



Quarterly Newsletter

July – September 2023

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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

RAINBO INITIATIVE HOLDS AN INDUCTION AND EXPERIENCE-SHARING SESSION WITH ITS NEW BOARD.



Figure 1: RI Board members in the Induction meeting at Atlantic Hotel.

On Friday, July 21, 2023, Rainbo Initiative held an induction and experience-sharing session with its new Board of Directors.

The induction session aimed to familiarize the new members of the Board with RI's mission, vision, and ongoing projects. It provided them with a comprehensive understanding of the organization's strategic goals and objectives in addressing the pressing issue of sexual and Gender-Based violence.

During the sessions, our outgoing Board members graciously shared their invaluable experiences and insights gained during their tenure. Their unwavering dedication and hard work have been instrumental in shaping Rainbo Initiative into the esteemed global example of a local Initiative it is today.

Among those leaving are Mr. James Fofanah, Chief of Party for Break Through Action and former Executive Director for Rainbo Initiative, and Mr. Leslie Williams, Finance Manager for the Irish Embassy in Sierra Leone, and Liberia. We extend our deepest gratitude to them for their exceptional leadership and their commitments have made a lasting impact, and we are forever grateful.

Madam Margret Bernard Jones, a retired Human Resources specialist, was elected as our new Chairperson. With her extensive knowledge in organisational management and strategic leadership, Madam Jones will guide Rainbo Initiative towards achieving its mission with utmost dedication and vision.

The role of Vice-Chairperson is Mr. Jamal Conteh, a highly respected media consultant. Mr. Conteh's expertise in communication and public relations will be invaluable in raising awareness and garnering support for Rainbo Initiative's vital work. Joining the board as Treasurer is Mr. Christian Campbell, a retired accountant. With his meticulous financial acumen and wealth of experience, Mr. Campbell will ensure the responsible management of Rainbo Initiative's resources, enabling us to maximize our impact and reach.

We are also delighted to welcome two new board members who will contribute their unique perspectives and expertise. Mrs. Millicent Kargbo, the Executive President of the Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalists (SLAWIJ), brings a wealth of knowledge in media engagement and women's empowerment, enriching our efforts in media engagement. Additionally, we are honoured to have Mr. Charles Vandí, Deputy Chief Director at the Ministry of Gender, and Children's Affairs, join our board. His deep understanding of gender issues will further strengthen our commitment to inclusivity and empowerment.



Figure 2: RI Incoming and Outgoing Board Members. From right to left, Mr. Christian Campbell, Mr. Leslie Williams, Mr. James Fofanah, Madam Margret Bernard Jones, Mr. Jamal Conteh, Mrs. Millicent Kargbo, Mr. Charles Vandí, and Mr. Daniel Kettor.

RAINBO INITIATIVE WITH OTHER CSOs ENGAGED YOUTHS ON GENDER AND POST-ELECTION CHALLENGES IN SIERRA LEONE.



Figure 3: Lela presenting on GBV at the National Youth Engagement.

Following a productive roundtable discussion with four (4) political parties: United Democratic Movement (UDM), People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), National Grand Coalition (NGC), and the All People's Congress (APC), ahead of the June 24, 2023, multitier elections, Rainbo Initiative in collaboration with four other CSOs, hosted a ground-breaking event called the "National Youth Engagement on Gender and Post-Election Challenges in Sierra Leone" on August 8th, 2023. The event brought together over one hundred young Sierra Leoneans representing major political parties, civil society organizations, the media, and others, drawn from across the country's 16 political districts.

Recognizing the significance of engaging the youth population, Rainbo Initiative and its partners took a proactive approach to address gender and post-election challenges through dialogue and awareness-raising. This collaborative effort between CSOs and Rainbo Initiative demonstrates our commitment to ensuring peaceful post-election transitions and fostering a more inclusive society where all voices are valued.

By convening young people from diverse backgrounds, including civil society organizations, political parties, academic institutions, and other sectors, we aimed to encourage collective reflection on pressing post-election challenges. Through such introspection, we can lay the groundwork for national peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

The outcomes of this engagement have been truly inspiring. Participants actively contributed their thoughts, concerns, and insights on gender-related issues and the challenges experienced during the post-election period. Through constructive dialogue and collaboration, they developed strategies and action plans to address these issues, paving the way for a harmonious and productive youth generation.

"I am inspired by the passion, dedication, and active participation of young people in addressing these crucial issues. This gives me hope for a more inclusive and equitable future. By empowering and amplifying the voices of youth, we can create real change and overcome the challenges that arise during the post-election period. Rainbo Initiative stands firmly with the youth of our nation as we strive for a better tomorrow." Daniel F. H. Kettor, Executive Director, Rainbo Initiative.

