: (i) improved earning, (ii) enabled social empowerment, and (iii) psychosocial empowerment. The evaluation found outcomes in all these areas but also notes that an **overarching change theory** was missing that more clearly set out actions and commitments by key actors at several levels of operation (global, organisational/Member Centre, and at the individual and collective level of surviv9ors). Some elements of such a change theory at different levels are outlined in the table below (Table 1) and visually represented in Figure 2, based on the evidence gathered as part of the evaluation.

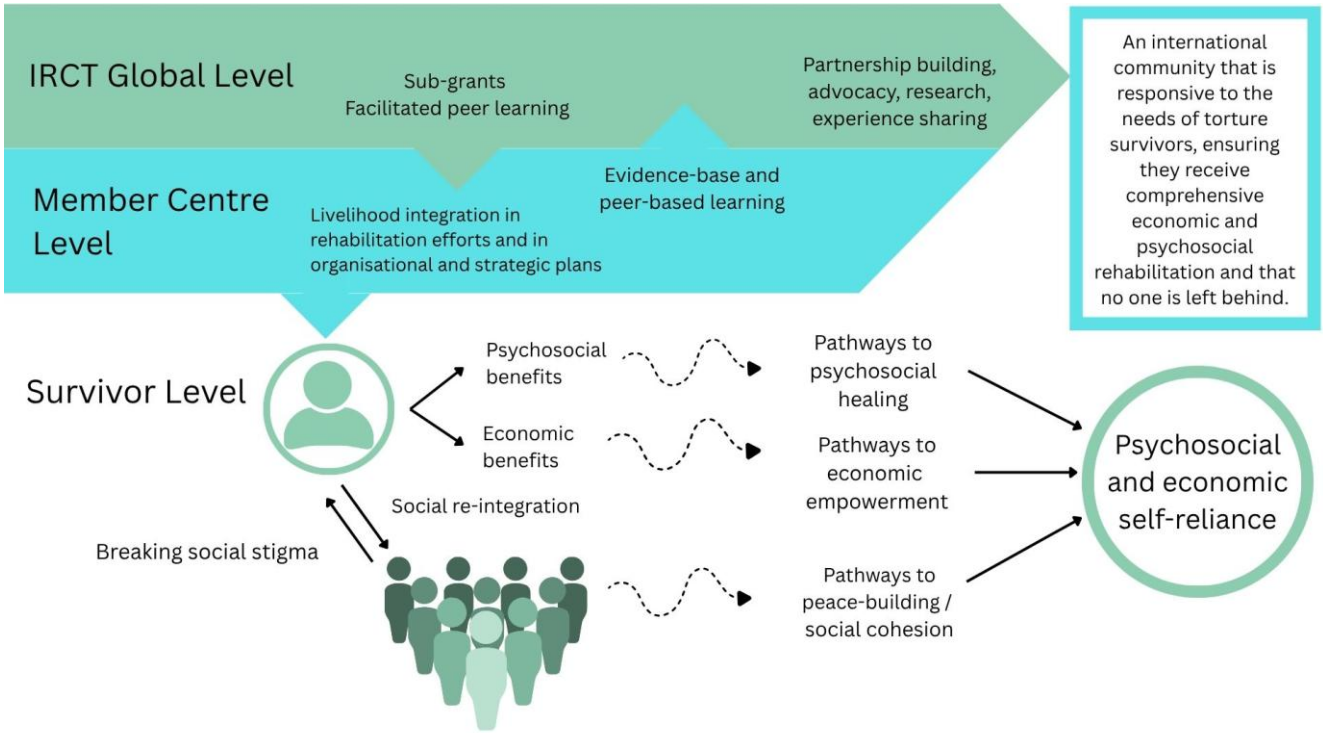
22. **Table 1: Elements of an overarching Theory of Change for the integration of livelihood support**

| Key actor | Main aim | Ideal outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| IRCT as part of the global anti-torture movement and the The #UnitedAgainstTorture consortium (UATC)[14] | Creating an evidence- and knowledge base for the integration of livelihood support in torture rehabilitation efforts through facilitated learning among its members and influencing peer organisations in "building a case" for dedicated and sustained funding.<br><br>Principles and guidelines are developed that can be adapted to local contexts and needs so that more Member Centres can get involved and build internal capacity. | International awareness raised with advocacy and knowledge sharing, and an 'architecture' created for supporting Member Centres in their efforts to respond to livelihood needs of torture survivors as part of the rehabilitation process. |

[11] Based on interviews with 10 out of 19 implementing members.
[12] See e.g.: https://testimonialhealing.blogspot.com/2025/06/the-station-house-officer-said-we-will.html
[13] Herbert, Tania L., *Torture, livelihoods and rehabilitation.* Torture, 2024, 34(2), 22-33.
[14] The United Against Torture Consortium brings together the global memberships of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) and the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT), with the Association for the Prevention of Torture, Omega Research Foundation and REDRESS.

| Key actor | Main aim | Ideal outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Member Centres serving torture survivors (with a focus on areas where torture strongly intersect with poverty) | Tools adapted and skills built to systematically document and respond to livelihood support needs of survivors in partnership with others.<br><br>Incorporation of a livelihoods approach into their own strategic plans to create and/or solidify local partnerships. | Feasible and locally relevant approaches to livelihood support are integrated into members' organisational strategies, plans and approaches, with the necessary partnerships formed in order to strengthen internal capacity to respond. The impact both on individual torture survivors and the 'ecosystem' around is systematically monitored and communicated to attract partners. |
| Survivor level | Individual and collective gains are noted across more tangible outputs (skills, income, nutrition, increased retention in other rehabilitation efforts etc.) and intangible or informal gains essential for psychosocial wellbeing (confidence, reduced anxiety and stress, hope, social interactions/acceptance and breaking of social trauma in community, rebuilding of trust in service providers etc.). | *Individual*: Improved rehabilitation journeys from the perspectives of improved (or potential) prospects for economic empowerment and psychosocial wellbeing of primary and/or secondary victims of torture.<br><br>*Collective:* Documented contribution to local economic development and/or social cohesion, peacebuilding, breaking of social trauma of affected communities and creating local partnerships to support social inclusion and trust-building between affected individuals and groups and local institutions. |

