



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION **SIERRA LEONE**



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responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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IEO TEAM

Directorate: Oscar A. Garcia (Director) and Alan M. Fox (Deputy Director)

ICPE section chief: Fumika Ouchi

Lead evaluator: Xiaoling Zhang

Research associate: Rim Benhima

Evaluation consultants: Elinor Bajraktari, James Gasana, James Vincent

External reviewers: Dorothy Lucks, Segbedzi Norgbey

Publishing and outreach: Kate Pond and Flora Jimenez

Administrative support: Georgiy Geyler, Nabie Yansaneh

The IEO could not have completed the evaluation without the support of the following:

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

UNDP Sierra Leone staff: Pa Lamin Beyai (Resident Representative), Sayed Sahibzada (Deputy Resident Representative), Kadi Jumu-Peters (Governance Cluster Team Lead), Charles Amponsah (Oversight and Compliance Specialist), Birendra Dash (M & E Specialist) and other staff

Other stakeholders and partners: Government of Sierra Leone, representatives of the United Nations agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations and bilateral and multilateral development partners

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sierra Leone. This is the third country-level evaluation conducted for Sierra Leone by the Independent Evaluation Office and covers UNDP programme interventions implemented over the period from 2020 to mid-2022, which corresponds to the first two and half years of the current country programme cycle (2020–2023).

Since the conclusion of the civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has made considerable progress in consolidating peace and establishing democratic institutions. While progress is evident in policy and legal reforms, challenges remain, including weak accountability mechanisms and limited institutional capacity. Sierra Leone is grappling with entrenched poverty, economic volatility and social inequality, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and is highly vulnerable to climate change, with recurring floods, landslides and coastal erosion.

The evaluation found that the current UNDP programme for Sierra Leone has been aligned with the country's development priorities and made significant contributions in areas like social cohesion, human rights, parliamentary development, Sustainable Development Goals localization and disaster risk management. It has played a crucial role in promoting the inclusion and empowerment of women, youth and persons with disabilities in local decision-making processes and economic activities, as well as providing prompt support for the COVID-19 response. However, there is room to foster more coherent and integrated planning processes and maximizing synergies across different programme portfolios and clusters. There is also a need to improve the programme's financial sustainability and strengthen the country office management system, improving data quality, monitoring and reporting. While the new UNDP senior management has initiated key measures, continued attention and efforts are needed to overcome these challenges.

As UNDP Sierra Leone prepares to develop the new country programme, it should focus on improving the coherence of its programming approach and strengthening cross-sector collaboration and synergy. It should also enhance programme management and accountability practices, by prioritizing the timely completion of workplans, rigorously tracking delivery, proactively addressing bottlenecks, enhancing monitoring, refining results frameworks and ensuring consistent and regular reporting to the public and partners. In an effort to strengthen the financial sustainability of the programme, UNDP should consolidate and expand partnerships with development partners, international financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, through more proactive and strategic engagement.

I express my gratitude to the Government of Sierra Leone, national stakeholders, the UNDP Sierra Leone country office team and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa for their valuable time, information and support during this evaluation. I believe that the insights, conclusions and recommendations presented in this evaluation will contribute to the upcoming UNDP country programme and Sierra Leone's sustainable development path.



Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWP	Annual work plan
CBSPM	Community-Based Social Protection Mechanism
CDC	Community Development Committee
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DAD	Development Assistance Database
DEPAC	Development Partnership Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GRC	Grievance Redress Committee
Ha.	Hectares
HDI	Human Development Index
HRCSL	Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
HSTF	Human Security Trust Fund
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International Financial Institution
INFF	Integrated National Finance Framework
IPCB	Independent Police Complaints Board
LIC	Low-Income Country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoYA	Ministry of Youth Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
MRCG	Media Reform Coordinating Group
MTNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan

NAYCOM	National Youth Commission
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NRA	National Revenue Agency
OAI	Office of Audit and Investigation
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
QAERP	Quick Action Economic Recovery Programme
RBM	Results-Based Management
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
SAU	Strategic Advisory Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERP	Socioeconomic Response Plan
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SLED	Sustainable Local Economic Development
SLHRP	Sierra Leone Humanitarian Response Plan
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

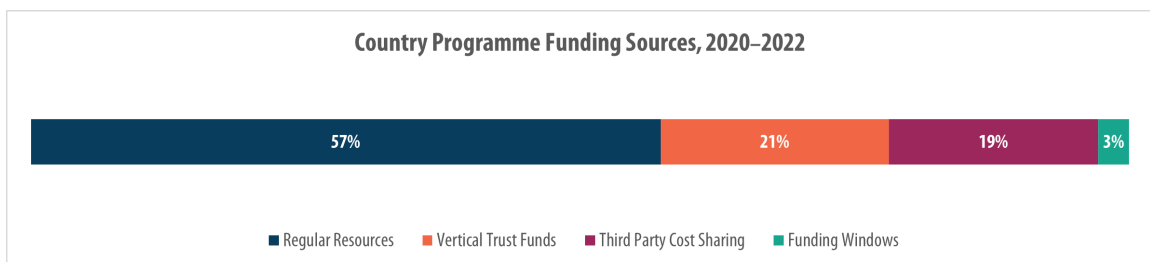
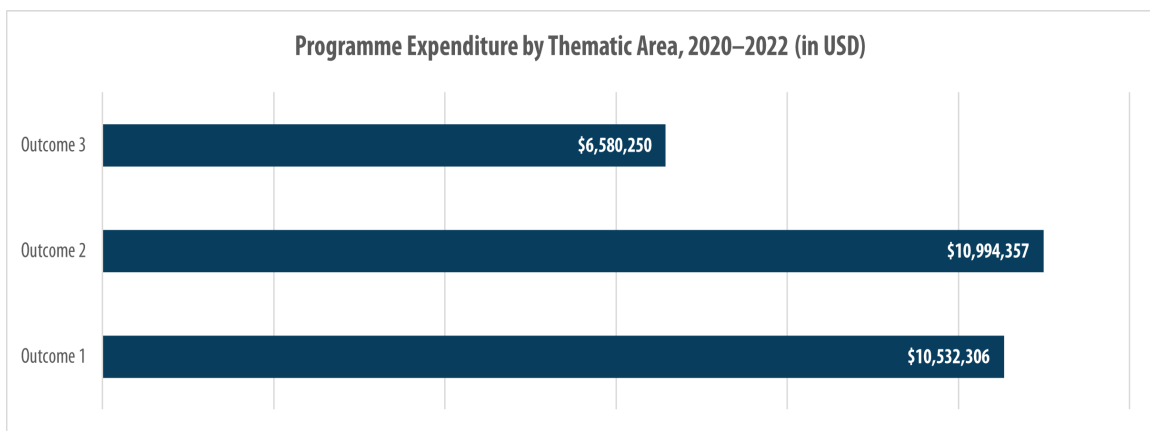
Evaluation Brief: Sierra Leone

This report presents the main findings and recommendations of the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) for the 2020–2023 programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sierra Leone.

Since the conclusion of the civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has made considerable progress in consolidating peace and establishing democratic institutions. The country has successfully held multiple elections since 2002, and has made significant progress in policy and legal reforms. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including weak accountability and limited institutional capacity. Furthermore, Sierra Leone is grappling with entrenched poverty, economic volatility and social inequalities, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy is reliant on natural resources, particularly mining, and the country is vulnerable to climate change, with recurring floods, landslides and coastal erosion.

The ICPE found that the UNDP programme has been aligned with the country’s development priorities, including the strategic priorities set out in its Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019–2023. UNDP has contributed to Sierra Leone’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which emphasizes the consolidation of peace and security.

As can be seen from the figures below, total programme expenditure from 2020 to the end of 2022 amounted to about US\$28 million. The budget execution rate has ranged between 60 and 80 percent, indicating challenges in programme delivery. The main source of financing for the country programme has been UNDP core (regular) resources, amounting to 57 percent of total financing, an indicator of limited funding diversification. Other sources include vertical trust funds (21 percent), third-party cost sharing (19 percent) and funding windows (3 percent). Key bilateral donors include Ireland, United States of America, Germany and Sweden. The European Union and Canada have joined recently with support for the elections programme.



Key findings and conclusions

The UNDP country programme for Sierra Leone has made significant contributions in various areas, including social cohesion, human rights, parliamentary and judiciary development, Sustainable Development Goal localization and disaster risk management. UNDP is also playing an essential role in the preparations for the upcoming elections, by promoting democratic processes and transparent governance. Local governance support has emerged as a theme in the current programme cycle and is expected to grow. At the subnational level, UNDP has supported community initiatives and created space for at-risk youth to participate in decision-making processes. UNDP has also supported the social and economic inclusion and empowerment of youth, women and persons with disabilities. UNDP has also contributed to the prevention and mitigation of resource-based conflicts by strengthening institutions and dialogue platforms that promote peaceful relations and the inclusion of women and youth. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDP provided swift support to help the country navigate the crisis and mitigate its impact on vulnerable communities. UNDP has also contributed to strengthening the policy framework and capabilities of national institutions to manage disaster risks and their impact on economic livelihoods.

Despite these achievements, there is room for improvement in programme execution. While restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have inevitably slowed down programme implementation and delivery, internal factors have also contributed to delays, such as the need for timely approval of annual work plans and stronger operational capacity. The programme will benefit from a more coherent and integrated planning and execution process, as well as greater attention to programme delivery and results-based management (RBM). This includes enhancing the quality of results frameworks, improving the availability of data at programme and project levels, monitoring the work of implementing partners more effectively, ensuring consistent reporting, and improving the functioning of programme management structures such as steering committees at project and programme levels. Additionally, partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector have been limited. Recognizing these challenges, the new senior management of the country office has already initiated measures to strengthen accountability and enhance RBM practices. It will be essential for the country office to further consolidate these efforts in the upcoming programme cycle.

The Sierra Leone ICPE put forth three recommendations:

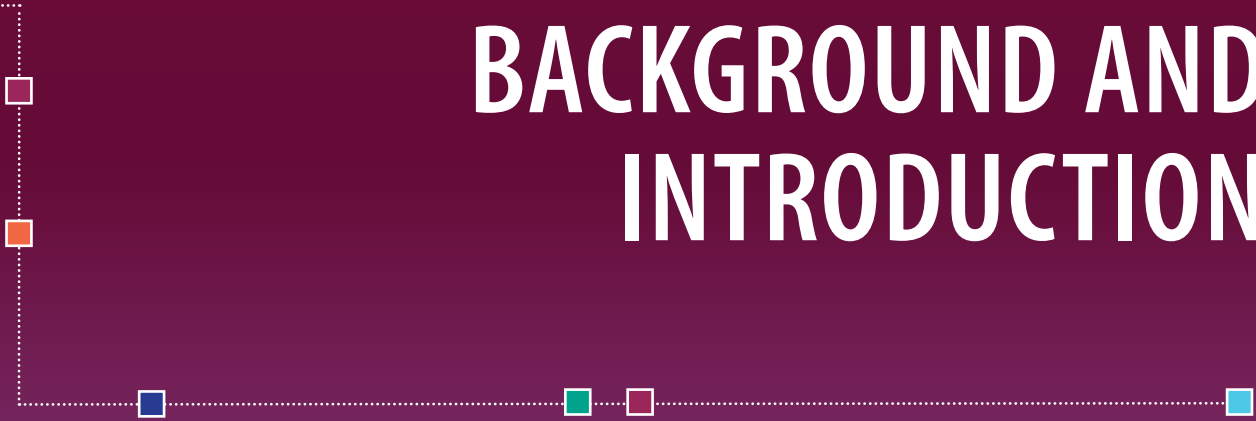
Recommendation 1: UNDP Sierra Leone should improve the coherence of its programming approach and strengthen cross-sector collaboration and synergy. In particular, UNDP should strengthen its programming approach for resilience-building and governance sector support. UNDP should further its efforts in promoting local development in collaboration with local governments and other actors operating at subnational level.

Recommendation 2: UNDP Sierra Leone should strengthen the programme management and accountability practices for the execution of the country programme. The country office needs to make increased efforts to address implementation barriers and ground the management of the programme more soundly in results and evidence.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should further consolidate and expand its partnerships with development partners, international financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector. Knowledge sharing, coordination and capacity development should be strengthened as integral parts of partnership building.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation as well as the methodology applied. It lays out the development context of Sierra Leone before introducing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country programme.

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate the evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results.

ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP evaluation policy¹. The objectives of the ICPE are to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders; and
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board.

This ICPE was carried out in 2022 and covers the period from 2020 to mid-2022, the first two and half years of the current country programme cycle (2020–2023). This is the third country-level evaluation conducted by IEO in Sierra Leone. Previously, in 2013, IEO conducted an Assessment of Development Results of UNDP activities in Sierra Leone for the period from 2008 to 2012, and in 2018 an ICPE for the country programme period of 2015 to 2019.

This ICPE covers all UNDP activities and interventions in the country from all funding sources, including UNDP own resources, donor and government funds. In light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the ICPE covered the extent to which UNDP has been able to adapt to the crisis and support the country's preparedness and response to the pandemic, and ability to recover and meet the new development challenges that may have emerged or been highlighted by the pandemic.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation based its analysis on the outcomes presented by the country programme for the period 2020–2023. It looked at each of the planned outcomes and the links to the strategic objectives of the programme. The effectiveness of the UNDP country programme was evaluated through an analysis of the progress made towards the achievement of the expected outputs, and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programme.

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
 3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support Sierra Leone's preparedness, response and recovery process?
 4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and the sustainability of results?
-

¹ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/evaluation-policy.pdf>.

To better understand UNDP performance and the sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined the specific factors that have influenced the country programme, positively or negatively. The capacity of UNDP to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to national development needs and priorities was also examined. The evaluation sought to answer four evaluation questions (Box 1).

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards². In line with the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the formulation of the country programme and its operations, as well as the results achieved, using the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.

