

RAINBO INITIATIVE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Apart from supporting survivors at the Rainbo Centres, Rainbo Initiative is a strong advocate for the prevention of violence against women and girls by giving survivors the platform to openly discuss these critical issues. Rainbo Initiative engages communities and Schools on SGBV prevention and response, working closely with key stakeholders, institutions and structures.

RI is committed to promoting evidence-based advocacy, engaging government, and its partners on the rights of women and girls, access to support services and other key issues

www.rainboinitiative.org

FREETOWN RAINBO CENTRE RECEIVED TWO VISITING IRISH AMBASSADORS



On May 17, 2022, our Freetown Rainbo Centre staff were thrilled to welcome the Irish Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Claire Buckley and Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, Sile Maguire. The pair visited the Rainbo Centre in Freetown to learn more about the work that Irish Aid and its partners are doing in Sierra Leone.

At the Centre, Ambassador Buckley and Ambassador Maguire were given a tour of the center by staff members, who showed them some of the work done by Rainbo Initiative through the support of Irish Aid and other partner organizations.

As prime donor to what we do at our five Rainbo Centres across the country, their inspection gave them insight into the quality of our work with survivors. Inspired by our free quality lifesaving services offered to survivors of Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Maguire and Buckley commended our work and encouraged us to keep doing what we do best.

At Rainbo Initiative, we remain committed to empowering communities to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote social and equal opportunities for all through the provision of comprehensive lifesaving services including free medical treatment and psychosocial support including access to justice for survivors of Sexual Gender-Based Violence

RAINBO INITIATIVE HOLDS A DAY MEDICO-LEGAL ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO COORDINATE AND ENSURE HARMONIZED PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE FOR SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.



As part of the ‘Improving the Availability of Quality Free Health Care for Survivors of SGBV - ImAQF’ project, funded by Irish Aid, Rainbo Initiative on 20th May 2022 held a day Medico-Legal Engagement with Doctors, RI Front Line Staff, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs officials, the justice

sector, and other relevant stakeholders at the Country Lodge Hotel in Freetown to increase coordination among stakeholders to improve access to quality and free health services for survivors of gender-based violence.

Participants at the engagement had exchange views on integrating survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) care into primary health care and the best practices around coordination.

The consultation further reaffirmed the need for a framework to direct efforts to coordinate and ensure harmonized provision of health care for survivors of gender-based violence.

By ensuring access to free quality services, we hope to save lives and reduce the rate of morbidity among this population who have survived these crimes.

Rainbo Initiative looks forward to the implementation of our shared learning experiences that all participants shared and seeks to strengthen mechanisms for advocacy for and by survivors of Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone.

RAINBO INITIATIVE COLLABORATES WITH PARTNERS TO ‘MAKE MENSTRUATION A NORMAL FACT OF LIFE’

The fact is, one in three women worldwide experience period poverty or do not have sufficient access to menstrual hygiene products. The reality is, this topic and the way menstruation is perceived is still an under-discussed



issue and taboo subject in many countries around the world.

The World Menstrual Hygiene Day has been established as a global celebration to address this issue with the aim to bringing positive changes in communities worldwide.

This year, under the theme “**Making Menstruation a Normal Fact of Life by 2030,**” Rainbo Initiative joins Orange Foundation and other partners to celebrate the World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

The event aimed at raising awareness and promote good menstrual health and hygiene practices for all women and girls and contribute to creating an environment in which every woman is empowered to manage her menstruation safely, hygienically, confidently, and without shame.

We are excited that brands like Orange are joining us in taking initiatives that are effectively helping to making a difference in the lives of women and girls in Sierra Leone.

We have more work to do with the schools, the communities, and the government to ensure that women and girls receive adequate guidance on menstrual hygiene management, including safe and proper personal hygiene. We need to work together to figure out effective ways to ensure that there is adequate supply of sanitary kits, and that girls have privacy for changing and cleaning.

Safe and hygienic menstruation is every menstruator's right.

As events like this helps participants understand that periods are part of a natural process that occurs regardless of the circumstance, our continued collaboration to make it possible for women and girls of all walks of life to have the basic right to a safe and hygienic menstruation will ensure a better society for all.

