



Quarterly Newsletter

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   Rainbo Initiative

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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

VISIT OF SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM LIBERIA TO SIERRA LEONE.



The visit aimed to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) in both countries. During the visit, the delegation engaged with various stakeholders and organizations in Sierra Leone, including the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Sexual Offences Model Court, the Family Support Unit, the Community of Practice against GBV Freetown, and the Rainbo Centre in Freetown.

The objectives of the visit were to gain a comprehensive understanding of Sierra Leone's SGBV data management system, discuss mechanisms for coordination among stakeholders in the GBV National Referral Pathways, and learn about the successes, challenges, and lessons in ensuring access to justice for survivors through engagements with the Sexual Offences Model Court and the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police. The visit facilitated the sharing of international best practices, case studies, and court decisions from Sierra Leone, empowering Liberian officials to take ownership of SGBV prevention and response efforts in their country.

In a debriefing session before their departure, the visiting team shared feedback on their engagements with counterparts in Sierra Leone.

They acknowledged the need for Rainbo Initiative Liberia to address gaps in One-Stop Centers in Liberia. Notably, the Ministry of Health in Liberia is responsible for the centres, while in Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs has a coordinating and supervisory role. The visit was considered a success, achieving its objectives and fostering collaboration between stakeholders in both countries. The insights gained and partnerships formed during the visit will contribute to the development of effective strategies and interventions in the fight against SGBV in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The delegation consisted of Councillor Isaac L. George Jr, Director and Prosecutor on SGBV at the Ministry of Justice, Madam Suzie T. Telleh, Head of section of WACPS/Liberia National Police, Madam Vivian M. Kanneh representing the Ministry of Gender in Liberia, and Madam Dorothy M. G. Morris, SGBV Focal Person at the Ministry of Health of Liberia.



Rainbo Initiative Liberia, an affiliate of Rainbo Initiative Sierra Leone, is actively working towards a society free from SGBV. The organization provides technical support to one of the fourteen One-Stop Centers in Montserrado County and promotes SGBV prevention and response in 15 communities across Rivercess County in Liberia.

RAINBO INITIATIVE LAUNCHES GBV SURVIVOR INCIDENT REPORT FOR 2023.



Rainbo Initiative released this comprehensive report, focusing on gender-based violence (GBV) and the incidents experienced by survivors. This report serves to highlight the occurrence and trends of sexual and physical assaults within communities, providing valuable insights into the magnitude of GBV, its impact on survivors and the urgent need for action.

Across the seven Rainbo Centres located in six districts of Sierra Leone, a total of 2,762 cases were recorded. Among these cases, sexual assaults accounted for 92.7% while physical assaults accounted for 7.3%. One of the most distressing aspects revealed by the report is the disproportionately high number of female survivors. A staggering 99% of the recorded cases involved women and girls, highlighting the deeply rooted gendered nature of GBV. This finding underscores the need for comprehensive efforts to address the underlying societal factors that perpetuate violence against women.

Importantly, the report emphasizes that GBV affects individuals across all age groups. The youngest survivor documented was a mere one-month-old infant, while the oldest survivor was 78 years old. This stark range of ages illustrates the universal vulnerability to GBV and the

necessity of age-specific interventions and support systems.

The report serves as a crucial resource for various stakeholders committed to preventing and responding to GBV. Government officials, policymakers, service providers, and partners can draw insights from the report's findings to inform their strategies and allocate resources effectively. By understanding the trends and patterns highlighted in the report, interventions can be tailored to address the specific needs of survivors and target areas with the highest incidence rates.

Rainbo Initiative expresses deep gratitude to the survivors who courageously shared their experiences and sought support from the Rainbo Centres. Their resilience and trust in the services provided by the organisation are a driving force behind the continuous improvement and expansion of their programs.



We also acknowledge the support of various entities and partners. The Government of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Judiciary, and the Office of the First Lady have played instrumental roles in addressing GBV. Additionally, we extend appreciation to donors and partners such as Irish Aid, UNFPA Sierra Leone, Comic Relief, Trocaire, the European Union in Sierra Leone, and the World Bank for their invaluable contributions that have enabled Rainbo Initiative to carry out its work effectively.

A DISTINGUISHED DELEGATION FROM CPA UK VISITS RAINBO INITIATIVE



Rainbo Initiative was honoured to welcome a distinguished delegation from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK) to our headquarters in Freetown on February 2, 2024. The delegation, which included Rt. Hon. Lord Foster of Bath, Kate Osamor MP, Theo Clarke MP, Sarah Rees, Clerk of the International Development Committee, Martin Vickery (CPA UK, Deputy Head of the International Partnerships Team), and Immy Richards (CPA UK, Project Officer), was keen to gain a deeper understanding of development programs in Sierra Leone, particularly those focusing on gender.