The assessment was carried out using a combination of qualitative data collection approaches, namely an in-depth desk review, questionnaires, a large number of virtual interviews and site visits. Data collection was carried out from June to September 2022. To answer the evaluation questions, the evaluation team collected and triangulated data through the following components:

- An in-depth desk review through analysis of the portfolio of projects and programmes, as well as a review of programme documents, documents and reports on projects/ programmes carried out by UNDP and the Government of Sierra Leone, and other relevant documents. The evaluation team reviewed UNDP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, including cluster/portfolio programme documents, project annual/progress reports, decentralized evaluation reports,³ audit reports, UNDP institutional documents (strategic plan, results-based annual reports [ROARs], annual work plans [AWPs], etc.), data related to programme performance indicators (disaggregated by sex for projects and programmes where available), as well as national strategies and relevant policy documents, studies and articles. The main documents consulted are listed in Annex 4.
- An advance questionnaire with the UNDP country office. Following the development of the terms of reference (Annex 1) and the desk review, a preliminary questionnaire was sent to the country office in April 2022 (responses received by August 2022) in order to collect staff reflections on the performance and results of the programme. The questionnaire provided a valuable source of additional information on the UNDP country programme, its effectiveness and sustainability, allowing the triangulation of data collected during remote interviews with stakeholders and from the secondary data and documentation review.
- Virtual interviews with 128 key informants, including the staff of the UNDP Sierra Leone office, representatives and officials of the various government institutions at national and subnational levels, officials and staff from other United Nations agencies and development partners, donors, civil society, academia, media and the private sector.⁴ A complete list of interviewees is available in Annex 3. Institutions met were identified on the basis of the desk review, supplemented by suggestions from the country office, and included the main partners of the UNDP country programme and the main development actors in the country. These interviews were used to collect data and obtain a comprehensive view of the perceptions of development partners and

² See <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

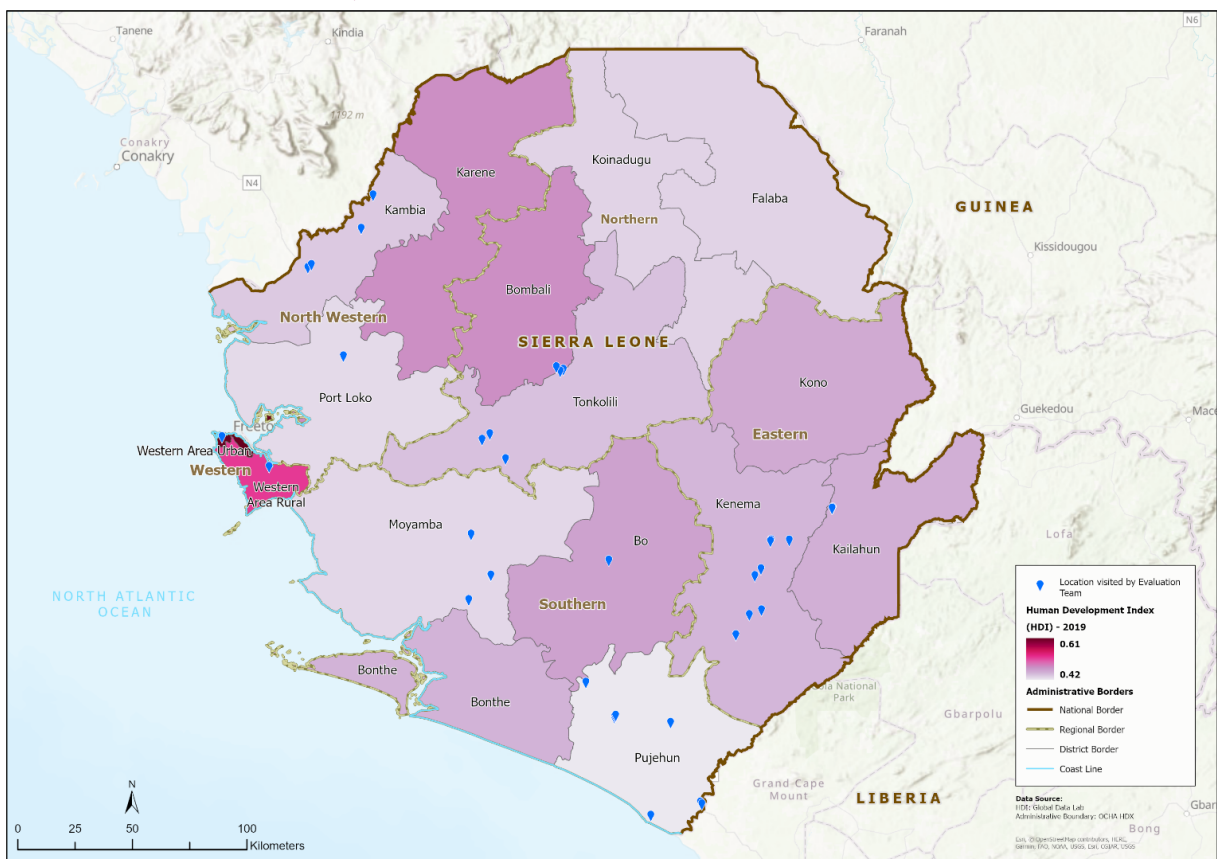
³ Three decentralized project evaluations have been carried out since 2020. All three are projects funded by GEF. Two of them received a quality assessment score of 4 (moderately satisfactory) and one was not assessed.

⁴ Total (128 individuals: 36 women, 92 men): Government of Sierra Leone (50 individuals: 10 women, 40 men), Civil Society and Non-Profit Organizations / Private Sector / Academia/ Media (20 Individuals: 4 women, 16 men), Donors / Bilateral Partners / IFIs (12 individuals: 4 women, 8 men), UNDP (32 individuals: 13 women, 19 men), Other United Nations Agencies (14 individuals: 5 women, 9 men).

actors on the performance and impacts of UNDP interventions, on the constraints to programme implementation, as well as on UNDP positioning, strengths and weaknesses for operating in Sierra Leone.

- Field visits in all four provinces and the Western Area. The national consultant on the ICPE team visited project sites in the districts of Kambia, Tonkolili, Bombali, Kenema, Kailahun, Pujehun, Moyamba, Western Area Rural District and Port Loko. Focus group discussions at district, chiefdom and community levels were conducted with 134 beneficiaries of UNDP interventions (68 women and 66 men). The field visits enabled the evaluation team to conduct physical verification and collect beneficiaries’ perspectives. Figure 1 shows the sites visited. The list of community-level stakeholders and beneficiaries met is included in Annex 3.

FIGURE 1. Project sites visited by the ICPE



Source: UNDP IEO.

All information and data collected from multiple sources were triangulated as a basis for evaluative judgements. The evaluation design matrix (Annex 2) guided how each of the questions was addressed based on the available evidence, facilitated the analysis and supported the evaluation team in drawing well-substantiated findings, conclusions and recommendations. Moreover, the ICPE used the IEO rating system to score the country programme performance against OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.⁵ A four-point rating scale was used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest rating. The summary rating is presented in Section 2.4 of this report, while detailed ratings are available in Annex 7.

The ICPE has undergone rigorous quality assurance, through peer review by two IEO internal reviewers and two external reviewers. Thereafter, the report was submitted to the country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa for comments and, finally, to the Government and other partners in the country for review. A stakeholder workshop was organized at the end of this process via video conference, which brought together the main stakeholders of the programme and offered an additional opportunity to discuss the results and recommendations contained in this report.

Evaluation limitations

The current country programme has a duration of four years, shorter than the five-year cycle usually used in UNDP programming.⁶ The ICPE started at the beginning of the third year of country programme implementation. As a result, it is too early to assess the programme results in several areas, as the effects at outcome level may not have come to fruition. Recognizing this limitation, this evaluation focused on discussing the factors that have influenced the performance of UNDP in this programme cycle, and assessing results wherever possible.

A key challenge met by this ICPE was inadequate programme data and documentation. This challenge is discussed in Finding 17. The ICPE used primary data collected in the evaluation process to fill in some of the information gaps in documentation.

Due to travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholder interviews were conducted remotely using video conferencing. While this prevented direct interaction with national-level and some district-level stakeholders, the challenges were mitigated by the field visits to project sites conducted by the national consultant of the ICPE team for observation and direct interaction with local stakeholders and beneficiary groups. Moreover, during the field visits, as well as the monitoring visits conducted by the country office, GIS-embedded photos were taken and uploaded to the ICPE GIS platform, to provide visual data for the evaluation team.

⁵ UNDP IEO (2022) Country Programme Performance Rating System Manual. http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/rating_system/UNDP_IEO_RatingSystem_Manual.pdf.

⁶ The previous CPD 2014–2018, was extended to 2019.

1.3. Country context

Sierra Leone is one of the world's poorest countries. As a least-developed and low-income country, in 2021 the Sierra Leone Human Development Index (HDI) score was 0.477, ranking 181 out of 191 countries, despite a 57.5 percent increase from its 1990 HDI score, before the civil war.⁷

Sierra Leone's economy remains volatile. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita stands at \$629.9 (constant US\$) in 2021, slightly increased from the level before the civil war (\$563 in 1991) and from the level at the country's independence in 1961 (\$513.2).⁸ After the end of the decade-long civil war, GDP grew at an average rate of 3.4 percent between 2002 and 2019,⁹ with a reversal in 2014–15 due to the twin shocks of the Ebola outbreak and the fall in the price of iron ore, a main export of the country. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the economy contracting by 2 percent and GDP per capita falling by 4 percent in 2020. GDP and GDP per capita bounced back by 3.1 percent and 1 percent respectively in 2021.¹⁰ COVID-19 further elevated the already high risk of external and overall debt distress. Growth, exports, revenues and the cost of health and socioeconomic measures experienced deleterious effects of the COVID-19 shock and continue to demonstrate sensitivities to shocks.¹¹

Poverty is widespread in Sierra Leone. The most recent survey data revealed that, in 2019, 59.2 percent of the population in Sierra Leone were multidimensionally poor and an additional 21.3 percent vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.¹² 86 percent of the country's workforce is in the informal sector, primarily small trade and agriculture.¹³

The COVID-19 pandemic induced once again a dual health and economic crisis in Sierra Leone, as with the Ebola outbreak of 2014–15. These exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and economic hardship, such as increased food insecurity, inflation and social tension. Sierra Leone is also experiencing the impact of the ongoing food and fuel crisis stoked by the conflict in Ukraine, and the rising cost of living and inflation have heavily impacted the lives of Sierra Leoneans. The incidence of multidimensional poverty is 16.2 percentage points higher than monetary poverty, implying deprivations in health, education and/or standard of living beyond income.¹⁴ While the most recent Gini index for Sierra Leone (in 2018) was 35.7, and inequality deepened with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the most vulnerable the most.¹⁵ Inequality is a known driver of conflict and, in August 2022, violent clashes broke out between protesters and the security forces, resulting in multiple casualties and a nationwide curfew.

Women in Sierra Leone experience significant gender inequality. Sierra Leone has low equality between women and men in HDI achievements, and belongs to Group 5 of countries with an absolute deviation from gender parity of over 10 percent. The Gender Inequality Index value was 0.644 in 2019, ranking 155 out of 162 countries. A 2019 evaluation by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) noted

⁷ UNDP (2022) Human Development Report 2021/22. https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf.

⁸ World Bank data. GDP per capita (constant \$).

⁹ United Nations Sierra Leone (2020) Common Country Analysis 2020 update.

¹⁰ World Bank data. Sierra Leone overview. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/sierra-leone?view=chart>.

¹¹ International Development Association and International Monetary Fund (2021) Sierra Leone: Joint World Bank–IMF Debt Sustainability Analysis.

¹² UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021.

¹³ UNCDF (2021) Sierra Leone–Boosting Entrepreneurs Skills with Financial and Digital Literacy Trainings. <https://www.uncdf.org/article/7372/sierra-leone-boosting-entrepreneurs-skills-with-financial-and-digital-literacy-trainings>.

¹⁴ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021.

¹⁵ United Nations Sierra Leone (2020) United Nations COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan for Sierra Leone. <https://www.undp.org/sierra-leone/publications/un-covid-19-socio-economic-response-plan-sierra-leone-vol1-october-2020>.

that inequalities in the country appear in literacy rates, per capita GDP, access to land and legal protection.¹⁶ It further noted that increased poverty among women results from a combination of factors, which include limited skills and knowledge, unfriendly market structures that concentrate women in lower-paying and time-consuming work and restrict their access to capital and credit, traditional family structures perpetuating gender inequality through patriarchal norms of property ownership and inheritance, discrimination in the public domain, and weak and unequal trade and economic patterns. Gender inequality is apparent in the number of parliamentary seats held by women (12.3 percent) and the percentage reaching secondary education (20.1 percent for female and 33 percent for male).¹⁷ Maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates were higher than the average of low HDI countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, local media has reported a rise in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).¹⁸

Persons with disabilities (PwD) experience higher multidimensional poverty and exclusion.¹⁹ PwD have been sidelined for years, but this is slowly changing. The voices and rights of PwD have been amplified in a new law on disabilities which ensures inclusion, on all fronts, in the country's development and political plans. In 2011, Sierra Leone passed the Persons with Disability Act (2011), to protect the rights and privileges of PwD and to establish a National Commission.

Sierra Leone has a young population. According to the most recent census, conducted in 2015, about 80 percent of the population are under 35 years of age.²⁰ This youth bulge is associated, in part, with low skills and some frustration around unmet expectations, a significant source of fragility.²¹ The majority of young people are unemployed or underemployed with low literacy. Youth unemployment rate stood at over 70 percent in 2020, amongst the highest in the West African region, posing risks to peace and stability.²² There is high unemployment among low- and semi-skilled youth, most of whom were unable to complete their education due to the civil war.²³ Sierra Leone established a National Youth Policy in 2020, setting the priority provisions for youth empowerment for the five-year period 2020–2025, focusing on access, inclusivity and impact.²⁴

Governance. Sierra Leone has made considerable progress in consolidating peace and democracy since the end of the civil war in 2002. The latest elections in 2018 were the first to be managed without the assistance of the United Nations Security Council. The elections, despite being peaceful, were characterized by heightened political tension and violence, resulting in perceptions of diminishing social cohesion.²⁵ The next general election is scheduled for June 2023.

