

Mid Term Evaluation of the
Local Economic Development
Portfolio of UNDP in Sierra
Leone

June 2023



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Project and Evaluation Information Details

| Project/outcome Information | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Portfolio Title: Local Economic Development Portfolio | | |
| Project ID: 00126320 | | |
| Contributing outcome and output: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 Outcome 4 - Country Programme Document (CPD) Output 4.1 - CPD Output 4.4 | | |
| Country: Sierra Leone | | |
| Region: Africa | | |
| Portfolio dates | Start: March 5, 2020 | Planned end: December 31, 2024 |
| Portfolio Planned budget: USD 23,602,000 (estimated to be mobilized) | | |
| Project expenditure at the time of evaluation: USD 5,917,391.18 (as of September 2022) | | |
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| Implementing parties: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Youth Affairs - Ministry of Social Welfare - National Youth Commission - National Youth Service - Public Private Partnerships Unit - Local Councils and CSOs | | |

| Evaluation information | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
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| Evaluation: Mid Term Evaluation of the Local Economic Development Portfolio | | |
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| GRM | Grievance Redressal Mechanism |
| LED | Local Economic Development |
| LIC | Low Income Country |
| MTE | Mid- Term Evaluation |
| MOYA | Ministry of Youth Affairs |
| MSW | Ministry of Social Welfare |
| MTR | Mid-Term Assessment |
| NAYCOM | National Youth Commission |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NYS | National Youth Service |
| NGO | Non-Government Organization |
| PPP | Public Private Partnership |
| PWD | Persons With Disability |
| SES | Social and Environmental Screening |
| UNCDF | United Nations Capital Development Fund |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| YCA | Youth-Connekt Africa |

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Executive Summary

The Local Economic Development (LED) Portfolio by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Sierra Leone is implemented with the objective to empower local communities, especially most vulnerable, particularly women, youth, adolescents and children and persons with disabilities. The portfolio was initiated in March 2020 and is scheduled to complete in December of 2024. The portfolio is funded by: UNDP Funding Windows (UNDP-FW); UNDP Rapid Financing Facility; UNDP Core Resources; Youth Connekt Africa (YCA); and the UN Disability Fund. The projects and activities under the portfolio are implemented by: Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA); Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW); National Youth Commission (NAYCOM); National Youth Service (NYS); Public Private Partnerships Unit; Local Councils and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The key outputs envisaged by the portfolio is to: (a) strengthen the knowledge base of key community stakeholders and council staff in designing financing, building, and operating revenue generating facilities through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement; (b) strengthen gender responsive regulations for the effective implementation of PPP; (c) Ensure the vulnerable groups, especially PWD, have improved entrepreneurial, financial literacy and employability skills, and are socially protected from discrimination. The UNDP in Sierra Leone strives to achieve these objectives through effective implementation of carefully crafted projects in various locations of the country.

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to assess the performance of the overall LED portfolio to date, with a focus on whether the portfolio is on-track to achieve its objectives; identify lessons learnt and develop recommendations that can be taken forward to the next stages of the project. The project and the activities implemented under the LED portfolio are evaluated against the results criteria specified in the mid-term evaluation TOR: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion.

Methodology:

The evaluation used desk reviews of project documents, interviews with key stakeholders, and field assessments to derive implementation details to inform the evaluation. The key informants for the interviews were identified in consultation with the UNDP team through stakeholder mapping and were selected based on their role and involvement in the project activities to date.

Findings:

Relevance: Highly Satisfactory. The projects and activities under the LED portfolio are well in line with the development policies of Sierra Leone and UNDP's strategy for development. The roll out of the LED portfolio is also very timely given the economic and social situation of the country.

The need for youth empowerment, particularly for the PWD beneficiaries, along with policy reforms and capacity development of the decision makers of the country is more pertinent than ever before. The program addresses the priority problems faced by the target beneficiaries. However, the MTE identified challenges regarding lack of resources, inadequate scale and scope of activities, implementation delays etc.

Coherence: Moderately Satisfactory. The LED's interventions are coherent with to the government's policies and complement to the interventions from other development agencies in the country. While many complementary efforts are implemented by development agencies in the country, there is a lack of proper coordination, donor harmonization and aid effectiveness efforts on the ground.

Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory. The program has been comprehensive in rolling out gender responsive and youth targeted activities with special focus on PWD clients. However, the programme outputs have been obtained at a moderate-high financial cost mainly due to logistical and operational challenges. The evaluation noticed gaps in terms of updating the results indicators, timely risk assessment and management evaluations, and proactive planning of exit strategies. Considering the need and the demand on the ground, the scope of interventions is noted to be small. Budgetary and human resources constraints have impacted the project's efficiency.

Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory. The achievement of results at the time of MTE varies in terms of projects and activities. However, a significant number of outputs are delayed due to several different factors. The quality of awareness building activities adopted by the projects were good. The monitoring and evaluation arrangements require strengthening. The grievance redressal mechanism (GRM) system is not established in all projects. The LED portfolio was exempted for the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure at the time of project design. However, the evaluation recommends, and UNDP mandates, that Social and Environment Screening must be conducted for each project activities going forward.

Impact: Moderately Satisfactory. The UNDP plans to conduct a full -fledged impact assessment after the portfolio ends. Overall, the portfolio interventions are transformative as they are purely targeted to the youth, women and PWD. The outputs have a strong potential to create enduring positive changes in the gender and systemic norms. Some of the projects under the program has been able to cause some noteworthy positive changes in the lives of the intended beneficiaries. However, since the results framework for LED was not updated, it was very difficult for the evaluation team to assess the impact of the portfolio.

Sustainability: Moderately Satisfactory. Sustainability considerations were said to be taken into account when designing the project interventions, however the exit strategies for the program interventions, and discussions on possibilities of the next phase for the portfolio, are not yet

formalized. Discussions have been initiated on the prospects of leveraging a participatory approach from multiple stakeholders, including government partners, to scale up the interventions initiated by the LED, however no concrete evidence such as meeting minutes, letter of agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) etc. for the same were noted. Despite the various partnership arrangements, there is still a large scope of possibilities for further collaborations at various administrative levels. For the fruitful operationalization and sustainable implementation of new reforms, it is essential to establish provisions for recurrent trainings and awareness programs.

Human rights, Gender equality and disability inclusion: Moderately Satisfactory (MS). The program has diligently integrated the needs of the youth, women and PWDs into the project design, and the implementation has resulted in some positive changes. Field assessments and stakeholder consultations reveal that adequate targeting to vulnerable groups have been used for the implementation of the program. The results framework requires the gender disaggregated information for indicators, wherever applicable. However, the monitoring reports have not diligently reflected the gender disaggregated information. Due to inconsistent reporting on gender disaggregated data, the scale of impact on these elements could not be assessed.

Recommendations:

Some of the recommendations that the evaluation would like to offer to the UNDP team to consider are:

- Deepen the interventions and scale up the fundings for the activities that did well.
- Start designing the sustainability and exit strategy for all the projects.
- Devise plans to overcome funding and human resource challenges.
- Strengthen the policy level coordination.
- Improve the portfolio's reporting standards.
- Update the risk logs, along with mitigation measures and timelines for periodic assessments.
- Conduct portfolio mapping of all project interventions to have a holistic understanding of the nature, scale and geographic footprints of all activities conducted under the portfolio.

Background

Since the end of civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has made some remarkable progress to create strong foundation for a resilient nation. However, the country's sustained economic growth has been frequently disrupted by multi-dimensional shocks (economic, health and climatic), further constrained by interdependent drivers such as accelerated inflation, weak institutional and governance structures, corruptions, limited and inequitable access to basic services for the citizen etc. The Government of Sierra Leone defines youth as those between ages 15 and 35. As of 2022, approximately 2.5 million of Sierra Leone's 8 million population (i.e., roughly 31.2%) are youths¹, and out of this 70 percent are underemployed. Limited employment and livelihood opportunities for youths, along with deep rooted inequality discrimination especially against women and PWD in cultural norms and practices, along with unmet expectations from the government have resulted in frustrations among youth, contributing to significant adverse social and economic impacts. While the youth of Sierra Leone represent a major opportunity for the country's economic growth, the unfocused youth could potentially create political and security risk, which reveals the urgent need to address the youth unemployment problem.

With the effort to address some of the pertinent issues highlighted above, UNDP is supporting the government of Sierra Leone to implement the Local Economic Development (LED) portfolio, referred to as 'the portfolio' or LED hereafter. The portfolio has been effective since March 2020 and is scheduled to close in December 2024. The objectives of the interventions implemented under the LED portfolio are to create equitable and sustainable economic opportunities, improve livelihoods, and create employment opportunities for youth, especially the economically excluded and vulnerable groups, as well as build institutions that ensure accountability and service delivery for all. The portfolio's strategy uses gender responsiveness as a cross cutting theme in all aspects of implementation. The target beneficiaries of the portfolio are youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). And the activities are implemented through the Ministry of Youth Affairs; Ministry of Social Welfare; National Youth Commission; National Youth Service; Public Private Partnerships Unit; Local Councils; and CSOs.

The portfolio overall aims to achieve following outputs:

Output 1: Knowledgebase of key community stakeholders and councils staff strengthened on designing financing, building, and operating revenue generating facilities through the PPP arrangement.

Output 2: Strengthened gender responsive regulations for the effective implementation of public private partnerships in the country.

Output 3: Vulnerable groups, especially PWDs have improved entrepreneurial, financial literacy and employability skills and are socially protected from discrimination.

¹ Sierra Leone: *The Youth and the Future of the Country*; <https://allafrica.com/stories>; April 2022.

Rationale for Mid-Term Assessment

The LED portfolio was initiated in March 2020, with a planned closing date of December of 2024. As the portfolio has reached its mid-point of implementation, the UNDP team decided to carry out a mid-term assessment of the portfolio, to review and assess the quality of preparation, quality of implementation, activities achieved so far, challenges, and lessons learned. The objective of the assessment is to gather the candid insights regarding the implementation approach and receive concrete recommendation on improvements, if any. The evaluation results shall act as an important source to inform the UNDP teams, implementing agencies and partners regarding what went well, and what needs to be improved during the second half of the project life to achieve the targets and generate the planned outputs and impacts in the most cost-efficient manner. The lessons and recommendations gathered during the assessment can be considered for the purpose of planning of subsequent projects and programs.

Description of Intervention

The Local Economic Development portfolio comprises of several innovative projects and sub-programs. The objective of the portfolio is to adopt an integrated approach to include key economic, social, environmental dimensions for inclusive and sustainable growth, while promoting Public Private Partnerships (PPP), and youth employment initiatives in a participatory and gender responsive manner. The projects include activities that strengthen national policies and strategies to provide conducive environments for business development; enhance employability of youth, women and persons with disabilities (PWD); promote the participation of young people in decision making processes and develop youth interest initiatives; increase social and gender inclusion; and strengthen the capacity (human and institutional) of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Youth Service (NYS) and National Youth Commission. Each of the projects are designed and implemented to achieve the planned outcomes of the portfolio. The list of the projects under the LED portfolio that were under the scope of the MTE are listed in the table below:

| Portfolio ID | Portfolio | Project ID | Project Name | Status |
|--------------|---|------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 126320 | Local Economic Revitalization for Local Communities | 00120416 | Local Economic, Revitalization | On Going |
| | | 00121059 | COVID-19 RESPONSE | Financially Closed |
| | | 00125389 | Stabilize affected communities | On Going |
| | | 00126004 | Youth Empowerment and Employment | On Going |
| | | 00129720 | Advancing Disability Inclusion | On Going |
| | | 00132037 | Transforming Public Universities | On Going |

Local Economic Revitalization for Local Communities, also known as the LED portfolio, has the objective to provide economic empowerment to the most vulnerable communities, particularly women, youth, adolescents, and persons living with disabilities. The status of activities and achievements for each project under the portfolio is listed below:

- **Local Economic, Revitalization (120416): USD 1.08 million**

The project seeks to provide local economic revitalization for economically excluded and vulnerable groups, especially youth, women and PWDs. Under this project as of September 2021, (i) a National Youth policy has been reviewed and validated, and the development of a National youth strategy is underway; (ii) Capacities have been enhanced for 250 stakeholders in designing, financing, building, and operating revenue generating facilities through PPP model; (iii) one, gender responsive regulation has been reviewed for effective implementation of PPP in the country; (iv) one, donor conference on the socio-economic empowerment of PWDs to kick start South- south initiatives has been organized; (v) 70 persons with disability has been supported to engage in vocational work, such as beadwork, smithery/metalwork and tailoring and administrative work; (vi) the construction of the Youth Connekt Hubs is underway in 3 project locations (Daru, Matru Jong & Falaba); (vii) the PPP unit has trained 150 petty traders from 6 Markets on public markets development and operations; (One) PPP regulation was developed and final report has been submitted; and at least 4 Youth empowerment initiatives (Review of the 2014 youth policy; the implementation of Graduate Internship Program; training of youth in COVID-19 preventive measures and livelihood support; strengthening of the Chiefdom youth council etc.) have been supported.

Out of the 14 results indicators of the project, 7 have not been accomplished. Although the project was able to initiate many of the planned activities, several key items could not be completed due to the disruptions brought about by the pandemic. In addition, certain amount of funds from the project had to be repurposed for the COVID-19 response, which left the project with less amount of budget to work with on its pre-planned initiatives.

- **COVID-19 Response (121059): USD .70 million**

In partnership with the WHO, sub-national government entities and NGOs and CSOs, this project sought to address the gaps in the COVID-19 response to counter the potentially devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, calling on everyone to “act together to lessen the blow”. The objective of the project was to develop resilience of the health systems to respond to COVID-19 through health procurement support. This was achieved through various means of direct support, service delivery, partnerships, capacity building and technical assistance. This project has now been financially closed. Under the short

duration of the project, four outreach COVID-19 communication strategies were developed and implemented. The communication strategies included the production and distribution of COVID-19 Braille factsheet, infographics in communities of persons with disabilities during awareness raising sessions on COVID-19, distribution of FM Radio sets to 400 school going pupils (children with disabilities and children of PWDs) with priority given to those in examination classes.

