



Quarterly Newsletter

April – June 2023

   Rainbo Initiative

Inside The Issue

Page 1: News Highlights

Page 8: Survivors' Voice

Page 8: This Quarter In Numbers

Page 9: Coming Up



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

RAINBO INITIATIVE LAUNCHES GBV SURVIVOR INCIDENT DATA FOR 2022.



Figure 1: Journalists at the press conference and Data launch

On Wednesday, 5th April 2023, Rainbo Initiative launched its GBV Survivor Incident Data for 2022 in a press conference at its Head Office in Freetown.

According to the report, 2,941 incidences of GBV were reported at the six (6) Rainbo Centres during the period under review with 99.4% of these being female and 0.6% male survivors.

The launch marks a significant milestone for Rainbo Initiative, as it demonstrates the organisation's unwavering commitment to ending Gender-Based violence (GBV) in Sierra Leone. The data provides valuable insights into the incidence of GBV, the different types of GBV survivors' experiences, and the efficacy of interventions aimed at supporting survivors.

The report highlights incidences of different forms and types of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) including physical, sexual, and emotional abuses reported between January and 1st December 2022 in Six (6) of the Seven (7) Rainbo Centres* ⁽¹⁾ in the country.

¹ The 7th Rainbo Centre was officially opened in January of 2023

This report which is not representative of the national incidences of GBV however draws our attention to the impact that sexual abuse and violence have on individuals and communities and calls for collective action to address all forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone.

Daily, we gather data on GBV cases reported at our Rainbo Centres and secure it in our comprehensive database, which enables us to monitor trends in GBV cases by district and year. We share this data with relevant authorities and organisations that are working on GBV prevention and response, so they can make informed decisions and develop effective interventions. Our database is considered reliable and accurate, and we are recognised by the Government of Sierra Leone and other organisations working on GBV issues.

The event was attended by journalists and media practitioners from over 13 media outlets including radio, television, and newspapers. In addition, representatives from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) such as the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were also present.

The launch of this data has further inspired us to remain dedicated to providing comprehensive support to survivors of GBV. Our commitment to supporting survivors of GBV remains unwavering. We will continue to advocate for policies that address GBV in Sierra Leone and work tirelessly towards a future where every individual is free from the devastating effects of GBV.

"The endorsed medical certificate issued by Rainbo Plays a key role to the Ministry of Justice. When it comes to sentencing, the medical report indicates factors that inform the judges' verdict." Adama Boima, State Counsel, Ministry of Justice, at the Data launch.

RAINBO INITIATIVE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED POLITICAL PARTIES IN ADOPTING PRO-GBV POLICIES IN THEIR MANIFESTOES AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE 2023 ELECTIONEERING PERIOD.



Figure 2: Engagement with NGC at their office in Freetown.

Violence is a common occurrence during elections in Sierra Leone, and unfortunately, women and girls are disproportionately affected by electoral violence. During the past three elections in 2007, 2012, and 2018 there were reports of violence against women during the electioneering period. Despite this, little has been done by political parties to prevent a recurrence of this violence against women and girls during the upcoming June 24th, 2023, Multi-tier elections.

Rainbo Initiative and other civil society organisations, with support from Irish Aid, engaged four out of the five political parties contesting the June 24th, 2023, Multi-tier elections. The political parties engaged include the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), the All People's Congress (APC), and the National Grand Coalition (NGC).

The objective of this engagement is to encourage the adoption of pro-GBV policies in their manifestoes and to prevent violence against women and girls during the 2023 electioneering

period. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet with the governing Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) due to their campaign schedule. However, they committed to upholding the rights and protection of women and girls in all their activities to prevent political violence against women and girls.

Political parties play a critical role in shaping public policy and have a significant impact on the lives of citizens. Hence, engaging political parties in adopting pro-GBV policies in their manifestoes as part of their political agenda can have a far-reaching impact on reducing the incidences of GBV and preventing violence against women and girls during the electioneering period.

This engagement provided an opportunity to discuss issues of sexual violence and to secure political parties' commitment to protecting women and girls, especially during the electioneering period. Additionally, we discussed how political parties plan to hold perpetrators accountable for sexual violence and rape during the electioneering process.



