



# Quarterly Newsletter



## *Inside The Issue*

1. News Highlights
2. This quarter in numbers
3. Coming up

January - March | 2021 |  RainboInitiative |  @RainboCentres |  @RainboInitiative

### *Message from the Executive Director*



The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our daily lives and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and livelihoods. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating especially on poor vulnerable women and girls in Sierra Leone. There is an increase in reported SGBV cases during this period at the five Rainbo Centres and 86% of those cases are children below 18 years. However, there is still uncertainty on how this crisis will unfold in times to come and we are all feeling it. Despite these challenges, at Rainbo we remain committed to supporting communities to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone. Our work is focused on saving lives, building resilience, trust, confidentiality, and partnership –

supporting communities and survivors to navigate through their abuse and heal with dignity - to improve their lives and gain opportunities.

Thanks to our dedicated staff who have given themselves to listen to the horrifying stories of survivors and provide appropriate support including free medical treatment and counselling to help survivors heal completely from their trauma. Their professionalism and compassion to ensure we provide quality services to the victims and be an accountable organisation to our donors, communities and partners is commendable. Their resilience to cope and deal with these stories, perseverance, integrity, and innovative ideas has given hope to continue the fight to end SGBV in Sierra Leone. We have become a stronger, effective and professional organisation with reliable data that informs stakeholders on SGBV incidences in Sierra Leone and beyond. Without them, nothing is achieved - thanks to our frontline workers at the Rainbo Centres and the Outreach Team.

Looking ahead, our mission is stronger than ever. We will continue to engage communities to strengthen their involvement in SGBV awareness-changing perceptions and attitudes towards survivors' support behaviours to change their attitudes.

*Daniel F. H. Kettor*

# NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## PROMOTING AWARENESS-RAISING AND SUPPORT RESPONSE SERVICES FOR SGBV SURVIVORS IN BOMBALI.



### Community outreach sensitisation

Increasing awareness on Gender-Based Violence laws and strengthening referral pathways to improve response services for survivors of SGBV is also important to make sure women and girls are supported to report cases of abuse in their communities, heal with dignity and overcome their trauma.

Building on existing community structures, Rainbo Initiative with support from Trocaire; is implementing a 12-month (January - December 2021) project to prevent and respond to incidences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in 10 communities in Bombali District - to increase knowledge of GBV laws, provision of comprehensive free quality age-appropriate medical care, psychosocial services and legal aid information to survivors of SGBV. This project is committed to promoting proactive efforts to shift the cultural rules, norms, and constructs that support Gender-Based Violence and support the health and well-being of survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Bombali District.

Currently, survivors face numerous challenges in accessing services, coupled with limited knowledge of existing laws and services, and a general lack of support from families and communities in the district.

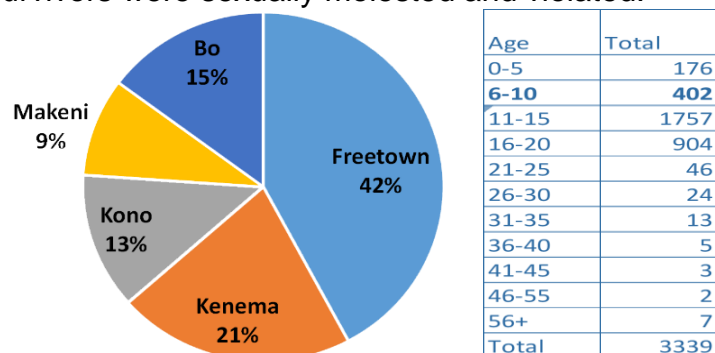
Community Champions and women leaders/groups will be identified and trained to jointly conduct awareness-raising and outreach activities to reach out to households with knowledge of the Rainbo Centre services, support survivors to report cases of abuse in their communities and foster attitude change against abuse and towards survivor support behaviours.

### OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVOR'S DATA FOR 2020.

Every day we collect SGBV data and add it to our extensive database, where we 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 SGBV issues to make informed decisions and design new interventions. We have a credible and accurate database and we are recognised by the Government of Sierra Leone and other GBV actors.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021, in a press conference - we launched our SGBV Survivor's data for the year 2020. 3,584 SGBV cases were recorded across our five Rainbo Centres in Freetown, Makeni, Kono, Kenema and Bo. 6% (209) of the said figure were survivors of physical assaults, while 3,339 (94%) were sexual assault cases – with a 3-month old baby and a 100-year old woman as our youngest and oldest survivors respectively.

The report further revealed that 559 survivors were pregnant at the time they visited our Centres after being raped, 10 were HIV positive and 20 male survivors were sexually molested and violated.