Looking at the targets versus the achievements, the project was not able to meet the target for two of its indicators i.e. (i) At least 1000 visually impaired persons supported with COVID-19 messages on braille;(disaggregated by sex); (ii) At least 3,750 (2250 Male headed HHs: 1500 Female headed HHs) households in 8 districts reached with food & non-food items & hygiene kits. Only around 500 visually impaired persons were supported with 500 COVID-19 sensitization fact sheets on braille. Food supplies and hygiene kits were distributed in special needs school and to the children with disabilities and their families in 8 districts. No gender disaggregated data has been presented and the achievements did not reflect the number of households impacted, as required by the results indicators.²

- **Stabilize affected communities (125389): USD .95 million**

The project seeks to stabilize and enhance livelihoods for COVID-19 affected vulnerable communities in Sierra Leone. The activities under the project are implemented in partnership with NAYCOM, NGOs, CSOs, UNCDF and the World Bank. This project includes three other sub-projects (i) Institute of Development and Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA); (ii) Restless Development; and (iii) Global Youth Network. The interventions designed under these sub projects geared to restore and improve the well-being of the vulnerable youth, through psychosocial support, life skills training, stimulus packages to women and youth owned businesses affected from COVID-19 to help revive and strengthen their business operations.

As by the end of 2021 (the results for 2022 is yet to be reported), The project provided stimulus packages to 443 young individuals (350F, 93M) to restart their businesses; 70 (30F:40M) targeted young women and men businesses were provided additional funds beyond the COVID-19 stimulus package; after the skills trainings, 300 (105F, 195M) targeted young women and young men were re-employed after job loss due to COVID-19; two car wash facilities in Freetown were upgraded, equipped, and are providing spaces for employment for youth and women; 420 (312M, 108F) jobs created or young women and young men, social services and psychosocial support provided to 300 (150F, 150M) most vulnerable youth affected by the pandemic living in 6 targeted slums of Freetown.

² <https://open.undp.org/projects/00126320>

Comparing the achievements against the targets, out of the six indicators, the project has been able to surpass the three and the achievements on the remaining indicators are slightly below the targeted mark. However, considering that the project is still live and the updates on 2022 figures are yet to come, it seems that the project has done well to address the challenges and is well in line to achieve its development objectives.

- **Youth Empowerment and Employment (126004): USD 4.31 million**

The objective of the project is to reinforce the enabling environment, entrepreneurship, development, and connecting youth to productive opportunities, and resources for job creation. The subprojects within this project support the activities that improve the innovation ecosystem in universities to increase opportunities for youth including university students to actively be involved in private sector development in Sierra Leone. The project is implemented by MOYA, NAYCOM, NYS, and MSW.

As by the end of 2021 (the results for 2022 is yet to be reported), under this project, 3 gender transformative policies (National Youth Policy, National Youth Service Act, and PWD revised Act) has been reviewed; 25 employment spaces (car wash facilities) equipped and upgraded; 420 (312M, 108F) jobs created; consultations have been initiated for formulation of a lending Policy for vulnerable group; 100 (60F: 40M) community members from Kailahun district benefited from seeds and locally manufactured input tools by PWDs that facilitated growing of groundnut and vegetables; 100 (60F: 40M) community members from Kailahun district benefited from financial assistance and practical income-driven empowerment schemes; consultations have been initiated for the formulation of an insurance system to promote lending to youth led small and medium enterprise; draft Project document on rice value chain developed; Youth Connekt model for Sierra Leone developed and validated.

The project has been able to progress well towards achieving all its targets. However, there has been delays in the formulation of a lending policy for vulnerable groups and emerging youth entrepreneurs. And delays in the establishment of insurance system that promotes lending to youth led SMEs.

- **Advancing Disability Inclusion (129720): USD .19 million**

This project was implemented in partnership with UNFPA and UNICEF. The objective of the project is to address key challenges identified for disability inclusion. The project aimed to achieve this objective by supporting knowledge and capacity building of multi stakeholder actors involved in advancing disability inclusion at country level, revising the disability act, developing a realistic assessment and certification system for PWDs, developing the tools to enhance the monitoring of disability inclusion in the country. There

has been some progress to update the disability act, however challenges related to coordination among disability rights actors, in addition to the lack of material, human, and technical capacities have hindered the process to be fully effective.

- **Transforming Public Universities (132037): USD .85 million**

The project intends to support the transformation of public universities across Africa into spaces for innovation, experimentation, and accelerated Learning, in LIC countries. Under this project, UNDP had envisaged to establish Fab Labs at four public universities: University of Makeni, Ernest Bai Koroma University, Eastern University, and Njala University. To anchor the activities in these location, Forah Bay college at the University of Sierra Leone was identified as the host for the Main UniPod facility. These Fab Lab would be the centers to foster innovative, scalable, and impactful entrepreneurship by African young people. Under this project, the UNDP provisioned to support the Fab Lab locations with resources (sewing machines, steel benders, 3D printers, toolboxes, and electrical equipment) and technical capacities to foster youth innovation and start-up ecosystem. The overall objective is to improve the innovation ecosystem in universities to increase opportunities for youth including university students to actively be involved in private sector development in Sierra Leone.

As of August 2022, the progress on this project has been largely delayed and has been facing challenges in terms of setting up the spaces within the identified universities and procuring quality equipment in the minimum required numbers, to start the labs. Although some progresses were identified, the quality of implementation can be improved and expedited.

Evaluation Scope and Objectives

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the progress of the various components of the Local Economic Development (LED) portfolio to date, and to examine whether the activities supported are in line to achieve the portfolio's overall development objectives. The evaluation reviewed the impact of portfolio interventions on national and local governments in terms of strengthened capacities, improved governance structure, refined policies, laws, and regulations to provide an inclusive space for all, especially for the youth, women and PWDs. In particular, the evaluation sought to uncover the impact the portfolio has had so far in creating an enabling environment to improve livelihoods and generate more economic opportunities for the vulnerable groups.

The evaluation reviewed the performance of each of the projects approved under the LED portfolio, and their progresses till date. In addition, the evaluation examined the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of these various projects and assessed their contribution towards achieving the overall portfolio outcomes.

The evaluation assessed the portfolio’s progress towards achieving the objectives. The study reviewed the portfolio’s readiness at entry; the external and internal factors that affected the implementation pace; quality of coordination and complementarities among the implementing partners to achieve efficiencies; measures taken to ensure environment and social safeguards (wherever applicable) and availability of a fair grievance redressal system; rationale and criteria for selecting the target beneficiaries; the adequacy of monitoring and tracking systems in place to ensure that the targeted beneficiaries are served. As much as possible, the evaluation ensured that the data is collected from a diverse group of stakeholders including the most vulnerable, along with gathering gender disaggregated data and other relevant categories, as much as possible.

Evaluation approach, tools, and data sources

To understand the relevance and performance of the portfolio, the evaluation undertook a theory-based evaluation approach which includes intensive desk reviews, field visits and stakeholder and beneficiary consultations.

Desk reviews: The evaluation reviewed portfolio and project documents comprising, but not limited to, the ones listed in **Table 1** below. All the information collected through these sources were analyzed in detailed to draw informed conclusions about the portfolio’s performance.

Table 1:

- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024
- UNDP Sierra Leone Country Program Document 2020-2024
- Government of Sierra Leone National Development Plan (2019-2023)
- Portfolio documents
- Theory of change and Result Framework
- Portfolio and project reports
- Annual workplans
- Activity designs
- Consolidated quarterly, annual and donor reports
- Results-oriented monitoring reports and Back to Office Report (BTOR)
- Portfolio meetings minutes
- Project board meetings minutes
- Technical/Financial monitoring reports
- Grant reports
- Other relevant communication materials and knowledge products such as research studies, policy brief, blogs, etc.

Stakeholder Consultations: The evaluation team conducted extensive interviews with all the key stakeholders for the portfolio and collected their views regarding: their roles in the LED program;

effectiveness and appropriateness of the activities implemented; target v/s achievements; implementation and coordination challenges; thoughts about the project's impact on women, youth and PWD beneficiaries; possibilities for scale up and continued support.

The evaluation team reached out to all the stakeholders identified by the UNDP. The interviews were conducted virtually on Teams and Zoom, as deemed convenient for the stakeholders. For the institutions that repeatedly had internet connectivity issues or difficulties with scheduling a convenient time for a call, questionnaires with specifically designed questions for those institutions, were shared for written responses. The questionnaires were sent to:

- IOM
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- Foray Bay College (Unipod)

The virtual interviews were conducted with the following entities:

- UN Agencies:
 - o UNDP
 - o FAO
 - o UNCDF
- Government:
 - o Ministry of Youth Affairs
 - o Ministry of Social Welfare
 - o Parliament
 - o Kailahun district council
 - o Kambia district council
- Civil Society Organizations:
 - o National Youth Commission
 - o Humanist Watch Salone
 - o Sierra Leone Association for Persons with Albinism
 - o Civil Society Organizations involved with the program (Global Youth Network, IDHA, Restless development)
 - o Prison watch
 - o Justice Sector coordination office West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP-SL)
 - o VIONet
- LED project team:
 - o Program managers of each project under the portfolio
 - o LED portfolio lead

The insights and feedback collected from the stakeholders to a large extent, supplemented and validated the information collected through the desk reviews, and provided the evaluation a large scope to further delve into specific details for recommendations.

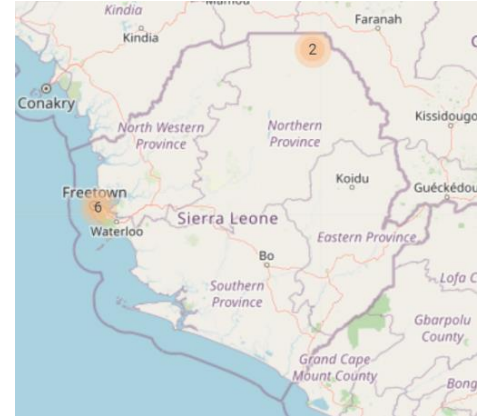
Field Assessment: To strengthen the findings with field observations and evidence, a two-week long field assessments were conducted to the neighboring as well as remote districts of the country. A set of activity sites for the field visits were identified by the UNDP team. Considering the logistical settings of the location, nature of activities and importance of the initiatives, the evaluation team selected a few from the list, received agreements from the UNDP team, and initiated the field assessments. During this phase, beneficiaries of the key project activities were interviewed with the objective to understand if the portfolio has been able to generate any positive economic impact in their lives.

The beneficiary consultations were an excellent opportunity for the evaluation team to record the actual challenges from the ground and collect recommendations for improvements. The evaluation sought to note if the awareness campaigns informing the target beneficiaries about the portfolio and project activities have been diligently conducted and have been inclusive for all. In addition, the evaluation checked if adequate provisions for environment and social safeguards as well as proper grievance redressal systems has been established in the project locations for the advantage of target beneficiaries. The list of the project sites visited is listed in the table below. The summary of field assessments is indicated in **Annex I**.

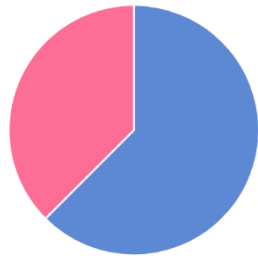
| Location | Activity |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jendema | Women in Cross-border Trade |
| Kambia, North-Western Sierra Leone | Women in Cross-border Trade |
| Kailahun, Daru | Youth Connekt Hub and Fishpond |
| Falaba, North of Sierra Leone. | Youth Connekt Hub |

Digital data collection: Considering the dispersed project locations, numerous activity sites, limited time for evaluation, and limited number of field evaluators to collect the field data, the evaluation used digital forms for data collection, wherever feasible. Once the stakeholders were mapped and the activities to be visited were ascertained, a simple online form were sent to the focal points running the project activities on the ground, requesting them to fill up the questionnaire and send their responses digitally to the evaluation team. The beneficiary list was provided by the UNDP team. Due to the issues of internet connectivity in various project locations, lack of active email addresses, and limited amount of ICT knowledge of the beneficiaries, only one digital form was reverted with feedback. However, to establish a process for digital data collection, the evaluation conducted the phone interviews with all the project beneficiaries identified by the UNDP and recorded the responses in the digital platform. Based on the data collected through the digital platform, the following assessments are made:

1. The UNDP team had provided a list of 11 project beneficiaries to the evaluation team, out of which the evaluation team could reach only 8 and collected the feedback from them. Majority of the beneficiaries from the sample resided in the Freetown area, whereas a couple of beneficiaries reported to be operating their businesses in Falaba town in Sierra Leone.



2. Among the beneficiaries, 62.5% were males and 37.5% were females.



| Value | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 5 | 62.5 |
| Female | 3 | 37.5 |

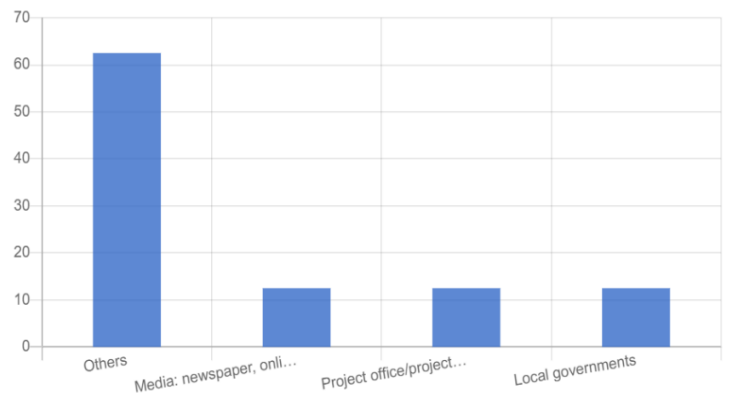


| Value | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Age 15 to 35 | 8 | 100 |

3. 100% of the beneficiary interviewed were of the age group 15-35 years, which indicates a good amount of targeting towards the youth.

4. Out of the total respondents, 12.5% indicated to be a person living with a disability.

5. When asked about how they learned about the UNDP project interventions: 12.5% indicated that they learned it through Media sources, namely newspaper, online bulletins, radio etc.: 12.5% were informed by the project teams; 12.5% learned about the project through their local governments, while 62.5% indicated that they were informed by the: youth chairman, UNDP team members visiting the location, and some through the internet/online bulletin.