Figure 3: Meeting with PMDC at their Freetown office.

During the engagement, Rainbo Initiative presented its statistics on GBV in the six districts of operation in the country, as detailed in its previous yearly GBV reports. We emphasised the need for political parties to recognise the impact of GBV on the country's development and

understand that ending GBV is crucial to achieving sustainable development.

The political parties expressed a strong interest in adopting pro-GBV policies and committed to working with Rainbo Initiative and other CSOs to develop policies that address violence against women and girls during the electioneering period.

The parties acknowledged the importance of prioritising the rights of women and girls in their campaign and pledged to ensure that their policies are geared towards ending GBV.



Figure 4: Engaging with UDM at their East End office in Freetown.

Our engagement with the political parties is a significant step towards promoting the rights of women and girls in Sierra Leone. We will continue to work with political parties and other stakeholders to promote policies that prioritise the rights of women and girls, as we believe that by working together, we can create a safer, more equal society where every individual is free from the devastating effects of GBV.

“Together we can make a difference. Join the fight against Gender-Based Violence and create a world where everyone feels safe and empowered.”

RAINBO INITIATIVE DONATES ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES TO THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND CHILDREN’S AFFAIRS (MGCA) TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF GBV.



Figure 5: Mr. Charles Vandi, receiving the donation on behalf of MGCA.

According to the United Nations, one in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence, often by an intimate partner. In Sierra Leone, GBV remains a serious issue that affects women, men, and children. To mitigate the effects of GBV on survivors, Rainbo Initiative, with support from Irish Aid, donated essential supplies to the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs.

This donation ensures that survivors have access to the resources they need to heal and move forward with their lives. It is in consonance with the MoU between Rainbo and MoGCA which stipulates that Rainbo will collaborate with the MoGCA to jointly support the operations and management of the One Stop Centres across Sierra Leone.

The donation represents a significant step towards Rainbo Initiative's commitment to addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Sierra Leone and supporting survivors in their journey towards healing and rebuilding their lives.

The donated supplies include essential items such as toiletries, stationery, and provisions, which will be distributed among the One-Stop Centres

across the country. Rainbo Initiative provides technical support to four out of the eight government-established One-Stop Centres to help them provide services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).

The donation was made by Rainbo Initiative's GBV Response Coordinator at the Ministry's headquarters in Freetown. Mr. Charles Vandj, Director of Gender, who received the items on behalf of the Ministry noted the importance of partnerships like these in addressing GBV in Sierra Leone and creating safer communities for our women and girls. He expressed their heartfelt appreciation to Rainbo Initiative for the generous donation to support their work with survivors of GBV.

Madam Ramatu Kargbo, National Consultant for MoGCA, commended Rainbo Initiative for its commitment to supporting survivors of GBV, not only through partnership with the ministry but also by providing free medical and psychosocial support to GBV survivors across the country.

We believe that these items will go a long way in ensuring that survivors have access to the resources they need to heal and move towards rebuilding their lives in their communities. We remain committed to supporting survivors of GBV and working towards a Sierra Leone free from sexual abuse and violence.

RAINBO INITIATIVE CELEBRATES WORLD MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY (WMHD) WITH A SAFEGUARDING POLICY AMIDST POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE COUNTRY.

World Menstrual Hygiene Day (WMHD), celebrated annually on May 28th, is an important occasion to raise awareness about the critical issue of menstrual hygiene management and to break the stigma surrounding menstruation. As a leading organisation in the prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, Rainbo Initiative recognises the

importance of menstrual hygiene and its impact on the well-being of girls and women.



Figure 6: WMHD celebration at St. Peter's the Fisherman Primary School.

Despite the ongoing political tensions in the country ahead of its multi-tier elections on 24th June 2023, Rainbo Initiative remained steadfast in its commitment to celebrate this year's World Menstrual Hygiene Day, as WMHD forms a core part of our advocacy approach and has been celebrated over the past years in several innovative ways.

Leveraging its Safeguarding Policy, the organisation ensured that all necessary measures were in place to protect the pupils and staff involved in the celebration.