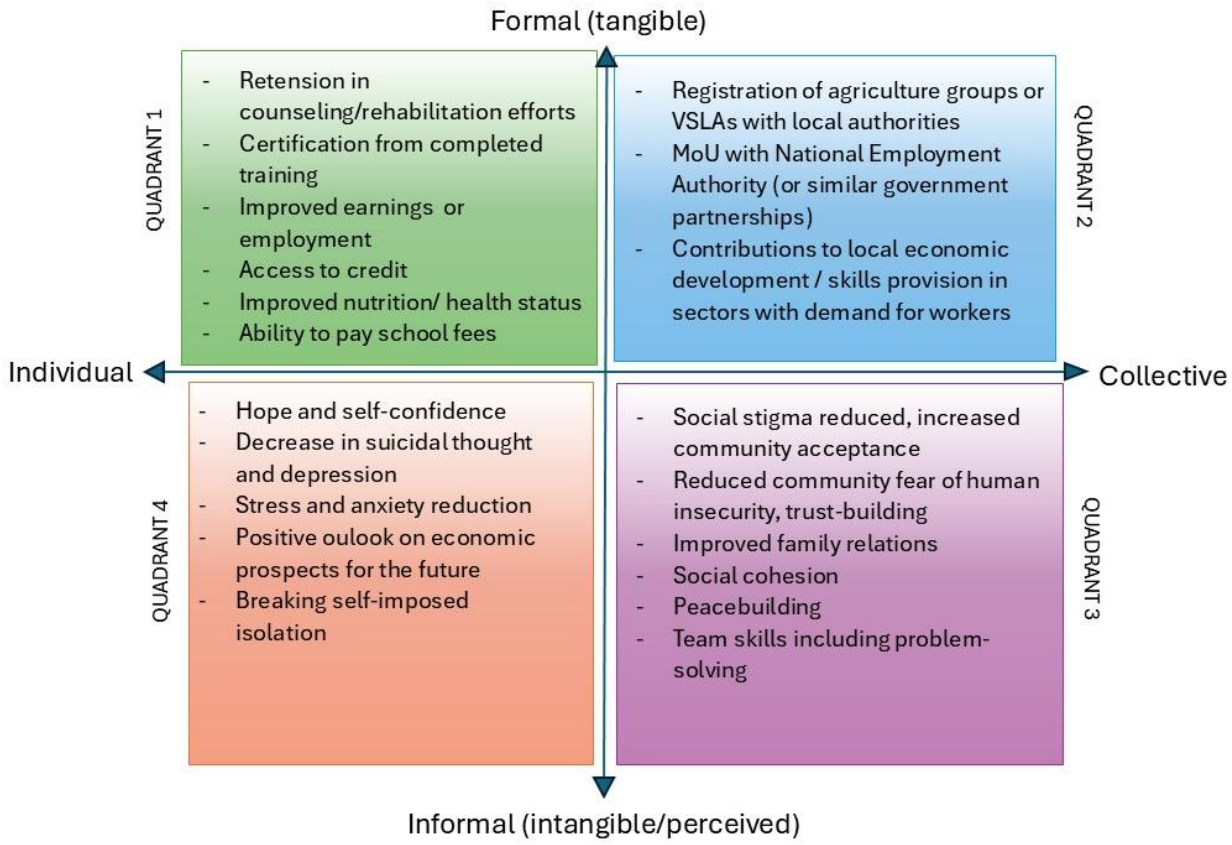
23. **Figure 2: A visual representation of a Theory of Change (ToC) based on evaluation findings**



24. The elements of a **multi-level ToC** for future efforts (as described above) were derived based on initial concept notes by IRCT and harvested outcomes to date, seeking to identify IRCT's added value as an international secretariat, knowledge broker and advocate for livelihood support based on member requests. As part of the evaluation assessment, an outcome table was created, logging **82 documented results** from the 19 implementing Member Centres (until end 2024), using the definition of outcomes described above (i.e. notable or significant changes in behaviours, practices or policies beyond activity level outputs). However, some outputs[15] (such as the provision of training or inputs to micro-enterprise start-ups) were also noted in newer initiatives which may not yet have led to the fruition of longer-term outcomes, or where effects were not systematically assessed.

25. Documented results were clustered in a two-by-two graph to illustrate **interlinkages** between formal, informal, tangible and intangible (or perceived/wellbeing) effects, where the **most successful and holistic approaches produced results in all of the four quadrants**, and to get a sense where the most frequently documented effects were. It should be noted that these are results from livelihood support combined with other rehabilitation efforts (notably psychosocial counselling), even though some reporting was unclear how such efforts complemented each other. See Figure 3 below with examples of results noted for each quadrant.

**Figure 3: Examples of results from rehabilitation efforts that integrated a livelihood approach**




26. **All projects** showed measurable improvements (some documented with more rigour than others) in mental health and other psychosocial factors, using pre- and post-livelihood support assessment forms. Most frequently quoted was the sense of regaining hope for the future, breaking self-stigma and self-imposed isolation and reducing anxiety and levels of stress. A conclusion across implementing Members was therefore that livelihood support clearly sped up the healing of primary or secondary torture survivors, helped build trust with both peers and service providers, and increased their attention to other rehabilitation efforts. Many of these positive effects extended to their families, particularly when an increase in income could ease the financial burden for covering family expenses.

[15] 7 out of 82

27. **Retention** of survivors initially selected for livelihood support initiatives (often vocational or entrepreneurial training in combination with rehabilitation or counselling) was generally very high, even though a small percentage had dropped out due to other personal problems, a lack of time to attend training sessions or lack of family support (more frequent for women survivors, notably older women).

28. Livelihoods initiatives have had a positive effect on socializing with peers and engaging in **constructive problem solving together**. This aspect was emphasized in several of the initiatives as something positive that complemented other forms of group therapy. It had a more prominent role in some of the initiatives which emphasized a more collective approach in the formation of groups that were interested in similar types of economic activities (e.g. chicken rearing, agricultural techniques using better tools, or the formation and financial management of Village Savings and Loans Associations, VSLAs).

29. **Family reintegration and improved family relations** also resulted from torture survivors increased ability to contribute to meet family expenses. For instance, artisanal training to do beadwork among inmates in two prisons in Pakistan, led to a third earning some income and being able to send money home to their families – helping their reintegration on release. This also led to an increase in demand for training among other inmates with each trained beneficiary also training others (raising the initial target of trained individuals from 120 to 520 trained participants). This, in itself, was noted to have a positive effect on those who took on a responsibility for training others.

30. **Compared to concrete economic benefits**, **more results at outcome level** across the 19 initiatives were recorded in the area of **psychosocial benefits**.[16] Overall, the livelihoods initiatives were found to empower individual survivors to regain increased control of their and their family's socio-economic situation, thereby restoring the agency lost during the torture experience. This led to a number of concrete changes in psychosocial wellbeing, while actual income increases in a sustained way (employment after training, sustained micro-enterprises etc.) were fewer and not documented to the same extent.

31. The fact that fewer concrete economic benefits were noted overall may partially be explained by the fact that rehabilitation was the primary objective for undertaking livelihood support. It is also likely that actual changes in economic self-reliance **take longer** than project durations of 6 months to a year to materialize, even if some short-term benefits were noted. However, all projects undertaken under IRCT's livelihoods initiative could point to some degree of economic benefits or prospects for future employment even though this was less clearly tracked.

32. Moreover, the degree to which such **economic benefits** were significant or could be sustained over time appeared to **vary a lot**. For instance, a quite intensive training program (120 hours of plumbing certification of 6 young men with mild mental disabilities) generated very positive results in terms of their wellbeing, hope and sense of self-worth[17], with all of them perceiving that they learned the profession. However, there were few concrete examples of employment afterwards (with one notable exception of one who later also became a trainer). Even so, compared to a control group who received only mental health and psychosocial support, those also engaged in the vocational plumbing training reported **more positive outcomes** in relation to engaging in school activities and forming and maintaining positive relationships after completing their training. While this type of intensive training could be extended to very few beneficiaries, others project examples opted to include more than 2000 families in a e.g. in seed distribution activities in India, in addition to a smaller cohort receiving more ongoing counselling and specific agricultural input. Wider outreach efforts may have had positive effects on buy-in for the community, yet economic benefits and their sustainability were less clear.

[16] 44 out of 82 results were noted in the psychosocial domain, with 29 out of 82 results clearly being in the area of economic empowerment or increased income generation. It should be noted that each of the 19 projects typically included some form of economic empowerment, but that more notable changes were in the area of psychosocial outcomes.

[17] 5 out of 6 of them felt that the course certification would strengthen their independence and self-reliance after the course.

33. Statements indicating **overall happiness** with the livelihoods support are present across all reporting and were validated during key informant interviews undertaken for this evaluation. Yet, more precise outcomes when it comes to self-sufficiency, and the extent to which economic benefits were sustained are hard to assess, as the reporting often is vague when it comes to economic benefits. One project example indicated that over 90% of beneficiaries experienced an ease in managing daily expenses.[18] While similar outcomes are reported in other projects, this was not a standard measure and says little about sustainability over time, even though initial results were very positive.