During the visit, we had a productive meeting where we had the opportunity to present our work with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to the delegation. It was an enlightening experience as we shared our mission, highlighting the vital role we play in supporting survivors and empowering communities to end Gender-Based Violence. The delegation actively participated in a vibrant question-and-answer session. Their genuine interest and insightful inquiries demonstrated their commitment to learning more about our work, understanding the challenges of addressing SGBV, and exploring solutions to foster positive change.

To make the experience even more insightful, we took the delegation on a tour of our Satellite Rainbo Centre, showcasing the valuable services we provide to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. It was a powerful

moment as they witnessed first-hand the impact of our work and the resilience of the survivors we support.

We are grateful to CPA UK for taking the time to visit us, as well as to the British High Commission in Sierra Leone and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for facilitating this invaluable visit. Their support made it possible for us to share our experiences and contribute to the delegation's broader understanding of development programmes in Sierra Leone.



We hope that this visit will further strengthen our collaborations and partnerships as we continue working together towards a future where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, where survivors are empowered, and where equal opportunities are available to all.

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.

We will 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.

COURTESY VISIT OF IRISH AID AFRICA DIRECTOR TO RAINBO INITIATIVE.



We had the privilege of welcoming Mr. Kyle O'Sullivan, the Irish Aid Africa Director, to our Rainbo Initiative office in Freetown.

During his courtesy visit to our Rainbo office in Freetown, Mr. Kyle O'Sullivan, the Irish Aid Africa Director, took the opportunity to familiarize himself with our organisation's efforts in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and supporting survivors in Sierra Leone. The visit provided an excellent platform for us to showcase our mission, discuss our ongoing initiatives, and exchange valuable insights with Mr. O'Sullivan.

The meeting was marked by an enlightening and engaging discussion, where we emphasized our commitment to empowering communities and eliminating gender-based violence. We highlighted the various programs and services we offer to survivors, including counseling, medical support, legal assistance, and community awareness campaigns. Mr. O'Sullivan displayed a genuine interest in our work, demonstrating his passion for understanding the challenges associated with SGBV and exploring potential solutions to drive positive change.

Throughout the conversation, Mr. O'Sullivan posed thought-provoking questions, seeking to deepen his knowledge of our organization's impact, the complexities of addressing SGBV, and the strategies we employ to create sustainable change. His genuine curiosity and

active engagement underscored his dedication to learning more about our organization and identifying ways to support our endeavours.

Accompanying Mr. O'Sullivan during the visit were the Irish Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Ambassador Aidan Fitzpatrick, and Madam Aminata Jalloh, the M&E Programme Officer. Their presence further highlighted the importance that the Irish Aid Africa Director and the Irish government placed on understanding and supporting initiatives aimed at combating SGBV in Sierra Leone.

Overall, the courtesy visit of Mr. Kyle O'Sullivan and his delegation was a mutually beneficial exchange, allowing us to showcase our work, address important issues related to SGBV, and strengthen our partnership with Irish Aid. We look forward to continued collaboration and support from Irish Aid in our shared mission to end gender-based violence and promote a safer and more equitable society.

COLLABORATIVE STRIDES: SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA UNITE TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



For a week, our team from Sierra Leone collaborated closely with our Rainbo Initiative Liberia counterparts to carry out a series of impactful activities aimed at addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Liberia. The main objective of our joint efforts was to enhance coordination among line ministries to effectively combat GBV and provide comprehensive support to survivors in Liberia.

During this time, we conducted the Foundation Training for Rainbo Initiative Liberia's newly recruited Field Officers and Outreach Interns. These individuals were equipped with the essential knowledge and skills needed to lead our GBV prevention activities in Liberia.

Additionally, we organized a highly successful Leadership Training for Government Officials on SGBV, Health Promotion and Services, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The sessions focused on building awareness, sharing best practices, and fostering collaboration to create a more coordinated response to GBV. The training also provided senior government officials with the necessary expertise to develop and implement effective action plans to prevent and address GBV. Through these collaborative efforts, we aimed to strengthen the national response against GBV in Liberia.



Furthermore, our team facilitated discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions, where experiences and challenges were openly discussed. This exchange of insights and expertise allowed us to collectively identify strategies to strengthen the response to GBV and improve support services for survivors.

Through our joint efforts, we aim to create a society where GBV is not tolerated, survivors are supported, and gender equality is embraced. We will continue to work together, leveraging our collective strengths and expertise, to create lasting change in the lives of those affected by GBV in Liberia.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS (TOT) ON VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION (VSLA)



Rainbo Initiative conducted a three-day intensive Training of Trainers (ToT) program for our focal point volunteers, focusing on VSLA. The training aimed to equip them with essential business skills and savings knowledge.

