



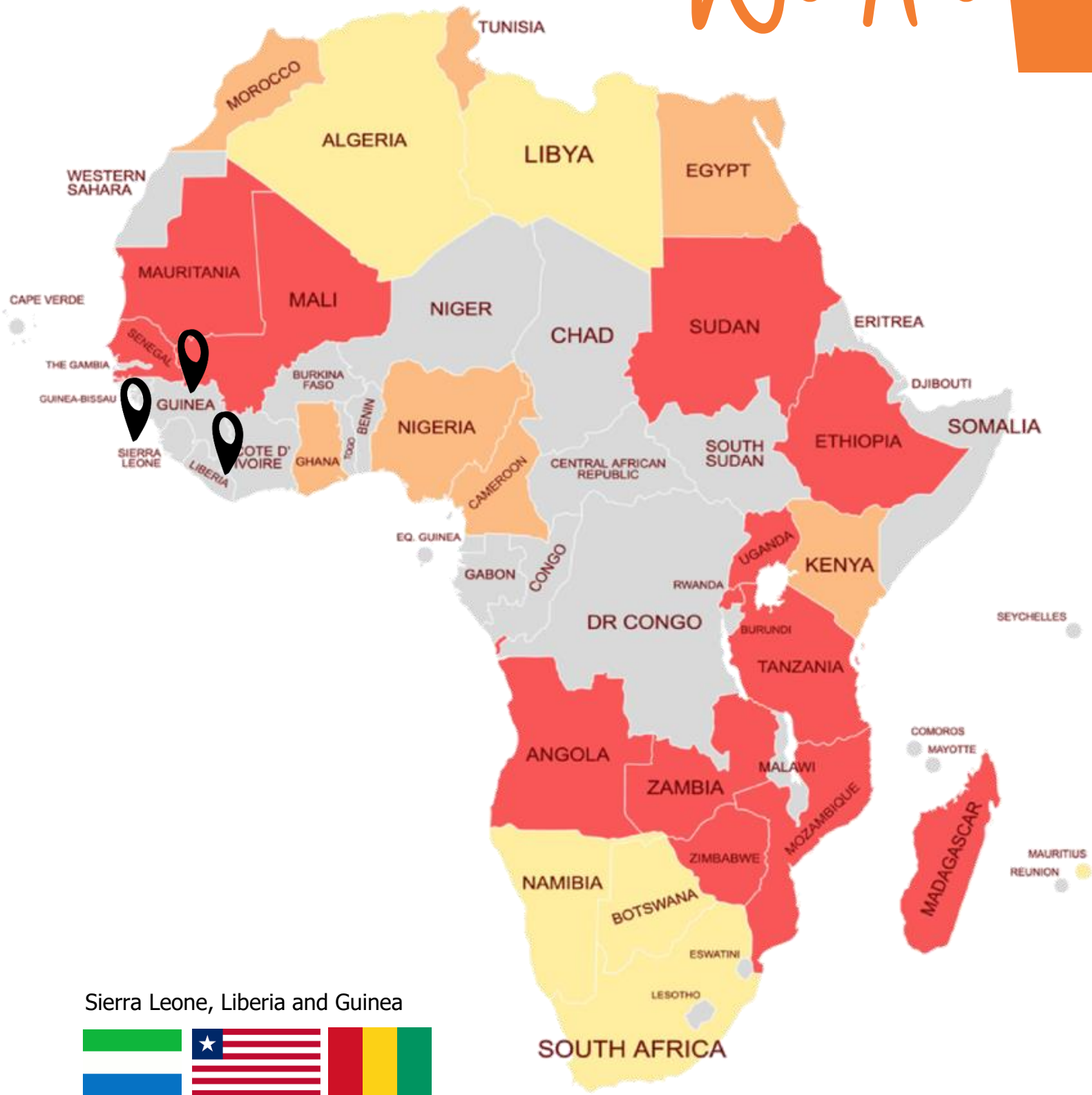
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

2024 - 2028 STRATEGY

EXPAND & DIVERSIFY; SECURE THE FUTURE



WHERE *We Are*



OUR History



Our history is intertwined with the sexual and reproductive health struggles of women in the aftermath of the Sierra Leone civil war. The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2002 recommended that the government of Sierra Leone should provide free psychosocial support and reproductive health services to women affected by the conflict. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responded to this call with a project that established Rainbo Centres and thus the genesis of Rainbo Initiative in 2003. Between 2003 and 2005, IRC established three Rainbo Centres in Freetown, Kenema, and Kono. We thus became the first provider of free medical treatment and psychosocial services for survivors of Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Sierra Leone.

