



# Walk for A Child

## Summary Report

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Edited by Ian Witry



### GREETINGS: From Hindolo and Dustyn

In June of 2020, Kadajah Saccoh, a five-year-old girl from Sierra Leone was raped and strangled to death by her older cousin. This tragic event sparked international attention to the crisis of rape and violence against women, which are becoming more and more rampant in Sierra Leone. Dustyn and I watched Terry Willis walk 1000 miles from Alabama to Minnesota in protest against police brutality against Black Americans after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. This heroic act inspired us to plan a similar walk in Sierra Leone to protest against rape culture in the country. We felt the pain of so many children like Kadajah whose voices are constantly kept silent, and many whose stories often go untold. Although all genders are susceptible to rape and gender-based violence, women and girls are the victims of this violence in the vast majority of cases. As such, all genders are susceptible to rape and gender-based violence, women and girls are the victims of this violence in the vast majority of cases. As such, our walk was a protest to raise awareness among people in village communities, towns, and cities throughout Sierra Leone about the increase of rape culture and its dehumanizing and traumatic effects on women and girls.

### THANK YOU MESSAGE:

Our 315 mile walk from Kailahun to Freetown was made possible by so many organizations that believed in our purpose for the walk. We want to acknowledge and thank ALL THE VILLAGE COMMUNITIES that hosted us during the walk, as well as The Women's Forum Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Female Musician Association, Women's Voice Newspaper, Women in Media Sierra Leone, Rainbow Initiative, The Vickie Remoe Show, Naasu Fofanah, Kelfa Kargbo-Director of Street Child Sierra Leone, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Community of Practice (COP), Sierra Leone Police, Focus 1000, and Sierra Leone Commercial Bank.

We also want to acknowledge all the organizations that stood in solidarity with us by recognizing our unique campaign style of walking 315 miles to raise awareness about rape culture in Sierra Leone. Thank you to the UN Women, UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Freetown, Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the Irish Embassy, Manor River Union Secretariat, Mercury International, and Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC).

## PURPOSE OF THE WALK:

We want to highlight that the WALK FOR A CHILD was about ENDING RAPE CULTURE. And rape culture is not just sexual penetration — there are so many other aspects of the impact that rape culture has on women and children, social, physical, mental, emotional, and economic. We brought these issues to the forefront of our walk and have conversations around the impacts that rape has in all of these aspects. Throughout the walk, community engagement, especially at the village level, was overwhelmingly collective and supportive. While we suffered through blisters, muscle pains, and sometimes not-so-good sleeping arrangements, the communities we passed through always welcomed us. We knew our African indigenous values were in place to support us.

## 315 Mile Route

Our 315 mile walk took us through eight districts, all three provinces, and the Western Area. On January 5th, we held our first washing of the feet ceremony — publicly apologizing to all women on behalf of all men for the wrongs committed by men. This was followed by the planting of trees and a public pledge that was read out and repeated back to us by men in the community promising to hold each other accountable. We want to thank Vickie Remoe for giving us this idea during our planning phase.

We chose to wash the feet of 18 women in every village community in which we spent the night. We chose the number 18 as a symbol to remind people that 18 is the age of consent, and NO means NO.

We walked an average of 16 miles a day, each day ranging from five to as much as 30 miles. We began most mornings at 5:30am, rested in the afternoon and then continued in the evenings. We slept on air bed mattresses, in camping tents and in rooms provided by community members in the villages and towns we passed through. Our walk was supported day-to-day by our team of six people who cooked for us, rode the motor bikes and informed community authorities of our arrival and our message ahead of time. This was a complete grassroots approach to hearing the stories of lived experiences — community members would often share their stories with us in the evenings while we shared meals together.

The route in the beginning was very safe. And, once we left Kailahun, we had the whole street to ourselves, waking up in the morning to beautiful sunrises and wrapping up the evening with perfect sunsets.

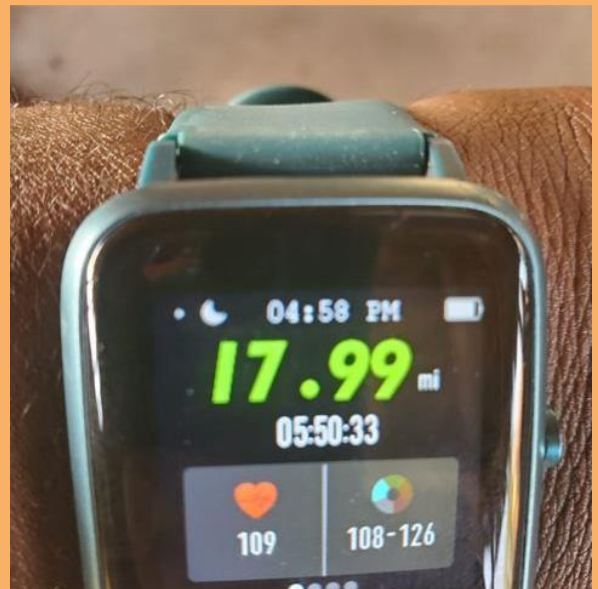
## A Collective Effort:

The Walk for a Child Campaign presented a unique opportunity for Sierra Leone to face the reality of the increase in rape. Dustyn and I realize that the work to end gender-based violence is not an easy task, and the organizations (including: Sierra Leone Women's Forum, UN Women, Sierra Leone Female Musician Association, Rainbow Initiative, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Purposeful, Hands Off Our Girls, Smart Women Initiative, etc.) that have been working on these issues before we showed up deserve the fullest credit. Our effort served to complement the work being done collectively to end this menace to our society. Our effort introduced a new approach to fighting together to end rape culture in Sierra Leone. While policy change is also a significant part of this effort, our walk's grassroots approach of hearing stories directly from people in communities, including survivors of rape, has provided us with crucial, experiential research necessary for change-making. We plan to publish a book including a more detailed account of our experience and the experiences of other Sierra Leoneans in the near future.

Contact us for any details: [hindolo@slfnd.org](mailto:hindolo@slfnd.org)



Hindolo & Dustyn being celebrated and congratulated for completing 315 mile walk by Head of Mission UN Women Representative Sèchèmè Mongbo in Freetown, Sierra Leone



On average, we walked 17 to 18 miles a day. It took us 21 days from Kailahun to Freetown through Mile 91 to Magboroka to Makeni.



Sierra Leone is peaceful and beautiful. A sunset in view as we approached Talia on the Kenema-Kailahun highway.