

# University-Community Partnership for the Wellbeing of Refugees & Immigrant Survivors of Torture

Bibhuti K. Sar, MSW, PhD  
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Kent School of Social Work

- **Overview/description of the project**

- The Survivors of Torture Recovery Center (STRC) provides 1) survivor centered services, 2) education, training, and evaluation, and 3) promote collaboration among systems of care for torture survivors. Torture survivors provided one or more core services (medical, mental health, social, legal) in partnership with community organizations.
- It is estimated that 150 to 200 countries practice torture on their citizens (Johnson & Miles, 2009; Rejali, 2007).
- Approximately 5% to 35% of refugees coming to the U.S. each year show signs of at least one torture experience (Baker, 1992).
- In Kentucky, over the past decade, there have been noticeable increases in refugee resettlements of people with histories of torture and trauma (i.e. From Bhutan, Burma, Cuba, Somalia, Burundi, Iraq, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Viet Nam, North Korea and Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cuba, Nepal, Uzbekistan).
- Between 2012-2017, of the 9,035 refugees screened for torture through health screenings in Metro Louisville 1,502 self-reported that they were either a primary or secondary survivor of torture (prevalence rate of 17%), which falls well within the range indicated by the research literature.
- Torture survivors suffer from PTSD, major depression and severe anxiety as well as chronic pain, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

- Relationship/history with the partner organizations
  - Kentucky Office of Refugees
  - Kentucky Refugee Ministries
  - Catholic Charities
  - Family Health Centers
  - Americana Community Center
  - Other UofL Programs & Schools ( Art & Expressive Therapies, Mental Health Counseling, HSC-health screenings)
  - Spalding University Clinical/Counseling Psychology

- **Impact on research and teaching, students, partner community**
  - Greater awareness in the refugee and immigrant communities about torture and trauma
  - Greater awareness in the larger community about refugee and immigrant trauma and torture
  - Greater involvement by the professional community in promoting the wellbeing of torture survivors (via trainings, internships, volunteering)
  - Increased number of students from various disciplines now engaged in work and study with refugees & immigrants (both torture and non-torture survivors)

## • Products

- Establishment of the Survivors of Torture Recovery Center and sustaining it in the community (now housed within Family Health Center-Americana)
- Presentations/workshops at national (i.e. CSWE) and State/Regional and local forums and conferences

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