34. In a couple of initiatives, in addition to psychosocial benefits, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires also pointed to improvements in **physical health** conditions and better nutrition for survivors who benefited from livelihood support, which can at least in part be linked to increased ability to afford food and medicines. However, livelihood beneficiaries also received more frequent follow-up and psychosocial counselling which could have further emphasized this effect.

35. While project **approaches have differed** substantially across livelihood subgrants, all implementing Member Centres faced the need to carefully balance the big demand for livelihood support among survivors with the limited budgets at hand. What works in different contexts is clearly very dependent on context. However, **a successful approach** in Albania, validated through this evaluation, included:

    (i) Meetings with **national stakeholders** including representatives from businesses and international NGOs and government as part of the project conceptualization to ensure wide understanding of the issue, break the stigma around employing torture survivors and explore viable pathways for employment/support for survivors, including any prospects for longer-term support by other partners,

    (ii) Conducting a **market analysis** along with a comprehensive needs assessment to match skills with potential uptake and demand for services (in Albania, this led the organization into the computer and IT sector since there is current demand for skilled employers in the digital industry in Albania). A comprehensive baseline study was conducted to provide a clear overview of programmes, resources, and opportunities for participants aiming to integrate into the job market, with a particular focus on remote work. The study compiled valuable suggestions, online training links, and industry insights tailored to the needs of survivors entering the digital sector.

    (iii) Signing a **memorandum of understanding** with the National Employment Agency[19] to create links with official authorities and ensure that survivors are also integrated in the national employment market. The formalized MoU also gave credibility to the Member Centre to conduct training sessions designed to equip survivors with the necessary skills (in collaboration with a specialized training agency).

    (iv) Conducting monthly **training sessions** in digital literacy aimed at initiating the empowerment of survivors, while at the same time providing psychosocial support through other initiatives undertaken by the Member Centre. Providing dedicated resources and strategies to ensure their well-being for effective learning was central to the project's success. Hands-on assignments on creating outputs in digital tools were critical and justified the spacing of sessions. Importantly, **certificates** were provided upon completion of the training, with other opportunities for certified courses introduced to those who wanted to continue their training, with clear pathways set out up front.

[18] Khanal, D., Sitaula, S., Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Koirala, S., *Outcomes of integrating livelihood into mental health and psychosocial support program among survivors of torture: A mixed-method study from western Nepal.* Torture, 2024, 34(2), 41-51

[19] In other countries the equivalent would be involving local authorities from the outset and link survivors to district councilors or social development workers.

(v) The Albanian Member Centre (ARCT) integrated livelihoods support as a **central part of their organisational strategy and as an integrated part in the rehabilitation support** for torture survivors. This was seen as important in order to continue to seek partnerships and raise funds for livelihood support. This is the biggest challenge faced. Hiring external technical expertise will always require additional and earmarked funding and the funding landscape is not so favourable. An external pool of technical experts has been created in order to be able to more regularly tap into the required expertise when there is an opportunity to do so. This complements the "core" skills of staff – most who are medical doctors and psychologists.

36. Although the process described above (Albanian example) appears to have generated good results and some potentially sustainable pathways for economic empowerment of survivors, it is also true that due to **capacity constraints**, the Albanian Member Centre could not offer any livelihood support for those not interested in working in the digital industry. Thanks to the MoU they could, however, refer them to the National Employment Agency. This was critical for trust-building and community integration, since many survivors had a low level of trust in public institutions. The IRCT sub-grant was instrumental in trying out this new livelihood approach[20] given that funding for anything other than medical or psychosocial support is reportedly scarce. However, while 30 individuals were able to benefit from this support, the Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture Victims (ARCT) received requests from more than 85 other survivors associated with ARCT's rehabilitation efforts to undergo similar vocational training. This is not something which ARCT will not be able to act on without further funding, leading to some frustration both institutionally and among survivors. The implementer notes, however, that benefits outweigh such challenges: "(…) *this initiative has innovatively engaged the Albanian target group beyond the traditional client-therapist relationship, helping to break the stigma associated with shame and fear of entering the job market due to educational deficits."*[21]

37. In Kosovo, success factors included selecting beneficiaries who were already associated with the rehabilitation centre so that the livelihoods support **complemented other forms of support and follow-up**, building and **upscaling their already existing skills or interests**. For instance, many of the Kosovo survivors (all women) already had some basic skills or a small business in their home which could be revitalized, sustained or upgraded to improve livelihood options based on coaching in drawing up concrete business plans and apply for small contributions, including a basic market analysis.

38. While **market analysis** was conducted in most of the livelihood projects, it is unclear from project documentation how detailed this was, and whether it was always fully aligned with to the needs and demands of survivors in terms of their desired livelihoods support. This can be expected in this initial phase of piloting where many Member Centres were trying out the integration of livelihood support for the first time. However, going forward, more consistent documentation and matching of livelihoods needs and options could potentially help identify where there are opportunities as well as gaps and be used to create a broader range of partnerships with local actors (including vocational training institutes and local economic actors/private sector and local government).

39. Another consideration for the future is to include more **explicit and realistic targets when it comes to economic/income-related indicators** or targets, taking into account that some livelihoods activities may not necessarily lead to long-term economic benefits, but can still add substantial psychosocial value, and some marginal but important income in a given situation (as was the case e.g. through vocational training in beads work and handicraft among male detainees in prisons in Pakistan, undertaken by one Member Centre in collaboration with vocational trainers). While economic self-reliance is the ultimate goal, realistic intermediate goals may be needed, given the short time frame of support, whose primary objective is to aid in the rehabilitation and healing journey. For instance, while "economic self-reliance" may be possible within a six-month project depending on context and type of activity,[22] it may be unlikely or could at least indicate more explicitly what such self-reliance would look like in the given context.

[20] The project was implemented over six months in 2024 with a total budget of EUR 9,965.
[21] ARCT project report, 2024
[22] As was indicated in a couple of cases.

40. Without burdening Member Centres with too many indicators to track, a careful selection of some more **standardized self-reliance monitoring tools** could give inspiration and balance the use of the more detailed WHO Well-being Index which has been used by IRCT and some implementing Member Centres to assess psychosocial benefits.[23] For IRCT, a way to combine these two types of measures in a simple, yet holistic guidance that leave room for local adaptation (looking at both tangible and intangible benefits from livelihoods support) could help in IRCT's efforts to build a case for livelihood integration during its next strategic phase.

### Key finding 3: A livelihoods approach can help address communal and systemic factors leading to exclusion and marginalization

41. It was clear from a review of results that individual as well as collective activities and approaches complement each other and lead to better cumulative effects. **A holistic approach** taking both formal (income, certifications, skills) and informal aspects (social integration, sense of belonging, peer support) into account therefore appears to have been the most successful. Of course, this is highly dependent on both culture and context with e.g., Village Savings and Loads Associations (VSLAs), providing a "safe space to talk with people who had gone through the same ordeal," as one survivor testimonial illustrated.[24]

42. Community outreach on livelihood options was also found to provide an entry-point for addressing **community stigma**, e.g. social trauma of whole villages, when individuals there have been targeted by police, tortured and/or killed. This was noted in contexts where fear was widespread in the community of potentially also being targeted due to systemic forms of discrimination (e.g. based on religion, poverty, ethnic tensions etc.) and where socially excluding torture victims or their families sometimes took place out of fear and insecurity. Dialogue on livelihood options, it was noted, was usually seen as less politically sensitive, could help form more constructive bonds between people, groups and local authorities, and support joint problem-solving and even peacebuilding (see quote from Palestine). This led one implementer in rural India to switch **from more individualized support to collective approaches** for affected families (through goat rearing, seed distribution, kitchen gardening preceded by capacity building workshops combined with group therapy sessions).[25]