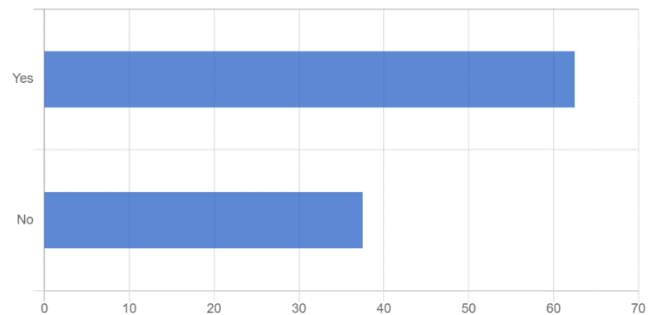


6. 100% of the project respondents indicated to have a positive impact from the projects they were involved in. Some of the beneficiary testimonials are listed in the table below:

Beneficiary Testimonials:

- *“Through the training, I was able to acquire practical and hands on skills on developing positive mentality and new strategies for generating and developing innovative business ideas. I learned practical step by step skills on business plan development that will aid in the development of my own business plan which I never had. I also acquired vast knowledge on how to manage finances, record keeping, budgeting, arrangements of files and documents.”*
- *“The training was good and impactful. I can make use of it to help my business. I learnt a lot, mostly on how to save money. As a student, I have gained a lot of understanding about entrepreneurship.”*
- *“It was good experience because as a woman I can now be self-employed and be able to provide jobs for others; I can now start my own business”*

7. When asked if they know where and what processes are available to lodge a complaint if they must file one, 62.5% of the sample beneficiaries responded positively and 37.5% indicated a negative.



8. 87.5% of the responded informed that they were satisfied with the quality of implementation of the project.
9. The beneficiaries provided a lot of practical recommendations for the program which are integrated in the MTE document. Specifically, the suggestions were around the need for more trainings, more funding support for the activities, increased length of the trainings, and continuous post-training support and mentoring.

Sample Selection

For the field assessments, the UNDP team shared with the evaluation team a list of project sites to visit. Out of the elaborate list, in the interest of time and resources, the evaluation team selected a few project locations. The list was consulted with the UNDP team and further guidance was received to ensure that activities from each of the projects from diverse locations were selected. In addition, focus was primarily made to youth-owned, female run and/or PWD operated and involved project sites.

For beneficiary feedback collection exercise, the LED team provided a list of beneficiaries, along with their contact details, from various projects that the evaluation team could reach out to. The list of beneficiaries interviewed included a fair share of male, female and PWD beneficiaries. Online questionnaires were shared to each of the beneficiaries to their personal emails. In case of technological difficulties, the beneficiary responses were collected over the phone. The questionnaire included specific questions to derive gender disaggregated data, and details on vulnerabilities and social inclusion. Adequate measures were taken to respect the rights of the beneficiaries in case they did not want to be interviewed. In addition, all the responses are kept confidential and only the aggregate summaries are used for the purpose of evaluation. The questionnaire used for beneficiary data collection is attached as **Annex II**.

The evaluation was able to capture candid responses and insights from a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries that contributed to unbiased assessments and clear analysis of the portfolio's performance.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The mid-term evaluation was based on an evaluation matrix that guided the design and development of data collection instruments and subsequent stakeholder consultations. The matrix was structured according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Partnership, Gender Empowerment and Social Inclusion (GESI) and human rights were added as cross cutting criteria. Under each of these criteria, key learning questions were developed to understand whether the implementation activities and modalities are in line to achieve the higher-level objectives as initially set out. The matrix also provided transparency on how each question was answered, drawing on multiple data sources that include both primary and secondary data, and was used to interpret the findings of the evaluation, thus ensuring objectivity and consistency throughout the evaluation process. The detailed Evaluation Matrix used is attached as **Annex III**.

Evaluation Methodology

The Evaluation followed a simple methodology.

- **Step one: A detailed evaluation matrix was developed** to list out all the key questions that need to be answered for the team to assess the portfolio in a coherent manner. Questions were drafted under overarching topics of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion. For each question, one or more responsible person/entities were assigned who the evaluation team believed to be able to provide us with the relevant insights or responses. Using the responsible entities and the corresponding questions listed in the evaluation matrix, each individual questionnaire was

devised for each stakeholder. For instance, a set of questionnaires for the Government partners, a set for the UN agencies, Implementing agencies, partner organizations CSOs, Academics, beneficiaries etc. There were instances where one question was asked to multiple stakeholders, and the evaluation team was able to receive different responses from varying perspectives. This allowed the evaluation to look at a certain topic from different angles and derive unbiased opinions.

- **Step two:** The evaluation conducted detailed **desk analysis** to review the project documents, strategy documents and all the relevant documents suggested and provided by the UNDP team to understand the theoretical aspect of the project implementation and use some of the details mentioned in the reports to refine to the questionnaires developed. For specific implementing agencies and partners, particular questions were added that specifically drilled down into the aspects of challenges in implementation, readiness at entry, non- performance, delays etc., whereas in questionnaires for some agencies and personnel, additional queries on recommendations, lessons learned, and impact were added.
- **Step three:** The evaluation team conducted detailed **stakeholder interviews, beneficiary assessments and field visits**. All the interviews started with asking the stakeholders broader question regarding the overall implementation, funds allocation, activities performed, activities remaining to be implemented, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations for the remaining life of the LED program. Ample space was allowed for the stakeholder to elaborate on a particular issue they wanted to be highlighted in the report. Additional supporting documents were requested from the stakeholders whenever the evaluation team felt it was necessary to validate the responses with document evidence.
- **Step four: Triangulation** of information was used to allow the verification of different information. Similar questions were used to various parties to examine the same aspects. Various methods were used as described above e.g., desk reviews, stakeholder consultations, field assessments, digital data collection etc. to validate the responses received from different avenues, to eliminate any biasness in the data collection and increase reliability.

The draft report was shared with the stakeholders and the findings and ratings were extensively discussed during the debriefing meeting with the stakeholders of LED. Consolidating and organizing all the information collected through various tools, data sources and stakeholders' comments, details were framed in a concise manner to be illustrated in this **final report**.

Methodological Limitations

There were a few challenges that propped up during the evaluation, primarily resulting to, reformulating tools and methods, e.g., adapting survey contents to partially substitute face-to-face

interviews, adjustments of travel plans, adapting to the challenges posed by unawareness of digital technologies etc.

- **Different time zones to operate in:** The differences in the time zones between the interviewer and interviewees made the scheduling confined to certain working hours during the day. The Lead Evaluator being in Sri Lanka and the implementing partners residing in Sierra Leone, allowed only a specific window of timings during the day for both parties to agree on a convenient time slot to conduct virtual meetings.
- **Internet connectivity challenges:** Many interviews had to be rescheduled due to the challenges related to the power cuts or internet issues at the interviewee's end. Despite confirming the meetings early on, the evaluation often faced the problem of "no shows", which was followed by rescheduling the call or sending the digital questionnaires requesting responses. These resulted in double work and delays, to a certain extent, in the process of data collection.
- **Digital data collection:** The evaluation had envisaged to use digital tools for beneficiary data collection, wherever applicable. For this, a digital questionnaire was developed on the platform of Kobo Toolbox, and the links were shared with the list of beneficiaries identified by the UNDP team. Firstly, not all the beneficiaries had email addresses; the ones who had, were not using the emails regularly. The evaluation team had to call each of the beneficiaries on their mobile phones and updated the digital questionnaire for analysis. The level of digital awareness, inclusion and access seemed limited, even among the youths of the country.
- **Delays in field visits:** The UNDP team identified a list of project locations and activities to visit, however the logistical arrangements that was supposed to be provided to the local consultant took longer than anticipated. The UNDP office was transitioning from "Atlas" to "Quantum", due to which resources (driver, vehicle etc.) could not be allocated to the LED MTE field trips, as planned. This delayed the field trip by almost a month and a half, hence shifted the deliverables dates by the similar timeline.
- **Small sample:** The major limitation of the process is that the evaluation had to work with a small sample of beneficiaries to collect the feedback from and a small subset of project activities visited to assess the implementation quality of the overall projects. However, for the mid-term assessment, the level of desk research conducted, beneficiary feedback collected, and field visits undertaken is adequate to derive informed judgements.

Evaluation Findings

A detailed evaluation matrix that intended to capture pertinent information regarding each aspect of implementation such as: Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact,

Sustainability, Human rights, Gender equality and disability inclusion; was developed. The information collected from the desk reviews, stakeholder interviews, field assessments, beneficiary feedback were all used to answer each of the questions in the matrix. Based on details compiled the evaluation was able to paint a fair picture of the status of project implementation and its likelihood to achieve the development objectives. One potential weakness in the process of data analysis was that the evaluation had to work with a small sample of project beneficiaries, which might have led to the generalization of responses from the beneficiaries. However, the MTE utilized a very wide range of stakeholders for consultations and relied on an extensive review of project documents, which helped to derive unbiased conclusions about the quality of performance. The implementation was measured based on the following rationale:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Highly Satisfactory (HS) | The project has no shortcomings |
| Satisfactory (S) | The project has minor shortcomings |
| Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | The project has moderate shortcomings |
| Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | The project has significant shortcomings |
| Unsatisfactory (U) | The project has major shortcomings |
| Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | The project has severe shortcomings |

The MTE findings and conclusions are presented below.

Relevance

Highly Satisfactory (HS)

The projects and activities under the LED portfolio are well in line with the development policies of Sierra Leone and UNDP’s strategy for development. The UNDP strategic plan 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 both envisages to respond to accelerating structural transformations for sustainable development and building resilience to safeguard development gains. The portfolio also resonates well with the priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone’s National Development Plan (2019-2023) as the latter also prioritizes to promote human capital development. In particular, the portfolio is aligned with the Goal 4: A competitive economy with a well-developed infrastructure, under the UNDP. The UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2024) particularly spells out the need for participation from women and persons with disabilities in all stages of project implementation. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020- 2024 prioritizes the protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable particularly women, youth, adolescents, and children (especially girls), and persons with disabilities. The portfolio is well aligned with the Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; Goal 10: Reduced Inequality; and GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the goal.

Sierra Leone has had a challenging history of internal conflict, military interventions, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters, all factors contributing to result weak economy, a poor education system, weak health-care system, youth unemployment, weak social protection systems, prevalent

corruption in the public sector etc. The portfolio tries to address some of these pertinent issues through various innovative programs and projects. The portfolio's objectives and design respond to the needs of the target beneficiaries, country priorities, and partner/institution needs. The objective of the portfolio is adequately defined with realistic, feasible, measurable, and verifiable results indicators.

Coherence

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Like UNDP's LED portfolio, The African Development Bank Group's Country Strategy for 2020-2024, and European Union's Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the period 2021-2027, The World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework for Sierra Leone for 2021-2026, are well aligned with Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan 2019–2023 that prioritizes investments in human capital, job creation, economic diversification and building a resilient health system.

While many complementary efforts are implemented by development agencies in the country, there is a lack of proper coordination, donor harmonization and aid effectiveness efforts on the ground. The UNDP is working with the MOYA in building their capacity to establish the youth empowerment fund. The idea is to pool the funding from all development agencies working on youth empowerment agenda in one basket and implement various programs through that fund. This shall enable the MOYA to track all its activities under one funding umbrella and shall mitigate the issue of small, fragmented support that has been causing duplications of efforts in certain areas while leaving gaps in the other. The Youth basket fund has been launched and is planned to be operational in 2023.

It was a challenge for the evaluation to fully assess the possible complementarities and synergies between the initiatives of the government or other development partners, as data is dispersed and fragmented. There is not one single platform that convenes the policy makers, social activists, CSOs, Ministry, NGO partners, development agencies and beneficiaries etc. to open dialogues about the needs of the beneficiaries that feed into project preparation. In addition, pooled interventions and multi donor projects that support common agendas are lacking. These have resulted in multiple one-off activities implemented on a small scale in a fragmented manner. The evaluation has identified the need for platforms that consolidates information from all development partners' interventions and centralizes data at the ministry level; would allow the ministry to plan, co-ordinate and strategize future interventions in the country better. Similar platforms can be developed for dialogues and knowledge sharing.

Efficiency

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

The project management has been carried out in a moderately satisfactory manner. While the general UNDP project guidelines for monitoring and reporting is observed to be fulfilled, the evaluation noticed gaps in terms of timely updating the results indicators, timely risk assessment and management evaluations, proactive planning of exit strategies. The programme outputs been obtained at a moderate-high financial cost mainly due to logistical and operational challenges of reaching the remotely located clients, escalated costs of operating during the pandemic as safety protocols had to be meticulously adopted, and currency devaluation post Russia war also escalated the operational cost which has forced the portfolio team to readjust their activities.

Out of the total budget of USD 8.42 million, the portfolio has disbursed about 71% (USD 5.99 million) as of March 2023, with still roughly 29% remaining to be disbursed by December 2024 i.e., the end of the project period. There were delays caused by the effects of the pandemic that hindered the implementation phase at the beginning. Some portfolio funds had to be shuffled and repurposed towards the projects addressing the COVID-19 situation in the country, leading to reorganizing, and restructuring the portfolio that caused initial implementation delays. In certain instances, bureaucratic procedures of UNDP on project processing and disbursements sometimes delayed the project implementation. However, the portfolio picked its pace quickly enough to move towards implementing the planned activities. To meet the 100% execution mark by the end of the project period, the rate of disbursement of funds must be increased.

Conducting periodic risk assessments, preparing, and updating risk logs and planning the mitigation measures were under the purview of the project implementation. The evaluation reviewed the portfolio risk register that captured the risk matrix as of March 2020. However, it is essential that the teams review the risk register, update the possible risks, design mitigation measures and provision for contingencies. Considering the fluid economic, political, and social situation of the country, it is utmost essential that the project teams conduct yearly risk assessment for the portfolio and rearrange implementation activities accordingly.