We are a living example of the true impact and sustainability trajectory of a development intervention by IRC. Eleven years later, we registered Rainbo Initiative as a national non-governmental organization in 2014, with an Executive Director at the helm of affairs. We have experienced highs and lows, and we have strengthened our resilience to sustain our growth and functionality, irrespective of shocks such as the Ebola Virus Disease, the Coronavirus, and global economic challenges and uncertainties.

The mutual relationships, trust, and support from communities, our hardworking and professional staff, our donors, and the government of Sierra Leone have enhanced our resilience.

To date, we have 7 (seven) Rainbo Centres in Sierra Leone and have served more than 50,000 people over the years. We remain ambitious in consolidating our gains in Sierra Leone and expanding to Liberia and Guinea.

WHO WE ARE



OUR Identity

No matter their ages, gender, sexuality, origin, and culture, we always stand committed to providing support services to victims of rape and sexual assault.

We are a trusted and reliable anti-sexual violence organisation dedicated to creating just and safer communities by inspiring and supporting grassroots solutions to complement national governments' efforts to end SGBV.

We combine charity and social enterprise approaches to finance, deliver, and sustain our work in providing free support services to enhance the care, healing, and dignity of SGBV survivors through our Rainbo Centres. Survivors are not only beneficiaries of our work but they are also equal partners with a stronger voice in helping us find sustainable solutions to mend the scars and end sexual violence and all its forms.

Rainbo Initiative has observed that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) can be experienced by anybody; infants, young, old, boys, girls, women, and men.

It can occur in various settings, including households, communities, workplaces, educational institutions, correctional facilities, public areas, and even online platforms.

This issue is intricate and involves multiple aspects, necessitating collaboration and coordination among partners at the community, national, and global levels.

“

Rainbo Initiative has been very engaging with its partners – donors and government. The staff are passionate, professional and trusted by survivors for their high-level of confidentiality. The organisation has been using reliable and quality data to influence policy and practice.

*Carol Henman,
Head of Development
Irish Aid, Sierra Leone.*



THE Challenge

BY THE END OF 2022

Around 383 million women and girls live in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys. More than 8 in 10 are in sub-Saharan Africa (62.8 percent) and Central Asia and Southern Asia (21.4 percent) (UN Women: 2022).

Gender-based violence is the shadow pandemic after COVID-19 as it has been observed that violence against girls and women globally increased as a result of COVID-19 as many 7 in 10 women (68%) reported being verbally and or physically abused by their partners. In comparison, 1 in every 4 women reported more frequent household conflicts (USAID, 2022). In 2021, WHO published estimates which indicate that about 30% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual violence from either an intimate partner or a non-partner in their lifetime.¹ Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a critical violation affecting women and girls across different societies and at different periods and on different magnitudes. Issues of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and female genital mutilation, for example, are all forms of sexual gender-based violence that the world continues to grapple with.

SGBV can endanger the lives of survivors by reducing their agency and exposing them to mental health problems, suicide, reproductive health complications, unwanted pregnancy, and higher risk of HIV and other STIs. SGBV also has negative social and economic consequences that hinder the well-being and development of individuals, communities, and society². The situation of women and girls is complicated, as they face more poverty, more care responsibilities, and more violence. There is also a risk of more child marriage happening (UN Women, 2022).

According to UN Women, though there is notable progress in addressing issues of GBV, it will take 21 more years to have universal laws that prohibit violence against women and an astonishing 286 years to achieve gender equality in legal frameworks. It is glaring that the efforts to reduce poverty have reversed as of 2022, almost 383 million women and girls lived in abject poverty compared to 368 million men and boys. Alarmingly, more than 8 in 10 are in sub-Saharan Africa (62.8 percent) as compared to Central Asia and Southern Asia (21.4 percent)³.

¹ WHO, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

² United Nations-Sierra Leone. Capturing the Socio-Economic and Cultural Drivers of SGBV in Sierra Leone.

³ UN Women Article. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022

To respond to global and regional GBV commitments, many countries have developed national solution action plans linked to global GBV aspirations. Practically these plans are usually aspirational due to funding constraints⁴.

The work of Rainbo Initiative is informed and shaped by the prevailing context of SGBV in a) the national development plans of the country of operations and b) regional and global GBV & SGBV priorities. Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea are countries with a presence of Rainbo Initiative, and all these countries are challenged with sexual and gender-based violence issues. For instance, SGBV is still a pervasive human rights violation in Sierra Leone (UN Women, 2020), 62% of women aged 15-49 years reported having experienced some form of physical and sexual violence in Sierra Leone in 2019⁵. According to the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey, 60% of women aged 15-49 experienced physical violence while 9% experienced sexual violence. Similarly, so, the 2018 Demographic Health Survey in Guinea, revealed that 96% of women aged 15-49 years experienced some form of SGBV in their lifetime, while 52% have experienced physical violence.