There has been visible progress in the policy and legal reforms that Sierra Leone has undertaken to strengthen public institutions. A Constitutional Review Process started in 2013 with support from the United Nations and overseen by UNDP, with the aim of establishing a new Constitution that protects the

¹⁶ USAID (2019) USAID / Sierra Leone women empowered for leadership and development project performance evaluation. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00W553.pdf.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ United Nations Sierra Leone (2020) United Nations COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan for Sierra Leone. <https://www.undp.org/sierra-leone/publications/un-covid-19-socio-economic-response-plan-sierra-leone-vol1-october-2020>.

¹⁹ UNDP Sierra Leone (2019) Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019.

²⁰ Statistics Sierra Leone (2017) Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Children, Adolescents and Youth. https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl_2015_phc_thematic_report_on_children_adolescents_and_youth.pdf.

²¹ World Bank (2020) Country Partnership Framework for Republic of Sierra Leone for the Period FY21–FY26. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/851731590804122431/pdf/Sierra-Leone-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-FY21-FY26.pdf>.

²² United Nations Sierra Leone (2020) Common Country Analysis 2020 update.

²³ Government of Sierra Leone (2021) National Adaptation Plan. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Sierraleone_iNAP_Final.pdf.

²⁴ Government of Sierra Leone (2020) National Youth Policy.

²⁵ United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone (2020), Common Country Analysis, 2020 Update.

rights of all citizens and enhances long-term institutional stability.²⁶ The support of development partners was instrumental in ensuring a wide consultative process that incorporated the opinions and views of various citizen groups.²⁷ The Constitutional Review Process is still ongoing (as of the writing of this report in September 2022), and recently culminated with the launch of a Government White Paper on the Process in January 2022.²⁸

The country has also made progress in human rights. Sierra Leone established a national Human Rights Commission (Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, or HRCSL) in 2006, which has investigated a number of human rights cases and has represented Sierra Leone in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. HRCSL has maintained its “Category A” status as the National Human Rights Institution for Sierra Leone, in conformity with the Paris Principles.²⁹ Nevertheless, HRCSL faces a number of capacity gaps, weak organization and struggles to reach the district level.

The Government has reintroduced decentralized governance structures through the Local Government Act 2004, which was revised in 2022 and a devolution process subsequently commenced with the view to transfer core functions from central to local government. Despite recent improvements, local councils have not yet been able to reach the full capacity required for effective development of their districts, due to budgetary constraints and structural shortcomings in the design of the decentralization process.³⁰

Progress has been undermined by significant systemic and structural challenges. Public institutions are challenged by weak accountability mechanisms, while the effective administration of justice is hampered by limitations in institutional capacity and the application of the rule of law. Sierra Leone improved its score in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance dimensions of security and rule of law, foundations for economic opportunity, and human development. However, the score for participation, rights and inclusion has declined.³¹ In 2021, the Corruption Perceptions Index score for Sierra Leone was 34, ranking 115 out of 180 countries, similar to previous years.³²

Environment. Sierra Leone is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, listed among the top 15 in the world with the highest susceptibility and vulnerability and the greatest lack of adaptive capabilities.³³ Increasing temperatures leading to seawater rise and the submergence of islands and coastal areas are the main climate change trend in Sierra Leone.³⁴ Floods and seasonal droughts are recurring hazards. With the second most intensive rainfall in Africa, extreme precipitation and sea level rise are

²⁶ The constitutional review was first agreed upon among national stakeholders at the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord. Subsequently, in 2002, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended a revision of the Constitution through a “wide and thorough consultative and participatory process” that “must lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which every citizen is equally protected by the law”. The first Constitutional Review Process started in 2007 and ended in 2008.

²⁷ The Constitutional Review Committee carried out a series of inclusive civic education activities, stakeholder consultations, consultative dialogues, workshops and expert meetings. The report that resulted from this remarkably inclusive effort was delivered by late Justice Cowman to former President Koroma on 24 January 2017. A Government White Paper was, subsequently, released on 10 November 2017, which rejected about 100 out of the 134 recommendations of the Committee report.

²⁸ United Nations Sierra Leone (2022) Launch of the Government White Paper on the Constitutional Review Process Statement by Mr. Babatunde Ahonsi. <https://sierraleone.un.org/en/168087-launch-government-white-paper-constitutional-review-process-statement-mr-babatunde-ahonsi>.

²⁹ The Paris Principles set out internationally agreed minimum standards that National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) must meet to be considered credible. Developed by NHRIs in 1991 and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, the Paris Principles require NHRIs to be independent in law, membership, operations, policy and control of resources.

³⁰ Government of Sierra Leone (2018) Wan Fambul–National Framework for Inclusive Governance and Local Development in Sierra Leone.

³¹ Sierra Leone has an Ibrahim Index of African Governance score of 51 in 2019, ranking it 24 out of 54 countries. Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2020) 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance: Index Report. <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-index-report.pdf>.

³² Transparency International (2021) Corruption Perceptions Index 2021. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/sle>.

³³ The Notre Dame Adaptation Index 2019 ranked Sierra Leone the 16th most vulnerable to climate change out of 182 countries. See also Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (2021) World Risk Report 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021-world-risk-report.pdf>.

³⁴ United Nations Sierra Leone (2020) Common Country Analysis 2020 update.

significant threats for coastal flooding and erosion, especially given the concentration of population and economic activity in Freetown, as well as the deforestation of hills and informal settlements on floodplains. Floods account for 85 percent of disaster-related mortality, followed by landslides and storms. Recurrent flash flooding in urban areas and coastal flooding occur every year. Floods and waterlogging cause yield reductions and crop failures, as well as post-harvest losses due to infrastructure damage and impassable roads. Variability in rainfall patterns creates vulnerabilities, as most of the country's installed energy capacity comes from hydropower.³⁵ Landslides in Freetown in 2017 resulted in hundreds of deaths, loss of livelihoods and infrastructure, and highlighted problems of deforestation and urban expansion.³⁶

Forest resources were highly exploited during the ten-year civil conflict in Sierra Leone. After the war, the Forestry Division embarked on a massive tree planting drive in order to make up for forests lost in the preceding years.³⁷ The Office of the Chief Minister of the Government of Sierra Leone estimated that natural forest cover, which was less than 5 percent of the country's original cover in 1990, has continued to decrease at a rate of around 100,000 hectares (ha.) per year, mainly through large-scale and subsistence agriculture, commercial logging and charcoal production for energy.³⁸ Mining operations have contributed to the high rates of deforestation, land degradation and the destruction of farmlands, inadequate availability of clean water, poor air quality and noise pollution.³⁹ The total area of humid primary forest in Sierra Leone decreased by 11 percent between 2002 and 2020.⁴⁰

About 300,000 ha. of wetlands and marine ecosystems support mangrove forests, which are a critical source of livelihoods and provide ecological support along the coastal plains of the Western Area and other riverine areas of the country. Mangrove coverage in Sierra Leone has decreased by approximately 25 percent since 1990.⁴¹ Coastal ecosystems have been severely threatened by pollution, physical alteration and destruction of habitats, overexploitation of resources, uncontrolled development, coastal erosion and climate change.⁴² With sea level rise, loss of coastal ecosystems, inundation from major rivers, flash floods during the rainy season and saline intrusions due to decreased low water flows in the dry season, there are increasing challenges to livelihoods. Coastal erosion is already a significant challenge in some coastal areas in Sierra Leone.⁴³

Sierra Leone has ratified relevant environmental and climate-related conventions. At the international level, these include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Sierra Leone has also signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) sets out the country's intent to maintain its emission levels close to the world average of 7.58 metric tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per capita by 2035, and neutral by 2050. The NDC was updated in 2021 with measures which reflect the growing local focus on merging top-down policy guidance with bottom-up planning, essential to a circular learning process that builds capacity for long-term support and commitment to implementation.

³⁵ World Bank (2020) Country Partnership Framework for the period FY21–FY26. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/851731590804122431/pdf/Sierra-Leone-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-FY21-FY26.pdf>.

³⁶ World Bank (2017) Sierra Leone: Rapid Damage and Loss Assessment of August 14th, 2017 Landslide and Floods in the Western Area.

³⁷ FAO (2020) Forest Resources Assessment 2020 Report Sierra Leone. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb0062en/cb0062en.pdf>.

³⁸ Government of Sierra Leone, Office of the Chief Minister (2019) National Reforestation and Timber Governance Policy: Policy for the Establishment of a National Reforestation and Timber Governance Agency.

³⁹ Mabey, P., et al. (2020) "Environmental Impacts: Local Perspectives of Selected Mining Edge Communities in Sierra Leone" in Sustainability, vol. 12, No.14.

⁴⁰ Global Forest Watch data. <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/SLE>.

⁴¹ WA BiCC (2017) Sierra Leone Coastal Vulnerability Assessment: A Report on the Vulnerability of Ecosystems and Communities in Mangrove Areas.

⁴² Government of Sierra Leone (2014) Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/sl/sl-nr-05-en.pdf>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Sierra Leone has put institutions in place and adopted laws, strategies and plans for environmental and natural resource management, adopting the Environment Protection Act in 2000 and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act in 2008. These two Acts were geared towards the protection of the environment, which includes forest ecosystems. The latter allows the EPA to prosecute perpetrators wilfully working against the law. The Government has reviewed six key environmental legislations: the Wildlife Act of 1972; the EPA Act of 2008 as amended in 2010; the National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2012; the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency of 2017; the Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Authority of 2012; and the Forestry Act of 1988. These reviews have informed the formulation and submission of six bills to Parliament for their enactment into effective environmental legislation during 2019–2020.⁴⁴ Sierra Leone developed its National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change in 2007, and initiated several projects to implement this Plan. It is also currently preparing its Third National Communication and its National Adaptation Plan, which should be completed in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Sierra Leone formulated a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2004–2010) in 2003 to stem the alarming rate of loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems in various ecological belts in the country.

Sustainable Development Goals and National Development Framework. The Sierra Leone development strategy is guided by the Government Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for the period of 2019–2023, entitled Education for Development. The MTNDP centres on human capacity development and sets out four key goals for the country to become: 1) a diversified, resilient and green economy; 2) a nation with educated, empowered and healthy citizens capable of realizing their fullest potential; 3) a society that is peaceful, cohesive, secure and just; and 4) a competitive economy with a well-developed infrastructure. The MTNDP is aligned with the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the New Deal Peacebuilding and State-Building Goals.

Sierra Leone presented three Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), in 2016, 2019 and 2021. In 2020 it was one of the first countries in the world to prepare an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), with the support of UNDP.⁴⁵ The Development Finance Assessment, also conducted with support from UNDP, concluded that the growth of domestic revenue had not kept pace with rising government spending and that public debt levels had risen. Elements that will be important to deliver the MTNDP include increasing fiscal space, improving the quality of spending, mobilizing private investment, deepening diaspora engagement and enhancing collaboration with development partners.⁴⁶

Since the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government of Sierra Leone sought donor assistance to combat the pandemic on social, economic and health fronts and return to the growth path laid out in the MTNDP. In the Annual Budget for 2020, the Government mobilized US\$613 million from external resources for various projects. In view of the massive economic losses expected because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government initiated a short-term Quick Action Economic Recovery Programme (QAERP) to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 on businesses and households, and to maintain macroeconomic and financial stability.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Government of Sierra Leone MoPED (2021). 2021 VNR Report on SDGs in Sierra Leone. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279542021_VNR_Report_Sierra_Leone.pdf.

⁴⁵ United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone (2020), Common Country Analysis, 2020 Update.

⁴⁶ Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP (2021) Sierra Leone Development Finance Assessment. https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Sierra_Leone.pdf.

⁴⁷ Government of Sierra Leone (2020) COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme. https://www.statistics.sl/images/2020/Documents/GoSL_COVID_19_Quick-Action-Economic-Response-Programme.pdf.

United Nations in Sierra Leone (1999–present). In October 1999, the United Nations Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone to support the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Plan. The Mission completed its mandate in December 2005. In the same year, the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone was established to further support peace and economic growth. This period followed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2004–2007, shifting the focus from conflict recovery to peacebuilding.

In 2008, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1829 established the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), headed by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, who also served as UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Resident Coordinator. The United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone (2009–2012) was subsequently developed as an integrated strategic framework for the United Nations country team, followed by the United Nations Transitional Joint Vision for the period 2013–2014.⁴⁸

2015 marked the end of UNIPSIL and the return to a full UNDAF for the period 2015–2018, later extended to 2019, followed by the subsequent United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSCDCF) 2020–2023.⁴⁹ The United Nations country team now consists of 21 agencies, programmes and funds.⁵⁰

1.4. UNDP programme under review

UNDP has been working in Sierra Leone since 1965, and signed a Standard Basic Assistance Agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone in 1977 to govern UNDP support. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, UNDP has had a high-profile presence and played a key role in the transition from post-conflict to development phase in Sierra Leone, as a dependable and responsive long-term partner supporting the recovery of crucial sectors in the aftermath of the civil war.

The UNDP Country Programme Documents (CPDs) for 2013–2014 and 2015–2018 (extended to 2019) are linked to the United Nations Transitional Joint Vision and UNDAF of the same periods respectively, and closely aligned to the Sierra Leone Agenda for Prosperity 2013–2018. Both CPDs focused on improving democratic governance and promoting sustainable and inclusive growth. Moreover, UNDP provided support to Sierra Leone in its response to and recovery from the 2014 Ebola outbreak. The UNDP Accelerator Lab in Sierra Leone was established in September 2019 to promote local innovation and local solutions to development challenges.

The 2018 ICPE, conducted by IEO and covering the 2015–2019 programme cycle, concluded that UNDP made important contributions in the areas of elections and access to justice and implemented a wide range of activities for local governance at subnational level. UNDP programming was broad but had inadequate depth and strategic focus. Resource-based management and usage of UNDP core resources (TRAC⁵¹) funds needed to be strengthened, and country programme implementation was further impacted by contextual

⁴⁸ United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone (2009–2012). https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/sl_joint_vision_14feb2011.pdf. United Nations Transitional Joint Vision for Sierra Leone (2013–2014).

⁴⁹ United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2015–2018). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3813094?ln=en>.