Considering the need and the demand on the ground, the budget allocated for the projects and programs under the portfolio and the scope of implementation is noted to be small. The donor landscape is small in Sierra Leone, and political interference whenever donor grants come in, adds to the constraint. This has warranted and resulted the portfolio to conduct beneficiary targeting, screening, and awareness activities more strictly resulting into efficient implementation. The project inputs (staff, time, funds, and other resources etc.) are noted to be used in the best possible way. The portfolio used locally available expertise and mobilized local partner organizations to implement the projects. For capacity building work, the trainers travelled to the project locations to ensure the largest number of participation and save the travel time and cost of bringing the participants to the training centers. For the PWD related work, the project used experts from Handicap International pro bono, wherever possible. For the skill training activities, local tools (cut glasses, shovels etc.) were purchased from the local skill centers that produced them.

In addition to the budgetary constraints, there were also slight issues in terms of the availability of human resource. The LED team indicated the need for additional resources with relevant expertise present within the project implementation team to undertake the activities efficiently.

To assess the efficiency of implementation, the portfolio has a detailed monitoring and supervision plan in place, which includes conducting supervision mission at least two times a year that comprises focused group discussions, interactions with the beneficiaries and taking stocks of realities and challenges in the ground. The portfolio was not able to completely follow the plan during the pandemic. But the evaluation also noted that there is a lack of dedicated M&E person for the cluster who could conduct continuous quality assurance of the programs, and not wait to conduct assessments only when the things go wrong.

The portfolio has experienced delivery challenges i.e., late approvals of work plans, restrictions brought about by COVID-19, inadequate monitoring of partner agencies, lack of proactive risk management, human resource gaps, inconsistent reporting, all of which has resulted in delivery problems, inadequate accountability, and weakness in results-based management.

The programme logic has been well thought and rationalized, and the project interventions are focused on the key objectives of the program to result intended outputs. However, the implementation efforts have been around conducting multiple one-off small activities, this adds to the transaction costs and has stretched the available resources. To mitigate this issue and to assure the quality of development results, coordination efforts between government partners and local stakeholders are being explored.

Effectiveness

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Although the scope of interventions has been small, the overall portfolio activities have reaped effective results. Some of the activities that have worked well are the implementation of growth accelerators, capacity development for PPP activities, grants to small businesses, policy level change initiatives and awareness campaigns etc. Good outputs and impacts were seen in instances for COVID-19 prevention. Certain outputs, however, take time to show tangible results.

Given the context, need and demand on the ground, the scale of interventions under the LED portfolio looks inadequate. To be more effective, the portfolio should now focus on narrowing down selected successful activities and scale them up.

The cooperation and coordination between the PMU, government and other stakeholders has been contributing to the effectiveness of the project. In many instances, the portfolio has taken deliberate steps to avoid work in the same geographic location where other development agencies are already

operational, to avoid duplications and overlaps. On the other hand, the portfolio has collaborated with government agencies and development partners to establish synergies. The National Commission for Social Action has an already running automated system of online database of poor households, the LED portfolio utilized the data to map out the beneficiaries. There are also instances where resources were pooled to achieve complementarities, wherever possible. For instance, under one of the projects, IOM and UNDP were setting up fishponds. IOM conducted training on fish farming, whereas the UNDP provided the tools needed. IOM supported on the soft skills of implementation, whereas UNDP contributed to the resources. Similarly for car wash sites, the government constructed the shed, whereas the UNDP provided the equipment, water pipes, washing tools etc., again the oversight is done by the government. For all the youth connect centers, the land was provided by the government, and the UNDP supported the construction work.

The portfolio has offered many trainings to the various stakeholders but follow-on support to practice those skills are still not adequate. The projects have helped beneficiaries open bank accounts and have access to banking services, but their access to financial services is still restricted. The youth do not usually have any credit history, and the country does not have a strong credit assessment system for them, therefore it is very difficult for the youth to access affordable funds from any formal financial institution to start a business. While the projects have tried to link the beneficiaries with financial entities such as BRAC, Community banks, LAPO Microfinance Company etc., for BRAC and MFIs, interest fees on collateral free loans were still high for the beneficiaries to afford and community banks are often located in few select locations catering to specific area, so accessibility was an issue. Similarly, trainings are given to PWDs but access to funds or linkages with the business centers are still not fully assured. Complete follow-on support should be designing a program for optimum effectiveness.

In addition, UNDP should also assess and plan for the caveats associated with providing the trainings. There are opportunity costs (travel and food expenses, leave from existing jobs, wages forgone to participate in the trainings etc.) for the participants to take part in trainings. While planning training activities, all these aspects should be meticulously considered for effective inclusion of target beneficiaries.

Although the beneficiary assessments were said to be conducted before designing projects and activities under the portfolio, no document evidence was received for the evaluation to make an assessment regarding the quality and completeness of such assessments. The evaluation also noted that there is neither norm nor a requirement under the UNDP for beneficiary feedback to be collected after the completion of the projects. Therefore only a few implementing partners conducted the ex-post surveys in a selective pattern for their own reference, using their own budget. Quick ex-post beneficiary assessment and feedback collection could have been an important tool to understand the gaps and effectiveness at the beneficiary level and use the data as baseline figures for future interventions.

The monitoring and evaluation arrangements require strengthening in terms of frequency, overall quality information gathering and communication. The baseline information has been found to be accurate. However, no evidence was received to confirm that appropriate beneficiary assessment, economic assessments and contextual analysis was carried out to support programme design. The progress recorded has, in certain instances, lacked to capture the results effectively. Rather than directly responding to the results indicators by indicating whether, or to what extent the project has been able to achieve targets set out in the indicators, the evaluation noted that the results frameworks have wordy details about the preparatory steps taken, with no indication of the progress details. Despite the indicators demand the gender disaggregated details on the progress, few of the projects fail to report on them. There have been no updates in the results framework of the LED portfolio which made it very difficult for the evaluation team to assess the project's effectiveness solely based on the stakeholder reviews, field assessment and project progress reports. The results framework used by LED portfolio is attached in **Annex IV**.

The grievance redressal mechanism (GRM) system is not established in all projects. And the projects that did establish the GRM system, did not implement in adequately. For instance, the project offices would place suggestion boxes or display hotlines on the notice boards for the beneficiaries to make complaints, if any. But effective operationalization of GRM system i.e., an established process to record the complaints, channeling them to respective persons or departments and reporting on them on regular basis is not evident anywhere.

The quality of awareness building activities adopted by the projects were good. The process included multiple avenues for information dissemination such as newspapers, print and digital media, local council members, UNDP project teams, district authorities etc. Special care was taken to ensure that the details about a new grant program, training programs, or any project etc. reached the targeted beneficiaries particularly youth, women and PWD. Information was designed in local languages, wherever needed.

To ensure that the vulnerable groups, mainly women, persons with disability and youth were properly included in the project operation, it was essential to have a proper Environment and Social screening conducted prior to rolling out each of the project activities. The LED portfolio was exempted for the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure at the time of project design. However, the evaluation recommends, and UNDP mandates, that Social and Environment Screening must be conducted for each project activities going forward.

Impact

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

A full -fledged impact assessment is planned to be conducted after the portfolio ends. Based on the field assessments, stakeholder interviews and beneficiary feedback collected, it is evident that

the program has been able to cause some noteworthy positive changes in the lives of the intended beneficiaries. The youth is more energized to channel their skills in productive activities. Women clients have been empowered with necessary technical skills and financial literacy to start businesses and have been provided linkages to formal financial sources. The PWDs have improved employability skills. There is increased awareness regarding PWD needs across the country. Updates on necessary policy frameworks to protect the vulnerable groups from discrimination e.g.: updates on the disability act and other gender responsive regulations) are underway. Trainings and awareness on PPP model of work has been initiated. Community stakeholders and council staff are now more capable to manage projects. These are positive outputs that have been noted so far on the project implementation. The portfolio is yet to see the impacts of these outputs on a larger scale.

Field visits to portfolio locations revealed that there were many direct and indirect impact of the intervention. Beneficiaries, particularly women, have been economically empowered to contribute to the upkeep of their marital homes and help the communities. Specifically, women in cross border trade, for instance, have started to contribute to the upkeep of their homes; assist in paying fees and other school charges for children; take care of sick parents; expand their businesses that have enabled them construct dwelling houses; acquire acreage of land for construction purposes and many others. The projects have also shown some notable unintended impact. Women in cross border trade have become more independent and self-reliant and as such, their self-worth and dignity as partners have enhanced. The intervention has enabled these women groups to aid (reclaiming, rehabilitating, and resettling the children into the community, getting them back to school; providing accommodation etc.) street children; manage and resolve conflicts among members; and through their bi-weekly contributions, extend financial assistance to other women who did not benefit from the first tranche.

The portfolio interventions are transformative as they are purely targeted to the youth, women and PWD, i.e., the most vulnerable groups in the country, who are traditionally been excluded and discriminated. The outputs have a strong potential to create enduring positive changes in the gender and systemic norms. Capitalizing on the scalable and replicable results achieved so far, the portfolio should continue the momentum by prioritizing the successful interventions and scaling them up to reap tangible impacts.

Sustainability

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Sustainability considerations were said to be taken into account when designing the project interventions, however the exit strategies for the program interventions, are not yet defined. To ensure the sustainability of results, several activities are routed through and/or conducted in partnership with the government entities and local councils, to ensure continuity and scale up. Local councils were instrumental in ensuring value for money and government buy-in. The

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development played a crucial role to galvanize support from the local councils and ensured ownership of the interventions implemented in the project/programme.

A well functional LED project board comprising of various categories of stakeholders, ensured project implementation compliance, which in turn strongly contributes to the sustainability of the project results. In addition, the government shows strong commitment to implement the policies and regulations developed/refined under the LED program. The stakeholders and funding agencies have also shown positive interest to continue to support the initiatives under the LED program, and possibly provide scale up support as needed.

Despite the various partnership arrangements, there is still a large scope of possibilities for further collaborations at various administrative levels. Partnerships with trade unions, Chamber of Commerce etc. would give the youth a platform to receive continuous mentoring even after the project's closure. In addition, establishment of Youth Empowerment Fund under the MOYA will act like a centralized platform for all interested development agencies to pool their resources to conduct streamlined youth centered activities and allow for activities to be continued under different channels of funds once any project gets over.

The LED has a variety of projects that focus on building capacity of the stakeholders. Considering the significant number of frequent staff rotations, it is essential that these training programs are institutionalized and provided within reasonable intervals in a recurrent manner to orient the new recruits. For instance, in 2019, for the popularization of the new law on prison reforms, 60 police officers were trained in 5 districts. No refresher trainings have been provided thereafter. Many officers may have moved away, and new ones may have joined since then. There are similar instances present with other training and orientation activities. For the fruitful operationalization and sustainable implementation of new reforms, it is essential to establish provisions for recurrent trainings and awareness programs. Targeted projects such as the ones for albinism, are at the risk of losing visibility and momentum after the program's closure.

It is recommended that the LED starts developing concrete strategies for (i) scale up; (ii) phase II; and or (iii) exit; to ensure that proper measures are put in place for the continuity of the program after its closure.

Human rights, Gender equality and disability inclusion

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

While human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion are the cross-cutting themes for all projects under the UNDP portfolio, for the LED these are the primary elements of focus. The LED's progress towards fully addressing the issues of human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion is moderately satisfactory. The projects and programs focus on legislative changes;

offering skill enhancement activities; raising awareness to bring about behavioral changes towards gender and disability inclusion; building strategic partnership for joint resource mobilization purposes to benefit the vulnerable groups. The program has diligently integrated the needs of the youth, women and PWDs into the project design. Beneficiary screening and targeting was done precisely to include the vulnerable groups. The implementation has resulted some positive changes in gender equality and rights of women, youth and PWD. However, the results framework for LED was not updated at the time of evaluation, because of which the evaluation is not able to provide a clear assessment on LED's impact on gender equality and disability inclusion.

Lessons Learnt

- There is a strong willingness of youth to change their situation. When grant proposals were out, the projects would receive three times more applications. The beneficiaries would happily go through meticulous screening and selection process to receive support from the projects. During the trainings, there were full and active participation, with no dropouts.
- Training needs are high, demands for the interventions proposed under the LED portfolio are high, funding availability is low, human resource challenges at the partners' and at the portfolio level are prevalent, youth expectations from the projects are high, which cannot be all met by UNDP alone. Several partnerships and collaborations have been established with government entities at various administrative levels, as well as with development partners active in the field to ensure sustainability of activities, and possibly scale up.
- The portfolio has lagged in terms of optimum resource mobilization due to limited diversification and insufficient identification of opportunities. Partnerships and collaborations are very important to ensure cost efficiencies in implementation.
- The effective implementation of COVID-19 related projects validates the fact that local councils are the best entities to run community programs.
- When it comes to spreading awareness and communicating with a mass, consistent and harmonized messaging through various channels (radio network, print media, district offices, local councils, word of mouth etc.) is essential to be effective.
- Frequent staff rotations at the partner organizations dilute the efforts built up by the projects and lessen the project impact.
- Provisioning of adequate financial and human resources on the ground, both at the LED and the implementing partner's, to consistently operationalize the project activities is utmost crucial for efficient and effective implementation.

- Adequate planning during the design phase to make room for unforeseen contingencies such as inflationary changes, political fluidity, elections, health risks etc. helps to create risk provisions and provides implementation buffers.

Recommendations

Based on the review, the evaluation would like to present the following concrete recommendations for UNDP to consider for the remaining phase of implementation of the LED portfolio.

1. Deepen the interventions and scale up the fundings for the activities that did well during the first phase of the program. Some of such activities noted by the evaluation are the implementation of growth accelerators, capacity development for PPP activities, grants to small businesses, policy level change initiatives and awareness campaigns, support for PWD (especially the Albinism project), COVID-19 prevention and control etc. In other words, intentional investments must be made for stronger impacts, and the portfolio should focus on the quality of the work, and not just the quantity.
2. Start designing the sustainability and exit strategy for all the projects.
3. Provision adequate number of capable staff for the project activities, both at the LED as well as at the implementing agency.
4. Reach agreements with the implementing partners to create some sort of staff stability during the implementation period. Staff rotations are inevitable, but the projects should try to set up directives or get into MOUs with the partners to control them as much as possible.
5. Integrate Social and Environmental Standard (SES) requirements in the implementation process, as mandated by UNDP.
6. Try to route all the local activities through local councils to avoid duplication of efforts and to have institutional record of all the past and present interventions. If all the major development partners agree to this process, a significant level of donor coordination can be achieved through this practice.
7. Strengthen the policy level coordination. There is a need to awaken inter-ministerial committees to refine policy guidelines. In addition, interlinked policies also need to be reviewed and refined.
8. Make ex-post assessments and beneficiary surveys mandatory to add to the learnings of the projects.

