

Good afternoon Ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for honouring our invitation, even at a time like this.

BACKGROUND

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2002 recommended that the government of Sierra Leone should provide free psychosocial support and reproductive health services to women affected by conflict. This was the genesis of what is now the Rainbo Initiative. We started our work as a project under the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in 2003 and became an independent national NGO in 2014. Rainbo Initiative is a well-established national NGO and the first service provider of free medical treatment and psychosocial service for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Sierra Leone. Rainbo Initiative has worked for over 20 years to support sexual and physical assault at its Rainbo Centres.

To date, we have helped more than 45,000 women and girls, 93% of which are below the age of 17. Rainbo Initiative operates five Rainbo Centres in 5 districts (Freetown, Kenema, Kono, Bo and Makeni).

We supported 3,137 survivors of SGBV in 2018; 3,897 in 2019 and 3,548 in 2020 at its 5 Rainbo Centres

Beyond supporting survivors at the Rainbo Centre after incidences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Rainbo Initiative is a strong advocate to influence national SGBV policy and practice by evidence-based advocacy and increasing awareness of SGBV at community and national level. Rainbo Initiative Outreach Team engages communities so that they are aware of the laws, know how to respond to SGBV and how to access SGBV response services by working closely with key stakeholders and structures such as Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs (MGCA), Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Community of Practice (CoP) and the National Committee on Gender-Based Violence (NaC-GBV) to promote gender equality and women rights.

VISION and MISSION

We envisage a Sierra Leone that is free from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), with a mission to Respond to and prevent SGBV in Sierra Leone.

WE DO THIS BY:

- Holding survivors at the core of everything we do
- Providing free medical and psychosocial services to survivors of SGBV

- Raising public awareness of SGBV
- Evidence-Based advocacy

WHAT WE DO

Our work is divided into four areas to achieve our mandate:

1. RAINBO CENTRE

The Rainbo Centre is a place where a person can get help after being raped or sexually assaulted. Here, we provide free, quality, age-appropriate response services to survivors of SGBV. We currently have (5) Rainbo Centres, situated in the government hospitals in Freetown, Kenema, Kono, Bo, and Makeni. The Centres are open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am-4:30 pm.

At our Rainbo Centres we provide:

- Medical examination and treatment for injuries and illness caused by the assault.
- A medical certificate confirming the survivor has been raped or sexually assaulted.
- Counselling to help cope with the emotional and psychological effects of rape.
- Help reporting the incident to the police.
- Information on the legal system if the person wants to take the case to court.
- Referral to other agencies for help that is not provided by the Rainbo Centre.
- Follow-up and provide further counselling for survivors when they are at home.

2. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS-RAISING PROGRAMME

We conduct a series of awareness-raising activities on SGBV at community and national levels. Our community outreach work focuses on increasing awareness of the laws in communities, helping communities to know how to respond to SGBV issues and know how to access SGBV response services. Our outreach work is conducted in communities, schools, churches, mosques, health Centres, market squares, and ghettos targeting local leaders, women, men, students and youth group using drama, songs, radio talk shows, stakeholders meetings and school tour. At the national level, the team engages electronic (radio & TV) and print media to raise awareness on SGBV issues and share life-changing testimonies of survivors to inspire change.

3. GBV DATA MANAGEMENT

Every day we collect GBV data and add it to our extensive database, where we can track yearly and district trends in SGBV cases. We share the data in our

monthly stakeholder's meetings with relevant authorities or organisations/partners working on prevention and response to GBV issues to make decisions and design new interventions. We have a credible and accurate database and we are recognised by the Government and other GBV actor.

4. ADVOCACY/POLICY INFLUENCE

Rainbo Initiative is a strong advocate for free health care treatment for survivors of GBV in all public hospitals and promote women's interests to decision-makers, donors and the private sector. RI advocates for access to justice and speedy trial of all GBV cases. We demand an amendment in the Gender laws where there are gaps. We are part of many groups including National Committee of GBV (Nac-GBV), the Community of Practice (CoP) and Adolescent Girls Network.

HOW DO WE DO

- **We deliver:** We directly work with survivors and communities to respond to and prevent SGBV incidences. We do evidence-based grassroots programs and provide quality service to survivors including women and children through the Rainbo Centres.
- **We collaborate:** We work with government and partners to and share best practice within the Gender sector. We work together with the government and patterns to help them shape their policies and work to achieve impact.
- **We influence:** We engage communities and people that matter to act now through sustained engagement with strategic patterns (government, donors and the private sector) to help them work more effectively with survivors of SGBV.
- **We prioritise:** We hold survivors at the core of everything we do. We prioritise their interest by linking them to other service providers that would help to improve their lives and gain opportunities.

Rainbo Initiative has been complementing Government effort by providing free services (medical & psychosocial support) to survivors and conduct capacity building training for government officials.

In 2020 among other activities, Rainbo Initiative has;

- Provided life-saving and age-appropriate services to more than 3,500 survivors of GBV.
- Trained over 200 personnel from the FSU, Community stakeholders, Medical Doctors and other health professionals on clinical care for Sexual Assault Survivors.