⁵⁰ United Nations Sierra Leone (2021) Joint Financing and Resource Mobilization Strategy. https://sierraleone.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UN%20Final%20Joint%20Financing%20and%20Resource%20Mobilization%20Strategy_compressed.pdf.

⁵¹ TRAC stands for Target for Resource Assignment from the Core.

factors, including the Ebola outbreak and the economic crisis caused by the drop in price of iron ore in 2014–2015, the floods and landslides in 2017 and the general elections in 2018. An audit conducted by the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of UNDP for the same programme cycle, issued four key recommendations, including two of high priority for strengthening programme monitoring and improving procurement control, respectively.

For the current UNDP country programme cycle, 2020–2023, preparation of the CPD was guided by the corresponding United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation Framework (UNSDCF) and lessons from the previous cooperation framework. The country programme was expected to place increased emphasis on downstream interventions through an area-based approach in selected districts, based on their multidimensional poverty level, strategic significance and job creation potential. The programme also aimed to increase its focus on women, youth and PwD. The CPD established three outcome areas for the UNDP programme which, during programme implementation, have been organized under two clusters:

- Inclusive Democratic Governance Cluster (hereinafter, the Governance Cluster):
 - Outcome 2: By 2023, people in Sierra Leone benefit from more gender- and youth-responsive institutions that are innovative, accountable, and transparent at all levels and can better advance respect for human rights and the rule of law, equity, peaceful coexistence, and protection of children, girls, and persons with disabilities.
- Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster (hereinafter, the SLED Cluster):
 - Outcome 1: By 2023, Sierra Leone benefits from a more productive, commercialized and sustainable agriculture, improved food and nutrition security, and increased resilience to climate change and other shocks.
 - Outcome 3: By 2023, the most vulnerable, particularly women, youth, adolescents and children (especially girls), and persons with disabilities are empowered and benefit from increased social protection services, economic and social opportunities.⁵²

According to the information registered in the UNDP database (ATLAS), UNDP implemented 19 projects during the evaluation period:⁵³ six in the Governance Cluster (Outcome 2) and 14 in the SLED Cluster (ten relating to Outcome 1 and five to Outcome 3). However, these numbers are inaccurate, as both programme portfolios and some (but not all) standalone projects were registered as “projects” on ATLAS. Other standalone projects were registered as “output” (see Finding 13).

Based on the information from ATLAS, all projects have been executed using the Direct Implementation Modality. Nevertheless, the country office has collaborated with national implementation partners for programme implementation. According to data extracted from Stream Analytics, 66 percent of expenditure from 2020 to the end of 2022 was implemented by UNDP and 34 percent by national implementation partners.⁵⁴

⁵² Outcome 3 refers to the UNSDCF Outcome 4. This is due to the configuration of UNDP systems (Atlas, Quantum+, etc.) which does not allow for keeping Outcome 1, 2 and 4 serially. Thus, Outcome 4 is registered as Outcome 3. This is applicable for all mentions of Outcome 3 hereinafter.

⁵³ Two projects have outputs under two outcomes/clusters. They are counted once for the country programme but counted for both outcomes/clusters in the outcome/cluster level data that follows.

⁵⁴ This data source does not allow for filtering by programme only. These figures therefore include management, special purpose, United Nations coordination and other categories as well.

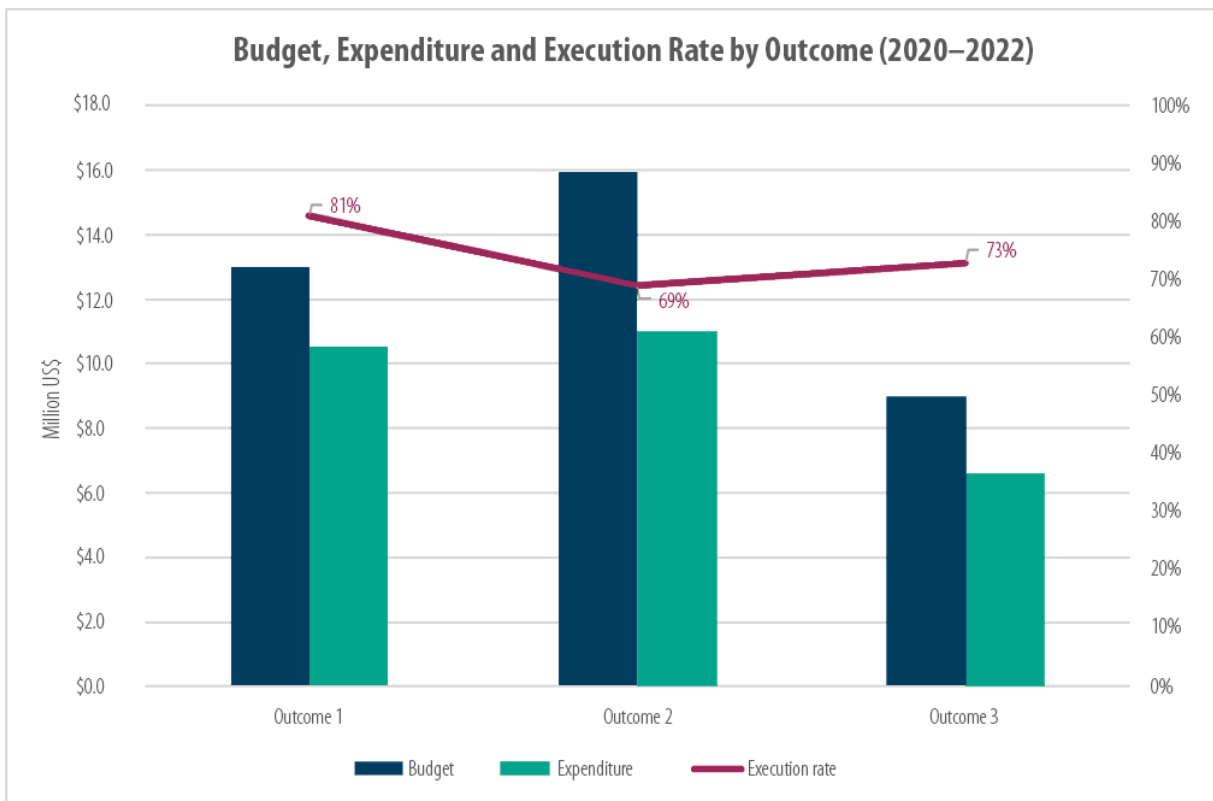
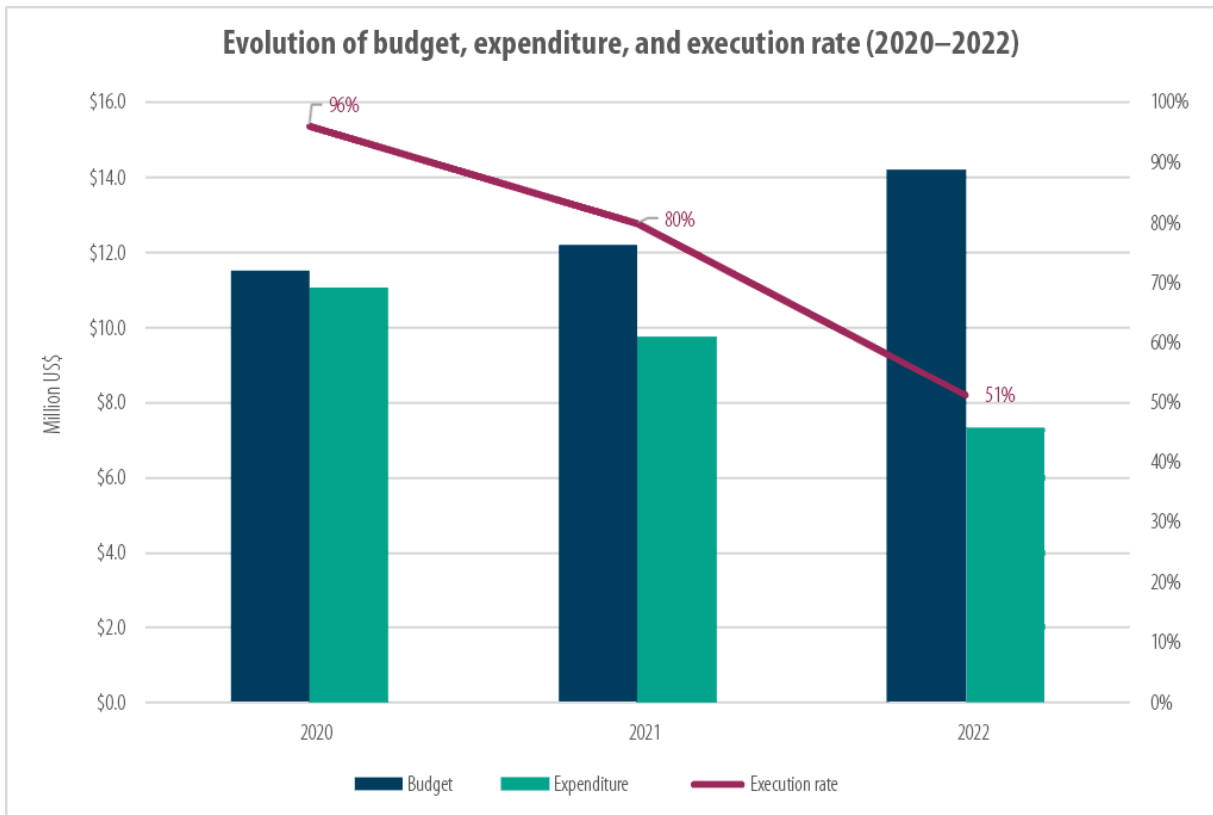
The UNDP Sierra Leone country office expenditure from 2020 to the end of 2022 was \$28.1 million, of which 57 percent was funded by UNDP core resources, 21 percent by vertical trust funds and 19 percent through third-party cost sharing. The remaining 3 percent pertains to funding windows. The most important bilateral donors are Ireland (\$1.1 million), the United States (\$0.6 million), Germany (\$0.5 million) and Sweden (\$0.2 million), although their contributions remain minimal in proportionate terms (less than 10 percent in total). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the only vertical trust fund financing the programme, with a contribution of \$5.9 million.⁵⁵

Expenditure is not evenly distributed among the three portfolios. While Outcome 2 has the highest budget, its expenditure is close to that of Outcome 1 (\$11 and \$10.5 million, respectively). Outcome 3 has expenditure of \$6.6 million.

Delivery rates were low in 2021 (80 percent) and 2022 (51 percent). Figures 2 and 3 below present the budget, expenditure and delivery rate by year and outcome respectively. For a detailed analysis of programme financial sustainability and delivery, see Findings 12 and 14, respectively. The country office audit conducted by OAI in early 2022 issued an audit rating of partially satisfactory/major improvement needed, with five key recommendations, including two of high priority to achieve the organization's strategic objectives and on the effectiveness and efficiency of operations.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Figures in this paragraph reflect expenditure between 2020 and 31 December 2022.

FIGURES 2 AND 3.



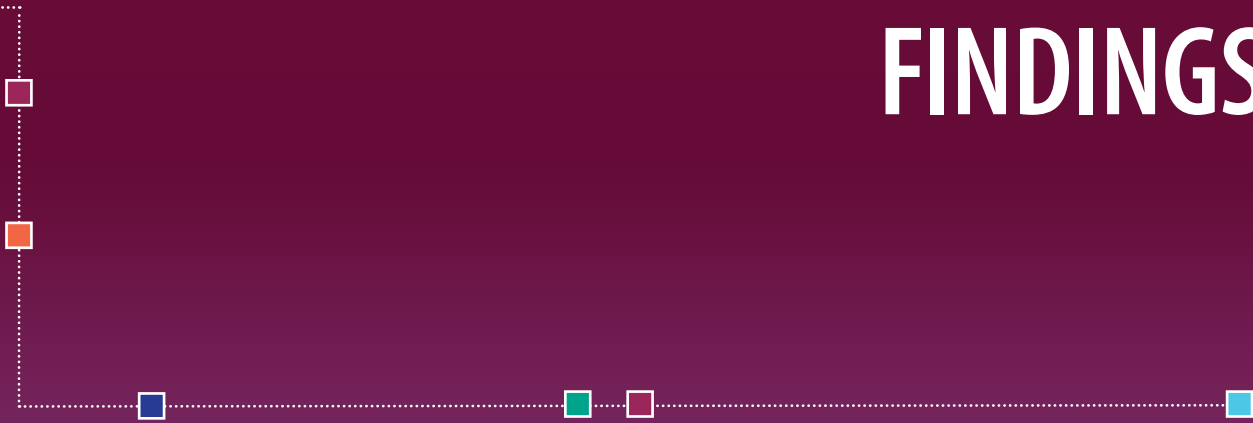
Source: UNDP Atlas Project data, Power Bi, 15 January 2023. Data for 2022 are up to 31 December.

As of 2021, the country office had 50 staff members, 26 service contracts, three United Nations Volunteers and two staff under National Personnel Service Agreements. Women represent 38 percent of the office staff, and are mostly in the General Service and National Officer categories. Only one of the seven staff members in the International Professional category is female.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Data provided by UNDP Sierra Leone country office.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis and an assessment of crosscutting issues. The main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results are also described in this section. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between project results, and their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome and consequently the overall outcome objectives.

2.1. Inclusive Democratic Governance Cluster

CPD Outcome: By 2023, people in Sierra Leone benefit from more gender- and youth-responsive institutions that are innovative, accountable and transparent at all levels and can better advance respect for human rights and the rule of law, equity, peaceful coexistence and protection of children, girls and persons with disability.