In response to the increasing violence against women, the President of Sierra Leone, Retired Brigadier, Dr. Julius Maada Bio declared rape and sexual assault a national emergency in February 2019. Among other things, he announced that the attack on minors is punishable by life imprisonment. The President highlighted plans to establish a specific police unit devoted to investigating instances of sexual violence. Furthermore, he proposed the creation of a specialised court managed by magistrates, which would prioritise and expedite the processing of such cases.

Similarly, in 2020, the then-President of Liberia, George Opong Weah followed suit by declaring sexual violence and rape a public emergency on September 11, 2022. President Weah introduced the initial set of new actions to tackle the surge in violence against females by assigning a dedicated attorney to manage rape cases and establishing a registry for sexual offenders at the national level. Moreover, he has

⁴ UNDP. https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:7408/GBVtheSDGs_BriefingNote.pdf

⁵ Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS), 2019

formed a national security team to deal with sexual and gender-based violence and assigned \$2 million towards resolving the problem.

Amnesty International has reported that rape is all too common in Guinea. For example, between the dates of 25th November and 2nd December 2021, sexual assaults and rape were committed against six girls aged three to sixteen, as well as one woman. Tragically, two of the girls lost their lives due to the violence inflicted upon them. Despite efforts like establishing one-stop centres that provide support and legal assistance in Guinea, the healthcare system's availability, quality, and accessibility need to be improved, particularly for victims who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many survivors face difficulties in obtaining proper medical and psychological care and struggle to exercise their rights to sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, limited access to specialised healthcare professionals outside of the capital city, Conakry, and the associated costs sometimes hinder victims from seeking necessary treatment.



WHERE WE HOPE TO CONTRIBUTE



We know we are responding to a global problem, one that cuts across homes and boundaries. We will therefore work toward contributing to the global goals of addressing gender equality and its associated issues around poverty, inequality, hunger, and good health and well-being challenges.

Therefore, our work will monumentally contribute to achieving Goal 5 while contributing also to Goals 1, 2, 3, and 10 of the sustainable development goals.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



WHAT INSPIRES OUR AMBITION



OUR VISION

A just, safe, and empowered society that promotes social and equal opportunities for all.



OUR MISSION

Responding to and empowering communities to create local solutions to prevent SGBV while working with and supporting survivors with care, healing, safety, and dignity.

OUR VALUES



We believe in the power of communities to identify lasting solutions that resonate with their unique socio-cultural context in addressing SGBV. We therefore inspire communities to dialogue and act to fight SGBV in their localities.



We are dedicated to providing age-appropriate services to everyone who needs our services irrespective of age, gender, religion, and sexuality.



We stand with and work together with survivors for a fairer, just and supportive society. We include survivors in our governance and programming. We connect with them and promote initiatives that promote their well-being, rights, and efforts to amplify their voices to find lasting solutions for a safer society.



We know that the people we work with trust us. We will never compromise such trust and will ensure the people we work with continue to rely on the character of our employees and the organisation. We are accountable, open, and transparent with our resources and to ourselves, survivors, partners, and donors for everything we do.



We are data-driven and we continuously seek best practices to improve our work. We pride ourselves in gathering evidence to inform and shape our intervention and to shape policies and practices.



We reach out, collaborate, and build trusted and mutually beneficial relationships with the government, partners, donors, survivors, women's groups, religious bodies, and the community to increase our voices, investment, and supportive environment for a society free of SGBV.

EXCELLENCE

We each do our best to deliver excellent services and programming. We support our staff in their professional development.

RESPECT

We respect the wishes and choices of our survivors, partners, and staff. We maintain the dignity of SGBV survivors and facilitate a stronger sense of self-esteem among our staff and survivors. We hold our values in high esteem and always maintain confidentiality in dealing with SGBV survivors.



OUR LONG-TERM GOALS



EXPANDING AND SUSTAINING OUR OPERATIONS

The demand for our inclusive and non-discriminatory services continued to increase beyond boundaries while the donor climate continued to be uncertain. We therefore want to respond to the demands of our services with a new business model that can guarantee flexibility and financial sustainability.

AMPLIFYING WHAT WORKS & SHARE BEST PRACTICES

Our response and evidence have been recognised as best practices as they meet the needs of the government, survivors, and communities. We are a resource and a go-to organisation on SGBV in Sierra Leone. Our aim over the next 5 years is to amplify what we do best and share such best practices to influence policy and practice around SGBV globally.



