



Quarterly Newsletter

January – March 2023

   Rainbo Initiative

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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

FREETOWN RAINBO CENTRE RECEIVES IRELAND'S CATHAOIRLEACH, SENATOR JERRY BUTTIMER.



Figure 1. Senator Buttimer and Mamanama Massaquoi at Freetown Rainbo Centre.

The Seanad Éireann's current Cathaoirleach, Senator Jerry Buttimer of Fine Gael visited our Freetown Rainbo Centre on 20th March 2023, as part of his official visit to Sierra Leone. Together with the Irish Embassy team in Sierra Leone, Senator Buttimer's visit was to highlight the crucial, high-impact work of Rainbo Initiative with Irish Aid's support whilst reiterating Ireland's commitment to ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as a key priority of the Irish Aid. Senator Buttimer took office as the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann on 16th December 2022.

The Cathaoirleach's visit was indeed a thrilling moment for everyone at the Centre acquiring first-hand information on the impact of Irish Aid's support to Rainbo Initiative.

RAINBO INITIATIVE OPENS A NEW GBV RESPONSE CENTRE IN THE WESTERN RURAL DISTRICT OF FREETOWN.



Figure 2. Photos of the Rainbo Satellite Centre

In addition to the six (6) government-established One-Stop Centres we technically support across the country and the six (6) operational Rainbo Centres in Bo, Kenema, Kono, Bombali, Kambia and Freetown, Rainbo Initiative has opened a new satellite Centre in the Western Rural district of Freetown to ease the workload at its Princess Christian Memorial Hospital (PCMH) in the Western Urban District of Freetown whilst ensuring efficient service delivery of sexual assaults against women and girls including boys and men. With the new Rainbo Satellite Centre, incidences of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) that occur in the communities of IMATT, Wilberforce, Aberdeen, Lumley, and Goderich unto the Peninsula can now be reported or referred to 4 Williams Drive, SS Camp – IMATT. This is undoubtedly part of our commitment to ending Gender-Based violence in Sierra Leone.

Report or refer any evidence of GBV to any of our Rainbo Centres One-Stop Centres and the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police across the country. Together, we are ending Gender-Based violence in Sierra Leone.

Anyone, male or female, can go to any of our seven Rainbo Centres located in Freetown (2), Bo, Makeni, Kono, Kenema, and Kambia for help if they suffered from RAPE or SEXUAL ASSAULT. Our Centres are safe, friendly, and private places where survivors of sexual and physical assault can get FREE help after an incident of rape or other kinds of abuse.

RAINBO INITIATIVE HOLDS ITS FIRST BI-ANNUAL STAFF WORKSHOP FOR 2023.



Figure 3. Group photo of RI Staff at the workshop.

This year's first Bi-Annual Staff Workshop was held in Freetown on the theme "Innovation to Enhance Excellent Performance." The workshop brought together over 100 participants including RI Sierra Leone, RI Liberia, Initiative Rainbo Guinea (IGR) RI Sierra Leone Consultant Doctors and RI Sierra Leone staff assigned to the government One Stop Centres across Sierra Leone to evaluate our shared values and commitment to ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. The workshop allowed participants to learn about RI's country-specific progress and yearly priorities with a highlight of our global strategy. Beyond building a better understanding of RI policies, the workshop was fun filled with entertainments, networking, and presentations.

RAINBO INITIATIVE TRAINS COMMUNITY FOCAL POINT VOLUNTEERS ON SAFEGUARDING.

As a gender-focused organisation, Rainbo Initiative places safeguarding at the core of its programming, as such, effective training on safeguarding is crucial for staff members and volunteers.

By equipping community focal point volunteers with the skills and resources needed to recognise and respond to cases of abuse and exploitation, they can help create a safe and secure environment for everyone in their communities.

WITH INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY: RAINBO INITIATIVE CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.



Figure 4. Audience reading survivors' stories at the exhibition.

