

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

Dear Sir/Madam,

Saving the Rainlily, the only Rape Crisis Center in Hong Kong

I was a victim of a rape incident a few years ago. With the help of the Rainlily, I was healed and recovered. When I learnt the potential closure of RainLily from the newspaper, my heart ached for I understand well all the hard works that the Rainlily had done for the sexually assaulted victims throughout these years. I am writing here to tell you, **from a victim point of view**, my unfortunate experience and how the Rainlily helped me to survive and have a new life. I am writing to urge the Government to provide financial support to the Rainlily. Without any funding, **the Rainlily, the only rape crisis center established in Hong Kong 5 years ago, will be forced to wind up by the end of this year.**

By way of background, may I introduce the Rainlily to you. Rainlily is a non-government organization established in 2001 to provide one-stop rape crisis services to help those who are sexually abused. A group of social workers recognized at that time that the services available to the sexually assaulted victims were fragment and insufficient, and that the victims had to undergo different kinds of procedures and double their trauma by repeating their painful story to police, doctor, social worker, clinical psychologist etc. These social workers saw the need and called for the establishment of a one-stop rape crisis center using similar rape crisis centers in other countries e.g. UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as model, to provide “one-stop” services to help the sexually assaulted victims. The idea gained wide support from the general public and the Legislative Council members. The motion was discussed in the Legislative Council Meeting on 12 April 2000 and was passed by a majority to *urge the Government to “provide comprehensive and timely “one-stop” emergency support service for the victims of sexual violence cases”*.

Since then, the Rainlily actively discussed the establishment of the rape crisis centre with the Government. However, to their surprise, the Government refused to finance them but instead referred them to the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC). The HKJC granted them a 3-year funding in which the Rainlily used them to establish the rape crisis center in 2001 for provision of one-stop services to sexually assaulted victims. They also participated actively in the education and promotion of the general awareness of sexual violence cases in Hong Kong. When the funding was about to due in end 2003, the Rainlily contacted the Government again for financial assistance but again, they were referred to the HKJC. On an exceptional basis, the HKJC

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

extended their funding to the Rainlily for 2 more years.

By the end of this year, the current HKJC funding will be due. Early this year, the Rainlily has approached the Government (Social Welfare Department) to discuss the long term planning including the funding issue of the Rainlily. However, the response of the Social Welfare Department was disappointing. Only after repeated chasers, they replied to the Rainlily that they did **not** intend to provide any financial support to the Rainlily. In parallel, the Rainlily also applied to the HKJC for extension of the funding. Notwithstanding of the appreciation and high commendation of the works of the Rainlily, the HKJC were of the view that it should be the **Government's** role and responsibility to support and maintain this valuable service to the public and to help those who suffered. They had no intention to give any further financial support to the Rainlily.

Regardless of the repeated lobbying by the Rainlily and Legislative Council members, the Social Welfare Department still stood firm in their position and turned down the request to take up the responsibility for the maintenance of the Rape Crisis Center. The implication of which is serious. It will lead to the closing down of the **one and only one** rape crisis center in Hong Kong. The services provided to the unfortunate sexually assaulted victims will unavoidably be reverted back to the situation 5 years ago i.e. they had to undergo fragmented services and painful process in **repeating their heartbreaking trauma to different professionals, at different time, and in different places.**

My Honorable Legislative Council Member, shouldn't Hong Kong be moving forward and improving? Why you allow this regressive action to happen nowadays? Can't you be empathized with the victims' situation?

My Honorable Legislative Council Member, let me now tell you my story. Yes, *I am a victim of a rape case a few years ago, by which the Rainlily had not been established and no rape crisis center was there to help.* It is the darkest ages in my life. It is such a painful act to repeat my trauma or to tell you my feelings here. You can't imagine how much courage I have to take to write this letter. But then, I still feel the urging and imminent need to do so because I really want you to know the difficult road that I had gone through, a road **without** any provision of one-stop rape crisis services but just fragmented and incomprehensive services. It is a heartache and terrible road that I really do not want other victims to undergo. I hope, after reading my story, you would apprehend more of the importance of the Rainlily.

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

My story

A few years ago, one night when I was on the way home, I was attacked by a stranger from the back. My head was seriously assaulted and injured. When I regained my consciousness, I noticed that I should have unfortunately be raped. I cried. The people passed by called the Police. I was conveyed to the hospital. When I was transferred to the medical consultation room for collection of forensic evidence, I was inspected by a male doctor. *(I was so embarrassed at that time. I didn't know what to do. I felt so helpless.)*

I was then settled down in the public ward. I was repeatedly interviewed by the Police for statements. *(I didn't know what my rights were? My emotion was so upset that I didn't feel like to give my statement at that moment but can I refuse?)*

I was so upset and emotionally unstable at that time, but there were no counselors around me to offer help. I wanted to ask and know what had happened to me, but who should I ask? *(Why weren't any people dare to tell me the truth?).* I could not sleep that night...

It was the doctor consultation time the next morning. The **male** doctor led a team of **male** housemen to consult me. I could hear clearly the wordings “**Victim of rape case**” said by the doctor to the housemen. The wordings struck me heavily. I was so ashamed that I used the flat sheet to cover myself up and refused to see anybody. I felt very irritated at that time. *(The doctor sounded so inconsiderate! Haven't they been trained on how to handle victims like me? Can anyone help?)*

The medical social worker had visited me twice during my 3-day stay in that hospital. My only memory of her was that she asked whether I needed to apply for any compensation under the crime violence scheme.

