




  
**SUPPORT  
 SURVIVORS,  
 END THE STIGMA**

# Quarterly Newsletter

October – December 2023




 Rainbo

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# NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE RAINBO CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AND FUNDRAISING DINNER.



Figure 1: RCOE Launch and fundraising dinner.

The official launch of the construction of the Rainbo Centre of Excellence (RCOE) and the accompanying fundraising dinner held on November 24, 2023, marked an extraordinary milestone in our journey to support survivors of Gender-Based Violence.

The event showcased the power of unity and compassion in creating a positive change in society. Attendees from diverse backgrounds and walks of life came together, demonstrating their commitment to a society free from violence and fear. The event created a sense of solidarity and purpose, fostering a strong community of individuals dedicated to supporting survivors.



Figure 2: Ongoing construction of the Rainbo Centre of Excellence

The construction of the Rainbo Centre of Excellence is currently underway. This state-of-the-art facility will serve as a haven for survivors, providing them with comprehensive care, support, and resources to heal and reclaim their lives. The centre will offer a range of services, including

counselling, medical support, and a training hub for healthcare and social workers.

Our journey to support survivors of GBV continues, and we invite everyone to join us. Your support, in any form, can make a significant difference in the lives of survivors. Whether through donations, spreading awareness, or advocacy, each action contributes to creating a society where survivors can find solace and empowerment. We encourage individuals to visit our website, [www.rainboinitiative.org](http://www.rainboinitiative.org), to learn more about our mission and how they can contribute to this noble cause.

***“By supporting the Rainbo Centre of Excellence, you are not only investing in bricks and mortar; you are investing in the lives of survivors. Together, we can create a future where no survivor walks alone, where every voice is heard, and where healing and empowerment flourish.” - Edwina, a survivor.***

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our outgoing board members, **Mr. James Fofanah, Mr. Leslie Williams, Mdm. Eunice N. Mustapha, Mdm. Fatou Wurie, and Mdm. Jello Kainwo.** Their dedication, expertise, and commitment to our cause have been instrumental in bringing us to this significant moment. We recognize their invaluable contributions to the development and success of the Rainbo Centre of Excellence.

The official launch of the Rainbo Centre of Excellence and the fundraising dinner served as a powerful testament to the impact that can be achieved when individuals come together for a common cause. We extend our gratitude to everyone involved in making this event a resounding success. Together, we can build a future where the Rainbo Centre of Excellence stands tall as a beacon of hope and healing for survivors of GBV. Let us continue to stand with survivors, shaping a society where violence and fear have no place.

## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Figure 3: Launch of the 16 Days of Activism in Freetown

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Rainbo Initiative actively participated in national efforts to combat violence against women and girls. The various activities undertaken, including awareness campaigns, sponsored walks, community dialogues, and female football competitions, had a significant impact on promoting dialogue, raising awareness, and fostering a safer environment for women and girls.

Through these initiatives, community members, stakeholders, and partners were engaged in discussions about the impact of GBV and strategies for prevention. The awareness campaigns helped to challenge social norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women and girls. The sponsored walks and community dialogues facilitated community-wide conversations and mobilized support for survivors of SGBV.

Furthermore, the female football competitions promoted gender equality and empowerment, providing a platform for women and girls to showcase their skills and challenge stereotypes. These activities collectively contributed to creating a more inclusive environment that respects and protects the rights of women and girls.

These activities have increased awareness, fostered collaboration, improved the quality of care, created safer environments, and promoted

dialogue and empowerment. The collective efforts of Rainbo Initiative and its partners have made a tangible difference in the lives of survivors and the communities they serve.

Overall, Rainbo Initiative's participation in the campaign had a significant impact on raising awareness, empowering survivors, strengthening partnerships, and advocating for policy changes. Our commitment to supporting survivors remains steadfast, and our efforts contribute to creating a society free from violence and discrimination. The campaign demonstrates the power of collective action in addressing Gender-Based Violence.