We firmly believe that engaging the youth is crucial in shaping a better future for Sierra Leone. Their active involvement in combating Gender-Based Violence and addressing post-election challenges is essential for creating lasting change within our society.



Figure 4: Focus Group Discussion at the National Youth Engagement.

Moving forward, we will continue to closely collaborate with our partners, civil society organisations, and both state and non-state actors, including political structures, to drive tangible progress. Together, we can ensure that every voice is heard, every life is protected, and every individual feels safe in their communities. Through these efforts, we can build a Sierra Leone characterized by peace, inclusivity, and prosperity.

EMPOWERING CONSTRUCTION WORKERS TO SAFEGUARD AND UPHOLD GENDER RIGHTS.



Figure 5: Participants at the Safeguarding & Gender Training.

Rainbo Initiative, supported by the World Bank through the Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADep) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, conducted a transformative Safeguarding and Gender training programme. This training targeted construction workers involved in the bridge construction project at four river crossing points in Sierra Leone.

The training's core objective was to empower and enlighten these workers about the critical significance of safeguarding women and girls, while simultaneously addressing the multifaceted complexities surrounding gender equality.

These bridges, located at Manowa in Kailahun district, Gandema in Kenema district, Matru Jong in Bonthe district, and Tomparay in Bombali district, will replace current ferry crossings, ushering in safer and more efficient transportation options for the surrounding communities.

Rainbo Initiative, as the specialist for the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) component of the project, is honoured to deliver consultancy services for this vital initiative.

By equipping these construction workers with knowledge and skills, we are taking a significant step towards creating a safer environment, where the safety and well-being of women and girls are paramount. Together, we have the power to build bridges not only physically but also in the social fabric of our society.

RAINBO INITIATIVE ENGAGES MEDICAL AND LEGAL PRACTITIONERS TO SHARE EXPERT EXPERIENCE AND STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION ON GBV.



Figure 6: Participants at the Medico-Legal Training in Port Loko.

As part of the 'Enhance Knowledge and Access to GBV Services for Women and Older Adolescent Girls to Promote Increased Safety and Psychosocial Wellbeing (EKAGS) Project' implemented by Rainbo Initiative in Bombali, Port Loko, and Kambia Districts, with funding from Trocaire, a two-day medico-legal engagement was held on September 18th and 19th, 2023. The purpose of the engagement was to bring together medical, legal, and other key service providers for SGBV survivors, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Family Support Unit, and the Local Police Partnership Board. The goal was to share sectoral and expert experiences, address challenges, and strengthen collaboration and coordination in medical and legal service provision for survivors of SGBV in Sierra Leone, specifically in Bombali, Kambia, and Port Loko districts.

Recognizing the critical role of medical and legal services in supporting survivors on their healing journey, Rainbo Initiative facilitated this platform for practitioners to share their expertise, raise awareness about the importance of medical and legal service delivery, and promote collaboration among all actors involved in the SGBV service delivery chain.

Effective coordination among all GBV actors is essential to ensure efficient and high-quality care and to maximize resources while avoiding duplication.

The engagement not only helped bridge long-standing knowledge gaps between the medical and legal sectors, specifically regarding GBV case interventions like medical reports, survivor statements, witness availability, and attestations, but it also enhanced collaboration among sector representatives. It resulted in the establishment of commitments for ongoing inter-sectoral consultations and coordination on SGBV service delivery. Bringing practitioners together to share challenges, examine best practices, and collaborate is a vital step in addressing the problems they are dedicated to resolving.

“Bringing practitioners under one roof to share challenges, examine best practices and collaborate is part of addressing the problems we all are dedicated to resolving.” Joseph Sesay, State Counsel – Bombali.

SERVICE PROVIDERS TRAINING ON INCLUSION, DISABILITIES, AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH.



Figure 7: Participants at the Service Providers Training in Port Loko.

Rainbo Initiative successfully organized a three-day training on Inclusion, Disabilities, and Survivor-Centred Approach for service providers involved in the provision of support and care to survivors of SGBV. The training aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective and inclusive services to SGBV survivors, with a particular focus on addressing the unique challenges faced by survivors with disabilities.

The training brought together social workers, medical practitioners, Family Support Unit (FSU) staff, and legal practitioners. Through interactive sessions and group discussions, participants gained a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of gender-based violence and disabilities, legal frameworks related to survivor rights, and best practices in survivor-centred care.