9. Conduct portfolio mapping of all project interventions to have a holistic understanding of the nature, scale and geographic footprints of all activities conducted under the portfolio. Projects and programs seem to be operating in silos with possibilities of overlaps and overcrowding of similar activities in easily accessible geographic locations. Detailed portfolio mapping can be conducted using open sourced freely available digital tools.
10. Redirect the focus towards implementing more livelihood generating activities. After the policies are refined and capacity building activities are completed, the portfolio should concentrate on rolling out more livelihood enhancement activities to reap the full benefits of the program.
11. Improve the portfolio's reporting standards. The LED must enforce timely assessment and update of the results indicators. The results frameworks are the tools that would allow the project management team keep track of the project progress and take necessary actions in a timely manner, in case of deviations. The updates on the results framework should directly correlate with the indicators mentioned. Currently, for many of the indicators, the RF for the individual projects only lists the updates and progress about the work, rather than reporting on the exact numbers targeted by the indicators. Also, reporting is lacking the gender disaggregated data, even for the indicators that specifically require them. One unique feature of the current National Development Plan (2019-2023) that distinguishes it from previous plans is its emphasis on implementation and result tracking. The practice for complete and precise reporting must be operationalized.
12. Ensure that all possible risks and contingencies are precisely recorded and planned for in the risk logs, along with mitigation measures and timelines for periodic assessments. Similarly, update the workplans developed prior to COVID-19, and reformulate them considering the possible delays that may be caused due to the upcoming elections.
13. Establish a robust steering committee (including government entities, development agencies, CSOs, beneficiaries etc.) that meets regularly and conducts joint monitoring missions. Create a common platform for conducting reviews, planning, and reporting. The timely sharing of project information among development partners, ensures transparency in implementation and avoids duplication of efforts.

Conclusion

Overall, the portfolio's performance has been moderately satisfactory. The portfolio has addressed the development priorities of the country and has made important contributions in areas such as broadening knowledgebase of key community stakeholders and offering support to improve entrepreneurial and employability skills for vulnerable groups. The portfolio has been very diligent

in targeting the intended beneficiaries i.e., women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and has promoted gender inclusion. Although certain activities were delayed, mainly because of COVID-19, and implementation scales were low compared to the demand, the portfolio is in line to achieve its development objectives.

The portfolio shows varying levels of successes under different projects. The portfolio demonstrates strength in relevance and coherence towards the underlying issues in the country and the care with which the portfolio is addressing them through various projects. However, synergies across projects have not been sufficiently promoted in the current implementation practices.

The evaluation acknowledges various constraints that hindered the efficiency, effectiveness, and project impact. There is a large scope for leveraging effective partnerships with relevant stakeholders to generate more resources such as more funding, technical support, extension services, capacity building support etc. to implement larger scale programs for deeper impacts. The LED portfolio holds strong potential to produce notable impacts, provided that the portfolio adequately and urgently addresses the constraints for sustainability and scale up.

Report Annexes

Annex I: Summary of field assessments.

Annex II: Questionnaire for beneficiary data collection.

Annex III: The Evaluation Matrix

Annex IV: Results Framework

Annex V: TOR for evaluation

Annex VI: Background information on evaluators

Annex VII: List of documents reviewed

Annex I: Summary of Field Assessments

Date: March 7, 2023

Location: Jendema

Activity: Women in Cross-border Trade

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| <p>1. Describe the activity, objective of the activity, location: The project activity visited at Jendema was “Women in cross-border trade”. The location of this project activity is the border town between Sierra Leone and Liberia. The group was chaired by Tata Koroma. The name of the club is women of Mano-River Club. Women in this club are engaged in various types of trade including tailoring, fishing, hairdressing, charcoal trade, food, gara dying, agriculture, soap making etc. Women in this club meet twice a month and do a contribution of le 1,000 per person during these meetings. The amounts collected go the aid other women who did not benefit from the first tranche paid to the 100 women.</p> |
| <p>2. Duration of the UNDP’s LED’s support. The project started in 2021 and it was a one-off project. Initially, 100 women were targeted. A lump sum of le 2,500,000.00 was given to each woman in the club to do business.</p> |
| <p>3. Number of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total beneficiaries: 100 - First Phase: 100 - Second Phase: N/A - Male (youth): N/A - Female (youth): All women - PWD (youth): 8 |
| <p>4. Intended outputs and impacts. The purpose of the project is to financially empower women engaged in cross border trade. It is designed to aid poor, vulnerable women that reside on the border town to improve their businesses and contribute to family welfare. One of the greatest impacts of this project is that women are becoming independent, self-reliant and are now contributing to family welfare. Other impacts include increased capacities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay fees and other school charges for their children - Contribute to upkeep their homes - Take care of sick parents and spouse - Build house out of the profits made - Expand their businesses - Buy properties (land) for building project <p>Unintended Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The beneficiaries manage and resolve conflicts among their membership through dialogue, reconciliation, and mediation. - Decrease in the number of street children, especially girls, as many of them are now enrolled in schools, and have a better accommodation |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because women are contributing to the upkeep of the home, they are experiencing increased self-worth and dignity as we as respect, unity and love from their spouse and society. - Improved unity among women |
| <p>5. Key challenges to implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills training required for women but there are no adequate facilities, tutors, kits available - No cold-rooms or proper storage facilities for perishable goods - It is difficult to remove street children and re-integrate them into society without other proper provisions. |
| <p>6. What worked well during implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women employment and empowerment is working |
| <p>7. Lessons learned from the implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women have learnt how to settle disputes among themselves without involving elders/men. - When women are contributing to the upkeep of the home, they are certain to enjoy peace and love - Contributing to the welfare/schooling of children go a long way of ensuring that they do well in school - Working together enhances peaceful co-existence better understanding. |
| <p>8. Suggestions and feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand the privilege to PWDs and other vulnerable women especially the aged - Help remove children from the street by incorporating them in some of the trainings - Provide proper facilities for perishable items - Increase the funding support for the activity |

Date: April 11, 2023

Name of interviewee: Mrs. Woobay Suad and Fatmata Conteh

Cross border women groups in the Kambia District, North-Western Sierra Leone

1. Describe the activity, objective of the activity, location: The activity included providing grants and proper tools to the beneficiaries to revive their businesses post COVID-19. The activity provided support to women who engage in cross border trading with Guinea. Some communities were provided milling machines to mill rice, and some were given solar freezers to preserve the fish produce. The beneficiaries were provided skills training in entrepreneurship, business management, record keeping, budgeting, planning, saving mobilization, securing credit from banks, micro-credit facilities, and financial institutions etc. Some of the goods traded include but not restricted to palm oil, fish, textile, cooking utensils, farm products: rice, cassava, cocoa, household materials etc.

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| <p>2. Duration of the UNDP’s LED’s support. The activity started in 2020 during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Between 2020 and 2022, the activity had two phases of support from UNDP; The activity ended in 2022.</p> |
| <p>3. Number of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total beneficiaries: First phase 100 beneficiaries all women in different chiefdoms - Second Phase: 300 in total; each group had at most 3 men and the rest women - PWD (youth): women PWDs benefitted: No data. - First phase: all chiefdoms (8) in the district benefitted. Beneficiaries were chosen randomly - Second phase: Six chiefdoms: Margbema, Samu, Briaya, Tonko Limba benefitted. |
| <p>4. Intended outputs and impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The activity helped the beneficiaries transform the way they did business. The trainings provided under the activity enabled them to understand how to manage business; how to carve out savings and plough it back in the business. - Domestic conflict has been minimized as the women beneficiaries can now contribute to the household expenses. <p>Unintended impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women groups informally shared some of the learnings from the training with other women who did not directly benefit from the project. And in turn, these additional clients have also become aware of some of the business management skills. - Decrease in the number of street children, especially girls. - Higher enrolment in schools. |
| <p>5. Key challenges to implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are inadequate provisions for proper storage facilities such as freezers for fish. The beneficiaries sometimes do rent the storage facilities, which is expensive and can create a dent on their savings. - Transportation cost is high due to the high cost of fuel— the beneficiaries requested if there could be provisions for delivery vans under this activity. - Security risks: Risk of sexual harassment, theft, and misbehaviors from Okada/Keke riders to vulnerable women. - Infrastructure challenge: Road network is terrible—no vehicles are available and when they are available, they are expensive. - Cost of doing business is extremely high, and the grant given is not enough kick start and revive the businesses and make profits. |
| <p>6. What worked well during implementation.</p> <p>Training worked well—The beneficiaries gained knowledge on how to conduct customer service, budgeting, VSLA, planning, record keeping etc.</p> |
| <p>7. Lessons learned from the implementation.</p> |

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| <p>Women empowerment can lead to decreased household conflicts and enhanced livelihood for her family.</p> |
| <p>8. Suggestions and feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When providing support for any activity, the project must ensure that full circle support is implemented, rather than supporting only a few parts of the process. - The beneficiaries requested additional funding support to have proper storage facilities for freezers (Cold Room); delivery van to transport our goods; more machines for farming and processing activities; and additional support for other vulnerable women who did not benefit from the first two phases of the project. |

Date: April 2, 2023

Location: Daru, Kailahun district.

Activity: Training and Capacity building

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| <p>1. Describe the activity, objective of the activity, location: One of the Youth Connect Hubs was visited in Kailahun. At the hub, computer software trainings particularly, word, power point, excel, etc. are provided to the youth beneficiaries. The hub has a training center with computers and accessories and is used for youth meetings.</p> |
| <p>2. Duration of the UNDP's LED's support. The project started in 2021 and is ongoing.</p> |
| <p>3. Number of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total beneficiaries: 400 - First Phase: 100 - Second Phase: 300 - Male (youth): 116 - Female (youth): 84 - PWD (youth): 14 (male 9 and female 5) |
| <p>4. Intended outputs and impacts. The purpose of the project is to train young men and women how to operate and work on computers. The young people are happy that they are exposed to modern technology. The beneficiaries can now work on computers to write messages, text, and some are intending to gain employment at internet cafes in the township.</p> <p>Unintended Impact: Outcomes brought about by the self-reliance of youth.</p> |
| <p>5. Key challenges to implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of internet facilities at the center - Electricity remains a key challenge to operate the computers - Infrastructure is a concern, and there is not enough sitting accommodation (chairs, tables) at the center |
| <p>6. What worked well during implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth employment and empowerment activities are working well - ICT Trainings are well participated by the youth |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring from the council and the Youth Ministry is paying off---keeping young men and women on their toes |
| <p>7. Lessons learned from the implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict and dispute resolution remains key to the co-existence of youths at the center. - Youths are becoming more responsible. - The cooperation and commitment among youths getting better - Working together enhances peaceful co-existence and create better understanding. |
| <p>8. Suggestions and feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction at the center is incomplete: more computers and accessories are needed • Youths to be provided with certificates after completion of training • The center needs solar panel and battery for sustainable energy • There is need to provide more furniture to accommodate learners • The center needs a sustainable water supply. • Bring on board PWDs so that they too can benefit from this project • More training in computer skills is required • Install internet facilities |

Date: March 30-31, 2023
Location: Mongul, Falaba
Activity: Computer Training.

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| <p>1. Describe the activity, objective of the activity, location: One of the Youth Connekt Hubs in Falaba was visited. At the hub, computer software trainings particularly, word, power point, excel, etc. are provided to the youth beneficiaries. The hub has a training center with computers and accessories and is used for youth meetings.</p> |
| <p>2. Duration of the UNDP’s LED’s support. The project started in 2021 and the construction of the hub was completed in 2022, in about nine months.</p> |
| <p>3. Number of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total beneficiaries: 400 - First Phase: 100 - Second Phase: 300 - Male (youth): 116 - Female (youth): 84 - PWD (youth): N/A |
| <p>4. Intended outputs and impacts: Increased awareness and computer skills among targeted beneficiaries.</p> |
| <p>5. Unintended Impact: N/A</p> |

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| <p>6. Key challenges to implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of internet facility at the center - Electricity remains a key challenge to operate the computers - Not enough sitting accommodation (chairs, tables) at the center |
| <p>7. What worked well during implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth employment and empowerment is working - ICT Training for the youth is working. - Monitoring from the council and the Youth Ministry is paying off---keeping young men and women attentive. |
| <p>8. Lessons learned from the implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youths have learnt how to settle disputes among themselves without involving elders. - Youths are becoming more responsible. - Working together enhances peaceful co-existence and better understand |
| <p>9. Suggestions and feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring on board additional PWDs to benefit from the project - Install solar panels and batteries for sustainable energy - There is need to put more furniture - Help provide sustainable water supply at the center - Install internet facilities |

Picture References:

Jendema:

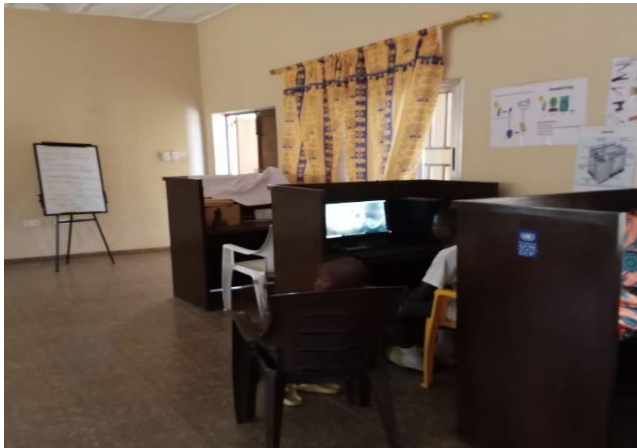




Falaba: The Youth Connekt complex



The computer lab with computers and accessories in Falaba:



Kailahun:



The Fishpond in Kailahun with parts fenceless

The Fishpond in Daru, Kailahun:



The Consultant interviewing beneficiaries of the Youth Connectt in Daru, Kailahun District:

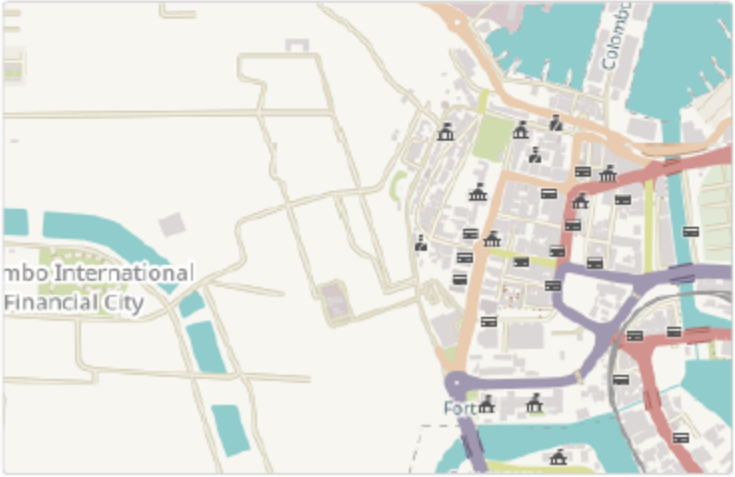




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Annex II: Questionnaire for beneficiary data collection

LED Portfolio, MTR: Beneficiary Feedback Collection

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| 1. Please enter your name: * | |
| | |
| 2. Gender: * | |
| <input type="radio"/> Male | |
| <input type="radio"/> Female | |
| 3. Please indicate your age group: | |
| <input type="radio"/> Below 15 | |
| <input type="radio"/> Age 15 to 35 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 35 and above | |
| 4. Do you belong to the category of "Person with Disability (PWD)"? | |
| <i>Definition: Those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others..</i> | |
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | |
| <input type="radio"/> No | |
| 5. Record your current location: * | |
| <i>Enter your full location address in the search tab press search, then pin the location in the map. The longitude, latitude and altitude details shall auto populate.</i> | |
| latitude (x.y °) |  |
| | |
| longitude (x.y °) | |
| | |
| altitude (m) | |
| | |
| accuracy (m) | |
| | |
| | |

6. Please select the project you received support from: *

- Local Economic, Revitalization
- COVID-19 RESPONSE program under the LED
- Stabilize Affected Communities
- Youth Empowerment and Employment
- Advancing Disability Inclusion
- Transforming Public Universities
- Accelerating Youth Innovation
- Other

6.1. Indicate the project name, if other: *

6.2. Indicate the sub-project under the project "Stabilize Affected Communities" *

- a. Institute for Development and Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA)
- b. Restless Development
- c. Global Youth Network

7. Please describe the activity under the program you are involved in received support from: *

Example: received technical assistance, received capacity building training etc.

8. How were you informed about the project and interventions? *

- Local governments
- Project office/project team
- Media: newspaper, online bulletins, radio etc.
- Civil Society Organization
- Informal networks: Friends and Family
- Others

8.1 Indicate, if others: *

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| 9. What impact did the activity have on your economic and livelihood condition? * |
| <input type="radio"/> Positive impact <input type="radio"/> Neutral <input type="radio"/> To early to tell <input type="radio"/> Negative impact |
| 9.1. Please explain briefly: * |
| |
| 10. If you have any complaints about the program, do you know where and what processes are available to lodge a complaint? * |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 10.1. If yes, please indicate what are the processes you would use if you had to lodge a complaint: * |
| |
| 11. How would you rate the quality of implementation of the program/activity? |
| <input type="radio"/> Unsatisfactory <input type="radio"/> Neutral <input type="radio"/> Satisfactory |
| 12. Kindly provide any suggestions or feedback for the project/program? * |
| |

Annex III: The Evaluation Matrix

| Relevant evaluation criteria | Key questions | Specific sub questions | Data sources | Data collection methods/ tools | Indicators/ success standards | Methods for data analysis |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Relevance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent the portfolio’s objectives and design respond to the needs of the target beneficiaries, country priorities, and partner/institution needs, and will continue to do so if circumstances change? - Are the objectives of the portfolio adequately defined, realistic and feasible, and whether the results are verifiable? - Are the portfolio indicators SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely)? - To what extent does the Portfolio respond to the priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone National Development Plan (2019-2023) and similar strategies, the UNDP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was the program in line with the government policies and UNDP’s strategy for development? - Did the LED portfolio address the priority problems faced by the target beneficiaries? | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information. | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program is in line with the Government priorities as stipulated in, but not limited to: National Development Plan (2019-2023) and similar strategies, the UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2024), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, donors’ strategies, and the Sustainable Development Goals. - The project activities, outputs, outcomes, and the | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |

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| | <p>Country Programme Document (2020-2024), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020- 2024, donors’ strategies, and the Sustainable Development Goals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does the support for project interventions contribute to the longer-term development results in terms of approaches, capacities, policies, and strategies? - How relevant have project interventions been in leveraging support sustainable development? - Do the interventions meet the practical and strategic needs of all genders, persons with disability, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups? | | | | <p>indicators are adequately defined, realistic, feasible and measurable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program looks promising to contribute to the long-term development results of UNDP and the Government and meet the strategic needs of the target beneficiaries. | |
| Coherence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent the Portfolio is coherent with Government’s policies? - To what extent does the intervention support national legislation and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How well are the LED’s interventions fit with or complement to the other | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback | <p>Desk review:</p> <p>Study of project documentation and additional material</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program provides complementarities to the other initiatives of the government or other | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data</p> |

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| | <p>initiatives that aim to improve gender equality and human rights? What lessons can be learned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent the UNDP portfolio addressed the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by UN and other development partners? | <p>interventions in the country, sector or by UNDP?</p> | <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information. | <p>provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <p>development partners.</p> | <p>from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
| Efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has the programme been implemented within its stated timeframe and cost estimates? - Did the programme interventions focus on the set of activities that were expected to produce significant results? - Were there sufficient (human and financial) resources allocated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were the project inputs (staff, time, money, and other resources etc.) used in the best possible way to achieve outputs in a timely manner? - Could the implementation have been improved? If yes, how so? | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of quality and timely reports on financial and implementation progress - No discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and</p> |

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| | <p>towards achievement of the programme objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were different resources allocated in ways that considered gender equality, and inclusion of person with disability and youth? If so, how were they allocated? Was differential resource allocation appropriate? - Was there any identified synergy between UNDP-funded interventions and other similar interventions that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results? - Has there been over expenditure or under expenditure in programme interventions? - Were there any unanticipated events, opportunities, or constraints for implementation? What could be done differently in the future? - What measures were taken to assure the quality of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the programme utilize the appropriate M&E systems adequately to ensure the efficient management and supervision of the programme? | <p>from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information.</p> | <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occurrence of change in project design/ implementation approach (i.e., restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency - Adequate number of staff with relevant expertise present within the project implementation team to undertake the activities efficiently. Red flags would be frequent staff turnovers. - Proportion of expertise utilized from international experts compared to national experts. Actions followed by valid explanations. - Completeness of risk logs, and evidence of periodic risk | <p>condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
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| | <p>development results and management practices, both in relation to process and products, and to partnership strategies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What monitoring and evaluation procedures were applied by UNDP and partners to ensure greater accountability? | | | | <p>assessments and actions taken to mitigate the risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs in view of results achieved | |
| Effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the expected programme (quantitative and qualitative) results been achieved and what were the supporting or impeding factors? - Were the approaches, resources, and conceptual frameworks relevant to achieve intended outputs? - What are the main lessons learned from the partnership strategies and what are the possibilities of replication? - To what extent have interventions' objectives and results contributed to gender equality, women and youth empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were the targets achieved effectively i.e., responding to the priority targets as well as cross cutting objectives? - In which areas does the programme have the greatest achievements so far? What have been the key supporting factors? How can the programme expand these achievements? - In which areas does the LED | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See indicators in project document results framework and log frame. - Adequacy of monitoring and evaluation tools and systems. - Quality and timeliness of monitoring reports. | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and</p> |

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| | <p>and human rights in governance processes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which aspects of the interventions had the greatest achievements? What have been the supporting factors? How can UNDP build upon or replicate these achievements? - In which areas does the programme component have the least achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can they be overcome? - Were the approaches, resources and conceptual frameworks used relevant to the achievement of planned outcomes/outputs? - What were the unintended results (positive/negative) of project interventions? | <p>have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How were the challenges overcome?</p> | <p>relevant data information.</p> | | | <p>evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
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| <p>Impact</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the portfolio interventions causing a significant change in the lives of the intended beneficiaries? - How did the portfolio interventions cause higher-level effects (such as changes in social norms or systems)? To what extent have impacts contributed to equal power relations between people of different genders? - Are all the intended target groups, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, benefiting equally from the portfolio interventions? - Are the portfolio interventions transformative – does it create enduring changes in norms – including gender norms – and systems, whether intended or not? - Are the interventions leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results? How will the interventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What differences does the intervention make? - What were the positive and negative changes produced by the LED’s interventions, directly or indirectly, intended, or unintended? | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information. | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthened knowledge base of key community stakeholders and council staff on designing, financing, building, and operating revenue generating facilities through PPP arrangements. - Vulnerable groups, especially PWDs have improved entrepreneurial financial literacy and employability skills and are socially protected from discrimination. - Enhanced economic opportunities, improved livelihoods, and increased employment opportunities for all, especially for | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
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|-----------------------|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| | contribute to changing society for the better? | | | | youth, women and PWDs. | |
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were sustainability considerations taken into account in the design and implementation of interventions? How was this concern reflected in the design of the programme component and in the implementation of activities at different levels? - Were exit strategies programme interventions appropriately defined and implemented, and what steps have been taken to ensure sustainability of results? - How did the development of partnerships at local and national level contribute to sustainability of the results? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the probabilities of the project and its interventions continuing successfully and independently even after funding assistance has ceased? - What are the probabilities of the programme being scaled up? | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information. | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The likeliness of the program receiving continued financial and technical support from the implementing partners and funding agencies. - Evidence that the government has adopted the activities as a part of their own initiatives and shows commitment to continue them even after the project duration. - The government shows strong interest to implement the | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings,</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How were different stakeholders engaged in the design and implementation? Have interventions been implemented with appropriate and effective partnership strategies? What has been the nature and added value of these partnerships? - To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights, and human development by primary stakeholders? | | | | <p>policies and regulations developed/refined under the LED program.</p> | <p>recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
| <p>Human rights, Gender equality and disability inclusion</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent have poor, indigenous and persons with disability, women, men, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project? - To what extent has the portfolio integrated Human Rights Based Approach in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the program diligently integrate the needs of the vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups into the project design and implementation? - What has been the program's contribution on | <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder interviews - Field visits - Beneficiary feedback <p>Secondary sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Documents - Additional materials | <p>Desk review: Study of project documentation and additional material provided by LED team.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews of the project stakeholders.</p> | <p>2.1: At least one gender responsive regulations on PPP reviewed and endorsed by parliament.</p> <p>2.2. At least two new gender responsive PPP related regulations/policy developed by 2023.</p> | <p>The evaluation will primarily use qualitative analysis.</p> <p>Step 1: Collect the relevant data from the various data sources.</p> <p>Step 2: Consolidate, filter, and</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address Human Rights in the implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality? - To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the promoting the rights of women and persons with disability? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men, or vulnerable groups? | <p>gender equality and the promoting the rights of women and persons with disability?</p> | <p>from LED team—for example National district development plans, statistical data, other relevant data information.</p> | <p>Field visits to selected project locations to review project activities.</p> | <p>2.3. One gender equality strategy designed for the implementation of the PPP.</p> | <p>condense the data collected from the desk review, stakeholder consultations and field visits.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze data as per the evaluation criterion and evaluation questions, and provide findings, recommendations & conclusions.</p> |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|

Annex IV: Results Framework

V. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Intended Outcome as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resource Framework: Outcome 4: By 2023, the most vulnerable, particularly women, youth, adolescents and children (especially girls), and persons living with disabilities are empowered and benefit from increased social protection services, economic and social opportunities

Output indicators as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets: Indicator:
 4.1.1: # of people accessing basic services disaggregated by target groups: (a) Men, b) Women, c) Youth, d) PWDs
B: 900: a) 0, b) 0, c) 0, d)
T: 3,000: a) 900, b) 600, c) 1350, d)150
S: Partner reports
F: Annually

Applicable Key Result Area (2018-2021 Strategic Plan): Outcome 1: Eradicate Poverty in all its forms and dimensions

Project title and Atlas Project Number: Local Economic Development (00118584)

| EXPECTED OUTPUTS | OUTPUT INDICATORS | DATA SOURCE | BASELINE | | TARGETS (by frequency of data collection) | | | DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS |
|---|--|-----------------------------|----------|------|---|------|------|---|
| | | | Value | Year | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | |
| Output 1: Knowledgebase of key community stakeholders and councils staff strengthened on designing, financing, building and operating revenue generating facilities through the PPP arrangement | <i>1.1: # of targeted community stakeholders operate revenue generating facilities produced through PPP arrangements (disaggregated by sex);</i> <i>B: 420 T: 105</i> | <i>LCs, PPP unit report</i> | 420 | 2020 | 25 | 25 | 25 | <i>Record review, Interviews, field visit</i> |
| | <i>1.2 # of gender responsive Revenue generating facilities designed & operated by LCs and targeted community stakeholders by 2023</i> <i>B: TBD T: TBD</i> | <i>LCs, survey report</i> | TBD | 2020 | TBD | TBD | TBD | <i>Direct observation, Interviews</i> |
| | <i>1.3: # of market facilities outsourced to private partners in Freetown through PPP arrangements;</i> <i>B: 0 T:8</i> | <i>PPP activity report</i> | 0 | 2020 | 2 | 2 | 2 | <i>Interviews, Record review, field visit</i> |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------|
| | 1.4 # of gender sensitive CADASTRE system set up and is functional B: 1 T: 2 | LCs, PPP unit | 1 | 2020 | 1 | 1 | | Direct observation, Interviews |
| Output 2: Strengthened gender responsive regulations for the effective implementation of public private partnerships in the country. | 2.1: # of gender responsive regulations on PPP reviewed and endorsed by parliament B: 1 outdated PPP regulations/policies in place T: At least 1 policy revised and endorsed | PPP unit | 1 | 2020 | 1 | | | Interviews, regulations reviews |
| | 2.2: # of New gender responsive PPP related regulations developed until 2023 B: X PPP existing regulations/Policies in place T: By 2023, at least 2 New PPP related regulations/Policies developed | PPP unit, Activity report | TBD | 2020 | 1 | 1 | | Interviews, regulations reviews |
| | 2.3 number of gender equality strategy designed for the implementation of the PPP B: 0 T:1 | PPP unit | 0 | 2020 | | 1 | | |
| Output 3: Vulnerable groups, especially PWDs have improved entrepreneurial, financial literacy and employability skills and are socially protected from discrimination | 3.1: # of targeted PWDs with improved entrepreneur and employability skills who are socially protected disaggregated by sex B: 0 T: TBD | Ministry of Social Welfare, | 0 | 2020 | TBD | TBD | TBD | Quick impact survey |
| | 3.2: % of PWD participants of the business skills training programme who established their own business or were employed one year after the programme, disaggregated by sex B: 10% T: TBD | Ministry of Social Welfare, Project sites, | 10% | 2020 | TBD | TBD | TBD | Quick impact survey |