Instead of the usual gathering of school pupils from different schools, this year's celebration took place in schools with pupils, and it included a variety of activities such as health education talks on menstrual hygiene, distribution of dignity kits containing sanitary pads, soap, and more, as well as interactive sessions with the pupils. These interactive sessions provided a platform for the pupils to share their experiences and ask questions about menstrual hygiene.

Through this celebration, Rainbo Initiative raised awareness about menstrual hygiene management and broke the stigma surrounding

menstruation intending to empower girls and women to manage their menstrual hygiene effectively and confidently.

As Lela Eton, Rainbo Initiative's Safeguarding and Training Coordinator, remarked,

"On this World Menstrual Hygiene Day, Rainbo Initiative calls on all stakeholders, including the governments, NGOs, and the private sector, to increase their efforts towards menstrual hygiene management and promote awareness of this critical issue. We must work together to ensure that all women and girls can manage their menstruation with dignity and without fear of stigma."

Rainbo Initiative remains committed to promoting menstrual hygiene management and breaking the silence and stigma around menstruation.

TWO DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS AND THE FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT ON THE HARMONIZATION OF GBV INDICATORS.



Figure 8: Participants at the engagement.

Rainbo Initiative held a two-day engagement with representatives from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the Family Support Unit on the harmonization of GBV indicators. This was a significant step forward in our collective efforts to address GBV in our communities in Sierra Leone. By working together to standardise GBV indicators, we can better track and address this issue with accurate, reliable, and comprehensive

data on the incidences of GBV in the country. With this data, we can design and implement evidence-based interventions to effectively address GBV, identify gaps in current policies and programs, and develop new and innovative approaches to tackling GBV.

We are proud to work in partnership with the Sierra Leone Police Family Support Unit (FSU) and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to provide holistic support to survivors of gender-based violence. Together, we are addressing the health, psychosocial, safety, and protection needs of girls and women in Sierra Leone.

This engagement is just one of the many steps we are taking to fight GBV in Sierra Leone. We remain committed to creating a safer and more equitable society for all, and we thank you for your continued support.

RAINBO INITIATIVE BUILDS INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRUCTURES TO END GBV.

As part of our evidence-based advocacy strategy, Rainbo Initiative is committed to building inclusive and sustainable community structures to end Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Sierra Leone. This commitment is reflected in all our projects funded by Irish Aid, Trocaire, Partners in Health and Comic Relief, which have established local structures to address GBV.

For instance, under the two-year '**Enhancing Free Healthcare Services for GBV Survivors and Empowering Communities to Prevent GBV (EHeSGS) project**', which is funded by Irish Aid through the Embassy of Ireland in Sierra Leone, we are championing the establishment and effective operation of key community-led structures aimed at addressing GBV.

Some of the key community-led structures include:

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON GBV ISSUES.

Rainbo Initiative's community dialogue meetings are held in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Kono. These meetings have been successful in mapping out ideas of local community members on the root causes of GBV in their communities and the best local approaches to address the scourge. With community members including chiefs, youths, and other key stakeholders, these meetings provide a platform for community members to share their experiences and perspectives on GBV, and to develop effective strategies to address the issue at the local level.

2. PROVISION OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS' GBV STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

Our efforts to provide technical and financial support to the government-established GBV Steering Committee Meetings have been successful through the EHeSGS project. These engagements are held in Bo, Kenema, and Kono in the form of coordination meetings to address incidences of GBV brought forward from the community dialogue meetings on GBV, including the development of effective strategies in addressing all forms of GBV at the district level.

The committee is made up of several organisations working on addressing GBV-related issues, especially at the local level. Rainbo Initiative provides both technical and financial assistance by providing refreshments and transport refunds to participants who attend these meetings.

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GBV STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEES.

The establishment of GBV Stakeholder Committees is a significant step in the fight against GBV in communities. With the support of Comic Relief through the 'Shifting Norms and Empowering Girls to End Sexual Violence (SNEGES)' project, we have established GBV stakeholder committees in 16 communities in the

Western Area and Kenema districts. These committees are made up of key community players who have been trained to identify and report any form of GBV incidents in their communities to service providers through the referral pathways established by the stakeholders themselves. This ensures that survivors of GBV receive the necessary support and care they need to recover and heal from the trauma they have experienced.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL CLUBS AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEES.