At Rainbo Initiative, our mission is to empower and equip VSLA groups with the necessary tools for their success. This comprehensive training specifically focused on enhancing their financial management capabilities and understanding of effective entrepreneurship and share-out methods within VSLA.

The training session brought together 32 Focal Point Volunteers responsible for overseeing the operations of 32 VSLA groups in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Kono. These groups collectively consist of 640 members, with an impressive 90% being female.

The VSLA model provides a powerful solution to the challenges faced by survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in accessing income and economic resources. By providing essential tools and knowledge, our goal is to promote economic independence and establish sustainable livelihoods within our communities.

The training session marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to empower VSLA groups and promote economic resilience for survivors of SGBV. We firmly believe in creating a future where economic empowerment knows no boundaries.

STRENGTHENING MEDICAL CARE FOR SGBV SURVIVORS: SHARE FINDINGS AND REFRESHER TRAINING



Rainbo Initiative, in collaboration with the Legal Access through Women Yearning for Equality Rights and Social Justice (L.A.W.Y.E.R.S.) with funds from Trocaire and Open Society-Africa (OSIWA), conducted a 3-day Share Findings and Refresher Training on Clinical Care for Sexual Assault Survivors for Medical Practitioners.

The primary objective of the training was to equip medical practitioners including medical doctors with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide effective care for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), with a particular emphasis on the timely endorsement of medical certificates.

A total of 8 Consultant Doctors from the 7 Rainbo Centres, along with 7 doctors from the 7 One-Stop Centres, were brought together to strengthen health service provision for SGBV survivors and promote best practices across the country.

The training enhanced the skills and knowledge of participating medical practitioners, enabling them to provide improved care and support for survivors of SGBV. Rainbo Initiative remain committed to creating a future where every survivor receives the high-quality care they deserve.

Rainbo Initiative became the first provider of free medical treatment and psychosocial services for survivors of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Sierra Leone.

STRENGTHENING GBV DATA MANAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE.



With the support of The Carter Center, the Rainbo Initiative successfully concluded a two-day engaging session with community stakeholders and service providers in the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sector in Freetown, Port Loko, Bo, and Kono districts.

This session was a part of our ongoing project titled "Strengthening Data Management Systems among GBV service providers to respond to and prevent GBV." The primary focus of these discussions was to analyze the results of the GBV survey we conducted, which explored the associated risk factors and the acceptability of violence in the districts mentioned above.

Throughout these highly productive engagements, we facilitated meaningful conversations regarding the survey findings and collaborated to generate effective strategies for engaging community members. Our collective objective was to address the challenges, risks, and concerns highlighted in the survey report.

This collaborative effort marks a crucial milestone in our journey towards promoting positive change and creating a safer environment for all.

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

OVERCOMING ABUSE AND FINDING STRENGTH FOR CHANGE.

A 15-year-old girl endured a horrific ordeal of sexual abuse at the hands of her own biological father for over a year. The abuse began when her mother left the house due to marital problems, leaving her vulnerable and alone. Fearing for her life, the girl remained silent, as her father had threatened to kill her if she ever revealed what was happening.

The abuse persisted until a turning point occurred when the girl fell ill while her father was away on a short journey. Her concerned aunt took her to a health centre, where it was discovered that she was 14 weeks pregnant. Finally, the girl mustered the courage to confide in her aunt about the perpetrator. However, instead of receiving support, she was met with disbelief and violence. Her aunt accused her of lying and forcibly drove her out of the house.

Fortunately, a compassionate neighbour intervened and brought the girl to a shelter, where she found a safe haven. It was at the shelter that one of the counselors recognized the urgency of the situation and took her to the Rainbo Centre to report the abuse. At the Rainbo Centre, she received crucial psychosocial counseling and medical care. She was also referred for antenatal care to ensure a safe delivery for her unborn child. The Rainbo Centre collaborated with the shelter to report the matter to the police, initiating a thorough investigation.

Upon her father's return, he was promptly arrested and charged with the heinous crimes he had committed, thanks to the diligent efforts of the police during their investigations. The weight of the evidence against him led to his conviction, and he was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment. The girl's testimony during the

trial was a pivotal moment, as she overcame her biggest fear and found the strength to speak out against her abuser. Though the process was emotionally difficult, the support she received from the service providers and the neighbour helped her on her path to healing.

Sadly, despite the progress made, the girl was unable to safely give birth to her baby boy. However, she emerged from the experience in good health, determined to forge a brighter future for herself. In her tears, she expressed the profound loss she had suffered, including the absence of parental love and the shattered dreams of a normal family life. But she vowed to persevere and channel her pain into becoming a human rights activist.