All of us come from one orifice and all will return there eventually. We're all on a journey to meet certain body functions that are as much a part of life as eating food. Puberty, pregnancy and childbirth, sweating, coughing, and sneezing; these are all normal bodily functions we have come to accept as part of living. The time has come to add another: **Menstruation**.

SURVIVORS' VOICE

THE STORY OF A 14-YEAR-OLD SURVIVOR WHO WAS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY TWO PERPETRATORS

Sexual Gender-Based Violence is becoming a constant reality in Sierra Leone especially in rural communities where its knowledge and support services are limited.

Despite the tireless efforts of front-line service providers like Rainbo Initiative in responding and preventing SGBV, violence against women and girls including rape incidences remains high in Sierra Leone.

Sad enough is, they happen in our communities, and mostly by people we know or are associated with.

The Rainbo Centres were established in 2003 to provide support to survivors of sexual gender-based violence in communities around Sierra Leone.

Every day, like a normal hospital setting, we receive survivors at our Centres who are raped or sexually assaulted.

Two months ago, like many other survivors, Jattu (real name withheld) was rushed to one of our Rainbo Centres speechless and in tears when she was gangraped by two men in her neighbourhood.

Giving her condition, our medical staff conducted a medical examination for pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Few hours later, Jattu regained energy and narrated her ordeals.

“My friends and I were playing in a nearby compound when two men called me in the next house, they told me they wanted to eat garri and I should help them buy sugar. Upon my return with the sugar, they had entered in their room and asked me to enter. One of them rushed and closed the door immediately I entered the room, and they asked that I have sex with them, I had no idea what that is, I started screaming for help, they stuffed clothes

in my mouth so no one could hear me cry. I was brutally undressed and sustained bruises from my bottom down to my private areas as well as my legs.

They laid me on the bed when they tore my pants and one of them took off his trousers and inserted his penis in me, I felt a sharp pain, tried so hard to cry but the other one was holding the clothes in my mouth tightly.

After some times, the other one also came on me, I felt like I was dying already.

Then I could hear the voice of one of my friends whom I was playing with, the other boy who was stuffing the clothes in my mouth left me and opened the door and told my friend that I was not there, then I shouted loud, telling my friend to call my uncle, they both left me in the room laying hopeless and ran away.

Minutes later, I saw and heard people talking to me, but I could hardly recognize any of them or clearly hear what they were saying.

In the Kehkeh, I recognized my mother's voice, she was crying”

Jattu was tested HIV positive, her family were discouraged at the news but our Centre staff supported her and later referred to the National Aid Secretariat (NAS) for further HIV treatment.

To date, Rainbo staff continue providing Jattu the needed medical and psychological support since she was referred to a safe home where she is getting additional support whilst the perpetrators have been arrested and charged to court.

Our medical doctors have also endorsed and issued to the Family Support Unit a medical certificate whilst our Centre staff have tendered in physical materials as evidence for prosecution.

As schools reopens in the next few weeks, Jattu, now physically and emotionally stable will be reintegrating in her community to join her family and friends.

Asked how she feels about the reintegration process, Jattu said she was safe going back to the neighborhood as long as her perpetrators are in police custody and she hopes they're sent to prison and pay for their evil deeds. Commending RI staff and its services, her mother told our Centre Manager "Rainbo indeed nar combra organization, I for loss mi pikin if norto wuna help, leh God continue for hep wuna en protect wuna from all bad tin dem"

We continue to monitor the court case with a promise to update the public accordingly.

RAINBO INITIATIVE SIGNS MOU WITH THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS



On 10th June 2022, our Executive Director, Mr. Daniel F.H Kettor on behalf of the Rainbo management signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs.

The three-year MOU seeks to develop a framework of collaboration between the Ministry and RI for the provision and coordination of GBV prevention and response services through the operations of the One-Stop Centres and Rainbo Centres where survivors of SGBV receive free legal, medical treatment, psychosocial services in Sierra Leone.

At RI, we maintain prompt response service to reports of SGBV and works with survivors up to one year after the incident to ensure safe and dignified healing.

FROM A FEMALE TAXI DRIVER TO RAINBO'S FIRST AND ONLY FEMALE DRIVER: THE STORY OF A 25-YEAR-OLD SINGLE MOTHER – AMINATA



In order to survive the harsh economic and social conditions, Aminata had to challenge the prevailing attitudes about women drivers. It is this ambitious young lady, who at the age of 21 had already lived a life of hardship and triumph, a girl with grit and determination, that would become Rainbo's first female driver.