I saw the Clinical Psychologist once for around 20-30 minutes for initial diagnosis on my psychological condition. No follow up was arranged. *(I want to have someone to talk to!! I was about to breakdown!! But of course I was not willing to talk to **him!** **He** was a **male!** And I have just been raped by a **male** stranger !!! Why didn't **he** notice that? What did **he** expect from me? Repeating the whole story and details to **him?**)*

I was horrified when I read from the newspaper the report of my incident. Why my

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

personal particulars (How old I was ? Which school's alumna I was? Where did I work?) appeared on the newspaper? I have only given it to the Police. (*How did the reporters get my information? Can I do anything to stop them ? Can someone help? How can I face my friends and my colleague when I was discharged?*). Eventually, I had no choice but to quit my job because the information, though not disclosing my name, were so obvious that all my colleague could associate the incident with me. I did not have any courage to face them. (*Could the Government do anything to **protect** victims like me?*)

3 days later, I was conveyed to an "Extended Care Hospital" for the continual treatment of my injured head. I stayed there for 3 weeks, during which, I was so depressed that I attempted to commit suicide. I was saved but yet no one knew how to take care of me psychologically. The medical social worker there has only visited me once. Some nurses tried to console me but they did not know how to approach me. I was so depressed and desperate that I took out my courage to ask for a clinical psychologist's consultation. Yet, the answer was unexpectedly frustrating. They told me that they did not have any in-house clinical psychologist. They would arrange one for me but I had to wait for 2 weeks. By then, I was discharged. (*Even now, I still found it **unacceptable**. A trauma survivor, being just saved from an attempted suicide, asked for a clinical psychologist, but no service could be provided! I might have died of another attempted suicide within this 2-week time! **Is that all the government services provided to the victims and the public?***)

After I was discharged, I was granted a 3-month sick leave. During these 3 months, I went nowhere but just to the hospital for medical treatment or stayed at home. I was on the verge of emotional breakdown. I was then referred to see the psychiatric because of my posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms. (*However, the consultation was not so helpful at all because the **male** doctor did not really understand me nor my feelings..*)

My Honourable Legislative Council Member, from my experience described above, I think you would understand how painful, how desperate, how helpless, how frustrated I was at that critical moment. My heart is still very painful when I am revealing my above feelings to you now. It is still a very real but yet sad and hurting feeling. I always think that if the Rainlily had been established at that time, I might not need to go through all these terrible experience. My recovery path would be less difficult...

My turning point was my regular counseling sessions with the social worker of the

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

Rainlily. A best friend knew my situation and referred me to the Rainlily. From there, **I could really have the strong feeling of *understanding* and *acceptance*. Most importantly, they helped me to correct my inferior, shameful and guilty feeling of being a sexually assaulted victim. I learned to accept and face the incident, and to understand that my *dignity* had never been, and would never be, taken off by this incident. From the Rainlily, I learned to live with my new entity as a *survivor, a survivor who would live brightly and bravely in spite of that unfortunate incident*.**

In the Rainlily, I was given the opportunity to meet a group of victims with similar experience in the workshops. We shared our feelings and supported each other for we had encountered similar fears and worries and had struggled through a similar road. I was no longer alone because I have found my companions in the Rainlily to walk together along this difficult road.

My Honorable Legislative Council Member, why I bother to repeat my painful story and my heartbreaking feelings to you? Just because I want you to understand to what extent that the Rainlily could help the sexually assaulted victims. I want you to understand how cruel and painful it would be if the victims have to repeat their trauma to all different kind of professions, *like what I had gone through*. I want you to understand how miserable it would be to walk the road alone without the accompany of the Rainlily.

How much will it be required for the Rainlily to maintain its service? Just around HK \$2 million per year, but then, how many victims or Hong Kong people would be benefited? Yes, the amount may seem a lot and the Government may argue that the services could be replaced by the existing services provided by the Government. However, all these services are yet fragmented and incomprehensive. In fact, these government services already existed well before the time of the establishment of the Rainlily. ***If such government services and resources were so useful and sufficient, why did Hong Kong people and the Legislative Council members called for the establishment of the one-stop rape crisis center 5 years ago? Why then, 5 years later, the Government allowed the services to move backward? Is that what you, as our Legislative Council Member, the leader of the Community, wants to see?***

The efforts and contributions of the Rainlily over the past 5 years can never be undermined. In fact, they were positively affirmed and highly commended by the HKJC. For the benefits of the sexually assaulted victims and the general public, for

A Letter from a Rape Incident Survivor

the sake of social responsibility, I really feel that it is now time for the Government to take up the leading role to **support** and **provide financial funding** to the Rainlily, the only one-stop rape crisis center in Hong Kong. The Government should no longer avoid or deny their responsibility. The Government should stop shifting their responsibility to other organizations like the HKJC. *It is unfair to Hong Kong people. It is unfair to all the victims. It is unfair to the Rainlily too!*

The issue of the possible winding up of the Rainlily and the neglectful attitude of the Government (Social Welfare Department) had already been drawing extensive public concern. Media reports on newspapers and televisions were widely promulgating the issue. The Legislative Council members should urge the Government to provide **long term** financial assistance to the Rainlily to ensure no interruption of this valuable, meaningful and unique service in Hong Kong. The Christian organizations were launching campaigns to save the Rainlily. *Yet, why could the Government be so inconsiderate and insensitive?*

My Honorable Legislative Council Member, as the Leader of our community, as a , I sincerely urge you to give support to save the Rainlily.

Your sincerely,
Pheonix, a survivor

Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women