> *"…Livelihood integration social cohesion and complements peacebuilding. Without mental and emotional well-being and no access to sustainable work opportunities, prospects of peace at the individual and community levels are vulnerable. … It offers a safe space for community members of different backgrounds and in varying situations to develop work-related skills, create meaningful and supportive social relationships as they pursue their livelihoods." (Member Centre reporting, Palestine)*

## Effectiveness and efficiency in IRCT's implementation

**EFFECTIVENESS***: The extent to which the portfolio of interventions achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups of intended beneficiaries and stakeholders. An emphasis in the TORs on the effectiveness of IRCT's implementation support.*

**EFFICIENCY***: How well resources are being used (secondary but related criteria).*

**EVALUATION QUESTION:** *How effective was IRCT in providing support in implementing this approach?*

[23] Though developed for refugee scenarios, the following is one example of a Self-Reliance Index: https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/sri#:~:text=CONCEPTUAL%20FRAMEWORK,their%20needs%20in%20the%20future.
[24] Recorded by ACTV, Uganda.
[25] See Soley, B., Park, S. (2024). *Small funding can make big difference: Short-term outcomes of five projects linking livelihoods with mental health and well-being in torture.survivors.* Torture Journal, 2024,34(2), 34-40. Findings were validated by a focus group with torture survivors and the Member Centre held for this evaluation on 4th June 2025.

### Key finding 1: IRCT is a valuable partner for Member Centres implementing livelihood integration in rehabilitation efforts

43. All interviewed partners expressed a very **high degree of satisfaction** with the way IRCT has supported them in their livelihoods integration by being flexible in the approach, supportive of any adjustments made along the way, and "highly professional"[26] in the ongoing coaching and facilitation of peer exchange and learning among Member Centres, including through monthly follow-up calls conducted by the IRCT International Secretariat.

44. There is a unanimous sense among implementing members that they **have been heard** in their request for livelihood support, including through the feedback and joint learning that has taken place as part of their implementation. This includes how IRCT has regularly featured results and testimonials from livelihood projects in international fora and in their Torture Journal, creating a platform for a common understanding of both opportunities and challenges to emerge in the wider anti-torture movement.

45. Several partners mentioned that they **could not have tested this approach** and incorporated it as a core pillar in their offerings, had it not been for the IRCT subgrant, given that most other donors active in the torture rehabilitation space do not specifically fund livelihood support, with a few exceptions. Unsurprisingly, a desire was for such support to continue, especially since the subgrants (ranging from EUR 10,000 to 20,000 over six months to a year) do not allow for sufficient follow-up over time and do not allow for more comprehensive approaches and offerings to a wider range of survivors. A desire is therefore that IRCT can continue to advocate among donors for additional funds being allocated to integrate livelihoods support in their rehabilitation efforts.

46. Given that many positive results have been noted since the IRCT Livelihoods Project was introduced, and a strong case for "why" has been documented and published, there is also a wish for IRCT to **continue to broker partnerships at different levels**, and to help Members come up with guidelines and tools that could facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration also with partners, such as INGOs, private sector, and other development partners or philanthropies active in livelihoods support that is not specific to torture rehabilitation. While challenges with such partnerships may contain a current misalignment of incentives (many 'mainstream' livelihoods initiatives being geared to reaching scale rather than catering for individual special needs like those of torture survivors), a link to the Leaving No One Behind agenda could potentially be further leveraged (See also findings on sustainability below).

### Key finding 2: Proof of concept has been established during the initial phase which means funds can be used more efficiently on livelihood support going forward

47. During this piloting phase since 2022, **pre- and post-surveys of interventions** helped in having a common approach and facilitated peer-based learning even when contexts and approaches differed considerably. Additionally, a common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework was proposed by IRCT. Yet, this was not extensively used by partners. A 'higher level' shared ToC, with key principles (that can be monitored) across projects may help to build a case for the integration of livelihoods support going forward. This could more clearly spell out the **different roles and functions**, e.g., between IRCT and Member Centres, for advancing a joint integration agenda at different levels, setting targets also for partnership development and integration (or as complementary to) existing rehabilitation efforts. (see Table 1 under 'impact and relevance').

[26] Direct quote from Member Centre interviewee.

48. In this first phase, some Member Centres explicitly used an experimental design to **rigorously and scientifically** test the value added of livelihood support. This meant often having a control group of those who only received psychosocial services and those who got this in combination with livelihoods support. For instance, in Palestine, the project initially selected 68 ex-detainee women in high need of support. Of these, 40 were randomly selected and then further divided into two groups of 20, with one of the groups (n=20) also receiving vocational training in beauty salon work, embroidery or handicrafts. Those selected for vocational training were also those in most need of livelihoods support based on criteria such as employment status (all selected were unemployed), poverty, lack of income or educational levels and tangible improvement after receiving initial psychosocial counselling. When comparing response and improvement between the group that received treatment and vocational rehabilitation and the group that only received mental health services, the effects of livelihoods integration appear to have been positive. A total of 85% of group members who received both services began to experience high self-esteem, in contrast to only 37.5% of those in the other group who only received treatment services.[27] Similar differences indicating positive effects were noted in other psychosocial rehabilitation indicators such as the ability to make and form social relationships, problem solving, and higher and greater sustainable improvement in their mental health in comparison the other group.[28] This is in line with **similar results by other members** who engaged a control group to assess effects.

49. Experimental approaches such as the one described above are laudable for their rigour and for providing proof of concept when it comes to livelihoods integration. However, they **come with a trade-off cost** in terms of how money was spent. While the evaluation could not cover a detailed audit of financial reporting of all projects on a project-by-project basis[29], the above example from Palestine shows that less than a third of those who initially got mental health and psychosocial support as part of the project budget eventually ended up also getting livelihoods support in 2022. The following year[30], when the Member Centre received a follow-up grant, around 20% of those initially identified for psychological first aid (and based on the same criteria of unemployment and lack of previous skills) received livelihoods support using 15% of the overall budget.[31] A holistic approach is clearly integral to success of livelihood efforts. Yet, in a situation where resources already are scarce, this points to the fact that only a small proportion of already limited budgets were used on actual livelihoods training and coaching, and only for a limited sub-group of individuals.

50. While a more **rigorous evidence-base** is needed for building a stronger case for livelihoods integration internationally and with donors, the designs with treatment groups and control groups in a single project seem both costly and possibly too labour intensive for Member Centres in projects that are already small-scale and short time in nature. Scientific results are furthermore hampered by the small eventual treatment group (the survivors who ended up getting both psychosocial and livelihoods support after a long selection process) and given that additional selection criteria were introduced (such as the level of poverty and need of livelihoods support compared with others in the control group). Conducting pre- and post- livelihood questionnaires with beneficiaries (as encouraged by IRCT) seems to be a good practice – particularly if done consistently and using similar tools across all sub-granted livelihoods projects in a manner that is regularly analyzed across the portfolio. However, given the resource constraints, more strategic partnerships with academic or research institutions for building a more rigorous evidence-base at cross-portfolio level could be considered, tapping into additional research funding.[32] Moreover, testimonials and qualitative evidence from IRCT's inception phase already suffices to justify the 'why' for livelihoods integration, while, going forward, the evidence-base for 'how', 'for whom' and 'how to adapt generic approaches to local context' should be more in focus.