Through the SNEGES project, Rainbo Initiative has established school clubs and safeguarding committees in 16 primary schools in the Western Area and Kenema districts. The establishment of these school clubs and safeguarding committees are a crucial step in the fight against GBV in communities and schools.

These committees provide a comprehensive and safe reporting system of GBV issues by school pupils and the protection of these pupils by the school community, especially teachers who interface directly with the pupils. This ensures that school pupils who are survivors of GBV can report incidents safely and confidentially and receive the necessary support and care they need to recover and heal from the trauma they have experienced.

In essence, the establishment of school clubs and safeguarding committees is a critical component of our effort to combat GBV in communities and schools. By creating safe spaces for school pupils to learn about GBV, empowering them to take an active role in preventing and responding to GBV, and equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and respond to GBV incidents in schools, Rainbo Initiative is contributing to the larger goal of ending GBV in Sierra Leone.

"No one deserves to be abused. Raise awareness, support survivors, and work towards a society free from Gender-Based Violence."

5. SETTING UP TOWN HALL MEETINGS AND SUPPORTING COORDINATION MEETINGS.

With funds from Trocaire through the **'Enhancing Knowledge and Access to GBV Services (EKAGS)' project**, Rainbo Initiative has set up Town Hall and Coordination Meetings in Bombali, Port Loko, and Kambia districts where critical GBV issues and service provision are discussed, and concrete action plans are developed for effective actioning.

Through these meetings, Rainbo Initiative is creating a platform for community members, key stakeholders, and government agencies to come together, share information, and coordinate their efforts to address GBV in their communities. This ensures that GBV is addressed using a collaborative and multi-faceted approach, which is essential to creating sustainable change. These engagements are essential to creating a safe and equitable society for all, where GBV is not tolerated.

RAINBO INITIATIVE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED WORTHY PATRON AND PROJECT AMBASSADOR FOR THE SICK PIKIN PROJECT INTERNATIONAL AND RECEIVES THE TASTE OF SALONE CULTURE AND FASHION AWARD.



Figure 9: Daniel receiving his award.

On Friday, 12th May 2023, our Executive Director, Daniel F. H. Kettor, was appointed as both Worthy Patron and Project Ambassador for The Sick Pikin Project International. This esteemed position was

bestowed upon him at the Sick Pikin Charity Concert, which took place in Freetown.

The Sick Pikin Project is a charitable medical initiative that raises funds through donations to provide healthcare for underprivileged and medically vulnerable children in Sierra Leone.

Daniel's appointment is a testament to his deep compassion and unwavering dedication to helping sick and impoverished children in Sierra Leone.

In addition to recognising Daniel's commitment to helping sick children, this appointment also acknowledges the incredible impact he is making in the lives of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence survivors, as well as their families and communities.

In addition to this incredible honour, we also want to congratulate Daniel on his "Recognition in Leadership" award from the Taste of Salone Culture and Fashion and Limkokwing University for his dedicated services to GBV survivors.



Figure 10: Daniel making a statement after receiving his award.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Daniel for his outstanding achievements and express our gratitude for his unwavering commitment to driving us forward, motivating us, and encouraging us to be our best every day. His continued efforts to effect positive change in Sierra Leone are a great inspiration to us all. With his dedication and leadership, we are confident

that we will continue to make significant strides in our efforts to create a safer and more equitable society for all.

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

OVERCOMING THE UNTHINKABLE: A YOUNG GIRL'S JOURNEY TO HEALING FROM SEXUAL ABUSE.

Sexual abuse is a heinous act that can leave a lasting impact on its victims, especially children. The story of a young primary school pupil who was repeatedly sexually abused by her uncle is a testament to the devastating effects of such abuse. However, with the support of the Rainbo Centre, this little girl was able to overcome the trauma and got on the path to healing.