Related outputs:

Output 2.1. Relevant ministries/departments/agencies have strengthened capacities to enforce inclusive regulations and gender-responsive policies on conservation of protected areas in coastal and urban planning and development

Output 2.2. Capacity of ministries/departments/agencies in natural resources management at national and local levels strengthened to ensure sustainable use of environmental resources including livelihoods

Output 2.3. Preparedness systems in place at community level to mitigate the impact of natural and manmade disasters

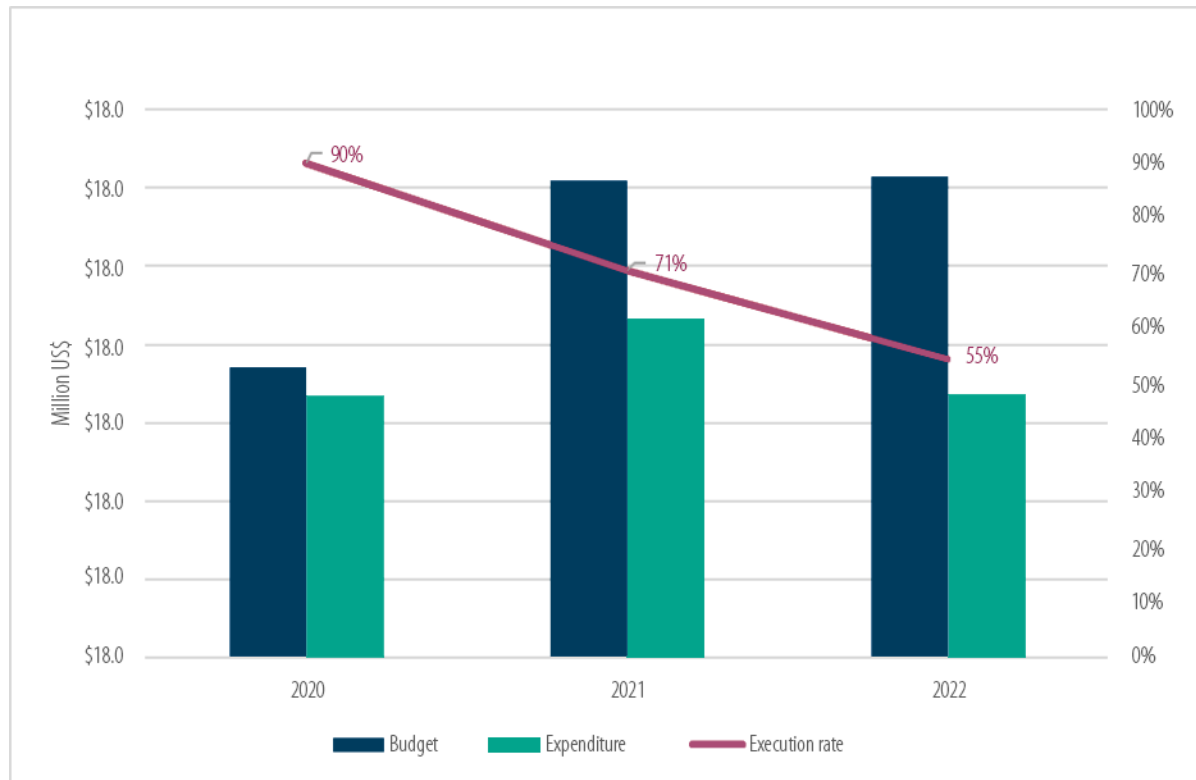
Output 2.4. Capacities of targeted local councils improved to deliver on devolved functions and manage resources

Inclusive and democratic governance is one of the priorities of the Sierra Leone MTNDP 2019–2023. More specifically, governance is highlighted in MTNDP Goal 3 for “a society that is peaceful, cohesive, secure and just”, as well as in Cluster 4 on Governance and Accountability for Results, with the goal to achieve a peaceful, cohesive, secure and just society and Cluster 5 on Empowering Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities.

The Governance Cluster is organized in two broad components or portfolios: 1) Strengthening Democratic Institutions; and 2) Rule of Law and Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion. The Governance Cluster has also provided support to the Government of Sierra Leone on effective aid coordination and implementation of the SDGs. The UNDP Governance Cluster has actively engaged the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) and provided support to key State institutions, such as Parliament, HRCSL, the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA) and the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM), local governments, media, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

During this programme cycle, six projects were implemented under this outcome.⁵⁸ The budget amounted to \$15.9 million, of which \$11 million had been spent as of December 2022, giving an execution rate of 69 percent. UNDP regular resources have been the source of funding for more than half of this outcome (\$6.2 million), followed by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (\$1.9 million) and bilateral funding from Ireland (\$1.1 million) and the United States (\$0.6 million). Most of the expenditure (80 percent) was on projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2).

FIGURE 4. Budget, expenditure and execution rate of Outcome 2, Governance Cluster



Note: Data for 2022 are to 31 December. In addition to the expenditure reported above, an additional \$1.7 million has been committed to be spent in the year for Outcome 2. Source: UNDP Atlas Project data, Power Bi, 15 January 2023.

Finding 1. The UNDP governance programme continues to be relevant to the needs and strategic priorities of Sierra Leone in the areas of social cohesion, human rights and parliamentary development. However, the scope and size of the governance programme has been on a declining trend, with limited resources spread thinly across many areas of work. A key aspect of the UNDP programme will be its support to the upcoming 2023 general elections. Activities in the areas of social cohesion and local governance are likely to continue building on the momentum of the current cycle.

⁵⁸ As per Project ID in ATLAS. The six projects have 15 distinct Output IDs. Financials of the “Youth at risk” and “Strengthening Domestic Resources Mobilisation for SDGs” projects are included under Outcome 3, although they are managed by the Governance Cluster.

Governance Cluster programming is in line with the strategic priorities of the MTNDP 2019–2023 and contributes to the Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which emphasized the consolidation of peace and security as essential factors for attracting the investment required to break poverty cycles. Moreover, the Governance Cluster is aligned with the UNSDCF for Sierra Leone 2020–2024, which outlines how the collective efforts of the United Nations development system in Sierra Leone will support the achievement of the country’s development agenda. At regional level, the governance programme is aligned with the African Union Agenda 2063 and its guiding vision of “An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa”.

UNDP has had an important role in the current programme cycle in the areas of social cohesion and human rights. Support for the Parliament has been crucial, given its vital role in holding the Government accountable. Analysis of UNDP work in each of these areas is presented in the subsequent findings of this section. As a result of many years of presence in the country, respect for the principle of neutrality and fostering dialogue for the peaceful resolution of emerging challenges and conflicts, UNDP has been able to establish good partnerships with national stakeholders, including central and local government authorities, CSOs and donors.

Arguably the most significant aspect of the UNDP programme will be its support for the upcoming 2023 general elections, which will be crucial for the country’s future.⁵⁹ UNDP support to elections has been cyclical, increasing in intensity before general elections. In the previous cycle (2015–2019), the UNDP programme provided crucial support for the conduct of the 2018 general elections.⁶⁰ Since UNDP completed its “Support to the National Electoral Commission (NEC)” project, in 2018, there has not been any formal United Nations electoral assistance in Sierra Leone.⁶¹ Both the United Nations Needs Assessment Mission (May 2021) and the UNDP Governance Mission Assessment (July–August 2021) concluded that the organization of credible elections is a necessary condition for the prevention of post-electoral violence, the legitimacy of elected officials, building citizen trust in governance at all levels (national and subnational), and social cohesion and prosperity in Sierra Leone. Both missions recommended that the country office uses its social and political capital resulting from UNDP credibility and comparative advantage to create an enabling environment for credible elections in 2023.

Despite its contributions, the UNDP governance programme in Sierra Leone has been on a declining trend, as dwindling resources have resulted in the programme being underfunded. There is a stark contrast between the scope and size of the governance programme in the previous two cycles, on the heels of the post-conflict institution-building process and the Ebola crisis, and in the current cycle.⁶² While the previous Sierra Leone ICPE found that UNDP engagement had been consistent and impactful in the areas of rule of law and access to justice, parliamentary development, civil registration and media development, the

⁵⁹ This work will be supported by country office core resources (\$4.5 million), as well as PBF (\$3 million), European Union (\$1 million) and Irish Aid (\$1.2 million).

⁶⁰ UNDP IEO (2018) ICPE Sierra Leone, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9403>, UNDP IEO (2018) Mid-Term Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention and Mitigation during the Electoral Cycle in Sierra Leone Project, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9935>.

⁶¹ Since the end of the civil war, UNDP has provided substantial technical and financial support to the NEC to increase its capacity to discharge its constitutionally-mandated mission. For instance, over the period 2005–2007, UNDP provided support for the achievement of NEC reform processes, including restructuring of the Commission itself, the capacity-development of its staff, the development of its infrastructure, the setting up of its IT systems, the review of electoral laws and regulation, the delimitation of electoral boundaries and the registration of voters. Similarly, over the period 2011–2014, UNDP supported key electoral processes that led to the administration of the 2012 elections. More recently, through its “Support to the NEC” project, implemented between 2016 and 2018, UNDP supported NEC institutional and management capacity to deliver on such processes as voter registration, results management and voter information. Through the same project, UNDP also supported the expansion of electoral and democratic awareness at all levels to ensure inclusive participation of citizens in electoral cycle, particularly the participation of women, youth and PwD.

⁶² For instance, the previous ICPE reported governance programme expenditure for the period of 2015–2018 of \$18.6 million plus an additional \$18.8 million for electoral support.

intensity of engagement in these areas has dwindled considerably in the current cycle. For example, in the previous cycle, UNDP played a major role in the country's rule of law and access to justice reforms, engaging with key institutions such as the police, judiciary, correctional services, Legal Aid Board, ICPB and HRCSL.⁶³ In the present cycle, while still supporting these institutions, this work has decreased considerably, focusing primarily on HRCSL, thanks to funding from Irish Aid. Also, engagement with the Parliament, National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and Independent Media Commission has declined.⁶⁴

The fragmented and small scale of activities identified in the last ICPE has persisted in this cycle. The country office has spread its contributions too thinly, without creating sufficient depth in key areas. ICPE stakeholders noted that programming is driven by events and specific activities, rather than commitment to a long-term vision and high-level outcomes. The focus on activities does not allow for a well-organized and well-structured programme, grounded in a solid long-term vision. Limited financing commitments from development partners create uncertainty, which hampers effective planning. Several projects identified in the Governance Cluster act as placeholders for eventual funding by development partners, which in many cases has failed to materialize. Several planned activities and financial targets remain unrealized.

The shrinking donor space in the governance sector has affected not only UNDP, but also other United Nations agencies and development organizations. The financing challenge has been compounded by an insufficient vision and strategic approach on how the governance programme should be positioned. Several ICPE participants pointed out that, despite the broad vision framed in the CPD, country office priorities for the governance sector were not completely clear.

Two governance areas where UNDP has created momentum in the current programme cycle are social cohesion and local governance. A greater focus on local-level development seems to be a trend that could be maintained in the upcoming programme cycle. This trend is driven not only by the availability of PBF funding for this area of work, but also by a general inclination of development partners to prioritize local governance and development as an alternative to the instability and weak accountability of central institutions.

Finding 2. In the area of strengthening democratic institutions, UNDP support for the Parliament contributed to its improved effectiveness. Local governance support has been an emerging theme in the current programme cycle, which is expected to increase in intensity in the near future. However, support to media development and civic registration is on the decline. UNDP plays an important role in supporting and coordinating development assistance for the upcoming 2023 elections.

Under the "Strengthening Democratic Institutions" portfolio, UNDP has supported central level institutions, primarily, Parliament, HRCSL⁶⁵ and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), and the development and independence of the media and civil society.⁶⁶ A novelty of this portfolio in the current cycle is the increased intensity of support for local governance and the decentralization process. Local governance and development seem to be an emerging theme across the UNDP programme in the current cycle. However, this portfolio remains fragmented and composed of small-scale projects. The only relatively large project in this portfolio is the "elections" project, in support of the upcoming 2023 elections, funded with resources from UNDP, PBF, the European Union, Canada and Irish Aid.⁶⁷

⁶³ UNDP contributions in the area of rule of law and access to justice have been considerable in the previous programme cycles and have drawn on years of United Nations and development partner support for justice and security sectors in Sierra Leone.

⁶⁴ UNDP has been a long-running (since 2007), continuous and consistent supporter of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, with activities supporting the establishment and strengthening of the parliamentary support services.

⁶⁵ Human rights related activities are discussed in Finding 5 below.

⁶⁶ This portfolio also included the "Strengthening Human Security in the Remote Chiefdoms of Gbense, Soa and Kamara in Kono District of Sierra Leone" project, which could have been more appropriately nested under the "social cohesion" portfolio. The activities and results of this project are discussed under Finding 3.

⁶⁷ Iceland and Germany expressed interest in contributing resources to the election basket fund managed by the UNDP election project.

Parliamentary Development. UNDP has been a longstanding partner of the Sierra Leone Parliament, providing crucial support for its development over many years. In the current cycle, UNDP has supported the review of the Standing Orders of the Parliament and the review of the Parliamentary Service Act. Support to the Parliamentary Budget Office helped to provide evidence-based information for members of parliament (MPs) debates. UNDP also supported Parliament to establish its Desk for CSOs, a mechanism that enables quick access to Parliament and an open-door policy for CSOs. In terms of capacity development, UNDP supported the establishment of Parliament’s Centre of Research and Parliamentary Studies and the development of its curriculum, as well as training for MPs and clerks on the application of a human rights-based approach to legislative reviews. Overall, there is consensus among the stakeholders interviewed by this evaluation that, thanks to UNDP support, Parliament has become a better and more effective institution. An external assessment for Democracy by the Parliamentary Network Africa found that, in 2022, the Sierra Leone Parliament topped the Open Parliament Index on public accountability in West Africa.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, despite the strategic importance and impact of this work, the intensity of UNDP support in this area has been on a declining trend in the current programme cycle in terms of both budget and activities. The Sierra Leone Parliament will benefit from continued support and UNDP will need to make greater efforts to leverage the necessary funds and seek collaboration with development partners who are also supporting this area, namely the European Union.

Media Development. UNDP supported the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) to undertake a mapping exercise that provided an in-depth understanding of the major sources, messages, channels, influencers and amplifiers of misinformation, disinformation and misconceptions on COVID-19, and identified trusted sources of information. In 2020, with support from the UNDP Governance Centre in Oslo, UNDP supported MRCG to promote a more structured approach to understanding the nuances of information pollution during the pandemic. UNDP work in this area has been fragmented and on a declining trend, unable to achieve any transformational results related to the state of the media in the country. This is primarily due to the limited availability of funding for work in this area. Nevertheless, the experience gained from the work related to the COVID-19 response can inform UNDP support in this area for the upcoming elections.