As part of our innovative approach to preventing and responding to issues of Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, Rainbo Initiative, with support from partners, in celebration of this year's International Women's Day held yet another creative event geared towards addressing the root causes of all forms of violence especially those against women and girls in Sierra Leone.

In telling the true-life stories of what GBV survivors go through, especially during their healing journey with us, RI organized an exhibition of what survivors were wearing at the time of their sexual assaults, and a film premiering a teenage schoolgirl who was drugged and raped by her schoolteacher. Among key stakeholders in the GBV landscape invited to the exhibition were representatives of government ministries, departments and agencies, donors, and partner organisations.

Held in Freetown on IWD's global theme: "Innovation and technology for gender equality" the 'Virgin Mary' film premier staged by Rainbo Initiative in collaboration with Solid Productions creatively told the thrilling story and life experience of Mary Massaquoi whose abuse yet raised further concerns on the safety of girls in

school very. This story well fits our daily efforts to end all forms of Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone whilst the 'What were you wearing' art exhibition further helped the audience with the stack knowledge of how and where sexual abuse is likely to occur and shifting blames from survivors to where it solely belongs – to the perpetrators.

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SIERRA LEONE IS ALREADY EVIDENT.

Through our work and that of other like-minded organisations, more people are now aware of GBV and the support that is available for survivors.

There is also greater dialogue and understanding between different sectors of society and more initiatives to address the root causes of GBV.

This has created a more inclusive and supportive environment in Sierra Leone and has contributed to more reporting of GBV cases in the country.

At Rainbo Initiative, we will continue our approach of engaging communities to raise awareness of GBV and creates a culture of respect and understanding whilst providing support services and referrals for survivors of GBV and working with local leaders and organisations to develop strategies to address the root causes of all forms of Gender-Based Violence.

Through our work, we are helping to create safe, healthy and sustainable communities in Sierra Leone.

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

THE STORY OF A 27-YEAR-OLD LADY GANG RAPED BY A VILLAGE CHIEF AND HIS MEN.

One harrowing case that rocked our organisation to its core was that of Salamatu, a 27-year-old survivor. Salamatu was ruthlessly attacked during a male secret society exercise and gang-raped by a group of men led by the village chief in a small community near the Guinea border in one of Sierra Leone's districts that border with Guinea.

As Salamatu lay helpless on the bare ground, her pleas for mercy went unheard as the men took turns violating her body. Her ordeal at the hands of the village chief and his team left her traumatised and in excruciating pain.

At our Rainbo Centre, Salamatu opened up about the heart-wrenching experiences she faced, particularly at the hands of the village chief. She vividly recounted how, he took the first turn, tearing her clothes and forcing himself onto her. Then, one by one, the other men took turns, heedless of Salamatu's cries for mercy. "By turn, these men took advantage of my body and raped me, despite my cry and appeals for them to stop." She said, weeping bitterly as she narrates her horrific ordeal.

With the help of our generous donors and partners, Rainbo Initiative was able to provide free medical treatment for Salamatu during her admission, as well as continued support through our Rainbo Centre. Our team also worked tirelessly alongside civil society organisations in the district to ensure that Salamatu's case was properly charged to the high court for justice to prevail.

We were deeply moved by her story, and we sprang to action by standing by her in her wish to seek justice and heal from the trauma.

She was referred to our Rainbo Centre's contracted certified medical doctor, who diagnosed Salamatu with severe physical and psychological pain, among other health concerns. Salamatu was rushed to an emergency ward for admission, where she spent two days before being transferred to the female ward for another two weeks before being discharged from the hospital.

Salamatu's case was charged to the magistrate court by the Family Support Unit for legal proceedings, where the journey towards justice proved difficult and slow-moving. Despite financial struggles and facing many adjournments, she and her mother showed immense courage by attending every seating at the high court until justice would be served.

We must all come together to end Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone and beyond. Rainbo Initiative will continue to encourage survivors like Salamatu to report any forms of violence so that we can offer them safety, medical care, legal aid, and support on their journey towards healing.