At just eight years old, the survivor was subjected to multiple instances of sexual abuse by her 35-year-old uncle. She was too afraid and innocent to confide in anyone about the abuse, and her abuser took advantage of her vulnerability to continue the inhumane act. It was only when her mother discovered a letter titled "**UNCLE SAPUKA IS A BAD PERSON**" that the abuse was brought to light.

The survivor's mother wasted no time in reporting the matter to the Family Support Unit (FSU), and the survivor was referred to the Rainbo Centre for specialised care and support.

Despite the perpetrator disappearing, the survivor's recovery process began with the support of the Rainbo Centre.

The Centre provided a thorough medical examination, including HIV testing and treatment for suspected sexually transmitted infections. The medical report was endorsed by a medical doctor and presented to FSU police for investigation and prosecution of the offender. The Rainbo Centre also provided continuous follow-up to monitor the survivor's recovery and well-being.

Despite the trauma, the survivor's academic performance significantly improved, and she went on to top her class in the National Primary School Examination. She is currently in Junior Secondary School and performing excellently well.

This story highlights the importance of specialized care and support for survivors of sexual abuse. It shows that with the right resources, children can overcome the trauma of sexual abuse and live healthy and productive lives. Rainbo Centre is committed to providing quality care and support to survivors of sexual abuse, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to heal, recover, and thrive.

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

717 GBV survivors (**668** sexual and **49** physical assaults) were supported with medical and psychosocial support services across our seven Rainbo Centres in Freetown (2), Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono and Kambia.

Of the **717** GBV survivors supported by the Rainbo Centre, **707** were female and **10** were male.

100 teenage survivors tested positive for pregnancy and **467** were treated for Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs).

58 GBV cases were followed up in court; 8 were charged to magistrate court, **50** were directly committed to the High court and **14** were successfully convicted.

12, 341 (**5,450** Male and **6,891** Female) people were reached with awareness-raising messages on GBV, its referral pathways and the Rainbo Center services.

NEWSLETTER

Among the **58** cases monitored, **9** were successfully convicted between April and June 2023.

COMING UP

GBV PERCEPTION SURVEY.

A bi-annual survey will be conducted in July 2023, to capture the views of the public on GBV and its associated challenges. The exercise will measure the level or the knowledge of the public on GBV issues and the services available to support survivors.

SNEGES PROJECT ENDLINE SURVEY.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the relevance and level of achievement outcome of the Comic Relief project entitled, "Shifting Norms and Empowering Girls to end Sexual Violence." The outcome of the evaluation will provide a comparative analysis of the project intervention in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability in Freetown and Kenema districts. Additionally, it will capture best practices to inform future similar programming.

CONDUCT A SURVEY ON THE UNDERLYING RISK FACTORS OF GBV.

The purpose of the survey is to generate information relevant to the design of an appropriate strategy to address the underlying risk factors of gender-based violence (GBV), including social norms and the acceptability of violence in our communities.

This survey will be conducted with support from the Carter Centre in collaboration with the Ministry

of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) and the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP).

DEVELOP AND ROLL OUT SCORECARDS FOR SERVICE USERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Rainbo Initiative will develop and "Scorecard" a performance management tool, which will be used to monitor and evaluate the performance of the various aspects including the quality of GBV service provision and survivors' satisfaction at the Rainbo Centre One-stop Centre and the Family Support Unit (FSU). This is an accountability tool, which Rainbo Initiative will use to collect feedback from service providers, service users and duty bearers and develop action to improve access to those services.

TRAIN PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ON THE HARMONIZED GBV DATA COLLECTION TOOLS.

Rainbo Initiative with support from the Carter Center, will develop GBV tracking tools with common indicators with the Family Support Unit (FSU) and establish a digital system for collecting data on harmonized indicators. This will be done to solve the issues of over and under-reporting GBV issues by the FSU and Rainbo Initiative.

ENGAGE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS TO REACTIVATE THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE.

In July and August 2023, RI will engage national stakeholders to influence policy and practices relating to GBV in Sierra Leone. This engagement is key to Rainbo Initiative's work on the campaign against GBV in communities and will provide us with the unique opportunity to get the buy-in of stakeholders to commit more funding to BGV programming In-country.

OUR PARTNERS



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