Local Governance and Decentralization. UNDP work in the current cycle has had an increasing focus on local governance and decentralization. The UNDP contribution in this area has been important for shaping the policy framework around decentralization. Specifically, UNDP has supported MLGRD in reviewing the Decentralization Policy, which in turn informed the review of the Local Government Act.⁶⁹ UNDP also supported MLGRD and 22 local councils to complete a capacity needs assessment and develop the Local Council Capacity Building Strategy (2021–2023), as well as supporting the Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone to align its constitution with the MTNDP. UNDP further supported the training of Community Development Committees (CDCs) in Pujehun and Moyamba districts on participatory approaches to development. Interviews with local government representatives at subnational level revealed that they are pleased overall with the quality of trainings organized by UNDP.⁷⁰ Based on interviews conducted for this

⁶⁸ Parliamentary Network Africa is a convenor and connector of civil society parliamentary monitoring organizations and journalists towards promoting open parliaments across Africa. <https://parliamentafrica.com/about-us/>. More information on the findings can be found here: <https://www.wfd.org/story/sierra-leones-parliament-jointly-tops-2022-open-parliament-index-public-accountability-west>.

⁶⁹ European External Action Service (2021) Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World. This policy document focuses on improvements of service delivery to rural communities through better-capacitated councils able to implement devolved functions.

⁷⁰ Key topics singled out as relevant by local-level participants were: financial management, human resources management, M&E and leadership.

ICPE, the increasing trend of UNDP efforts in support of local governance and decentralization is expected to continue.⁷¹ Going forward, and subject to the availability of funding, there is significant potential for UNDP to support the development of the administrative capability of local governments.

Civil Registration. With funding from Irish Aid, UNDP supported NCRA to conduct a review of the National Civil Registration Authority Act, that will enable the smooth transfer of data from NCRA to NEC ahead of the 2023 general elections. As a result of this support, NCRA developed a Data Protection Policy and submitted it to the Office of the Attorney General for approval. UNDP also supported NCRA, 22 local councils, CSOs and the media to conduct a 10-day nationwide awareness-raising campaign on timely registration and a well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system.⁷² Most ICPE interviewees consider that UNDP work in this area has been on a declining trend and towards an exit, with limited impact as far as the registration of the population is concerned. Development partners noted that there is also a need for greater transparency and better communications from UNDP in this area.

Elections. Support for the conduct of elections has traditionally been a cornerstone of the UNDP programme in Sierra Leone. In the current cycle, until mid-2022, election-related activities have been limited. However, during the conduct of this ICPE, the country office launched an electoral project in support of the upcoming 2023 general elections, with financial support from PBF, European Union, Canada and Irish Aid. This work was predicated on the recommendations of the United Nations Needs Assessment Mission (May 2021) and UNDP Governance Mission Assessment (July–August 2021) (see Finding 1). UNDP support for elections is a key strategic part of its programme and, as many development partners have moved away from this space, its role has become even more crucial. During ICPE interviews, development partners praised the UNDP role in the coordination of overall development assistance for the upcoming elections.

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Under the “Strengthening Democratic Institutions” portfolio, UNDP has supported the formulation of recommendations and actions for promoting the equal representation of women, which informed the electoral roadmap, the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Bill, which was enacted into law in November 2022, and the review of the Political Party Registration Act.⁷³ The revised Criminal Procedure Act integrated gender needs and interests relating to proceedings for the arrest and court adjudication of lactating, pregnant and illiterate women. Fifty parliamentarians acquired skills and knowledge in developing gender-responsive legislation, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other legislative frameworks for GEWE.

Finding 3. To promote peace and social cohesion, UNDP has helped to prevent and mitigate resource-based conflicts between communities, local governments and private mining companies by strengthening the capacity of institutions and dialogue platforms that promote peaceful relations and the inclusion of women and youth. At subnational level, UNDP has supported the establishment of community structures and promoted the integration of at-risk youth into local decision-making processes. UNDP has also addressed economic empowerment as a factor for strengthening peace and social cohesion. However, activities in this area would benefit from more coherent planning and management.

⁷¹ Based on interviews for this ICPE, several development partners reported increased interest in the subnational level, partly motivated by the idea that interventions at this level are closer to the citizens.

⁷² Civil registration and vital statistics are stored in electronic database of the population of Sierra Leone, on the basis of which NCRA: issues national identification numbers to every citizen and resident in Sierra Leone; provides accurate information about civil status events such as births, adoptions, marriages, divorces, nullities and deaths; and provides information about demographic distribution in Sierra Leone, the rate of social change and civil status trends.

⁷³ The GEWE Bill was approved by Parliament as the Gender Empowerment Act, 2021.

Although important in substance, the logic used by the country office for the organization of projects and activities on the topic of peace and social cohesion is not clear and not fully understood by staff members. Social cohesion activities are spread in a fragmented manner across the Governance Cluster. For example, the “Strengthening Human Security in the Remote Chiefdoms of Gbense, Soa and Kamara in Kono District of Sierra Leone” project, funded by the Human Security Trust Fund (HSTF), has a strong focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion, yet it is placed under the “Strengthening Democratic Institutions” portfolio, rather than the “Rule of Law and Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion” portfolio. Despite the incoherent planning and management approach, the following initiatives contributed to the overall objectives for this thematic area.

With PBF funding, and in partnership with the Office of the Vice President, MLGRD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, UNDP implemented the “Mitigating Conflict” project jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Fambul Tok International.⁷⁴ This project contributed to the mitigation of resource-based conflicts and promotion of social cohesion in four chiefdoms in the Moyamba and Pujehun districts. It helped to prevent and mitigate conflicts between communities, local governments and private mining companies by strengthening the capacity of institutions and creating dialogue platforms to promote peaceful relations and the inclusion of women and youth.

UNDP helped to strengthen the regulatory framework on land acquisition and improved the mediation and dialogue infrastructure at national, district, chiefdom and community levels. UNDP supported the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute to complete a Land Degradation Assessment in the targeted chiefdoms and districts, to ensure that land acquisition and land use processes were inclusive and aligned with policy frameworks.⁷⁵ A total of 27 Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs), three Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and two CDCs were established with project support in the Moyamba and Pujehun districts, to facilitate social cohesion and peace. These structures have helped to prevent and mitigate conflicts within the community and between the communities and companies. As a result of these interventions, mining companies are reported to have experienced fewer roadblocks and disruptions and a steady improvement in their relations with communities.

Under the HSTF-funded “Strengthening Human Security in the Remote Chiefdoms of Gbense, Soa and Kamara in Kono District of Sierra Leone” project, UNDP has supported the establishment of local-level community structures as grievance redress mechanisms, youth-led cooperatives and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), which help local groups to advocate for their interests and coordinate their efforts.⁷⁶ The project has also supported entrepreneurship and economic development, including a baseline mapping of private sector businesses in 12 chiefdoms and the development of business plans for cooperatives. The project provided training on entrepreneurship to three cooperatives, 15 youth-led businesses, 15 women-led businesses and 30 VSLA groups.⁷⁷ It also supported established cooperatives with agricultural processing machines and start-up equipment. The project supported peer-to-peer nurturing of peacebuilding skills through youth engagement forums for in-school and out-of-school youth. As this project was halfway through its implementation at the time of the ICPE, it was not yet possible to examine its impact on social cohesion in the communities, or security or economic improvements.

⁷⁴ The formal title of the project is “Mitigating localized resource-based conflicts and increasing community resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba districts of Sierra Leone”.

⁷⁵ The project provided training on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and improved post-harvest management practices, land rights, land acquisition and the existing land regulatory frameworks, human rights and business, SGBV and conflict resolution, community-based participatory planning, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, climate-smart practices, etc.

⁷⁶ This project is managed by the “Strengthening Democratic Institutions” portfolio instead of the “Rule of Law and Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion” portfolio.

⁷⁷ UNDP Sierra Leone (2022) Annual Progress Report 2021.

Youth-related issues have been prominent in the current UNDP programme cycle. The PBF-funded “Empowering at-risk youth as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema districts in Sierra Leone” project was dedicated to empowering at-risk youth, turning them into contributors to peace and community resilience.⁷⁸ The project supported the key national institutions of MoYA and NAYCOM. At the policy level, UNDP supported the review of the National Youth Policy 2020 and National Youth Service Act, as well as the preparation of the Status of Youth Report 2021 (see also Finding 9 below on UNDP support to youth development). UNDP also supported the organization of the National Youth Summit and MoYA media engagement through radio discussions. Further, UNDP supported MoYA in organizing local-level consultations with at-risk youth, resulting in memoranda of understanding that outlined measures to address drug abuse, SGBV, youth and gang related violence, teenage pregnancy and child marriage.⁷⁹

UNDP supported NAYCOM to organize meetings with district, chiefdom and community stakeholders to discuss the participation of at-risk youth in local decision-making structures.⁸⁰ UNDP also promoted the representation of youth in decision-making structures in their communities. Chiefdom Peace Ambassadors were identified at the local level to serve as peace role models and facilitators.⁸¹ The “Youth at Risk” project supported the organization of several trainings, such as training for at-risk youth groups on gender and livelihoods and on food-based dietary guidelines, or the training for Male Advocacy Peer Educators.⁸² ICPE interviews with the communities where the “Youth at Risk” project was implemented revealed that there have been some tangible positive changes in the way that youth now engage with productive activities (e.g., small scale agriculture or crafts), and that they play a more constructive role in peacebuilding at the community level.

One concern raised by several ICPE interviewees was the uncertain sustainability of several structures supported by UNDP in the current programme cycle after the completion of UNDP support. These include a variety of community and youth groups such as GRCs, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms, CDCs, Human Rights and Peace Clubs, agricultural cooperatives, etc. The concern about the sustainability of these structures was brought up in clear terms by the terminal evaluation of the PBF-funded “Mitigating Conflict” project.⁸³ Insufficient attention was paid to the formulation of an exit strategy and/or sustainability plan for these structures, especially the financing required for their continued operation. Although UNDP provided local communities, especially youth groups, with support for building their capacity as community organizations, in many cases it was not clear how they would be supported and motivated to operate after the end of UNDP support. UNDP has been working with government counterparts (e.g., local councils, NAYCOM and MoYA) to further institutionalize and integrate some of these structures into subnational development plans and budgets, but concrete commitments from government structures, especially those enshrined in laws and regulations, have yet to materialize.

⁷⁸ Hereinafter, referred to as the “Youth at Risk” project. The project is linked to Outcome 3 on Atlas. The financials of the project are thus included in Outcome 3 (on local economic development) instead of Outcome 2 of the Governance Cluster.

⁷⁹ The consultations included sports authorities and security institutions, involving a total of 880 participants (589 men, 291 women).

⁸⁰ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) PBF Project Progress Report.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Based on the project’s annual report for 2021, 90 Male Advocacy Peer Educators were trained, five from each of the 18 target communities across the two districts.

⁸³ Draft evaluation report dated July 2022, provided by WFP.

Another sustainability concern identified by this ICPE relates to the development of the capacity of local-level structures. For example, ICPE participants pointed out that the implementing partner Fambul Tok frequently carried out the work of GRCs, instead of building the capacity of GRCs to execute their mandate.⁸⁴ With such an approach, GRCs remain unable to deliver their mandates after the completion of project support. This challenge also indicates the need for a stronger system for monitoring the performance of implementation partners.

Finding 4. UNDP support for rule of law institutions has improved the country’s policy framework and the efficiency and transparency of the judiciary in handling cases. At the local level, UNDP support has contributed to improving the conditions in correctional facilities and greater access to legal aid for vulnerable groups.

In the area of strengthening the rule of law, at the policy level, UNDP has supported the Justice Coordination Office to coordinate the review of the Justice Sector Strategy and the implementation of specific sections of that strategy. UNDP has also supported reviews of the Criminal Procedure Act and the IPCB Act.

With regards to case management in the judiciary, UNDP continued its support for the improvement of the “Justice App”, a tablet-based application created with UNDP support in 2017 that helps the judiciary to monitor the progress of cases in real time and fast track the process from hearing to sentencing. It also facilitates the sharing of information among key stakeholders in the sector. UNDP supported the training of 36 judges, magistrates, court clerks and registrars (26 men; 10 women) on utilization of the Justice App. For this purpose, tablets were distributed across 22 magistrates courts in the provinces and Freetown. UNDP also supported the Sierra Leone Correctional Service to establish a case management system and an earning scheme for inmates to integrate into society after their release. A total of 365 inmates (360 men; 5 women) enrolled in the earning scheme. ICPE interviewees noted that the use of the Justice App and the case management system has improved the efficiency and transparency of the handling of cases in the judiciary.⁸⁵

UNDP has provided training for representatives of the judiciary, human rights institutions and security sector (jurors, registrars, police officers, correctional officers, etc.) which contributed to improvements in the work of the judiciary. For example, the country office reported that the programme strengthened the capacity of 470 jurors in jury trial processes and deliberations, resulting in the adjudication of 600 felony cases on prolonged trial. Training was also provided to inmates for successful reintegration into their communities.

At the local level, UNDP supported a skills mapping in correctional service centres in two districts, identifying areas of support for correctional services.⁸⁶ The programme helped to improve water and sanitation in three correctional facilities in Bo, Port Loko and Moyamba which benefitted 627 inmates (550 men; 67 women) with improved water supply and hygiene conditions, thereby reducing the risk of the spread of communicable diseases in overcrowded facilities.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ WFP, UNDP and PBF (2022) Endline Evaluation for the project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone, Draft Version. The evaluation noted that “the implementing partner Fambul Tok frequently took a direct role and even the lead in resolving disputes. While this likely proved a more effective strategy for solving disputes in project areas in the short-term, it also created a perception among community stakeholders that it is the role of Fambul Tok, rather than of GRCs, to assist with grievance redress at community level. It also seemed to create a dependency among platforms like the GRC for the support of Fambul Tok in carrying out their activities. The implementation models of subsequent projects of this nature should focus less implementation work on providing technical assistance, capacity building and systems strengthening—all key comparative advantages of United Nations agencies.”