[27] Based on project reporting from the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (TRC), Palestine.
[28] Economic benefits were not measured in relation to income or self-reliance.
[29] Due to scope and time constraints.
[30] The first year (2022) the Member Centre's total budget was EUR 20,160, while for 2023 the budget was EUR 10,000.
[31] EUR 1,500 towards vocational training with EUR 6,080 going to a bigger sample for mental health and psychosocial counseling.
[32] This was successfully done with one master's thesis in collaboration with Copenhagen University already, and in sourcing articles for the Torture Journal special edition on livelihood integration in 2024.

51. Nevertheless, the evaluation also noted that the **quality of reporting** on livelihoods support varied greatly between different sub-grantees. While some reports contained excellent detail, using pre- and post-intervention survey results, it was often difficult to assess why certain livelihoods activities were chosen over others, and why with a particular sub-group of torture survivors were selected over others. A simple reporting format should be encouraged. Yet, given that the current reporting is done on an activity-by-activity level before getting to more generic lessons, it is difficult to even assess the total number of beneficiaries involved if some participate in more than one activity. Simply adding together all participants that have participated in all stated activities tend to inflate overall reach.[33]

52. It would be recommended that IRCT looks over its reporting format to **better capture reporting against the overall rationale of the initiatives** and how they complement existing approaches to rehabilitation. Several projects included activities that seemed to be less directly linked to the core purpose of the project, some which seemed unjustified given the high demand for livelihoods support among survivors.

### Key finding 3: There is an opportunity to use gender disaggregated data more effectively for gender analysis, possibly at a cross-portfolio level

53. Project reporting typically disaggregated between the number of male and female beneficiaries. Many **gender issues** also appear in the reporting and testimonials[34] (e.g. men in particular suffering from depression and self-stigma for not being family providers, broken marriages, female primary or secondary victims being socially isolated or stigmatized when taking up different types of work etc.). However, any overall (or project-based) gender analysis typically does not go deeper into how gender intersect with other forms of marginalization of survivors. If done, this could provide further guidance on how to address livelihood needs by both primary and secondary victims in a way that ensures a gender responsive (and possibly gender transformative) approach[35]. One **intersectional aspect** was noted in relation to older survivors (60+ in age), particularly women, who often lacked family and/or community support to engage in economic activities. To overcome such barriers, tailored support, including the formation of groups for peer interaction, was important to build the necessary confidence and support to engage in livelihood activities. Other intersectional dimensions related to disability and the inclusion of people living with disabilities in the workplace.

54. 'Loading' more tasks onto Member Centres (such as conducting more thorough gender analysis) would not be advisable given that many of them are already overstretched and that integrating livelihood activities already puts their internal staff under some strain unless dedicated staff can be hired. Instead, this could potentially be supported by IRCT at **a cross-initiative level**, and be used to leverage partnerships with other types of organisations, e.g. in the women's movement, through global funds supporting frontline women human rights defenders – many whom also have livelihoods components for example for women survivals of sexual violence – or UN Women[36], UNFPA and others with existing livelihoods support initiatives in the context of the empowerment of women and gender equality. Agencies who are actively supporting women's economic empowerment (but not specifically in conjunction with the rehabilitation of torture victims) may be increasingly interested if such linkages are further explored and highlighted as part of IRCT's knowledge generation, particularly since over 50% of livelihood beneficiaries supported between 2022-2024 were women[37].

### Key finding 4: Assessment criteria for project proposals could emphasize complementarity and leverage potential

55. The **simple proposal format for members applying** to participate in IRCT's calls for proposals for livelihood initiatives was positively perceived. At the same time, based on a review of a sample of both proposals and proposal assessments, the complementary nature of livelihoods support to other rehabilitation efforts (and funding

[33] According to IRCT calculations, a total of 1,237 beneficiaries benefited from livelihood support across all projects (until the end of 2024). From the literature review undertaken through this evaluation, the estimate is a total of 1,116 beneficiaries with an overall budget of EUR 346,076 for the 2022-2024 period. Of these, 52% were women, 30% men and 16% of beneficiaries were unspecified in terms of their gender or were identified as "families".

[34] Individual testimonies from secondary survivors in India, recorded by PVCR and validated during the data gathering with a focus group of survivors can be found here: https://pvchr.blogspot.com/2023/09/ground-report-victims-of-police.html

[35] See e.g., the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (UNDP) as a means to classifying gender results: https://erc.undp.org/pdf/GRES_English.pdf

[36] Such partnerships, e.g. with UN Women and other UN agencies such as UNHCR already exist for individual Member Centres at the country level, but not necessarily on livelihoods support.

[37] Based on a review of project reports reviewed as part of this evaluation.

sources) is currently not clearly spelled out. It is also unclear what share of the Members' overall number of associated survivors are being served, which sub-group is being selected and why. Another requirement could be to explain what partnerships will be established, and how limited funds for livelihood support will be used in an effort to leverage additional funding and/or partnerships to ensure sustainability.

56. Currently, many livelihood support initiatives are being conceptualized as a **stand-alone projects** instead of being perceived as an integrated complement to other existing efforts. For example, in a couple of sampled IRCT's project proposal assessments for new projects in 2025 (one still pending approval), project goals are ambitious given the very limited funding of EUR 10,000 respectively. While one of the proposals mentions a project partner for the distribution of business grants and providing technical training, it is unclear whether any additional funding streams will be tapped into to achieve the target of having 80% of participants (16 out of 20 targeted survivors) achieving financial independence within six months. While beneficiaries will, in part, be from already supported cases, the livelihoods grant will also cover mental health support at an individual and group level. This is also the case for the other proposal which covers 50 intended beneficiaries. Such mental health support is clearly critical. Yet, it is unclear whether additional rehabilitation funding streams and efforts could be used so that the livelihoods grant complements already existing efforts, e.g. for mental health counselling.

57. Some projects appear to be **thinly stretched** in terms of covering a lot of activities with different groups. For instance, in Bungoma, Kenya, 150 survivors were initially trained in a workshop on livelihood opportunities. Reporting from the Member Centre illustrates the high demand of secondary survivors, and the youth targeted: *"…we had a high number of torture survivors in the project compared to the funds received so we decided to accommodate a lot of them although not all of them and this led to the stretch of the resources we had."* Four groups were then formed to learn skills in carpentry, poultry rearing and starting a retail shop. This led to employment opportunities for around a third of them which is a clear achievement. Yet, it is unclear how much follow-up could be done or to what extent initial groups and economic activities could be sustained, and if/how follow-up can be done through other rehabilitation efforts will continue. Others, such as the Member Centre in Cameroon, invested more in support in each individual beneficiary, providing them with all start-up materials for their economic activities in sewing, nail care services, agriculture and laundry care/clothing business. With a total budget of EUR 6000 over six months and only 11 selected beneficiaries, the "investment" per beneficiary was higher: over EUR 500. Even though this is a higher livelihoods investment per beneficiary compared to many other projects, even this seems like a fairly low amount for setting up a new business. Still, it is unclear how it was complemented by other forms of rehabilitation, and how material costs could be sustained over time, if needed. Testimonials illustrate how the support had positive effects – e.g., 60% reported feeling less stressed after the support was provided with an average of 50% increase in income per beneficiary, but sustainability measures remain unaddressed.

### Key finding 5: There is a big need among torture survivors to access livelihoods support. Yet, so far, only a small percentage of survivors are given the opportunity to benefit.

58. All interviewed implementing Member Centres went through **a rigorous selection process** of who would be most in need of and/or be best suited to participate in livelihoods initiatives given the particular circumstances of their individual healing journey and the limited resources available. Clearly, not all survivors need, want or are in a place in their healing journey where they can effectively participate in livelihoods activities. At the same time, some project offerings tended to be conceptualized more out of opportunity, based on the availability and affordability of trainers and materials, than out of a more consistent individualized assessment of livelihood losses, needs for support, and susceptibility for receiving engaging in livelihood activities. This means that there is no systematically gathered data in the project documentation on what the different livelihoods needs are overall, what share of these were served through the livelihoods project (and how), and where there are remaining gaps (e.g., for survivors who are not suited or interested in the proposed activities).