Annex V: TOR for Evaluation

United Nations Development Programme

Terms of Reference for Mid-term Evaluation of
Local Economic Development Portfolio



Basic evaluation information:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Evaluation Title | Mid-term Evaluation of the Local Economic Development Portfolio |
| Department/Unit | Sustainable and Local Economic Development |
| Country | Sierra Leone |
| Duration | 35 working days |
| Type of Contract | 1 International Consultant and 1 National Consultant |
| Location | Freetown with travel to the regions |
| Application deadline | |

Background

One key development challenge for Sierra Leone is the inability to generate employment and livelihood opportunities for the youth and women, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), as well as build institutions that ensure accountability and service delivery for all. One of the strategies for Sierra Leone to address these challenges is Local Economic Development (LED). In line with the UNDP Country Programme (2020-2024) and as part of the Sustainable and Local Economic Development cluster, LED portfolio supports Government efforts to create economic opportunities, improve livelihoods and create employment opportunities especially amongst youth, women and PWDs. Local Economic Development Portfolio aims to address the challenges that vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, and people with disability (PWD) facing in Sierra Leone. It supports capacity building of national and local institutions to enhance local economic development.

The portfolio adopts an integrated approach covering key economic, social, and environmental dimensions for inclusive and sustainable growth. The portfolio promotes Public Private Partnerships (PPP), and youth employment initiatives in a participatory and gender responsive manner. Through dedicated initiatives, the LED portfolio also strengthens national policy, strategy and coordination frameworks for youth employment and establish, on a national basis, basic support services for youth including business development support and youth career advice all geared towards increasing the employability of youth. This portfolio support is attained through provision of rapid employment opportunities and income generating activities for young people including persons with disability; strengthening the capacity (human and institutional) of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Youth Service (NYS) and National Youth Commission; promotion and of the participation of young people in decision making processes and the development of youth interest initiatives.

In all its strategies, the portfolio considers women as a strong agent of change and seek their inclusion in decision-making process, formal labor force participation, access to credit, savings rates, income levels, entrepreneurship rates, as well as in inheritance and ownership rights. As such, the portfolio's strategy incorporates a gender responsive approach in its implementation and aimed at strongly support gender-responsive planning and budgeting, in all aspects of implementation including ensuring gender norms, roles and inequalities are considered and awareness of these issues raised in intervention.

| Basic portfolio information | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Portfolio Title | Local Economic Development Portfolio | |
| Department/Unit | Sustainable and Local Economic Development (SLED) | |
| Country | Sierra Leone | |
| Region | Africa | |
| Project ID | 00126320 | |
| Contributing outcome and output | <p>United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 Outcome 4: By 2023, the most vulnerable, particularly women, youth, adolescents, and children (especially girls), and persons living with disabilities are empowered and benefit from increased social protection services, economic and social opportunities</p> <p>Country Programme Document (CPD) Output 4.1: Vulnerable groups (poor women, youth, and persons with disabilities) are enabled to gain access to basic and financial services for business development and job creation</p> <p>CPD Output 4.4: Public and private sectors institutions have improved capacities to create decent jobs and sustainable livelihood options</p> | |
| Portfolio dates | Start | Planned end |
| | 1 January 2021 | 31 December 2023 |
| Portfolio Planned Budget | USD 23,602,000 (estimated to be mobilized) | |
| Portfolio Expenditure | USD 5,917,391.18 (as of September 2022) | |
| Funding sources | UNDP Funding Windows (UNDP-FW), UNDP Rapid Financing Facility, UNDP Core Resources, YouthConnekt Africa (YCA), UN Disability Fund | |
| Implementing Partners | Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Youth Commission, National Youth Service, Public Private Partnerships Unit, Local Councils and CSOs | |
| Supervisor | Youth Technical Specialist and Programme Specialist for SLED | |

The portfolio theory of change is designed on the premise that promoting local economic development has the potential to contribute to alleviating poverty, addressing exclusion, gender inequalities and marginalization, helping to promote sustainable economic growth and development much needed in local communities. The core function of the state is the provision and delivery of goods and services that meet the needs of its people. Such delivery must be effective, efficient, and sustainable. To attain this, a lot of attention was paid to overhauling the governance structure. That is developing, reviewing, and reworking on policies, laws and regulations that provides the space for decision making involving the vulnerable groups referred to above. It also requires focusing on implementation, monitoring the ways in which affected population particularly vulnerable groups are engaged in the process.

Translating local economic development intentions and targets into concrete results require other governance capacities in terms of institutional framework; monitoring of implementation of laws and regulations; coordination across ministerial/agency boundaries; central-local communication and coordination.

The portfolio overall aims to achieve following outputs:

Output 1: Knowledgebase of key community stakeholders and councils staff strengthened on designing financing, building, and operating revenue generating facilities through the PPP arrangement.

Output 2: Strengthened gender responsive regulations for the effective implementation of public private partnerships in the country.

Output 3: Vulnerable groups, especially PWDs have improved entrepreneurial, financial literacy and employability skills and are socially protected from discrimination.

Key Achievements:

The youth sector regulatory, policy, and coordination framework was strengthened during the reporting period. Notably the National Youth Policy (2020 – 2025) under the theme: “Empowered youth leading the development of a new Sierra Leone” reviewed with support from UNDP and other partners was officially unveiled. The policy is a strategic guiding document for Salone to enhance the capacity and potential of the youth. The policy is guided by three principals – access, inclusivity, and impact. Additionally, National Youth Service Act of 2016 was reviewed, and the Status of Youth Report 2021 published.

In the wake of COVID-19, vulnerable youth and women’s resilience has been strengthened and their economic recovery supported from effects of the pandemic. Specifically, young men and women led businesses in the informal sector whose operations were severely disrupted by effects of the COVID-19 pandemic supported to economically recover.

Alternative livelihoods options and job creation opportunities were created for young people through establishment, upgrade and equipping of employment spaces including car wash centres, innovative fish facilities among others.

Innovative Enterprises for youth and women identified, and a gap analysis through technical entrepreneurship sessions conducted for required support to scale up and grow to full potential. Subsequently, products, tools and items are being provided to the youth and women to scale their innovative enterprises, 40 innovators have launched their product in the market.

Young graduates were deployed in various institutions both public and private sector to gain on-job work experience for 12 months and support their transition from school to the world of work.

Improved access to finance for youth and women businesses. UNDP supported the establishment of an online crowdfunding platform for mobilizing resources for commercially viable youth and women innovative businesses accessible at <https://salonecrowdfunder.com>.

The Socio-economic empowerment for Persons with Disabilities project established with support from UNDP that is aimed at generating employment for poor households.

Gender sensitive Public Private Partnership (PPP) Regulations on various sectors to enhance the implementation of the PPP Act were published and popularized across all local councils in the country. The project supported the review and validation of the Person with Disabilities Act of 2011 (PWD Bill 2021).

Voice and participation of vulnerable groups are critical in information sharing and decision-making processes. It is therefore relevant for development practitioners to pay a critical attention to these very important principles including core elements of good governance: responsiveness, equity and fairness, effectiveness and efficiency, participation, the rule of law to name a few. In addition, the portfolio advocates the inclusion of PWDs and rights of the disadvantaged groups.

Scope and objectives of evaluation

The evaluation will focus mainly on assessing the achievements of the various components within the LED Portfolio. It will focus on assessing the impact of programme interventions spanning from 2020 to present. Specifically, it will examine the impact of UNDP's support to capacity strengthening of national and local governments and its impact to vulnerable groups particularly women, youth and PWDs.

Specific objectives of the evaluation include:

- Review the performance of the programme interventions in achieving the outputs stated in the programme document and their contributions to CPD outcomes.
- Review of programme approach and coherence in delivering programme results.
- Assess the factors that have been influenced community and national ownership of programme results and its sustainability.
- Assess the knowledge, visibility and communication employed by both programme and government counterparts around the programme results.
- Assess the appropriateness of the project strategy, implementation approach, and programme institutional/management arrangements.
- Document best practices and lessons learned from the programme to feed into the next phase of the programme cycle.
- Proffer concrete recommendations that may be required for enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of a future programme.

Evaluation criteria and key questions

- The evaluation will follow the Organization of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Partnership, Gender Empowerment and Social Inclusion (GESI) and human rights will be added as cross cutting criteria. The guiding questions outlined below should be further refined by the consultant and agreed with UNDP prior to the commencement of the evaluation: The assessment on the contribution of the projects to development results through its activities will be made in accordance with the following evaluation criteria:

Relevance

To what extent does the Portfolio respond to the priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone National Development Plan (2019-2023) and similar strategies, the UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2024), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020-2023, donors' strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals?

How does the support for project interventions contribute to the longer-term development results in terms of approaches, capacities, policies, and strategies?

How relevant have project interventions been in leveraging support sustainable development?

Do the interventions meet the practical and strategic needs of all genders, persons with disability, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

Coherence

To what extent the Portfolio is coherent with Government's policies?

To what extent does the intervention support national legislation and initiatives that aim to improve gender equality and human rights? What lessons can be learned?

To what extent the UNDP Portfolio addressed the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by UN and other development partners?

Efficiency

Has the programme been implemented within its stated timeframe and cost estimates?

Did the programme interventions focus on the set of activities that were expected to produce significant results?

Were there sufficient (human and financial) resources allocated towards achievement of the programme objectives?

Were different resources allocated in ways that considered gender equality, and inclusion of person with disability and youth? If so, how were they allocated? Was differential resource allocation appropriate?

Was there any identified synergy between UNDP-funded interventions and other similar interventions that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results?

Has there been over expenditure or under expenditure in programme interventions?

Were there any unanticipated events, opportunities, or constraints? What could be done differently in the future?

What measures were taken to assure the quality of development results and management practices, both in relation to process and products, and to partnership strategies?

What monitoring and evaluation procedures were applied by UNDP and partners to ensure greater accountability?

Effectiveness

Have the expected programme (quantitative and qualitative) results been achieved and what were the supporting or impeding factors?

Were the approaches, resources, and conceptual frameworks relevant to achieve intended outputs?

What are the main lessons learned from the partnership strategies and what are the possibilities of replication?

To what extent have interventions' objectives and results contributed to gender equality, women and youth empowerment and human rights in governance processes?

Which aspects of the interventions had the greatest achievements? What have been the supporting factors? How can UNDP build upon or replicate these achievements?

In which areas does the programme component have the least achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can they be overcome?

Were the approaches, resources and conceptual frameworks used relevant to the achievement of planned outcomes/outputs?

What were the unintended results (positive/negative) of project interventions?

Impact

Are the portfolio interventions causing a significant change in the lives of the intended beneficiaries?

How did the portfolio interventions cause higher-level effects (such as changes in social norms or systems)? To what extent have impacts contributed to equal power relations between people of different genders?

Are all the intended target groups, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, benefiting equally from the portfolio interventions?

Are the portfolio interventions transformative – does it create enduring changes in norms – including gender norms – and systems, whether intended or not?

Are the interventions leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results? How will the interventions contribute to changing society for the better?

Sustainability

To what extent were sustainability considerations taken into account in the design and implementation of interventions? How was this concern reflected in the design of the programme component and in the implementation of activities at different levels?

Were exit strategies programme interventions appropriately defined and implemented, and what steps have been taken to ensure sustainability of results?

How did the development of partnerships at local and national level contribute to sustainability of the results?

How were different stakeholders engaged in the design and implementation? Have interventions been implemented with appropriate and effective partnership strategies? What has been the nature and added value of these partnerships?

To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights, and human development by primary stakeholders?

Human rights, Gender equality and disability inclusion

To what extent have poor, indigenous and persons with disability, women, men, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project?

To what extent has the portfolio integrated Human Rights Based Approach in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project? Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address Human Rights in the implementation?

Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality?

To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the promoting the rights of women and persons with disability? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men, or vulnerable groups?

Evaluation methodology

The methodology mentioned in this section is indicative. The evaluators should propose a final detail methodological framework in the inception report based on the systematic review of the portfolio documents. Evaluators should adopt both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative data assessment should include the secondary project data to be collected and developed for more insight into the project's accomplishments and lessons learned. The evaluation stages include (i) desk review, (ii) prepare inception report, (iii) field visits to project's provinces and districts, (iv) data analysis and interpretation, and (v) evaluation report writing and finalization.

The consultants/evaluators will be responsible for designing appropriate theory-based evaluation methodology including designing tools, developing questionnaire and other instruments for data collection and analysis based on programme theory of change. A kick-off meeting should be organized with UNDP and evaluation partners to discuss on data collection plan, expectations, and tools and techniques to be adhered for collection of primary information. The consultant should use, but not limited, the following methods for data collection:

Desk review

The evaluators should review portfolio documents which includes portfolio notes, project proposals, progress reports, consolidated quarterly and annual reports, minutes of project board meetings, project modification document, knowledge products, research, monitoring reports and legal review reports, communication and visibility reports, case stories, IEC Materials etc. Please see annex -1 for relevant portfolio documents. In addition, the evaluators will review literatures, relevant research, and donors' and government's reports.