RE-ENERGISING PARTNERSHIP AND PEOPLE'S POWER TO ADDRESS SGBV FOR A SAFER SOCIETY

Investing in our networks is a responsibility because we cannot single-handedly address the SGBV challenges we face. Similarly, we believe in people's power and their actions in addressing the common problems they face. We have been working with community structures directly and have learned that SGBV issues can be impacted by the actions of the community. If communities are adequately engaged according to their unique sociocultural makeup, a more positive impact will be achieved to enhance a safer society. We want to continue such work through other community-based organisations.



THE 5 INTERVENTION AREAS TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

1. Strengthen Response Capacity
2. Influence Policy Through Research
3. Scale up to New Communities and Countries to Respond and Prevent SGBV
4. Sustain Our Interventions to Achieve Our Social Outcomes
5. Re-energise Partnerships and Empower Communities to Engage and Act

EXECUTING *Our Goals*

WHAT WE WILL DO



1. Strengthen our Response Capacity

Our impact in providing free quality, age-appropriate response services to survivors of SGBV is recognised by survivors and governments, UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and think tanks. We are not complacent. We want to innovate and improve our services. We will therefore consolidate our gains in SGBV response and strengthen our response services. Therefore;

- We will continue to provide accessible and inclusive survivor-centred free quality, age-appropriate response services through our Rainbo Centres. In Sierra Leone in particular, we pilot 24-hour free quality, age-appropriate response services in Sierra Leone in all our Rainbo Centre starting in 2026.
- Having observed that people living with disabilities (PWDs) continue to face challenges in accessing SGBV services, especially relating to communication barriers, we will continue training our staff on inclusive SGBV service delivery and ensure all our communications (print, and electronic) become disability friendly while employing the service of a sign language interpreter to improve our services especially for people with hearing impaired.
- We will continue to follow up on the recovery of survivors and their path to justice to ensure they regain their dignity, respect, and life in society
- We will continue to utilise our knowledge, skills, and experiences from our Rainbo Centres to share best practices with national governments ensuring government services are delivered with equal quality, professionalism, and efficiency as those of the Rainbo Centres.

- We will support the operations and functionality of all major government helplines on sexual assault and create linkages with our Centres to ensure response services are accessible to all those who need them.
- We will train our volunteers, staff, government officials, and other service providers on how to better provide professional services to survivors.
- We will continue to ensure our services are welcoming, confidential, and meaningful to our clients.
- We will strengthen our documentation by developing and disseminating new learning tools, guidelines on best practices in responding to SGBV
- We will continue to refer cases to other service providers working on child protection and will explore the opportunity to pilot the establishment of a temporal safe home where there is none to provide appropriate protection services to victims.

2. Influencing Policy Through Research

We know that the lack of robust evidence hampers policy decisions and affects solution-based programming in addressing SGBV. There is an urgent need to launch a data revolution in the SGBV sector to shape and inform community, national, and global response actions. We will be able to better understand the nature and scope of SGBV, track progress, and measure the success of national plans on SGBV, and the SDGs components of GBV. We know we can be counted on to address this challenge.

In Sierra Leone, we succeeded in engaging with and attaining the political will of the government in responding to SGBV. We therefore have the experience of working to attain political will to support SGBV's response. Therefore:

- We will leverage the power of technology to strengthen data generation and analysis in our Rainbo Centres
- We will launch ground-breaking research on the trends and emerging issues around SGBV to inform policy discussions and flexible and responsive programming.
- We will work to support government response efforts while specifically facilitating policy dialogue forums and conferences with relevant stakeholders (from the executive, Judiciary, Parliament, Donors, CSOs, Media) for a better understanding of what works and how to scale up what works across communities, and countries
- We will work with and support Parliaments to conduct post-legislative scrutiny on SGBV-related policies and laws to assess implementation and shape future legislation. Additionally, we will work with relevant committees of Parliament to strengthen oversight around themes on SGBV- human rights, access to justice, and gender-based budgeting to strengthen government response capacity
- We will offer research-based consultancies to institutions wishing to tap our various expertise on research, training, and sexual violence education. We will further explore working to provide such expertise to companies to enable them to identify, prevent, and develop safeguarding policies for their staffers.
- We will utilise national and international platforms like 16 days of activism against GBV, International Day of the Girl Child, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Orange the World Campaign, International Women's Day, Human Right Day to amplify the voices and needs of women, girls' men, and young boys affected by SGBV.



3. Scaling up to New Communities and Countries to Respond and Prevent SGBV

We know that SGBV cuts across geographical boundaries. Success in reducing SGBV in one geographical area does not set free the other areas. We know we cannot achieve a fair, just, and safer society without extending our interventions to places that need us.