Region	Freetown	Kenema	Kono	Makeni	Bo	Total	%
Total	1409	710	422	303	495	3339	100

## **PREVENTING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITIES.**

From September 2019 to date, we have been using our community-based approach model to engage communities in the “Strengthening Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Inclusive Response Services in Sierra Leone” (SGP Project), funded by the European Union through the EU delegation in Sierra Leone to prevent Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone. The SGP is implemented in a consortium with Handicap International and CARE Sierra Leone, led by Rainbo Initiative in the districts of Makeni, Bo and Freetown, empowering 48 Gender Focal Points and 24 Gender Support Groups which includes 360 individuals in more than 24 communities to disseminate messages on preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence for the protection of marginalised women and girls, especially those with disabilities and support survivors with referral pathways within the community to access services and follow up cases.

***“SGBV is on the increase in most of our communities and this requires our support as community members to ensure the safety of everyone - women and girls especially those with disabilities. Our work with Rainbo Initiative has empowered us to contribute towards preventing GBV.”*** Tejan Kabia, Chairman AYPUD



**House-to-house sensitisation**

SGBV service providers including medical practitioners, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) Family Support Unit (FSU), Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs (MGCA) welcomed the capacity building activities under this project as enhancing their capacity and contributed to strengthen comprehensive service provision for survivors of SGBV in the project operational districts. This has also strengthened the capacity of medical practitioners manning the One-stop Centres established by the government to respond to issues of SGBV.

## **REFRESHER TRAINING FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLORS.**

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence happens in many forms in Sierra Leone and it has affected a large number of girls and women at different stages in their life - from childhood to adulthood and old age. This has long remained a feature of family and social life, of which society has preferred to remain silent.

To salvage this unfortunate situation, a 3-day intensive psychosocial counselling refresher training was conducted for our psychosocial counsellors to support survivors deal with their trauma after experiencing sexual abuse. The training was designed to increase their knowledge and understanding of the concept of gender, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and takes a closer look at psychosocial counselling and counselling guidelines – to listen to the survivor and provide a safe space for discussion and reflection – without judging the survivor. With their help, more survivors of gender-based violence and sexual assault will receive psychosocial support and their work also contribute to reducing incidences of Gender-Based Violence and sexual assault in communities.

***“This training is very timely and important as it has helped me understand not to judge or blame survivors for being violated but to believe their stories. Going forward, I will respect, value and encourage them to tell their story as a source of healing and power.”*** Doris, Psychosocial Counsellor, Makeni Rainbo Centre

# THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

**5,701** people were reached in **180** community engagement sessions in **20** communities with messages on SGBV, its referral Pathways and GBV laws by Focal Point Volunteers.

**150** psychosocial group counselling sessions were held with sexual assault survivors in Kenema, Bo, Freetown, Kono and Makeni (**30** in each district) with support from the survivors' Solidarity Fund.

**2** lessons learnt workshops were conducted on the EU project, reaching a total of **66** participants in Freetown (**37**) and Bo (**29**).

**140** refers were made to other services providers.

**32** Focal Point Volunteers from **16** communities in Kenema, Kono, Bo and Bombali Districts were recruited and trained on SGBV, its referral pathways, GBV Laws and Community engagement.

In close collaboration with Care International supported the training of **16** Focal Point Volunteers in Freetown on Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA)

**798** (**794** Female, **4** Male) GBV cases (**731** Sexual Assault & **67** Physical Assault) were reported across our five Rainbo Centres - **130** were pregnant, **5** had HIV/AIDS, & **580** were infected with STI at the time they visited our Centres after the rape.

## COMING UP

### COMMUNITY DIALOGUE AND ACTION MEETING WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The community critical dialogue session will facilitate action planning with community stakeholders to raise awareness and challenge social norms and encourage them to take actions against SGBV in 24 communities in Freetown, Makeni and Bo under the EU funded "Strengthening GBV Prevention and Inclusive Response Services in Sierra Leone Project". These meetings will trigger communities to formulate bye-laws and guidelines to prevent GBV from happening in their communities and also protect survivors of Gender-Based Violence.

### TRAINING OF COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS.

20 Community Champions from 10 communities within Bombali District will be recruited and trained with support from Trocaire to engage community structures including women's groups to support our community outreach activities, targeting public places including schools, Ataya bases, churches, mosques and marketplaces. These Champions will be doing grassroots level mobilisation using our community-based model approach to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in their communities.

### ENGAGEMENT OF LEGAL AND MEDICAL (MEDICOLIGAL) PERSONNELS

This engagement will help lawyers understand the interpretations of the medical reports issued by our Rainbo Medical Doctors after their physical examination of a survivor who had been raped or physically assaulted. This will support address the issue of cases being thrown out of court due to insufficient evidence on the medical certificate, thereby helping survivors access justice in the shortest possible time.

**OUR PARTNERS**



**Irish Aid**  
Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



**OSIWA**  
Open Society Initiative for West Africa

**Trócaire**  
Working for a just world.



**Save the Children**



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