

Case 1

A 28 year old female from Surkhet district, located in mid-western Nepal, was referred by a previous client of CVICT. She has an education qualification till grade three and is unmarried. She came to the organization on 15th April 2009 with myriads of complaints about her health.

Torture History

She was picked up from Surkhet Bazar (Market) by 50 policemen in the evening of July 1997 and was taken to the police custody where she was kept for 34 days. The police eventually shifted her to Surkhet jail where she was kept for 8 years. Though she has no political affiliation to the Maoists she was accused of supporting the Maoists and being engaged in their political activities. She was severely tortured while in police custody and in jail. Unable to bear the pain in police custody, she confessed that she was a Maoist sympathizer but the police continued torturing her using various methods even in jail.

Various methods of torture were used in police custody such as beating on head, legs and entire body with pipes and sticks, beating on chest with stick and hand, beating on shoulder with pipe and stick, sexual molestation and other kinds of pressure techniques such as rolling bamboo over legs and forced to sleep on cold floor. Some of the psychological methods of torture were being blind folded, threatening to kill the victim, threatening to rape her and her sisters, keeping her naked in front of the police for hours, humiliation by scolding with abusive language, barred from talking to her visitors, insufficient water given to drink, sleep deprivation, hygiene deprivation and health service deprivation.

Treatment at CVICT

She was referred by an old client to the CVICT centre. She had tried various types of medications for her problems selling all her belongings and her mother's jewels but years of taking medications prescribed by pharmacists did not help her. A client at CVICT happened to meet her and referred her to the centre. Her complaints are headache, entire body ache, pain in the soles, sleeplessness, irregular menstruation, not able to walk properly, bone pain, feels like crying, feels like living alone, does not want to talk to anyone, has flashbacks of the incidents, burning sensation of the eyes etc.

Physical examination revealed no abnormalities but to rule out any other abnormalities as per her complaints, she was sent to gynecology and ophthalmology department. Various forms of psychotherapies were tried (meditation, EMDR etc.) but her symptoms were so severe that she was refractory to any form of treatment. So, a psychiatrist consultation was sought who prescribed her a combination of drugs. The rehabilitation team continued various forms of psychotherapies along with medicine and family counseling.

After eight months of treatment she started feeling better and most of her symptoms subsided. She opened a small store and started making some money to feed herself and her parents. She reports that her relationship with family members and friends are also good and is actively participating in her social functions also. Now she has no complaints but she needs to continue her medications and psychotherapy so she is regularly visiting the centre for follow up.

Case 2

On 31st July 2008, 33 years old, unmarried male client also from mid-western part of Nepal arrived at CVICT for treatment of his physical and psychological health, referred by district counselor.

The case is of the so-called high class ethnic group – Brahmin. He studied for six years after the school leaving certificate examinations doing his Bachelors of Arts degree and was working for political party - Maoist. He was arrested on the street in the evening from Surkhet and tortured by Police in police custody for being a Maoist during the Maoist's people's revolution.

From the year 1999 to 2003 he was in and out of various jails (Surkhet jail, Nepalgunj jail, Bhairahawa jail, Palpa jail, center jail, Tauliwawa jail) in charge of being a Maoist and was tortured on all occasions. Various torture methods were used such as beating on leg/ sole with pipe and sticks, beating on thigh, beating on back, beating on hand and face and random beatings, other ways of physical torture were hanging him up side down with exposing with smoke of chilli powder, exposing to electricity, forced to sleep in cold floor, belna (rolling bamboo over the thighs), buried in ground with the head out, sinking head in a bucket full water, tied hand and legs to the back etc.

Some of the psychological forms of torture were blind folded for many days, taking him to jungle and leaving him overnight tied to a tree, misinforming him about his family members (e.g. telling him they are dead, your mother and sister are being sexually assaulted etc), sensory deprivation, perceptual deprivation, not allowing his family members to visit him, depriving him of basic needs and services.

He came to the CVICT centre on 31st July 2008 referred by CVICT's district psychosocial support unit in Surkhet. In the first visit he had complains of pain in abdomen, feeling of someone pulling his legs all the time, getting tired all the time, dryness of mouth, palpitations, not able to move toes and not able to walk well, feels as if his legs have become small, and extreme pain in his lower legs etc.

After assessment by psychosocial counselor, careful examination done by the medical doctor, he was sent for necessary investigations (routine blood count, ECG, X-ray and urine/ stool RME) to rule out any problems. The reports of the investigation were normal but he had various problems similar to the symptoms of mental illness (psychosomatic pain) so that the physician and psychosocial counselor had decided to send on psychiatric consultation. The psychiatrist prescribed him few medicines with a diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder which is not unusual with people who have been tortured severely.

He received medicines with various forms of psychotherapy over a period of one year. Gradually, his problems started decreasing in each follow up visit in CVICT centre. Finally he got total relief and came back to his normal daily life functioning. So the psychiatrist has been slowly decreasing the doses of his medications (Psychiatric medications should never be stopped at once, it leads to relapse and the symptoms are more dangerous during this second episode).

He has resumed his job and is doing social work. He is also actively involved in the community and he is also identifying the torture cases and referring to CVICT centre. He has been designated as CVICT's volunteer and recently is recommended for further training activities conducted by ICTJ on transitional justice.

Case 3

Ms. T from Jajarkot aged 23 who was accused of supporting the Maoist party and was arrested from her house in 2000 and 2003 for a total period of five months.

Torture History

According to her, she is not a Maoist sympathizer. She is single with an education of passing SLC and a student in the local school living with her parents and brother. She was twice taken to the police station from her home at night and tortured physically and psychologically for a total period of five months but even after enduring so much pain she never confessed to being affiliated to any political parties.

The physical forms of torture includes random beating, beating all over the body by gun butt, beating on head with pistol, beating on chest and back with boots and beating on shoulder with sticks. The psychological forms of torture included threatening to kill her and other prisoners and even being blindfolded and left in the dark for days. She gives no history of sexual assault.

Treatment at CVICT

She was referred by a client under treatment at CVICT. She complains of feeling of weakness, not able to think, palpitations, pain in her arms and legs, not able to breathe properly, trembling of the whole body, feels like she is feverish all the time, chest pain, neck pain, feels like hair on her head is twisting, feels like fainting etc.

After doctor's physical examination which revealed no physical signs, mental status examination was done which revealed that she has a form of illness called PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). To rule out any problems with her urine and blood investigations were sent and x-rays were done which were all normal. She was even referred to ENT to rule out any problems with her head, but nothing significant was diagnosed.

So in the end she was diagnosed as a case of PTSD by consultant psychiatrist and medications along with psychotherapy was given. Over a period of one year she has improved drastically and is actively participating in teaching primary school children as well as continuing her education. She plans to do something big one day.