Interview/Consultation

The consultant will conduct in-depth key informant interviews (online or virtual) to gather primary data from key stakeholders. For this, evaluators should develop checklist and evaluation questions. This includes interviewing representatives from donors and partners. The evaluators also conduct group interview, Focus Group discussion, with portfolio stakeholders and beneficiaries. Interview should also include relevant UN agencies and other implementing partners. While organizing interviews and consultations with beneficiaries, the evaluators should ensure the participation of women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Field observation

Evaluator, particularly the local consultant, is expected to directly observe portfolio interventions in provinces and districts in leadership of international consultant. This also includes observing the functioning of the project supported community and stakeholder's groups, platform, and infrastructures.

The inclusiveness in terms of gender, ethnicity and geographic locations should be maintained in respondent selection. The evaluators will follow the COVID-19 protocols during the mission. If field mission is not possible due to COVID-19 crisis, it should be discussed and mutually agreed with UNDP.

Case story

Using thematic case studies, evaluators may assess the impact of the project on the beneficiaries, particularly the benefits they accrued from the project and the visible changes in their lives, and overall well-being. The gender and social inclusion should be well considered while capturing and documenting the stories in the report.

Evaluation management and institutional arrangement

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The UNDP CO will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country. The portfolio team will be responsible for liaising with the consultants to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits with missions.

| Role (Who) | Responsibilities (What) |
|---------------------------|--|
| Evaluation Advisory Group | <p>The senior management will provide advisory role throughout the evaluation implantation. This group includes Resident Representative as Evaluation Commissioner, Deputy Resident Representative, Team Lead of Programme Support Unit and Cluster Team Lead. The key roles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation plan through monitoring and advising the process Safeguard the independence of the evaluation exercise and ensure quality of evaluations Ensure that all steps in the evaluation process are applied as defined in the UNDP evaluation guidelines Ensure that gender equality and woman’s empowerment and other cross-cutting issues are considered in all steps of the evaluation process Ensure management responses are prepared for evaluation with time-bound key actions for their implementation Approval of final terms of reference (TORs), final evaluation reports and management responses before final submission to the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) |
| Evaluation Manager | <p>The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Sierra Leone. The UNDP CO will contract the consultant and ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation. The evaluators will directly report to the Evaluation Manager i.e., M&E Specialist in this case. The Evaluation Manager will assure smooth,</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | <p>quality, and independent implementation of the evaluation with needful guidance from UNDP's Senior Management.</p> <p>Review ToR ensuring that they meet UNDP guidance requirements</p> <p>Assure smooth, quality, and independent implementation of the evaluation with needful guidance from UNDP's Senior Management.</p> <p>Participate in hiring consultants by reviewing proposals and complete the recruitment process.</p> <p>Organize a kick-off meeting/briefing with evaluation team.</p> <p>Provide UNDP evaluation policies and guidelines to the evaluation team.</p> <p>Ensure that the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation standards are adhered to, including safeguarding of transparency and independence.</p> <p>Supervise, guide, and provide feedback and comments to the evaluation consultants.</p> <p>Ensure quality of the evaluation.</p> <p>Review the evaluation inception report, ensuring that it meets UNDP requirements.</p> <p>Review management response and action plan.</p> <p>Report to the senior management on compliance with the evaluation plan, completion of management responses and key actions and results of the quality assessment.</p> <p>Upload the ToR, report and management response and action plan to ERC.</p> <p>Monitor implementation of evaluation action plan and update the progress at ERC.</p> |
| <p>Portfolio Team</p> | <p>The portfolio team led by Youth Technical Specialist and Programme Specialist for SLED consists of programme and support staff. Their key roles include:</p> <p>Provide required portfolio documents.</p> <p>Provide preliminary partner, stakeholder, and beneficiary information.</p> <p>Arrange all the field visits, stakeholder consultations and interviews as needed.</p> <p>With evaluation manager, the portfolio team will further provide briefing to evaluation team</p> <p>Provide comments and clarification on the ToR, inception report and draft evaluation reports.</p> <p>Assist in circulating and getting the feedback on ToR, inception and evaluation report from stakeholders.</p> |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| | <p>Respond to evaluation recommendations by providing management responses and key actions to all recommendations addressed to UNDP.</p> <p>Ensure dissemination of the evaluation report to all the stakeholders including the project board.</p> <p>Implement relevant key actions on evaluation recommendations.</p> <p>Contact regional focal points to seek advice when dispute arises.</p> |
| Evaluation Reference Group | <p>Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) includes key partners and stakeholder including representatives from project management board. The primary roles of reference group are to support the evaluation process, provide feedback and direction in key stages. The key roles of ERG include:</p> <p>Perform advisory role throughout the evaluation process providing inputs into and review of ToR, inception reports and draft evaluation reports.</p> <p>Ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment and other cross-cutting issues are considered in all steps of the evaluation process.</p> <p>Ensure that the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation standards are adhered to, including safeguarding of transparency and independence.</p> <p>Provide advice on the evaluation relevance, the appropriateness of evaluation questions and methodology, and the extent to which conclusions are credible, considering the evidence presented, and recommendations action oriented.</p> <p>Support and provide input to the development of the management responses and key actions.</p> |

Deliverables and timelines

Under the direct supervision from Evaluation Manager and in coordination with the UNDP Programme Support Unit (PSU), portfolio team and collaboration with relevant partners, the Consultants will accomplish the following deliverables in accordance with the stipulated timelines covering a total period of Thirty-Five (35) working days.

| S/N | Deliverable | Timelines | Payments |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|
| 1 | <p>Inception report: An inception report detailing the evaluators' understanding of the assignment and why, showing how each evaluation question will be answered by way of proposed methods, proposed sources of data and data collection procedures. These should be included in an evaluation matrix, a proposed schedule of</p> | 5 Days | 20% |

| | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|-------------|
| | tasks with activities and deliverables. Inception report should be prepared before going into full-fledged evaluation exercise. | | |
| 2 | Draft report: The draft report should include desk review and data collection methodology used, analysis and interpretation with discussion in the prescribed report outline. The consultant should also present the draft report in debriefing session to discuss on initial findings and recommendations. | 20 Days | 50% |
| 3 | Second draft report: A revised report based on the comments from the stakeholder or validation workshop. A PowerPoint Presentation for evaluation dissemination. Final MTE report: A final report in prescribed format with annexes including the response in the evaluation audit trail form. The evaluation audit trail form can be sent separately to show that comments from the UNDP and its stakeholders are addressed properly. | 10 Days | 20% |
| Total | | 35 Days | 100% |

Evaluator competencies

This Mid-term evaluation will be conducted by an external consultant who will work closely with the Country Office M&E Specialist, the portfolio team and government counterparts in the conduct and direction of the evaluation.

Corporate Competencies

Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality, and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Demonstrates diplomacy and tact in dealing with sensitive and complex situations.

Strong communication, team building, interpersonal, analysis, and planning skills.

Professionalism

- Effective communication.
- Problem solving skills.
- Demonstrated ability to negotiate and apply good judgment.
- Shows pride in work and in achievements.
- Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines, and achieving results.
- Superior leadership and strategic management skills with an excellent understanding of international development issues and knowledge of the UN system.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, in a multi-cultural setting; ability to conduct results-based management and reporting, objectivity and ability to analyze large multi-country data sets in short period.
- Good understanding of gender and human right based approach, and skills, experience and commitment to gender issues including experience of conducting inclusive evaluation.

Planning & Organizing

- Organizes and accurately completes multiple tasks by establishing priorities while taking into consideration special assignments, frequent interruptions, deadlines, available resources, and multiple reporting relationships.
- Plan, coordinate and organize workload while remaining aware of changing priorities and competing deadlines.
- Establish, build, and maintain effective working relationships with staff, partners, and beneficiaries to achieve the planned results.
- Experience working collaboratively in small teams with tight deadlines.

Required qualification and experience

The international consultant will serve as lead evaluator and collaboratively working with the national consultant. The qualification of the consultants are below:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Education: | Advanced university degree in Business Administration, Development Studies, Monitoring and Evaluation, Policy Management, Social Sciences, and any related field of study |
| Experience: | <p>For international consultant: At least 7 years of international development experience or at least 5 years of experience in project/programme design and implementation for international consultant.</p> <p>For national consultant: At least 5 years of international development experience or at least 3 years of experience in project/programme design and implementation for international consultant.</p> <p>Relevant professional experience in evaluation of economic development, livelihood, or other relevant programmes at all levels.</p> <p>Strong monitoring and evaluation background, sound methodological skills and knowledge of evaluation methods and techniques.</p> <p>Extensive experience in working with the UN/multilateral development agencies and UNDP country offices.</p> <p>Demonstrate experience in working with a variety of stakeholders.</p> <p>Technical knowledge and experience of inclusive evaluation and other cross-cutting areas such gender equality, disability issues, rights-based approach, and capacity development</p> |
| Language Requirements: | Ability to communicate clearly and concisely in written and spoken English. |

Ethical considerations

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The contractor must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

The evaluator will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct upon acceptance of the assignment.

Submission of application

Qualified candidate is required to submit both technical and financial proposals through the link provided.

Technical proposal submission should include following detailed document.

Personal CV or P11, indicating all experience from similar consultancy, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the candidate and three (3) professional references.

Brief description (max. 1 page) of why you consider yourself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a methodology (max. 1 page) for how you will approach and complete the assignment.

Proposal containing a summary description of proposed strategy and how the strategy will ensure the achievement of the required tasks, proposed methodology, draft agenda for half-day session on discussing the findings of the evaluation (max 2-3 pages).

Example of works demonstrating the individual past experiences working on evaluations for the UN system (please share the document's links).

Financial proposal: Financial proposals are expected to be realistic indicating the all-inclusive, fixed total contract price, supported by a breakdown of costs. No adjustment thereafter would be allowed.

For any further clarification, please send an email to vendors.sle@undp.org.

Evaluation criteria

Offers received will be evaluated using a combined scoring method, where the qualifications and proposed methodology will be weighted 70%, and combined with the price offer, which will be weighted 30%.

Criteria to be used for rating the qualifications and methodology

Technical evaluation criteria (total 70 points)

- Proposed methodology of approach to the consultancy [25 marks].
- Demonstrated experience in similar consultancy work especially in evaluation of environment or natural resource management and climate change in developing countries especially working within the UN system. [25 marks].
- Demonstrated/evidence of relevant education and experience in Environment, Development Studies, Monitoring and Evaluation, Natural Resource Management, Policy Management or Social Science. [20 marks].
- Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 49 points in the Technical Evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Financial evaluation (total 30 points)

All technically qualified proposals will be rated out of 30 points. The maximum points (30) will be assigned to the lowest financial proposal.

UNDP is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Annexes

Relevant documents and annexes will be shared with the evaluator after selection process is completed and the evaluator is on board. The relevant annexes include the following:

Annex 1: Documents to be reviewed and consulted

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024

UNDP Sierra Leone Country Program Document 2020-2024

Government of Sierra Leone National Development Plan (2019-2023)

Portfolio documents

Theory of change and Result Framework

Portfolio and project reports

Annual workplans

Activity designs

Consolidated quarterly, annual and donor reports

Results-oriented monitoring reports and Back to Office Report (BTOR)

Portfolio meetings minutes

Project board meetings minutes

Technical/Financial monitoring reports

Other relevant communication materials and knowledge products such as research studies, policy brief, blogs, etc.

Annex 2: List of key agencies, stakeholders, and partners for evaluation

UN Agencies: UNDP; FAO; UNCDF; IOM; UNFPA; UNICEF

Stakeholders:

Ministry of Youth Affairs

Ministry of Social Welfare

National Youth Commission

National Commission for Social Action

University of Sierra Leone

National Youth Service

Limkokwing University

Humanist Watch Salone

Public Private Partnerships Unit

Sierra Leone Association for Persons with Albinism

Local Councils

CSOs

Annex 3: Inception report template

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix template

Annex 5: IEO's guidance on structure and content of report

Annex 6: UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation-Pledge

Annex 7: Evaluation Audit Trial Form

Click on the link below to retrieve the annexes.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18qSwYSKUE15RCLXswmv6As4xBjUxuwFZ?usp=sharing>

Annex VI

Background information on evaluators

The evaluation team was composed of Ms. Dikshya Dawadi, the Lead Evaluator and Dr. Hindowa Momoh, Co-evaluator for the mid-term evaluation.

- **Dikshya Dawadi** is a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist currently working as a consultant in the Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) group for the World Bank in Sri Lanka. Dikshya has a master's degree in business administration, and over twelve years of experience in conducting M&E assignments across multiple sectors namely microfinance, digital finance, agriculture and livelihoods and private sector development; particularly with the World Bank, United Nations, and international private institutions. She has worked in Nepal, India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and the United States. Dikshya is a Nepali citizen currently based in Sri Lanka, and is fluent in English, Nepali and Hindi languages.
- **Dr. Hindowa Momoh** is an International Development Consultant with more than fifteen years' experience in evaluating governance, sustainable livelihood, peacebuilding, economic transformation, women and youth empowerment related programmes and projects. He has worked with particularly UN agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO) in Tanzania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Guinea, and the USA. He is also a Senior Lecturer and Dean, Faculty of Governance and Leadership at the Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone. As a scholar, he has written extensively (one book and scores of articles) on good governance, Traditional Peacemaking, Elections Management, Gender Equality, to name a few.

Annex VII: List of the documents reviewed

1. Project documents
2. Funding and grant agreements
3. Project concept notes
4. LED progress reports
5. Portfolio risk registers
6. LPAC meeting documents
7. Project board meeting minutes
8. Annual workplans
9. Procurement plans
10. M&E reports
11. Portfolio Narrative reports
12. Knowledge products and communications
13. Partners capacity assessment reports
14. Field visit reports
15. Back to office reports
16. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024
17. UNDP Sierra Leone Country Program Document 2020-2024
18. Government of Sierra Leone National Development Plan (2019-2023)
19. Portfolio and project reports
20. Activity designs
21. Consolidated quarterly, annual and donor reports
22. Portfolio meetings minutes
23. Project board meetings minutes
24. Technical/Financial monitoring reports
25. Other relevant communication materials and knowledge products such as research studies, policy brief, blogs, etc.