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

The training of healthcare workers on clinical care for sexual assault survivors in Kono District has brought about a positive change in the quality of care provided to survivors of SGBV. With the support of Partners In Health through the 'No Woman or Girl Left Behind project,' Rainbo Initiative successfully trained 30 healthcare workers, primarily from Peripheral Health Units (PHUs), over five intensive days.

The training addressed the lack of knowledge and skills among PHU staff when it comes to examining and treating survivors of sexual assault. By equipping healthcare workers with the necessary tools and knowledge, the training has significantly enhanced their ability to provide better clinical care for survivors.

As a result of this training, PHU staff members have become more competent and confident in handling cases of SGBV. They are now better equipped to support survivors effectively, both medically and emotionally. Survivors who seek help from healthcare facilities are receiving improved care, which has a positive impact on their overall well-being and recovery.



## RAINBO INITIATIVE SPONSORED WALK: UNITING COMMUNITIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GBV.



Figure 4: Cutting of Robben and releasing of balloons to mark the start of the Sponsored Walk in Freetown.

Rainbo Initiative Sponsored Walk, held on Saturday, December 2, 2023, in Kenema, Bo, Makeni, Kambia, Kono and Saturday, December 9, 2023, in Freetown were a resounding success, bringing together survivors, donors, partners, participants, and the media in a powerful demonstration of solidarity.

The Sponsored Walk had a profound impact, extending beyond the event itself. It catalyzed change, inspiring conversations, and fostering a collective determination to eradicate GBV. By uniting survivors, allies, and advocates, the event created a powerful force that challenges societal norms, supports survivors, and demands accountability at all levels of society.

Rainbo Initiative Sponsored Walk was a testament to the commitment and collective efforts of our community. The event highlighted the power of unity, generating tangible outcomes in our mission to end GBV and create a society built on respect, dignity, and equality. We extend our deepest gratitude to every individual involved for their invaluable support and dedication.

Moving forward, we remain dedicated to our commitment to supporting survivors, raising awareness, and advocating for systemic change.

## COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS' MEETINGS



Figure 5: The Town Chief of Dorma Community addressing his people during the meeting.

The community stakeholder meetings were organized in ten project communities: Kumao, Resettlement, Kania, Tombodu, Koeyor, Dorma, Hill Station, Koaquima, Bungalow, and Yengema Communities. These gatherings successfully brought together 15 stakeholders from each community, fostering an inclusive approach that actively involved key stakeholders in the fight against GBV.

Rainbo Initiative believes that involving stakeholders is crucial in the fight against GBV issues in communities. The engagement aimed to provide stakeholders with a platform to discuss challenges, progress, and actions taken to prevent and respond to GBV at the community level.

The meetings served as a platform for enhancing referral networks and promoting community ownership. By collaborating closely with community leaders and other stakeholders, the project ensured that survivors of SGBV received the necessary support and assistance. This collaborative effort improved the sustainability and effectiveness of the project at the community level.

Through these stakeholder meetings, community members gained a deeper understanding of SGBV issues, leading to increased awareness and empathy.



## **SURVIVOR'S VOICE**

### **THE STORY OF A 19-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO WAS RAPED BY A MILITARY CAPTAIN.**

Edwina had dreams that reached for the stars. From a young age, she was driven by a desire to make a difference in the world, to fight for those who couldn't fight for themselves. Edwina excelled in her studies, her intelligence and determination propelling her to the top of her class. Her peers admired her, and she was even appointed as the Head Girl, a testament to her leadership skills.

But life has a way of taking unexpected turns, and Edwina's journey took a tragic and unimaginable detour. Amid her dreams, she found herself entangled in a web of darkness and despair. It was a sunny afternoon when a family friend, a military captain, shattered her world. He betrayed her trust and violated her innocence in the most heinous way possible.

