



Week: 13th – 19th September 2020

Big Idea of the Week:

Supporting girls and women helps communities thrive!

Coronavirus has added stress to many of our lives. We have overcome difficult times before and we will get through this too.

Families and community leaders, especially men, have a responsibility to prevent child marriage and protect girls and their future to go to school, pursue a career, and choose when to have a family.

Fathers and mothers, women and men have a very important role in encouraging girls to focus on their dreams and goals, and talking with boys and girls about how teenage pregnancy can be harmful and make life more difficult, especially for the young mother, her family, and the child.

Supporting girls to achieve their dreams and thrive benefits communities and encourages other girls and boys, women and men to do the same.

Men and boys can lead by example and publicly supporting women and girls, listening to them and treating them with respect, and stepping in to prevent or stop violence by other men and boys.

Corona fet na we all fet!

Suggestions of People to Interview and Panel Discussions

- Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
- 116 Call Center
- One Stop Centers and Rainbo Centers
- Women Organizations and Female Community Leaders (e.g., Counselors, Mammy Queens)
- Gender Experts assigned to NACOVERC and DiCOVERCs
- Smart Women's Initiative (provides psychosocial support to survivors with a focus on people with disabilities)
- L.A.W.Y.E.R.S. (free paralegal services and legal representation to women and girls)
- Aberdeen Women's Center (provides sexual and gender-based violence services to women and children, and teen pregnancy and maternity services)

Suggestions for Questions for Interviews and Panels

- What is gender-based violence? What is sexual violence? Why are they wrong?
- Why should we be worried about sexual and gender-based violence during coronavirus?
- What services are available in the community for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence?
- How can we prevent teenage pregnancy and early marriage during coronavirus?
- What can men and boys do to support women and girls?

Additional Messages on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Child Marriage, and Teen Pregnancy

Q. Where can survivors of rape or domestic violence go for help?

A. Survivors of rape or domestic violence can go to a One Stop Center. One Stop Centers provide a range of services under one roof. Each Center provides medical, psychosocial counselling, and legal aid for survivors in an environment that is confidential, private, safe, respectful, and without judgment.

All services at the One Stop Centers are free. You can go to a One Stop Center at any time. Services are provided all hours of the day.

You do not need to go to the police station to report. The One Stop Center staff includes a Family Support Unit (FSU) officer who will take a report from you while you are at the One Stop Center.

The One Stop Centers are currently located at Port Loko Government Hospital, Moyamba Government Hospital, Pujehun Government Hospital, Kabala Government Hospital, Kailahun Government Hospital, and King Harmon Road Government Hospital (Freetown).

If you are in Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono, or Freetown (PCMH), please contact Rainbo Centers for medical and psychosocial services. Call 116 Rape hotline for help locating a center.

If you are the survivor of an attempted rape, you may report at the One Stop Center or local Family Support Unit (FSU). Call 116 for help.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is violence toward a person because of their gender or identity. Gender-based violence is a human rights violation deeply rooted in gender inequality.

Gender-based violence can happen to anyone – women and girls, men and boys – but women and girls are the ones who suffer most often.

Physical and armed violence are the most common types of gender-based violence among boys. Women and girls, especially those with disabilities, are more likely to face neglect, physical and emotional abuse, and sexual violence and exploitation.

The spread of coronavirus around the world and in Sierra Leone has added stress to many of our lives. We have overcome difficult times before and we will get through this too.

Let's support one another by listening to each other, offering words of understanding and encouragement, and helping through small acts of kindness.

Worry about loved ones getting the virus, children being out of school, and earning the money to feed and support one's family is a lot to manage. You are not alone. It is understandable to feel worry, fear, and anger in these challenging times.

While anger is a normal human emotion, violence is never ok. If you are angry about something, try to step away from the situation. Take a moment to breathe and think before you act. Doing this helps us to calm down and avoid hurting others when we are upset.

Staying at home and away from crowded places is important to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, but home is not always a safe place for many women and girls. We all have a responsibility to protect and create a protective environment for women, girls and boys in our community by reporting acts of violence and abuse.

