Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law – Sierra Leone (CARL-SL)

Project Success Story

Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law, Sierra Leone (CARL-SL) with support from United Nations Development Program (UNDP) implemented the **"Enhancing Access to Justice for Vulnerable Groups and Advancing People-centered Justice Reforms for SGVB Survivors in Falaba Moyamba, and Kailahun districts project".**

In Kailahun District, survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) often face significant barriers to accessing justice and support, including stigma, discrimination, fear and social isolation. For many, the trauma of abuse is compounded by the silence and rejection they experience within their communities.

For Hawa a 17 year old, these challenges were a painful reality. Following an experience of sexual violence, she found herself ostracised and without a safe environment in which to seek help or begin her recovery. However, through the support provided under the project, Hawa accessed essential medical care, psychosocial counselling and legal representation, enabling her to begin rebuilding her life while pursuing justice. In a space of three months, her perpetrator was convicted, marking what was reported as a historic milestone for her chiefdom and demonstrating the importance of survivor-centered support and effective access to justice.

Today, Hawa has transformed her painful experience into a source of strength and inspiration. She now serves as a youth peer educator, engaging young people and raising awareness about SGBV prevention, survivors' rights and the importance of speaking out against sexual violence. Through her advocacy, she has reached more than 800 young people, encouraging greater awareness, responsibility and community action against SGBV.

Hawa's journey demonstrates that when survivors receive timely support, protection and access to justice, they can move beyond victimisation and become powerful advocates for change within their communities. Her transformation from a survivor who once faced stigma and isolation into a youth advocate illustrates the far-reaching impact of survivor-centred interventions.

Nevertheless, Hawa's experience also highlights the reality that many survivors continue to suffer in silence, unable to access the medical, psychosocial, legal and protection services they need. Expanding these services and strengthening community awareness remain critical to ensuring that no survivor is left behind.

Her story is a reminder that justice restores hope, support rebuilds confidence, and empowered survivors can become agents of lasting community change.