59. Many members also seem to have struggled with **balancing the availability of support they could offer** in terms of livelihoods, and **managing survivors' demands and expectations**. For example, in 2022 (according to the Annual Report of ACTV Uganda), around 10% of all torture survivors treated by the centre also received livelihoods support, of which 2% went through the tailoring training supported by IRCT. A total of around 4% of all survivors received tailoring and other types of livelihood support through the IRCT pilot project (including also training in VSLA management, support for starting micro- and small businesses, agricultural support and the formation of a farming group). The following year (2023), this increased somewhat to around 8% of all survivors treated benefiting from the IRCT sub-grant. Yet this is still far from meeting the total demand among torture survivors. During 2023, start-up capital for small agri-businesses was provided to a total of six survivors, making the selection process a challenge.

> *"Limited resources to meet the overwhelming number of survivors that lose their livelihood and require small scale businesses is a problem. This slows down the selection process as many of them qualify for the intervention but few of them can benefit." (ACTV reporting, 2023)*

60. Given that many torture survivors live in marginalized communities, where **overall poverty levels are high**, providing livelihoods support to some, but not all, also proved challenging in some projects. One Member Centre report indicated that: *"…survivors who did not receive the livelihood support were inquiring why they were not receiving it, and it was a big challenge to convince many individuals in the community. They were informed by the psychosocial counsellor that the livelihood support was being provided not only on the basis of economic condition but considering all other mental health, physical health and overall wellbeing of survivors."*[38]

61. Another initiative in Burundi illustrates how a total of 100 survivors, divided into 5 groups were selected for training, and **how thinly resources were spread** to cover costs for the initial training: *"…300 Euro were budgeted for each group. We used this sum for transport and accommodation of the participants at a rate of 15 Euro per participant*." For the actual implementation: *"100 income generating activity projects (IGA) were selected for 100 survivors. These were then grouped into three categories: 40 IGA projects for livestock, 30 for agriculture and 30 for small-scale commerce."* With an investment of EUR 185 per participant for their income generating activity taking off, this made up the entire budget of EUR 20 000, leaving nothing for follow-up, coaching of expert trainers or project coordination, which all had to be done on a voluntary basis, or by tapping into other resources to fill financing gaps. For livestock farming, since each person's individual contribution was not enough to buy a cow (at a cost of around EUR 540), beneficiaries organized themselves into groups of three for the purchase and had to find ways to share the daily income from the milk. Nurseries and fertilizers were invested in and wholesale items were purchased for small store retail. Contrary to those projects who spent a large amount on counselling and coordination, this differed in the sense that all went to livelihoods support for individuals. Yet, the large number of beneficiaries and the fact that the intervention was (presumably, judging from reporting) delinked from other rehabilitation efforts still call into question its sustainable impact.

62. In Zimbabwe **start-up costs** were a key consideration in the choice of proposed businesses, with many opting for activities that had the potential to quickly generate some economic returns. Taking more of a collective approach, four groups of women (10 in each group) were formed and initially trained on teamwork and problem-solving skills so that they could later articulate their vision for income generation. Most settled on chicken rearing and detergent making to support their choices for quickly establishing some income at a low production cost (each group received EUR 500 amounting to EUR 50 each per participant). While some initial first signs of progress were recorded (again, mostly in relation to psychosocial benefits), the project is still ongoing and whether funds were sufficient to get their micro-businesses off the ground and flourishing over time is still to be fully assessed.

63. A **different model going forward**, could be for IRCT to: (i) provide livelihood support strictly as a leverage tool to complement other ongoing rehabilitation efforts (supported by IRCT or others), with the aim to enhance survivors' rehabilitation journey, and/or (ii) support Members to partner closely with others who can tap into other funding for livelihoods support (vocational training, start-up kits, monetary grants etc.), with the Member Centre focusing more specifically on making sure such efforts are complemented by sufficient psychosocial support and integrated in other rehabilitation efforts. In the latter case, livelihoods support provided by IRCT to Member Centres would nearly exclusively focus on the more informal or intangible benefits, such as behavioural, mental health and wellbeing aspects, even though the combined effects – economic and social – would need to be monitored

[38] TPO, Nepal.

to track cumulative effects. There is no reason why IRCT could not do both types of support grants. However, it would mean that the limited resources available could be more clearly directed and not be spread too thinly over a number of activities.

## Sustainability

**SUSTAINABILITY:** *The extent to which benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

**EVALUATION QUESTION:** *How can long-term sustainability of this model be ensured in resource-limited settings?*

### Key finding 1: Self-reliance as a goal implies that support should trigger change, but not go on forever

64. Most livelihoods initiatives have self-reliance and social integration as a core goal. This implies that support is supposed to be **catalytic for the survivor**, but not that it will not necessarily continue for a long time. This, however, needs to be balanced with the fact that the journey to self-reliance may be longer for torture survivors and secondary survivors – many who live in extreme poverty and who suffer from other forms of trauma rehabilitation while also trying to e.g., get a small business to flourish and expand. As such, the goal of quickly reaching self-reliance can seem overly ambitious combined by the short-term nature of the support without a clearly built-in strategy for follow-up and continued coaching for some time. At the same time, positive effects on the rehabilitation process may not immediately pay off economically.

65. Grants for livelihoods activities ranged from a duration of 6-12 months, each grant being between EUR 10,000-20,000 per implementing Member Centre. Members who received **follow-up grants the following year** could more actively follow up their first cohort of livelihoods trainees while training others, which turned out to be beneficial even if anecdotal evidence, rather than continued tracking over time were used to highlight cases of success.

66. Other **successful examples of follow-up** were when survivors initially received a small start-up grant, either to reactivate or upscale their small businesses which they had lost or discontinued (i.e. basic foundational skills and infrastructure were already in place). Follow-up then took place – initially through the livelihoods grant and later through their regular psychosocial coaching and continued rehabilitation efforts. In Kosovo, close relationships between individual beneficiaries and the Member Centre's project coordinator (skilled in livelihoods support) continued long after the initial monetary or material support was given, with beneficiaries volunteering information and photos indicating progress or seeking advice in running their individual businesses. This exemplifies how even small inputs can make a big difference, but that it requires careful processes of trust-building and support – formally or informally – to keep up motivation.

67. Nevertheless, livelihood support does not come without **challenges**, and sustainability was frequently mentioned as one of the more pressing ones. The most frequently stated challenge were limited funds and the short-term nature of project support. However, other frequently mentioned challenges related to the fact that it was **hard to select beneficiaries**, taking into account that "*those who need support the most may not be in a position to successfully engage in livelihood activities*"[39]. This was particularly the case when start-up kits and materials were provided to survivors with no prior experience in how to run a micro-enterprise, and who had very low financial literacy. In some cases, only a one-day workshop, or a limited number of training sessions preceded the entrepreneurial support, even if follow-up was done via regular counselling sessions. Regular follow-up also appeared to be more difficult when the number of beneficiaries was larger, when there was no natural follow-up via other rehabilitation efforts (i.e. when the livelihood project was conceptualized more as a 'stand-alone' initiative) or when traveling to remote and marginalized areas was difficult or too expensive in terms of covering travel costs of staff.

68. Going forward, addressing **what would be considered a sustainable outcome upfront** would be key, ensuring that there are exit strategies where the livelihood support ends, but where other follow-up mechanisms 'take over' to capture whether any catalytic effects are sustained over time. Referrals to other sources of support could also be further explored.

[39] Direct quote, key informant interview.