⁸⁵ UNDP Sierra Leone (2022) 2021 Annual Report.

⁸⁶ The mapping identified tailoring, carpentry, agriculture, hairdressing, bead making and baking as priority skills for the inmates.

⁸⁷ UNDP Sierra Leone (2022) 2021 Annual Report.

The focus of the access to justice component has been on enhancing civil society capacity to support access to justice and elicit accountability for justice service delivery, focused particularly on vulnerable people and women. Through a network of CSOs working at the community level, UNDP support has enabled the provision of legal representation to victims of SGBV and has empowered families to recover through socioeconomic development skills. The programme has also supported the Legal Aid Board to provide legal assistance and representation for women in civil cases around property and inheritance, divorce and land rights. UNDP reported that legal representation, advisory and paralegal services were provided to 320 women, 209 girls, 123 boys and 158 men, enabling them to access justice through successful hearings and conclusion of their cases by the Legal Aid Board in 234 cases.

Despite these contributions, the big picture in the rule of law sector remains challenging for the country. Key rule of law and governance indicators measured by the World Bank and Freedom House remain stagnant for Sierra Leone over the last five years, which indicates the need for more sustained progress across the board.

Finding 5. UNDP support to the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone is widely valued by national partners. UNDP has contributed to the implementation of the UPR recommendations, the improvement of case management mechanisms, as well as local-level engagement and awareness-raising on human rights issues. Nevertheless, the impact of this work on the overall human rights situation in the country has been limited, and Sierra Leone continues to face significant human rights challenges.

With funding from Irish Aid, UNDP supported HRCSL to review and validate the HRCSL Act based on the Paris Principles and best practices.⁸⁸ UNDP has supported HRCSL with equipment (such as laptops, bicycles, vehicles, etc.) and has facilitated trainings for HRCSL staff on key topics such as leadership, procurement, project management and M&E, organized by the Institute of Public Administration and Management.

UNDP provided support for the development of the National UPR Implementation Plan through a participatory process that involved representatives from the Government, CSOs and United Nations agencies. The plan has served as a blueprint for implementation of 216 recommendations from the third cycle of the Sierra Leone UPR. UNDP has also facilitated the transfer of knowledge on UPR processes from HRCSL to CSOs, three of which prepared and submitted shadow reports in 2021. Moreover, UNDP has supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch the National Reporting Mechanism, strengthening the coordination of Sierra Leone's reporting on the implementation of recommendations related to human rights mechanisms.

As part of Sierra Leone's commitment to implement the UPR, some positive results were achieved by the country in recent years. One significant human rights achievement in the period in question has been the abolition of the death penalty, announced by the Government in May 2021, approved by Parliament and signed into law by the President on 8 October 2021, to fulfil the Government's voluntary commitment during the third UPR.⁸⁹ Another achievement was the repeal by Parliament of Part V of the Public Order Act 1965 (freedom of expression and press), based on a UPR recommendation. Further, the Criminal Libel Law was abolished by Parliament in November 2020, a historic achievement of Sierra Leone in support of freedom of speech.

⁸⁸ The Act has been submitted to the Cabinet, which will subsequently submit it to Parliament for approval once the new Parliament convenes.

⁸⁹ According to Freedom House, 99 people facing the death penalty as of July 2021 reportedly benefited from the change. See link to story here: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sierra-leone/freedom-world/2022>.

At subnational level, UNDP has supported local human rights committees to establish and operate the human rights reporting mechanism (KoBo toolbox) across the country. This has enabled the creation of a network of human rights activists that identify and report human rights concerns. UNDP also supported the establishment of 18 Human Rights and Peace Clubs in secondary schools, bringing together 136 pupils and 24 teachers from 14 schools. These clubs promote human rights education and information dissemination in schools and their surrounding communities.

UNDP supported HRCSL to operate “mobile complaints hearings” in targeted communities, with 224 participants (178 men, 46 women) benefitting from four clinics which ensured that beneficiaries’ grievances were heard, resolved or referred for additional action.⁹⁰ The country office helped four CSOs organize community forums in eight chiefdoms, which engaged rural communities on human rights issues.⁹¹ The forums attracted the participation of 436 beneficiaries (236 men, 200 women) drawn from members of the Ward Development Committees, Local Councils, CSOs, women’s leaders and youth groups. UNDP has further facilitated the conduct of six training sessions on human rights for members of community-based and faith-based organizations, Ward Development Committees, and local chiefs and councillors.

Although UNDP support has been critical for HRCSL, the impact of this work on the country’s overall human rights situation has been limited. Sierra Leone continues to face significant human rights challenges, especially in the areas of SGBV, conditions in detention centres, public sector transparency and accountability, and youth violence.⁹² These areas would benefit from continued UNDP support and institutional strengthening of HRCSL.

Finding 6. UNDP has supported the Government to develop flagship policy instruments that anchor key principles of sustainable development into the country’s policy and institutional framework. UNDP has also assisted the Government in strengthening systems for development coordination and SDG localization and financing. UNDP work in this area is highly strategic but, overall, is yet to be fully integrated into a cohesive package in coordination with other development partners.

UNDP has supported MoPED in development planning and SDG localization. Key contributions in this area included the midterm review of the implementation of MTNDP (2019–2023), which took place in 2021. This included technical consultations and data collection to establish the status of the implementation progress. The process resulted in the identification of emerging issues and lessons learnt from programme/project delivery, to inform MTNDP implementation going forward. UNDP also provided MoPED with technical and financial assistance for the preparation of the VNR in 2021.⁹³ During the VNR process, UNDP further supported MoPED to develop two pilot Voluntary Local Reviews. UNDP also supported MoPED to establish an SDG Secretariat and a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for the SDGs.

UNDP has supported the establishment and operation of the Development Assistance Database (DAD) to track inflows of development assistance and the country’s progress with the implementation of the 2030 agenda. UNDP has supported MoPED to train its staff to operate the DAD platform, organize ministerial Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) meetings, and prepare the Development Assistance Report and the Development Encyclopaedia 2021.⁹⁴ DEPAC is recognized as the main forum that brings together

⁹⁰ UNDP reported that four such hearings were held, in Mile 91, Lunsar, Mattru and Gbado towns, benefitting a total of 224 participants (178 men, 46 women). A total of 28 complaints were received (22 men, 6 women). Thirty-three complaints were earlier referred to various bodies. All but four complaints were resolved.

⁹¹ The forums were held in Dansokoya and Kafesimra in Tonkolili district, Lower Bambara and Dama in Kenema district, Kpaka and Kpanga in Pujehun district and Dasse and Lower Banta in Moyamba district.

⁹² More information here: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-2021-annual-report-human-rights-and-democracy-world_en?s=119&page_lang=en.

⁹³ Sierra Leone presented its VNR to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2021.

⁹⁴ The Encyclopaedia contains information about government ministries, commissions and local councils, as well as NGOs.

Government and development partners to discuss pertinent issues. Development partners interviewed for this ICPE praised UNDP assistance in this area, as DEPAC meetings have improved the coordination of development assistance and the DAD platform increased access to comprehensive aid information. Outstanding challenges in this area, however, are that some donors have difficulty entering relevant information, and the late publication of the Development Assistance Report, which is the result of the late submission of data by development partners.

UNDP has supported the Government to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and tax compliance. In 2020, UNDP supported MoPED to undertake a comprehensive Development Finance Assessment to identify innovative financing options (private and public sources) for implementation of the SDGs. UNDP assisted the National Revenue Agency (NRA) to develop a Medium-Term Revenue Strategy and National Tax Policy. It has also supported public-private dialogues between the NRA and businesses in the informal sector on tax reforms and compliance and the importance of business formalization across the country. Further, UNDP has supported the Fiscal Decentralization Division of the Ministry of Finance to strengthen the capacity of local councils in monitoring revenue and expenditure.

At the subnational level, public financial management was strengthened through a series of hands-on trainings and mentoring for local councils and councillors throughout the country. UNDP supported MLGRD and the Local Council Association of Sierra Leone to undertake an assessment of all 16 councils and the development of a capacity-building plan.

UNDP has promoted the INFF concept at national and subnational levels, which was presented to MPs. UNDP has partnered with the civil society consortium VIONET to train SDG ambassadors working throughout the country, to popularize INFF recommendations.

While UNDP engagement in this area has been strategic, some development partners interviewed for this ICPE were not aware of, or familiar with, this work of UNDP, implying the need for UNDP to improve its visibility, better communicate its activities, and coordinate its work on development financing more closely with the Resident Coordinator's Office and international financial institutions (IFIs) who are also supporting this area. This is important, especially considering that the results of the initiatives for public financial management for the SDGs and INFF have so far been limited, as an integrated approach to public finance is yet to be adopted by the country.

2.2. Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster

CPD Outcome: By 2023, Sierra Leone benefits from a more productive, commercialized and sustainable agriculture, improved food and nutrition security and increased resilience to climate change and other shocks.

Related outputs:

Output 1.1. Relevant ministries/departments/agencies have strengthened capacities to enforce inclusive regulations and gender-responsive policies on conservation of protected areas in coastal and urban planning and development

Output 1.2. Capacity of ministries/departments/agencies in natural resources management at national and local levels strengthened to ensure sustainable use of environmental resources including livelihoods

Output 1.3. Preparedness systems in place at community level to mitigate the impact of natural and manmade disasters

The MTNDP 2019–2023 sets the goal for the country to achieve middle-income status by 2039 through inclusive growth that is sustainable and leaves no one behind.⁹⁵ In line with the needs of the country and the Plan, the CPD defines the goal of the UNDP programme (2020–2023) as to support the people of Sierra Leone to eradicate poverty and build resilience to climate change shocks and disasters. It states that the programme will be delivered at upstream level (improving legal, policy and institutional environment to facilitate the eradication of poverty and build resilience), and at downstream level (addressing the challenges of poverty). The CPD further specifies that the SLED cluster will promote the nexus between reducing environmental vulnerability, building disaster resilience and eradicating poverty.

The SLED cluster includes two CPD/UNSDCF outcome areas:

- **Outcome 1** focuses on sustainability, including climate change, disaster risk management and natural resource management. During this programme cycle, ten projects were implemented under Outcome 1, with a total budget of \$13 million and expenditure of \$10.5 million.⁹⁶ The overall execution rate stood at 81 percent. This Outcome represents 37 percent of expenditure. More than half of the Outcome (56 percent) was funded by GEF, with the remainder directly funded by UNDP regular resources. Over 77 percent of expenditure was on projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2).

⁹⁵ Sierra Leone is currently a least-developed country. While it has met the graduation threshold for the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index, its performance in Gross National Income per capita and the Human Assets Index is far behind the graduation requirement. See data on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs website: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category-sierra-leone.html>.

⁹⁶ As per Project ID in ATLAS; The ten projects have 12 distinct Output IDs. COVID-19 response expenditure, including that repurposed from other projects, is included in this outcome.

CPD Outcome: 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.

Related outputs:

Output 3.1. 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

Output 3.2. Households in target areas with access to energy for domestic consumption

Output 3.3. Vulnerable communities in targeted districts are enabled to harvest safe, clean and drinkable rainwater

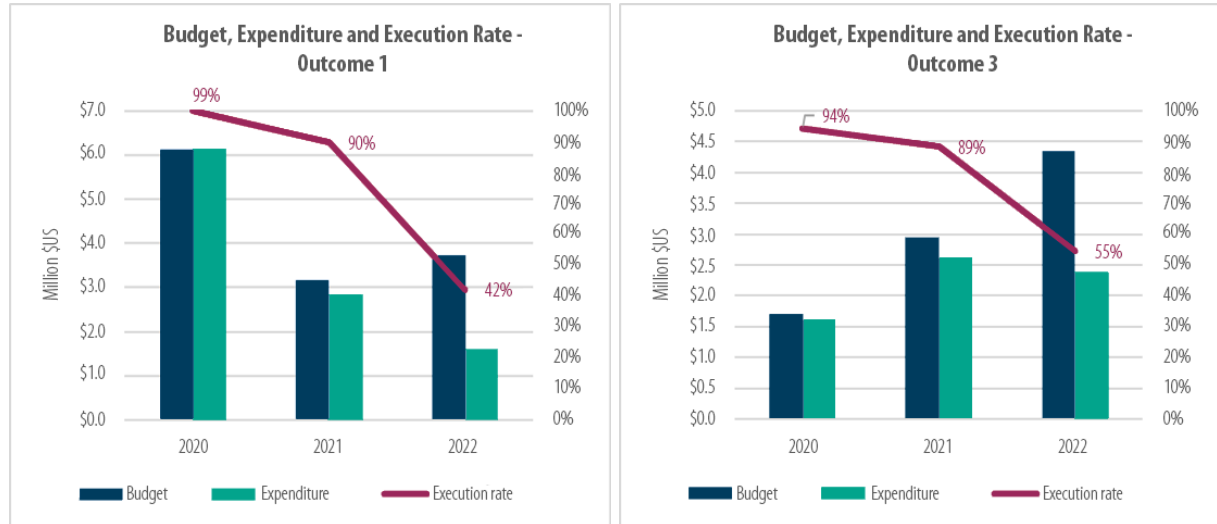
Output 3.4. Public and private sectors institutions have improved capacities to create decent jobs and sustainable livelihood options

Output 3.5. Grassroots innovative solutions identified with local actors (youth, women, community people) to address development challenges

- **Outcome 3** focuses on local economic development, including for vulnerable groups such as youth and PwD. During this programme cycle, five projects were implemented under this outcome with a budget of \$9 million and expenditure of \$6.6 million.⁹⁷ The execution rate stands at 73 percent. UNDP regular resources have been the main source of funding for this Outcome (\$5.4 million, representing 82 percent of the portfolio), followed by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Joint SDG fund (\$0.4 million) and bilateral funding from Germany (\$0.3 million) for the Accelerator Lab. About 90 percent of the expenditure was on projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2).

⁹⁷ As per Project ID in ATLAS; The five projects have eight distinct Output IDs. Financials of the “Youth at risk” and “Strengthening Domestic Resources Mobilisation for SDGs” projects are included in Outcome 3, although they are managed by the Governance Cluster.