Men and boys can lead by example and treat women and girls with respect. Men and boys can be role models by stepping in when they see other men and boys doing harm toward women or girls.

Because violence toward women and girls is so common, some men and boys may not even realize that certain acts of violence are wrong, because they have seen other men and boys doing it their whole lives. That is why it is so important for men and boys to publicly support women and girls, listen to them and treat them with respect, and step in to prevent or stop violence by other men and boys.

If you are harmed, feel afraid or pressured, or someone is disturbing you, you have the right to ask for and get help. Do not keep quiet!

Talk to someone you trust and go to the nearest Family Support Unit (FSU) or One Stop Center (in select hospitals) where they will listen to you, give you the care and support you need, and help you report all forms of abuse.

You can also report to your local authorities including the Child Welfare Committee and religious leaders.

Violence is everyone's business and communities have a role to play in preventing it and supporting those who experience it. Do not keep SILENT, LOOK out and SPEAK up!

Sexual Violence

If you see or learn of any act of sexual violence happening in your community, you must SPEAK out to help the survivor and punish the perpetrator.

EVERYONE has the right to say NO to sex!

Any sexual contact between two people must be fully and freely agreed by those two people, on EVERY occasion. Any forced sexual act where one person does not want it, is violence and a crime.

Report ALL cases of sexual violence to the nearest Family Support Unit (FSU) or hospital, or call the 116 Rape hotline for free on Orange, Africell or Q-cell at any time of the day.

You can also report to your local authorities including the Child Welfare Committee or religious leaders,

Having sex with a child under 18 years is an abuse and an offence against the state!

Most of the violence against women and girls happens in their own homes. Girls are especially vulnerable to violence if they are left unsupervised. The person who uses violence is always the one to blame. We should support women and girls who have experienced violence – not blame them!

Asking for sex in exchange for food, money, or materials is an abuse of power and does great harm to women and girls as well as boys. This is corruption and should be reported to the Anti-Corruption Commission's free mobile hotline, 515. Your call will be kept confidential.

Parents and caregivers should talk to their children at an early age about 'good' touch versus 'bad' touch. They should teach their children to talk to an adult they trust if they have experienced a 'bad' touch. They should believe and encourage their girls and boys to talk about people or situations that makes them uncomfortable.

As a parent or caregiver, when a child comes to you with such information, you must take the child's claims seriously and immediately ensure that the abuse stops.

Survivors of rape can go to a One Stop Center. One Stop Centers provide a range of services under one roof. Each Center provides medical, psychosocial counselling, and legal aid for survivors in an environment that is confidential, private, safe, respectful, and without judgment.

Rape is a crime in Sierra Leone! Taking money to settle a sexual offence instead of reporting it is also a crime. If you do not report a sexual offence such as rape and try to settle it out of court, you will be sentenced and / or charged a fine.

Don't underestimate the power of your voice as a community to let women and girls know it is not their fault and where they can get support!

Child Marriage & Teenage Pregnancy

During crisis situations such as coronavirus, some families may want to encourage their girls under 18 to get married to get quick money from bride price, to avoid issues such as rape from the community, or simply to pave a better opportunity for the girl.

Marriage below the age of 18 years is against the law. Younger people below this age have not developed the maturity and practical skills for a successful marriage and to make informed decisions.

When girls get married under 18, they are at higher risk of violence, and of injury and death during childbirth.

Boys and men, fathers and sons, have a big role to play in preventing child marriage. They should try to learn more about the dangers of child marriage and take responsibility not to exploit women under the age of 18.

Families and community leaders, especially men, have a responsibility to prevent child marriage and protect girls and their future to go to school, pursue a career, and choose when to have a family.

Supporting girls to achieve their dreams and thrive benefits communities and encourages other girls and boys, women and men to do the same.

During the Ebola period in Sierra Leone, over 14,000 girls became pregnant forcing them to drop out of school and driving them, their families and communities further into poverty.

Fathers and mothers, women and men have a very important role in encouraging girls to focus on their dreams and goals, and talking with boys and girls about how teenage pregnancy can be harmful and make life more difficult, especially for the young mother and her family.