### Key finding 2: The IRCT livelihood support model has strong support from Member Centres which will help ensure its continuation and sustainability

69. In favour of the IRCT livelihoods model being sustained and further refined, even in resource-scarce settings, is the **strong commitment, interest and level of ownership expressed by Member Centres** for integrating this type of support into their rehabilitation efforts. Member Centres involved in implementation gave generously of their time and knowledge in monthly sharing sessions with each other, spanning a wide variety of geographical and cultural contexts – something which has been identified by most as very enriching. Key lessons could also be directly fed into IRCT's Executive Committee presided over by one of the implementing Member Centres.

70. Several organisations mentioned that they had learned a lot from participating in the IRCT livelihoods projects, which led to several important **changes internally to sustain this work**. An important outcome for ACTV was however that livelihoods support was incorporated as one of the key pillars of its approach, each with a clearly articulated strategic objective. Likewise, ARCT in Albania has now incorporated livelihoods into their organisational strategy.

71. Most of the other Member Centres implementing livelihoods projects mentioned it as an activity in their **annual reports**. However, only some appear to have made it a more integrated part of their strategic approach. Lack of funding and capacity (i.e. having a livelihoods expert on staff) were stated as the main reasons why it is still seen largely as an "add on" or "stand-alone" activity only if there is earmarked funding for it[40]. One implementing member noted that they were not so explicit about their livelihoods support in order to manage expectations and not to "promise more than we can deliver."[41]

72. Others also noted an **initial reluctance or hesitation of staff** to engage in livelihoods support activities, given that this is not their main expertise. While such initial hesitations were typically overcome when they noted the positive effects on rehabilitation efforts, some Members would have preferred to be able to hire livelihoods expertise to be part of their core team if this was to be a fully integrated activity. Instead, most relied on short term consultants who left at the end of the project, making longer-term follow-up more complicated. A couple of implementing Centres did hire a Socioeconomic Programme Associate (or similar), in charge of livelihood activities and follow-up, but could not retain the staff member at the end of the project.

73. It should also be noted that livelihoods support typically is a **very small part of Member Centres' overall support to torture survivors**. For instance, while the Member Centre in Nepal serviced over 22,000 survivors with mental health and psychosocial services, only the IRCT pilot provided livelihoods support to 44 survivors, covering a very small percentage of their overall services to survivors.

74. In the **country context**, involvement of **local government** was key for sustainability. For instance, the Family Rehabilitation Centre (FRC) in Sri Lanka worked closely with local authorities to provide training in sewing of leather bags for groups of women, and in establishing a food packaging facility where equipment could be housed and maintained. This helped with community integration and allowed women to work together in groups. For local authorities, this was seen as an opportunity for local economic development, and they therefore supported the initiatives with facilities that could be used for free. Links were also made to local banks, where some women managed to secure loans for their business plans. Where such buy-in from local authorities was weak, problems seemed on the contrary to occur in implementation, e.g. in relation to leather processing in DRC where local environmental taxes had not initially been taken into account and where plant facilities had to be rented by the project, severely limiting longer-term sustainability. Creating a formal MoU with the National Employment Agency was also key for ARCT in Albania to refer and facilitate employment opportunities and create trust with local authorities. Likewise, a jail-based training in beads work and handicraft in Pakistan created partnerships both with local authorities, prison management officials and a school of design, art and architecture technologies to support the display and promotion of the beads work that inmates created, and to provide technical expertise. Such (local and national) **partnerships were important**, not only for longer-term sustainability, but also to help with reintegration of beneficiaries in society and for building trust, self-confidence and providing tangible pathways for how to continue education or use skills after the initial training.

[40] Based on feedback during key informant interviews.
[41] Ibid.

### Key finding 3: With a more extensive track record in providing livelihood support, leveraging additional partnerships and resources should be possible, but needs good coordination

75. Many agreed that additional partnerships may open up for new funding opportunities and potentially enhance sustainability going forward. However, some also **warned for the risk of a 'siloed' approach**. Even internally, several implementers had to overcome the challenge of lack of coordination between mental health teams (providing psychosocial counselling) and livelihood teams. Such silos could be even more difficult to break if partnerships are formed with external organisations in charge of livelihood support while Member Centres focus more exclusively on other types of rehabilitation.

76. An example of a **successful NGO partnership** was however found in Kenya where the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) managed to collaborate effectively with the Italian NGO No One Out! who was already present in some of the areas where beneficiaries were located and who had a track record on working with livelihoods support and poverty reduction. While many projects hired experts, consultants or paid training institutes to conduct vocational training courses, the partnership between IMLU and No One Out! was found to be beneficial in that it involved a more equitable sharing of tasks and costs, particularly since the INGO already worked with some of the survivors also covered by IMLU. The fact that IMLU had its own funding via IRCT facilitated the collaboration. Yet, continued funding was still seen as a major barrier for the partnership to continue over time. It is clear that cost-sharing with other NGOs may be challenging. Rather, partnerships seem to work if each organization comes into the partnership with its own funding secured. The partnership between IMLU and No One Out! worked out since they served the same communities. Otherwise, it was noted that just "referring" torture survivors to other NGOs is not easy, given that they already have their own selected beneficiaries and lack budget or skills to cater for the special needs of survivors. Government programmes (e.g. for women's or youth entrepreneurship) were also noted to be quite complicated for survivors to access without coaching and support.

77. Livelihoods support was a new type of activity for many of the implementing Member Centres. Yet, in some cases, building a track record in livelihood support **led to new funding opportunities with local donors and funding agencies**. In Sri Lanka, the Member Centre could use the results from the IRCT project to approach UN agencies that were already implementing livelihoods programmes to help boost existing funding. To ensure organisational sustainability, **field officers were involved in all training** provided to survivors so that they would also learn and be able to follow up, making sure that organisational capacity was built and could be sustained.

78. Though not a requirement from IRCT, some Member Centres also managed to get in-kind supplies or inputs to entrepreneurial activities at lowered costs from local private sector companies when they explained the purpose. While such support from the local business community cannot be taken for granted, it illustrates that even the **private sector** could potentially have a role to play in keeping costs down. Having **dedicated staff** who can form and maintain such relationships with suppliers and local firms was critical.

79. At present, **funding prospects** for many Member Centres are dire. Several of the interviewed members reported having suffered from a substantial loss in their overall funding, particularly those who previously had USAID funding for part of their activities. The current funding climate and increased competitiveness among organisations have not been favourable for creating new partnerships, and "everyone is very protective about their funding sources and donor contacts"[42]. In this context, the **IRCT funding has been critical for many of the members**, even if short term and catalytic in nature, to expand their own institutional capacities and offering to torture survivors to better meet livelihood needs.

## 3) Conclusions

80. Since the introduction of IRCT's Livelihoods Project for Torture Survivors (2022), IRCT together with implementing Member Centres have come a long way in **building a strong case for 'why'** livelihood support should be part of a holistic approach to torture rehabilitation. This should be starting from the very outset of systematically docu-

[42] Direct quote from key informant interview.

menting livelihood losses and needs, and finding means and partnerships to address them. Such a holistic approaches should be taking both individual and collective, formal and informal factors and results into account, placing livelihood support firmly within, and as an integrated complement to, other rehabilitation efforts.

81. IRCT has been able to provide critical financial support in the form of livelihood subgrants to Member Centres, without which members would not have been able to build critical skills, test approaches, and learn together with peers how to implement livelihood initiatives in ways that make meaningful difference to survivors. Additionally, IRCT has played a key role in **sharing and systematizing insights** through a special section in its Torture Journal on livelihoods, and through extensive documentation of testimonials and partner experiences (e.g. through Webinars and facilitated monthly peer exchanges among members). As such it has used its role and mandate strategically, making sure that international awareness and an emerging 'architecture' for livelihood integration has picked up momentum and interest among others in the anti-torture movement and among individual Member Centres as part of their regular service offering. IRCT will need to **continue to play this role** of knowledge broker, facilitator, advocate and manager of subgrants as a first phase of establishing 'proof of concept' now moves more firmly into operationalization.