- With the help from our donors have constructed 2 new centres of excellence in Bo and Makeni.
- Conducted outreach and awareness-raising activities to communities and schools within the 5 districts that we currently operate in.
- Collaborated with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs in the setting up of the one-Stop Centres.
- Received funding from the people of Sierra Leone through the Survivor Solidarity Fund organized by Purposeful.
- Trained several Magistrates and lawyers on the interpretation of Rainbo Initiative's medical certificate.
- Reached over 90,000 people in 5 districts with our outreach events raising awareness with key messages on GBV
- Part of the Special Taskforce on Rape set up by His Excellency the President Julius Maada Bio that meet monthly to give updates on progress.

Signed MOU's with:

1. Consortium (Rainbo, Lawyers. Aberdeen Women's Centre and Don Bosco)
2. Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalism
3. Sierra Leone Red Cross Society
4. Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL)
5. Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
6. Parliamentary Research Unit
7. Partners in Health
8. Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
 - Rainbo Initiative's Model was used in setting up the One- Stop Centres.
 - Trained nurses that are working at the one-stop-centres
 - Trained PHU staff, local schoolteachers and community volunteers to facilitate speedy reporting of SGBV case in communities
 - With support from our partners, we provided dignity kits to adolescent girls in quarantined homes during COVID-19.
 - Secured land at the 34 Military Hospital for the construction of the Freetown Centre of Excellence.

RAINBO CENTRES GBV DATA ANALYSIS FOR 2020

Table 1: Summary of Sexual Assault Disaggregated by Centre and age - 2020

Age Category	Freetown	Kenema	Kono	Makeni	Bo	Total	%
0-5	110	22	18	13	13	176	5.3
6-10	216	78	39	32	37	402	12.0
11-15	712	370	257	157	261	1,757	52.6
16-20	338	222	96	75	173	904	27.1
21-25	14	9	5	15	3	46	1.4
26-30	10	3	4	5	2	24	0.7
31-35	3	3	2	2	3	13	0.4
36-40	1	2	0	0	2	5	0.1
41-45	1	0	1	1	0	3	0.1
46-55	0	1	0	1	0	2	0.1
56+	4	0	0	2	1	7	0.2
Total	1,409	710	422	303	495	3,339	100.0

- ✓ Analysis of GBV survivor data from the five Rainbo Centres in 2020 shows that we had 3,584 GBV cases. 6% [209 of the said figure were survivors of physical assaults, while 3,339 [94%] were sexual assault survivors.
- ✓ 97% (3,339) of the sexual assault cases were adolescents and 26% (209) of physical assaults were also adolescents.

Table 2: Summary of Physical Assault Disaggregated by Centre and age - 2020

Age Category	Kenema	Kono	Makeni	Bo	Total	%
0-5	2	2	2	1	7	3.3
6-10	2	0	2	0	4	1.9
11-15	2	0	13	0	15	7.2
16-20	1	8	19	0	28	13.4
21-25	3	14	19	0	36	17.2
26-30	3	22	29	0	54	25.8
31-35	3	13	24	0	40	19.1
36-40	2	8	5	0	15	7.2
41-45	0	3	3	0	6	2.9
46-55	0	1	3	0	4	1.9
56+	0	0	0	0	-	-
Total	18	71	119	1	209	100.0

Table 3: Summary of SGBV – 2020

Sexual	3,339
Physical	209
Total	3,548

Survivors (3,339) (

Challenges

It is unfortunate that despite these measures; we continue to witness soaring cases of GBV, with most of them going unreported and survivors suffering stigma, discrimination and worse still loss of life. We have heard and seen horrible stories of survivors including three months old baby as our youngest survivor and a 100 years old woman as the oldest recorded for the year 2020 at our Rainbo centres. As RI we are in direct contact with survivors daily and continue to be distressed over the following:

- A horrifying surge in cases of sexual abuse of minors that continue to be witnessed in Sierra Leone. For the majority of girls and women; the threat is more rampant in their home; where they ought to be safe. These are the silent girls and women trapped with abusive relatives and neighbours.
- Families and communities are doing less to identify early warning signs of child sexual abuse; supporting survivors to access services and there is a general lack of safe ways for child survivors to seek support without alerting their abusers.
- A significant number of cases go unreported; unrecorded with survivors suffering and even dying in silence. The culture of silence has allowed crimes to continue. The consequences of reporting rape and going through the criminal justice system are significant. Survivors have spoken to us about the re-traumatising experience of reporting rape and sexual assault to the police and going through the subsequent investigation and court processes.
- There are still widespread toxic assumptions, judgements and victim-blaming attitudes held by members of the public around consent, what rape involves and how survivors should respond, and these views will also be represented in communities and those who make up the system to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.
- We still don’t have enough safe homes for GBV survivors in our operational areas.

- Non-availability of forensic labs nationally to further test evidence

Recommendations

Plans

- Continue providing free medical and psychosocial services
- Build and establish a centre of excellence in Freetown
- Provide best practice for government and other players that are interested in supporting survivors.
- Become a hub for SGBV data in Sierra Leone.
- Continue the national advocacy on free medical for survivors.
- Continue with community outreach and promote good parenting

This plan of Rainbo Initiative depends on good relationship and partnership and on securing funding from different sources, be that corporate organization, donors, individuals or international fundraising. If you would like to donate to Rainbo Initiative or partner with us, then please do get in contact.

Contact

For more information about the Rainbo Initiative, please contact the Executive Director

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Thank you for your attention.

Gibril Kargbo

Deputy Executive Direction

Visit our Centres!

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