Aminata dropped out school at age 14 in JSS 2 when she lost her parents and had no one to support her education. She was brought to Freetown from the village by her aunt who promised her education but ended up in a miserable relationship after being forced to live with a 42-year-old office messenger at a music academy in Freetown. Though against her wish, she had to live with this old man till she became pregnant a few months after. She was often molested and sexually abused but had no way to go or report because

she was afraid been taken back to the village.

At a teen age, Aminata gave birth to her first child and then the 42-year-old husband had ran-away without paying the house rent. Aminata was left to take care of herself and her children and to pay the house rent.

The situation became worst when the house owner asked her to leave the apartment and was forced to stay with her friend who leaved in a single room

Today, as Aminata celebrates her birthday and marks her 8 month as RI's first and only female driver, she takes a reflection of what life has been for her.

“It's bad that women, like myself are often faced with such hurdles in life, I could remember hulking the streets of Freetown, selling cold water after my aunty had promised me better education when I lost my parents”.

Aminata explained how she worked tirelessly in the streets of Freetown to achieve her dream. She use to sell cold water and later started working at the restaurant where she saved some money to pursue a driving course that gave her opportunity to work with Rainbo

she was denied almost every little facility she had in the home when she resisted her aunt's decision to love someone older than her late father.

She said “one day I was asked to make a choice either to live with the old man or leave my aunt’s house and never return. I knew it was a hard decision I had to make if I choose to leave her house, I will go in the street but in tears and pain I accepted to move and live with him”. He will always abuse me and maltreat me. I was depressed and wanted to leave but had nowhere to go especially when I was already months pregnant for him. After I gave birth he left home and to date, not even in a dream have I seen him.

“One day, my neighbor recommended me to a local restaurant where I started cleaning dishes and helped with cooking. I wasn’t earning much, but I used the little I had to take care of my son and myself.

I wanted to do something and pursue a career, so I started saving from my little stipend to learn driving. After several months of saving, I enrolled at ChrisTex Driving School to learn driving and six months later I got my license. At first, I was employed as a taxi driver but later saw advert for Rainbo Initiative requesting for driver.

I applied and went through the interview process and was successful. Though I had no prior experience in driving Hilux or Toyota Landcruiser, but Rainbo gave me the opportunity to be trained and believed in my ability to drive. After several months of training, today I am excited to be one of their finest drivers.



“I am so excited because I felt my world is changing around, it all happened like a miracle. I feel very happy and safe in a working environment where everyone appreciates me.

With the help of Rainbo, I am now enrolling into an adult education programme and hope to sit to my BECE and WASCE to enter university to become a Human Resource Manager.

“I believe every woman have the power to change her story, its just a matter of making a firm decision and getting started”

RAINBO INITIATIVE HOLDS A -DAY HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY STAFFERS ON NATIONAL SGBV ISSUES



In February of 2019, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio after more than 8,500 cases of Sexual assaults and rape were recorded in 2018 and a rise in recorded cases in early 2019 declared a national state of emergency on rape and sexual assault,

thereby placing a life imprisonment on sexual penetration of minors and rape of adults.

On November 4th of 2019, Sierra Leone’s parliament amended the 8-year-old Sexual Offences Act enacted in 2012.

The new law make provision for the increase of the maximum penalty for rape and sexual penetration of a child from fifteen years to life imprisonment, the introduction of the offence of aggravated sexual assault, an alternative conviction of aggravated sexual assault, the

prosecution of offences under the Act, the making of rules by the Rules of Court Committee, and to further regulate the practice and procedure under the Act and provide for other related matters.

On Friday, 24th July, 2020, President Julius Maada Bio launched the country's first-ever Sexual Offences Model Court, where he assured Sierra Leoneans of speedy trial and justice for all sexual abuse victims in the country.

Three years into the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act, Rainbo initiative, with support from Irish Aid (IA) and Comic Relief (CR) convened a day High-Level engagement with members of parliament from three parliamentary oversight committees – Gender Committee, Basic and Senior Education Committee and the Health Committee and parliamentary staffers from the Female Caucus, Research Unit, Parliamentary Leadership, Gender Unit and Committee Clerks representing the three committees.