The collaboration and networking opportunities were invaluable aspects of the training. Professionals from different sectors shared their experiences, built networks, and fostered a supportive learning environment. This collaboration will enhance coordination among service providers, ultimately improving the overall support system for survivors.

Rainbo Initiative remains committed to supporting service providers in their efforts to create a society where survivors of SGBV receive comprehensive and inclusive support, irrespective of their abilities.

In the upcoming months, we will continue to work in partnership with service providers, stakeholders, and the community to enhance our support services and advocate for the rights of survivors with disabilities.

TRAINING OF RAINBO INITIATIVE OUTREACH ON GBV MESSAGING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Figure 8: FO Admire leading a session on SRH in the Interns Training in Makeni.

With support from Trocaire, Irish Aid, and UNFPA, Rainbo Initiative held an impactful 3-day training in Makeni City for its outreach interns to make a difference in their communities.

During the training, the interns received comprehensive capacity-building and support, equipping them with the necessary tools to engage communities, particularly young women, and girls, on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and its impact. They gained vital knowledge on GBV early warning signs, referral pathways, GBV legal

frameworks, and the services provided by the Rainbo Centre.

Through collaborative learning and shared experiences, the interns also built a strong support network, enhancing their effectiveness in serving their communities.

But that's not all! These passionate interns will also focus on educating young boys and men on the eradication of SGBV. By fostering dialogue and raising awareness, we aim to create a society that is safe, equal, and free from violence.

These interns were drawn from various districts, including Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Kono, Port Loko, Kambia, and Bombali. This diversity allows us to extend our reach and make a lasting impact across Sierra Leone.

TRAINING OF DATA COLLECTORS



Figure 9: Ibrahim giving feedback on the Data Collection Toolkit.

Rainbo Initiative, with support from the Carter Centre, organized a comprehensive two-day training programme for 7 Field Officers and 20 interns. The primary objective of this intensive training was to provide participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively conduct a crucial data collection exercise.

The focus of this exercise was to gain insights into the underlying risk factors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including the examination of social norms and the acceptability of violence in the districts of Port Loko, Kono, Freetown, and Bo.

This survey represents a significant milestone in generating valuable information that is pertinent to the development of an appropriate advocacy strategy to combat GBV and foster a society that upholds principles of equality, respect, and safety for all. By gathering valuable insights into prevailing social norms, attitudes, and behaviours we can develop effective strategies to address and eradicate GBV.

Our dedicated interns, equipped with their newfound expertise, took the lead in engaging with diverse communities to gather this vital data. Their dedication and commitment will play a significant role in challenging harmful norms and fostering positive change.

The interns actively served as enumerators, responsible for carrying out the data collection process, while the entire exercise was closely supervised by the Field Officers.

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

FROM DARKNESS TO RESILIENCE: MARTHA'S JOURNEY OF SURVIVAL AND HOPE

Martha's (real name withheld) spirit refused to be extinguished in the depths of unimaginable darkness. Her harrowing journey from a small community in Sierra Leone to one of the Rainbo Centres and ultimately to the government hospital is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the power of unwavering support. Martha's story of survival and resilience serves as a rallying cry for justice, compassion, and the urgent need for action in the face of sexual and gender-based violence.

Martha, a 23-year-old pregnant mother of three, experienced a horrific act of violence that left her physically and emotionally shattered. This case study delves into Martha's harrowing experience, emphasizing the critical role of dignity kits in the lives of survivors. It also highlights the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration, increased provision of medical drugs, and advocacy for support in Martha's journey towards healing and livelihood stability.

On a cattle farm in a small community in Sierra Leone, Martha's life hung in the balance after

being brutally assaulted and raped by the son of their landowner. In a desperate bid for help, she was rushed to the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and then to one of the Rainbo Centres. Recognizing the severity of her injuries, Martha was referred to the government hospital for immediate intense care. Medical examinations revealed the extent of her injuries, including a fractured skull and spinal damage resulting from a machete attack.

Despite her critical condition, Martha's 24-week pregnancy remained viable. For nine weeks, she received comprehensive medical care, including a two-week stay in the High Dependency Unit (HDU) where she received support to manage her blood pressure and regular pregnancy check-ups. Throughout her hospitalization, Rainbo Initiative provided unwavering support, covering medical expenses, providing clothing and dignity kits, and offering psychosocial counselling. With the help of the medical staff, Martha made significant progress in her healing journey.