82. Going forward, the next strategic phase would benefit from shifting focus **more to the 'how'**, while seeking to broaden both interest and tapping into additional resources from others, also beyond the 'inner circle' of torture rehabilitation experts and funders. One suggestion is to link the livelihood integration agenda to the transformative promise of Leaving No One Behind as a fundamental principle of the SDGs. In doing so, IRCT can focus on its **core competence** of servicing its members in the provision of holistic rehabilitation support in line with their expressed needs, while ensuring that funds dedicated to livelihoods support are used in a way that are catalytic in nature and help leverage additional buy-in and support from a broader range of partners. Continued earmarked funding for livelihood support will however be needed

83. **Challenges on the 'how' clearly remain**, even if recorded results are plentiful and cut across very different geographical settings and contexts – at least in the short to intermediate term. Longer term sustainability both from a rehabilitation and self-reliance perspective is still to be further assessed, with the potential for maximizing potential sustainability if subgrants are more effectively combined with other longer term rehabilitation efforts and if skilled staff can be retained onboard. In addition to continued resource mobilization, the formation of strategic partnerships, improved coordination (especially between psychosocial and livelihoods support), and continued facilitated peer learning among Member Centres can help come up with a more coherent vision and overarching theory of change for operationalizing the agenda, building on emerging the lessons to date.

# 4) Recommendations

### Impact and relevance

84. **IRCT should continue to build a case for the integration of livelihoods as part of a holistic approach to the rehabilitation of torture victims, focusing on the 'how' of operationalization.** This could be supported by a more comprehensive change theory (see elements in Table 1 and Figure 2) that link actions at global, Member Centre and survivor levels. A shared vision and joint framework, including a simple but adaptable framework for tracking progress (including formal, informal, collective and individual dimensions), could support more coherence in approaches across initiatives while still responding to specific contexts. Given that IRCT (through its members) have taken on a pioneering role on livelihoods support in the global anti-torture movement, it will need to continue to dedicate sufficient staff time, earmarked funding and expertise to the issue, noting that this still is a relatively new and emerging field among organisations specializing in torture rehabilitation and that internal experience and staff capacity still needs to be strengthened.

85. **The practice of more systematically documenting and matching livelihood needs and options from the outset of the rehabilitation journey should be encouraged.** This would help identify where there are opportunities as well as gaps in meeting livelihood needs and could be used to create a broader range of partnerships with local actors (including vocational training institutes and local economic actors/private sector and local government). It would also give a better overview of which sub-groups are provided with livelihood support (based on what criteria) as a share of all those who would qualify or need support on similar grounds.

86. **More explicit and realistic targets should be set when it comes to economic/income-related indicators**. This could be done drawing on more standardized tools for assessing and tracking self-reliance. In doing so, it should still be clear that the main purpose of activities has to do with the rehabilitation and wellbeing of survivors as a primary purpose yet would help balance a more nuanced understanding of both economic and psychosocial empowerment in terms of their long-term effects.

87. **Systemic effects on social coherence and peacebuilding could be further leveraged when forming local partnerships.** Livelihood activities as a means to engaging communities in joint problem solving and rebuilding trust in contexts where the social fabric has been broken can be a powerful tool for reintegration and a means to tap into resources dedicated to peacebuilding in conflict scenarios. There is a need to revise the results framework to more systematically monitor and communicate such effects as well, which go beyond individual rehabilitation journeys.

### Effectiveness and efficiency in IRCT's implementation practices

88. **IRCT should continue to broker partnerships at different levels**, and help Members come up with **guidelines and tools** that could facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration also with partners, such as INGOs, private sector, and other development partners or philanthropies active in livelihoods support that is not specific to torture rehabilitation.

89. **In IRCT's sub-granting practice clearer guidelines on how to use funds efficiently for livelihoods support should be developed**, emphasizing complementarity with other rehabilitation efforts and ideally leveraging additional funding streams. Going forward, lessons from across IRCT's Livelihoods Project can be drawn on in the design of new projects, with less of the money having to be spent on experimental designs involving treatment and control groups (with the latter receiving only psychosocial support). Partnerships with academic institutions can instead help establish additional evidence, using bigger sample sizes and cross-portfolio analysis.

90. **IRCT should revise its project reporting format to be less activity-based and to better capture reporting against the overall rationale of the initiatives** and how they complement existing approaches to rehabilitation. While keeping reporting requirements light and simple, this may help in getting more homogenous quality across project reporting for subgrants and help aggregate results towards a higher-level change theory and/or a set of guiding principles.

91. **IRCT should consider how reported data points are being used for regular cross-portfolio analysis, further reflection and documentation.** Just like IRCT published an article comparing preliminary results across five implementing organisations in the Torture Journal special livelihoods edition in 2024, additional aspects of cross-portfolio analysis could potentially be undertaken and discussed in future learning sessions, including e.g., making better use of gender disaggregated data and conducting analysis on the many gender issues faced by both primary and secondary torture victims in their livelihood efforts. This is trying to better use data that is already being gathered, but other intersecting aspects of livelihoods and social inclusion that cut across projects and that are relevant for torture survivors could also be considered (such disability inclusion in the workplace etc.).

92. **IRCT should make sure that livelihood project support is not too thinly stretched and that the selection criteria of beneficiaries are clear and transparent.** This would assist Member Centres in establishing good practices on how to balance the big demand for livelihood support with available resources.

### Sustainability

93. **The expected catalytic effects of (limited) livelihoods support should be realistically assessed up front, defining what sustainability looks like in a given context.** Sustainability may not always mean entering a quick path to self-reliance, especially in contexts where the rehabilitation journey is longer or contexts are particular (e.g., conducting artisanal training for inmates in jails). It is therefore recommended that each implementer of livelihood initiatives define what sustainability realistically looks like in the given context, given the short-term nature of support and its intended catalytic nature. This means thinking broadly about sustainability, also in terms of partnerships established, ability to extend services to additional survivors in the longer term or using other follow-up mechanism to sustain livelihood coaching and support.

94. **Given the strong demand for and ownership of the livelihood integration model by Member Centres, IRCT should prioritize the livelihood agenda in its advocacy for sustained funding and partnerships.** While this may be more difficult in a more competitive funding landscape, IRCT is well placed to continue working with Member Centres to implement livelihoods support drawing on initial lessons from activities that has taken place so far.

# 5) Annex 1: List of organisations consulted

| Name of organisation | Geographic location | Number of staff and/or survivors consulted |
|---|---|---|
| African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitatin of Torture Victims (ACTV) | Uganda | 3 |
| People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR) | India | 15 (including focus group of survivors) |
| Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture (RESTART) | Lebanon | 1 |
| Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (TPO) | Nepal | 1 |
| Family Rehabilitation Centre (FRO) | Sri Lanka | 1 |
| Human Development Organization (HDO) | Pakistan | 2 |
| Tree of Life (ToL) | Zimbabwe | 2 |
| Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture Victims (ARCT) | Albania | 1 |
| The Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT) | Kosovo | 2 |
| Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU) | Kenya | 1 |
| Supporting Survivors of Torture and Trauma (STARRS) | Australia | 1 |
| Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT) | Global | 1 |
| International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) | Global | 2 |
| IMPAKT | Global | 1 |
| **Total number of interviewees:** | | **34** |