This was to discuss on trending GBV national issues which include, but not limited to MPs' oversight role in strengthening accountability and transparency in the gender sector, skills, and resources at MPs' disposal to improve government accountability and responsiveness to GBV issues, MPs' regular engagement with the media and broader populations on substantive GBV issues, the sexual Offences Amended Act of 2019, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) bill, the sexual offences court etc.




Deliberations from the engagement informed the development of two policy briefs on two key GBV issues as deliverables in the Irish Aid project and as well informed the Comic Relief project on the implementation of key actions developed in the previous engagement.


In response to parliamentarian's impression on the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act, MP's expressed gratitude to government and citizen's support in the implementation of the act as it has led to;


1. An increase in the awareness of SGBV at local and national level
2. An increase in SGBV prosecutions and convictions
3. An increase in the report of SGBV incidences
4. Has led to the establishment of a modern court for SGBV related matters only
5. Massive drop in cases from senior high schools and tertiary institutions etc


Members of Parliament present however reaffirmed their commitments to support Rainbo Initiative in its work and especially on interventions that support the achievement of the Sexual Offences Act 2019 (as amended)


THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS


 **795** SGBV survivors (**741** sexual and **54** physical) were supported with medical and psychosocial services across our five Rainbo Centres in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Kono.


 **16** Community Champions (8 Freetown and 8 Kenema) selected and supported to raise awareness on SGBV in Comic Relief project operational communities in June 2022.


 **71** SGBV cases were followed up in court; **32** were charged to magistrate court, **27** were in the High court with **7** being successfully prosecuted.


 RI Conducted safeguarding assessment for **8** Primary Schools (**4** Freetown and **4** Kenema) with support from Comic Relief.

 **48** Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADeP) staff and Implementing Partners (IPs) trained on SGBV, Sexual Exploitation and Assault and Safeguarding in Freetown and Bo April 2022.

 **35** Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staffers were engaged by RI on critical SGBV matters including the Sexual Offence Act in June 2022. RI together with LAWYERS conducted monitoring visits to the High Court in the provinces to enhance access to justice for SGBV survivors in July 2022.

 **31** (**19** Female and **12** Male) Interns trained and deployed in communities to raise awareness on GBV, its referral pathways, GBV laws and the Rainbo Centre services in June 2022.

 **281** children were reached by Rainbo Initiative during the Day of the African Children commemoration in in Kambia and Port Loko districts in June 2022.

 **60** (**30** Boys and **30** girls) children were engaged on GBV and children's right during the Day of the African Child commemoration in Freetown in June 2022.

COMING UP

HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

With funds from Comic Relief under the “Shifting Norms and Empowering Girls to End Sexual Violence” (SNEGES) Project, Rainbo Initiative will engage 30 Members of Parliament on the SGBV issues, their oversight role on SGBV, and promoting accountability on GBV issues. The expected outcome of the engagement will lead to the development of a monitoring framework to ensure state accountability through civil society-state partnerships and the building of technical competencies of the justice and security sectors and the non-governmental sector to respond effectively to gender-based violence

CELEBRATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

In line with our vision to empower communities to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote social and equal opportunities for all, RI will join the world and its national partners to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child with a line of activities that ensures the promotion of girls’ rights at both community and national levels.



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**With over 45,000
SGBV survivors
supported at our
Rainbo Centres,
We are
committed to
support you too**

**Visit our Rainbo Centres after an
incident of rape or other kinds of abuse.**

FREETOWN

Address: Princess Christian Maternity Hospital, Fourah Bay Road
Contact: +23276-668052

KONO

Address: Koidu Government Hospital
Contact: +23276-919501

MAKENI

Address: Makeni Government Hospital
Contact: +23275-151930

KENEMA

Address: Kenema Government Hospital
Contact: +23276-716157

BO

Address: Bo Government Hospital
Contact: +23275-916291

KAMBIA

Address: Kambia Government Hospital
Contact: +23278-855290

All services at our Rainbo Centres are *FREE*, and we respect each survivor's wishes and choices. Our trained staff treat each survivor as an individual and always maintain confidentiality.

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OUR PARTNERS



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3RD QUARTER NEWSLETTER

RAINBO INITIATIVE

APRIL - JUNE 2022



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Rainboinitiative