Through months of intensive follow-up and counseling, the girl began to rebuild her life and regain her sense of self. The justice she received through the legal system provided validation for her experiences and a sense of closure. With the support of dedicated service providers and the strength she discovered within herself, she embarked on a journey of healing and resilience. She remains steadfast in her determination to fulfil her dreams and become a force for change, working tirelessly to protect the rights of others who have suffered similar traumas.

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

656 GBV survivors (**624** sexual and **32** physical), **652** female and **4** male were supported with medical and psychosocial services across our **7** Rainbo Centres in Freetown (2), Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono and Kambia.

17,244 (**8,172** Male and **9,072** Female) people were reached with awareness-raising messages on GBV, its referral pathways and the Rainbo Center services.

Followed up on **7** SGBV cases in court; **7** were charged to magistrate court. These are only cases that went through our Rainbo Centres.

34 teenage survivors tested positive for pregnancy at the time they visited our Centres after the abuse. **2** survivors tested HIV positive and **479** were treated for sexually transmitted Infections (STIs).

COMING UP

TRAINING OF RAINBO AND FSU ON HARMONIZED REAL-TIME DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

Rainbo Initiative with support from The Carter Centre has developed a harmonized indicator data collection tool and a real-time digital data management system with a dashboard for both Rainbo Initiative and the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP). A two-day training will be organised for Rainbo Staff and FSU personnel on digital data management, to enhance their management skill in the platform for reporting. The training will also incorporate topics on safeguarding and data management procedures and best practices for quality and safe reporting on GBV issues.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCORED CARDS FOR THE RAINBO CENTRE AND ONE STOP CENTRE.

Rainbo with support from The Carter Center, has developed a 'Scorecard' – a two-way participatory tool that will be used for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Rainbo Centres, One Stop Centres and the FSU services. The Scorecard will bring together the demand side (service user) and the supply side (service provider) of a particular service or programme to jointly analyse issues underlying service delivery problems at the Rainbo Centre, One-Stop Centre and the FSU and find a common and shared way of addressing those issues.

RESEARCH ON THE SOCIO-CULTURAL EFFECTS OF SGBV ON CHILD SURVIVORS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 6YRS TO 13YRS IN THREE DISTRICTS.

Sierra Leonean society sees certain types of violence against women and girls in a relationship as warranted and acceptable social norms. Orphaned children and women with limited decision-making power within the family are at higher risk of experiencing SGBV. The experience of SGBV threatens the lives of individuals, especially women and girls between the ages of 6 to 13 years, as it limits their autonomy and can lead to mental health issues, suicide, gynaecological complications, unwanted pregnancy, and an increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Rainbo with support from Comic Relief, will conduct on the above-mentioned topic. This study seeks to investigate the socio-cultural effects of SGBV on child survivors. It will further examine the impact of SGBV on children's growth and development in communities and suggest interventions or programs to address the gap that exists.

CONDUCT EXPERIENCE-SHARING AND LEARNING EXCHANGE SESSIONS AND COORDINATION MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT COUNCILS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS.

This will be to address concerns gathered from the 15 Trocaire community town hall meetings so that partners can discuss issues and come up with possible agreed solutions for the protection of women and Girls in Bombali, Port Loko and Kambia District. This activity will strengthen coordination and networking among the Child Protection Partners across the districts that work towards ending SGBV and action concerns from community stakeholders and the Partners.

COMMUNITY/TOWN HALL MEETINGS ON REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND SGBV-RELATED LAWS.

This activity will implemented to raise awareness and campaign on the negative impact of VIOLENCE and ABUSE on WOMEN and adolescent GIRLS within communities, increase public awareness on the rights and welfare of women and adolescent girls and the implications involved with regard violence against women and girls, to popularize key aspects in the Sexual Offences Amendment Act 2019, to popularize

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the revised national SGBV referral pathways, and to engage influential stakeholders to strengthen prevention and response to SGBV-related issues within their respective communities

TRAINING OF VULNERABLE GROUPS.

Conduct training for vulnerable groups seeking employment in solid waste management on GBV referral pathways in the 7 cities of Makeni, Kenema, Bo, Koidu, Port Loko, Freetown, Western Rural, one Municipalities of Bonthe

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SENSITIZATION.

The RI outreach team will conduct community awareness sessions to increase the awareness of Rainbo Services and project visibility of the Trocaire project. The awareness raising and sensitization will be conducted across the three districts (Bombali, Port Loko and Kambia). This will further establish professional relationships with SGBV partners and line ministries hence establishing professional relationships.

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.

A 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 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.

SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION/MONITORING VISITS.

The M&E team will be conducting the project monitoring and evaluation activities including the development of tools, data collection and analysis, monitoring of project activities and tracking project and results, including providing technical support to the project team and ensuring project compliance. The M&E will also be conducted in collaboration with partners and service providers at district and national levels to support the GBV survivors.

OUR PARTNERS