At the government hospital, Martha received unwavering support from Rainbo Initiative. From covering medical expenses and providing nourishing meals to offering clothing and dignity kits and medical support for sexual assault, including treatment against Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), our Rainbo Centre staff stood by her throughout her nine-week hospitalization. Through several psychosocial counselling sessions, Martha is healing and recovering from emotional trauma faster than we initially thought.

"I cannot express enough gratitude for the support I have received from the Rainbo Centre here. They have been my lifeline throughout this unimaginable ordeal. Their unwavering support, from the moment I was brought to their centre to my time at the hospital, has given me hope and strength to heal. I am forever grateful for their kindness and generosity." Martha

Thanks to the physiotherapy unit at the hospital, Martha can now walk upright with a straightened neck and a beautiful smile on her face, embracing healing with dignity. The Medical Superintendent, hospital Matron, the surgeon, and several healthcare professionals at the hospital have all

been a part of Martha's healing journey for which she and her mother are extremely grateful.

"I am overwhelmed by the compassion and care shown by the staff at the Rainbo Centre. They have been a true blessing in our lives during this difficult time. From covering all the medical expenses to providing clothing and dignity kits, they have gone above and beyond to ensure Martha's well-being. I cannot thank everyone here enough for their support and for standing by our side when we needed it the most." Martha's Mother.

Martha's story is a testament to the resilience of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and the urgent need for support systems to aid their healing and recovery. The provision of dignity kits, inter-sectoral collaboration, increased medical drug availability, and livelihood assistance are crucial aspects of ensuring survivors like Martha can rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

As we stand alongside Martha on her journey towards healing and justice, let her story be a call to action, inspiring us all to create a world where such atrocities are never tolerated. We also call on other right-based institutions to support us in seeking justice for Martha, as her perpetrator is currently in police custody.

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

682 GBV survivors (**637** sexual and **45** 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 **682** GBV survivors supported at the Rainbo Centres, **678** were female and **4** were male.

108 teenage survivors tested positive for pregnancy and **492** were treated for sexually transmitted Infections (STIs).

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31 GBV cases were followed up in court; **7** were charged to magistrate court, **24** were directly committed to the High court and **9** were successfully convicted.

16, 781 (7,384 Male and 9,397 Female) people were reached with awareness-raising messages on GBV, its referral pathways and the Rainbo Center services.

COMING UP

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS' MEETINGS

Acknowledging the significance of community engagement in combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), we are committed to conducting community stakeholder meetings in the four project communities within Kono district. These meetings will aim to bring together 20 stakeholders from each of the four communities. The purpose of these gatherings is to employ an inclusive approach that actively involves stakeholders in addressing SGBV issues.

Through the enhancement of referral networks and the promotion of community ownership, these meetings will contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of our project at the community level. We will collaborate closely with community leaders and other stakeholders who hold key roles in supporting survivors and combating SGBV.

TRAINING OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS ON CLINICAL CARE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS IN KONO DISTRICT.

With support from Partners In Health through the 'No Woman or Girl Left Behind project', Rainbo Initiative will train 30 healthcare workers, mostly from Peripheral Health Units (PHUs), in Kono District. The training will focus on helping healthcare workers provide better care for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The training will last for five days and will be intensive. It aims to address the lack of knowledge and skills among PHU staff when it

comes to examining and treating survivors of sexual assault.

This is important because there are many GBV cases in the communities, where the Rainbo Centres are easily not accessible. Healthcare workers at the facilities may be the first point of contact for survivors, so they need to have the right knowledge and skills.

During the training, healthcare workers will learn how to provide better clinical care for survivors of sexual assault. They will gain the tools and knowledge they need to support survivors effectively. The goal is to improve the quality of care provided by PHUs so that survivors can receive the help and treatment they need.

SCHOOL REVIEW MEETINGS

To further increase awareness among women and adolescent girls about their rights and the available support services for survivors of SGBV, we will conduct school review meetings in ten schools in Kono district. These review meetings will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of our school club members and exploring opportunities for improvement. By engaging with schools, we aim to create safer and more supportive environments that empower students to report incidents of GBV and access necessary support.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

From November 25th to December 10th 2023, during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Rainbo Initiative will actively participate in national efforts to combat violence against women and girls. Various activities will be undertaken, including awareness campaigns, sponsored walks, community dialogues, and female football competitions. These initiatives aim to engage community members, stakeholders, and partners in discussions about the impact of gender-based violence and strategies for prevention. By fostering dialogue and promoting awareness, the goal is to create a safer and more inclusive environment for women and girls.

OUR PARTNERS



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