Devastated and broken, Edwina found herself plunged into a bottomless pit of pain and despair. Nightmares haunted her every waking moment, and she felt as though she had nowhere to turn. The captain, leveraging his position and power, threatened her with impunity, leaving her utterly defenceless. The weight of her ordeal pushed her to the brink of despair, and she even contemplated ending her life. The trauma was overwhelming, and the scars ran deep.

To add to her anguish, Edwina discovered that she had contracted sexually transmitted infections (STIs) because of the abuse. The physical pain served as a cruel reminder of the emotional and psychological torment she had endured. It appears darkness had enveloped her entirely, suffocating any glimmer of hope.

But just as the shadows threatened to consume her completely, a ray of light appeared.

Within the walls of Rainbo Initiative, Edwina found solace and strength in the caring staff who stood by her side. They listened to her stories, held her hand through the darkest moments, and provided the support and encouragement she so desperately needed. They became her pillars of hope, reminding her that she was not alone in her struggle.

Edwina's harrowing experience, though painful beyond words, had ignited a fire within her. She became determined not only to seek justice for herself but also to be a voice for countless other women and girls who had suffered similar traumas. Through her journey of pain and resilience, she gained a profound understanding of the depths of their suffering. It was this understanding that fuelled her determination to redefine her future and become a symbol of hope for survivors everywhere.

With unswerving resolve, Edwina now aspires to become a lawyer, using the law as her weapon to deliver justice and bring about systemic change. She wants to stand in the courtroom, her voice strong and unwavering, advocating for those whose voices have been silenced by fear and shame. Through her pain, she has found purpose—a purpose that drives her forward, even in the face of adversity.

As Edwina shares her thoughts, her voice trembles with a mix of pain and determination.

***"I am now more than determined to achieve my dream of becoming a lawyer," she says. "I want to deliver justice to other women and girls who have experienced what I have gone through. Now I understand their pain because I have endured it. I want to be a beacon of hope, a voice that cannot be silenced."***

## THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

**603** GBV survivors (**562** sexual and **41** 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 **603** GBV survivors supported at the Rainbo Centres, **597** were female and **6** were male.

**78** teenage survivors tested positive for pregnancy, **7** survivors tested positive for HIV, and **417** were treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

**16** GBV cases were followed up in court; **11** were charged to magistrate court, **5** were directly committed to the High court and **2** were successfully convicted.

**12,281** (**5,745** Male and **6,536** Female) people were reached with awareness-raising messages on GBV, its referral pathways and the Rainbo Center services.

## COMING UP

### BASIC TRAININGS FOR VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS (VSLAs) GROUPS IN BUSINESS SKILLS AND SAVINGS.

Rainbo Initiative is dedicated to empowering and equipping 32 Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups. The primary objective of this initiative is to provide comprehensive training to these groups, focusing on essential business skills and knowledge about savings. The training will focus on enhancing their financial management abilities and understanding of

effective entrepreneurship and share-out methods within VSLAs.

The training will bring together 32 VSLA groups from four districts: Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Kono, comprising a total of 640 members, with 576 females and 64 males. Through the VSLA model, Rainbo Initiative aims to address the challenges faced by survivors of GBV in accessing income and economic resources necessary for their livelihood needs.

This activity represents a significant step towards empowering VSLA groups and fostering economic independence for survivors of GBV. By equipping participants with the necessary tools and knowledge, Rainbo Initiative aims to create sustainable livelihoods and promote economic resilience within our communities.

### SUPPORT DISTRICT GBV STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

Rainbo Initiative is committed to providing refreshments during the District GBV Steering Committee meetings in Bo, Kenema, and Kono districts. This provision of refreshments aims to create a conducive and comfortable environment for committee members to engage in discussions, share insights, and collaborate effectively. By offering refreshments, Rainbo Initiative recognizes the importance of sustaining the energy and focus of participants throughout the meetings. This support ensures that committee members can fully engage in the discussions, contribute their expertise, and work towards the common goal of addressing gender-based violence in the district.

## OUR PARTNERS