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

760 GBV survivors (**694** sexual and **66** physical), **751** male and **9** female were supported with medical and psychosocial services across our **7** Rainbo Centres in Freetown (2), Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono and Kambia.

12,230 (**5,056** Male and **7,165** Female) people were reached with awareness-raising messages on GBV, its referral pathways and the Rainbo Center services.

25 GBV cases were followed up in court; **17** were charged to magistrate court, **8** were in the High court with **2** being successfully prosecuted.

32 (**16** Males and **16** Females) were trained on GBV basic concepts and Safeguarding.

Followed up on **57** SGBV cases in court; **18** were charged to magistrate court, **39** were directly committed to High court and **14** were successfully prosecuted.

121 teenage survivors tested positive for pregnancy at the time they reached our Centres after the abuse. **519** were treated for Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs).

20 (**18** male and **2** female) FSU Personnel were trained on case identification and proper management of sexual assault cases.

COMING UP

A DAY DIALOGUE SESSION WITH POLITICAL PARTIES TO INFLUENCE THEIR MANIFESTO TO ADOPT PRO-SGBV POLICIES AND TO PREVENT ELECTORAL VIOLENCE.

This one-day dialogue session will be organised by Rainbo Initiative with funds from Irish Aid to engage political parties to influence their manifesto to adopt pro-SGBV policies and to prevent electoral violence.

Political parties play a critical role in shaping public policy and have a significant impact on the lives of citizens. Hence, involving political parties in adopting pro-SGBV policies in their manifestos as part of their political agenda can have a far-reaching impact on reducing the prevalence of SGBV and preventing electoral violence.

The expected outcome of this intervention is that political parties will prioritise SGBV in their election manifesto, thereby committing to taking concrete actions towards combating SGBV and political violence before, during and after the election. This will have a significant impact on reducing SGBV and improving survivors' access to justice and support.

NEWSLETTER

STAKEHOLDERS' COMMUNITY TOWN HALL MEETINGS ON THE REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND SGBV-RELATED LAWS.

With support from Trocaire, Rainbo Initiative will organise 15 community town hall meetings in Bombali, Port Loko and Kambia districts to raise awareness on the referral pathways and SGBV-related laws in Sierra Leone.

These engagements will further increase public awareness of the rights and welfare of women and adolescent girls and the implications involved in violence against women and girls. It will also serve as a platform where women and adolescent girls get adequate information on GBV-related laws.

This will increase awareness, galvanise advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations to end violence against women and adolescent girls. Through these meetings, communities will be triggered to formulate by-laws and guidelines to prevent GBV from happening in their communities and protect survivors of Gender-Based Violence.

RAINBO INITIATIVE TO CONDUCT PERCEPTION SURVEYS ON SGBV.

Rainbo Initiative will conduct four (4) bi-annual perception surveys to capture the views of the public on SGBV and its associated challenges.

This will be done in close collaboration with other Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) such as the Ministry of Gender Children's Affairs

(MoGCA), Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (MHTE), Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE) and other like-minded Civil Society organisations (CSOs) such as the Institute of Governance Reform (IGR) with the skills set and experience to deliver on such activity. This exercise will measure the level of knowledge of the public on GBV issues and the services available to support survivors.

Significant value addition to this activity is that it will bring a fresh outsider perspective to the whole discourse around SGBV prevention and response in these institutions and will help to shape the thought processes of duty bearers to influence policies and practices.

The survey will target public institutions; Commercial Banking Institutions, Telecommunication Companies, Tertiary Education Institutions (Universities) and Government Ministries, Department and Agencies. The data collection exercise will target beneficiaries (Workers, Students, administrators, including the public) within and around these institutions in Rainbo Initiative operational districts, with opinion-based questions on GBV, safeguarding issues and services. This will help Rainbo Initiative to understand the current trend and gaps in GBV and safeguarding and engage administrators and government to adopt best practices to curb these gaps.

OUR PARTNERS