We will therefore go to new countries and increase our outreach to other communities. Therefore;

- We will redesign our governance system to fit a global organisation, with a global body supporting the work of our country of operations.
- We will support our global leadership to work collaboratively while recognising the uniqueness of each of our country programmes
- We will scale up work in new communities in Sierra Leone while firming up our operations, systems, and programmes in Liberia and Guinea
- We will construct new Rainbo Centres to ensure our impact cuts across societies

4. Sustaining Our Interventions to Achieve Our Social Outcomes.

We acknowledge the ongoing commitment of our donor partners in supporting our work to achieve a safer society devoid of sexual and gender-based violence. We equally recognise that the international development sector is facing major changes that require new thinking about our business model. Our donors, partners, and beneficiaries have acknowledged our solutions in addressing SGBV. We are inspired by them and would therefore want to continue to complement their efforts by upholding the impacts of their investment but more importantly ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of such impact over time.

We will be working towards achieving the financial sustainability of our core interventions. Our big thinking is to hinge our charity work with a sustainable social enterprise to achieve our social outcomes. Our primary focus is on our social outcomes; however, we will explore innovative social enterprise opportunities to continue to deliver free SGBV services in our Rainbo Centres. Therefore;

- We will develop a new business model geared towards resilience and financial sustainability to attract unrestricted funding to achieve our ambitions and social outcomes. We aim to secure an unrestricted funding of 30% of our budget during the next 5 years.

- We will develop a comprehensive sustainability framework that will guide our approach to enhancing the sustainability of our work.
- We will review our operational policies and make them fit to our new business model
- We will invest in developing and implementing a capacity-building and training framework that will reskill our staff for the new future
- We will imbibe a new open development culture that will demonstrate openness, transparency, integrity, and trust thereby ensuring that our social focus is protected and our cost recovery drive is within standard ethical boundaries

5. Re-energise Partnerships and Empower Communities to Engage and Act

We are aware that no one institution has the expertise, resources, and power to single-handedly address SGBV-related challenges. We know we need to tap into the expertise, resources, and power of our partners- government, donors, the private sector, the media, and CSOs to find lasting solutions to SGBV.

We also know that we cannot be in every community but we believe our support can inspire and trigger communities to act. We believe in people's power and that with the right support and intervention, communities can develop measures to address common challenges. Therefore:

- We will complement governments in enhancing effective coordination and collaboration amongst response partners at national, regional, and community levels.
- We will collaborate with and support community-based organisations to work in solidarity with community structures (*like schools, religious houses, SGBV community structures, child protection structures, and women's and men's groups*) to develop, implement, and monitor SGBV-related actions in schools and communities to enhance a safer society.
- We will work with the media and entertainment industry and share with them up-to-date content to raise awareness and guide the use of appropriate language in their reporting and movie production exercise.
- We will pilot a survivor mentorship and leadership program that will be guided by digital technology.
- We will support communities to develop sustainable livelihood opportunities to help them address SGBV-related triggers like poverty and hunger.

THE MODEL THAT UNDERPINS OUR INTERVENTION

OUR SAFER - SOCIETY MODEL

Bridging global and national plans and making them relevant to local contexts to trigger grassroots solutions that complement governments' efforts in ending SGBV of all its forms.



MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

We remain committed to ourselves and our stakeholders and will hold ourselves accountable for our performance. We will develop our theory of change and set very clear challenging but achievable targets with a robust monitoring and evaluation plan with clear performance indicators. We will maintain data integrity and invest in our data generation, storage, and dissemination process. We are committed to open data development but also recognise the sensitivity of the data we generate.

The strategy will be delivered through country plans and staff performance will be aligned to the country plans. Staff will develop their work plans and this will form the basis of their annual appraisals.

We will be conducting internal and external evaluations of our country programmes. Our Global Executive Committee will keep an eye on our global performance while our respective in-country senior management teams will keep track of country-specific performance.



'A just, safe, and empowered society that promotes social and equal opportunities for all'



PHOTO Credits

The images used in the creation of this strategy were sourced from the Rainbo Initiative Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/RainboInitiative>, while the background image on this page was obtained from Unsplash - <https://unsplash.com/>, an open-source website for graphic designers.

To uphold transparency, respect, privacy, safety, and consent, Rainbo Initiative adheres to ethical practices when capturing or using photos. This commitment safeguards the rights and dignity of the individuals being photographed and nurtures trust and understanding.

**2024
2028**

**EXPAND
DIVERSIFY
SECURE THE FUTURE**

www.rainboinitiative.org