FIGURES 5 AND 6. Budget, expenditure and execution rate of Outcomes 1 and 3, the SLED Cluster



Note: Data for 2022 are to 31 December. In addition to the expenditure reported above, an additional \$1.4 million has been committed to be spent in the year for Outcome 1 and an additional \$1.3 million has been committed to be spent in the year for Outcome 3. Source: UNDP Atlas Project data, Power Bi, 15 January 2023.

Finding 7. UNDP has contributed to strengthening the policy framework and capabilities of national institutions for managing disaster risks and their impact on economic livelihoods. Despite the attention paid in the CPD to the sustainable management and use of natural assets and the potential of accelerating the blue economy, UNDP support for natural resource management has been limited in this programme cycle. The resilience approach promoted elsewhere by UNDP has not been adequately integrated into the Sierra Leone programme.

Upstream interventions for the development of national policies and plans are notable examples of UNDP support for disaster risk management in Sierra Leone.⁹⁸ Through the “Adapting to climate change induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone” project, UNDP supported the Disaster Management Department of the Office of National Security to develop the Disaster Risk Management Policy, and subsequently to establish the National Disaster Management Agency in 2020.⁹⁹ UNDP has contributed to capacity-strengthening for disaster risk management. To institutionalize disaster risk management at subnational level, through the “Promoting disaster risk resilience” project UNDP supported the establishment of 16 gender-balanced Chiefdom Disaster Management Committees in Kambia and Pujehun districts.¹⁰⁰ Committee members were trained to use the updated Disaster Risk Management Standard Operating Procedures.

Given the country’s long coastline and coastal ecosystems threatened by erosion, through the “Adapting to Climate Change Induced Coastal Risks Management in Sierra Leone” project, UNDP implemented highly relevant interventions for the development of a policy framework and relevant guidance to address the challenges of climate change for coastal risk management and support climate resilience planning to protect coastal communities.¹⁰¹ UNDP supported the review of current marine use planning policies and

⁹⁸ UNDP has also supported the improvement of energy policies. The National Energy Policy and Bioenergy Policy was finalized and is awaiting enactment by the Government, whereas the Clean Cooking Action Plan has been validated and is also awaiting enactment.

⁹⁹ UNDP (2021) Adapting to climate change induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone. Annual Report 2020.

¹⁰⁰ These committees comprise community members, including chiefs, market women, bike riders, teachers, military and police personnel and members of other social networks within the community.

¹⁰¹ Coastal communities experience considerable repercussions from erosion, including reduced fishing productivity, ecosystem degradation and low farm productivity.

guidelines and helped the authorities to develop Integrated Coastal Zone Management implementation plans.¹⁰² These plans provided policymakers with important instruments to address the challenges of coastal climate change and support climate resilience planning to protect coastal communities.¹⁰³ However, the SLED Cluster strategy did not include support for the implementation of these plans on the ground, nor explicitly to mainstreaming disaster risk management into development initiatives in other sectors with the aim of setting up a fully integrated national climate and disaster risk management system. Despite covering some 15 percent of Sierra Leone’s coastline, the initiative did not lead to a process of elaboration and implementation of a coastal management masterplan for scaling up the results to the entire coast.

Access to risk information, such as meteorological information, can improve the absorptive capacity of coastal communities by supporting short and long-term planning and implementing preparedness measures.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, through the “Adapting to climate change induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone” project, UNDP supported the EPA and Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency to install five weather stations covering six coastal communities and a system for monitoring sea level rise. The objective was to enhance the availability of high-quality climatic data for critical decision-making and supporting the adaptation of coastal zones in Sierra Leone. The Oceanic Monitoring System has enhanced the collection of real-time climatic and oceanographic data, enabling early warning and response planning. UNDP supported the development of an Early Warning App that collects data from mobile phones and makes it available to communities through radio stations and focal points for climate information. Part of the early warning information and disaster preparedness system put in place included climate change radio drama series, climate change school clubs and face-to-face community engagement with climate change information. About 30 percent of project beneficiaries received reliable weather information, which they used for disaster preparedness. This information also allows district council officials to integrate climate change adaptation measures in their district development plans to promote climate change adaptation and resilience in their communities.

UNDP has provided direct support to targeted communities for the rehabilitation of degraded mangroves and the distribution of plants for reforestation.¹⁰⁵ UNDP also supported the Government to regulate coastal sand mining and mangrove cutting, thereby reducing the exploitation of those buffers to climate change impact. UNDP worked on raising community awareness on the threats to mangroves and their role in buffering climate change impacts. As a result, targeted communities formulated local bylaws and established taskforces to monitor indiscriminate sand mining and mangrove cutting. However, the project evaluation noted the need for stronger community participation in the activities targeting mangrove rehabilitation, as little monitoring was done to assess the survival of the newly planted mangroves. It also stressed the need to start putting in place a credible and negotiated exit strategy that would clarify the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in managing the infrastructure, as well for building alliances with the private sector and other development actors to identify continued support for the work already undertaken.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² UNDP Sierra Leone (2020) Annual Progress Report, 2020: Adapting to climate change induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone.

UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Project Implementation Report: Coastal risks management. Integrated Coastal Zone Management Action Plans integrate climate change-induced risks. They consist of an Action Plan for coastal protection measures, an Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Guidance Manual, regulations on coastal protection, the Coastal Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the Marine Spatial Plan and Implementation Framework.

¹⁰³ UNDP (2022) Adapting to climate change induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone Annual Progress Report, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ UNDP and IFPRI (2019) Building Resilience to Climate Shocks in Ethiopia. This report defines absorptive capacity as “the sensitivity of individuals, groups, communities, countries, or regions to shocks and stressors—that is, factors that determine the extent to which different actors are directly affected by climate shocks and stressors and the extent of the changes they need to make to preserve or improve their well-being”. <https://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/133312/filename/133524.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) ROAR.

¹⁰⁶ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Midterm evaluation of the project Adapting to climate change-induced coastal risks management in Sierra Leone.

UNDP supported the design of adaptation strategies for alternative livelihoods to strengthen the resilience of women and youth associations to climate change impacts on the coastal zone.¹⁰⁷ With UNDP support, 18 VSLAs were established in six coastal communities, and UNDP provided training to VSLA members.¹⁰⁸ Trained beneficiaries have been actively mobilizing resources to invest in innovative economic activities in their communities. UNDP also supported the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in its delivery of value chain support for the fishing sector. UNDP interventions provided up to \$40,000 in start-up grant capital to beneficiaries to improve the livelihoods of people living in these fishing communities. The grants allowed members of fishing communities to benefit from, for example, the fish landing site constructed by the project, solar cold rooms, ice flake machines and outboard engine machines with which helped to improve the fish value chain and improve their livelihoods. However, the project evaluation noted limited progress in the establishment of businesses due to the lack of financial resources.

In support of coastal resource management, UNDP contributed to the country's natural resource management and conservation. The CPD noted the importance of sustainably harnessing Sierra Leone's vast natural assets through private sector development to accelerate economic growth, ensure livelihoods for communities, build resilience, and reduce climate-related risks and disasters. Concrete interventions included the rehabilitation of degraded mangroves and the distribution of plants to communities, as discussed above. The "coastal area management support" project integrated disaster risk reduction into coastal area management through the installation of five weather stations and the operationalization of weather forecasting systems, as well as training on gender mainstreaming in early warning systems. While the CPD noted that investment in the blue economy represents untapped potential for inclusive economic growth, activities in this area have been limited thus far, with more intensity planned for 2023.

UNDP programming did not adequately adopt the resilience approach, although the CPD places significant emphasis on the concept of resilience to promote the nexus between reducing environmental vulnerability, building disaster resilience and eradicating poverty.¹⁰⁹ UNDP did not elaborate explicit guidance that would allow the SLED Cluster (or the country programme) to identify pathways to achieve climate and disaster resilience. The Strategic Note for the SLED Cluster provided some operational elements, but integration of various themes of resilience is lacking. Projects and activities exhibit several resilience features, but the resilience framework was not promoted strongly and systematically in the design and implementation of projects across the programme. There is no comprehensive theory of change showing the impact pathway across themes as diverse as disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, environment, adaptation to climate change and management of solid waste.¹¹⁰ Overall, the programme has not articulated a clear vision or operational approach for resilience in the Sierra Leone context.

Finding 8. UNDP supported local economic development with a focus on social and economic inclusion of youth, women and PwD. UNDP has increasingly promoted innovation for entrepreneurship development and local development solutions, including through the Accelerator Lab, but these innovation solutions remain small in scale and lack sufficient data and time to assess their impact.

¹⁰⁷ UNDP also supported the Ministry of Tourism to conduct training for 400 women entrepreneurs in climate change and risk and awareness raising in coastal communities of Sulima, Banana Island and Kent.

¹⁰⁸ The "Coastal Risk Management" project provided training to 400 youth and other community members (211 men; 189 women) on sustainable waste management techniques, including plastic recycling, bio-charcoal briquetting, aluminium waste can recycling and eco-stoves, who are now able to recycle plastics and produce bio-charcoal briquettes.

¹⁰⁹ The CPD defines resilience as "the ability of individuals, households, communities and societies to withstand shocks and stresses, recover from such stresses and work with national and local government institutions to achieve transformational change that supports sustainability of human development in the face of future shocks".

¹¹⁰ In the Strategic Note 2020–2023 for SLED, UNDP only provided a succinct sub-theory of change as follows: "improving economic policy frameworks, diversifying the economy and strengthening the capacities of institutions, enterprises and individuals, will minimize economic exclusion and marginalization of the poor". This is illustrated in a schematic representation of the SLED Cluster logic, showing the challenges, the interventions to address them, and the outputs.

In partnership with MoPED, MoYA, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) and local councils, UNDP provided technical and institutional capacity-building support through economic development initiatives, innovation and competitiveness for inclusive development at the local level. Through the “Local Economic Revitalization for Local Communities” project, UNDP collaborated with MoYA and MoSW to empower the most vulnerable, particularly women, youth and PwD, to benefit from increased social protection services, as well as economic and social opportunities.¹¹¹ In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, UNDP helped with the delivery of COVID-19 stimulus grants, coupled with skills enhancement, to support businesses, as well as mentorship to youth whose businesses were affected by the pandemic. This support benefitted a total of 443 youth-led and owned businesses in the capital Freetown (93 men and 350 women), leading to the creation of 350 jobs in 2021.¹¹² The targeting of young people, women and PwD for job creation and improved incomes has been a key feature of UNDP livelihoods support, which was appreciated by most stakeholders interviewed for this ICPE. Despite this contribution, the project was of short duration with limited funding, given the needs.

UNDP supported local community groups and entrepreneurs to explore innovative technologies and initiatives, in partnership with several key private sector entities such as PayPal, Ecobank Sierra Leone Limited and Orange Sierra Leone. One example is the establishment of a crowdfunding platform for mobilizing financial resources from the private sector, public and diaspora for commercially innovative enterprises run by youth and women. Another is the adoption of an electronic security device that prevents the theft of vehicles and fuel. In collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNDP supported the training of 40 youth and women innovators on a range of topics such as creative design, product development, digital marketing and finance, entrepreneurship, leadership and business planning. The training was followed up with practical support for these participants, including equipment and tools. As a result of this support, UNDP reported the launch to market of 32 new products developed by youth and women entrepreneurs, attracting about 200 local customers. Overall, the country office has reported the creation of 320 jobs, impacting 1,280 beneficiaries. Support to youth, including for livelihoods and entrepreneurship, is further discussed in Finding 9 below.

UNDP launched the Accelerator Lab in Sierra Leone in September 2019. The Lab has since supported local innovators to identify solutions to local challenges. In partnership with the country’s two leading mobile network operators, the Accelerator Lab has operated a toll-free line for channelling information on innovative solutions. Innovations are tracked through the Grassroot Solutions Mapping database, which is continuously updated as new solutions are tested.¹¹³ The Lab has also supplied this data to development partners in search of local solutions. Through the Accelerator Lab, UNDP has rolled out the “Innovation Challenge” initiative, which identifies and supports innovative solutions to local development problems. Under this initiative, 54 grassroots innovations were identified. The Accelerator Lab supported the experimentation of three of these solutions and the upscaling of two.¹¹⁴ The full results of the Accelerator Lab are yet to be seen, especially the sustainability of initiatives supported by the Lab, which has to be tested by the market.

¹¹¹ The project started in March 2020 and is planned to end in December 2023.

¹¹² UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Local Economic Development Portfolio Annual Progress Report 2021.

¹¹³ More information here: <https://www.undp.org/acceleratorlabs/undp-sierra-leone-accelerator-lab>.

¹¹⁴ The first upscaled solution was the installation of low-tech boreholes in ten slum communities using local resources. The other consisted of creating a disabled-friendly handwashing station that dispenses soap and water through a foot pedal, preventing people from touching the handwashing station and thereby reducing the spread of bacteria and viruses. The Accelerator Lab has also supported the introduction of hydroponic production in the country. Hydroponics is the technique of growing plants using a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil. A sample design of an indoor unit was installed at a hotel in Bo City. The results showed that hydroponic techniques produce increased crops yields, a positive factor of food security for the country.

The UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre programme has supported the generation of development ideas from borderlands communities and promoted dialogue with the Government to raise its awareness on borderland issues.¹¹⁵ One of its priorities is to support borderland communities left behind by national development policies and plans. In Sierra Leone, the programme uses small grants to address the needs of pastoralists who cross the border to Guinea and of female-headed households whose livelihoods have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.¹¹⁶ The country office has reported that the borderlands programme has revived the businesses of 448 women traders and strengthened social safety nets and security in 21 border communities in seven chiefdoms in the Pujehun and Kambia districts.¹¹⁷

Overall, UNDP support for innovative solutions to community problems has resulted in the development of several products and services for youth and women in the sectors of agriculture, food and nutrition and information communications technologies (ICTs). However, these innovation activities remain small in scale, with limited impact on the communities where the interventions took place. Efficient and systematic scaling up of these solutions is a challenge for the country office. Moreover, data limitations, combined with the short timespan since the creation of some of these ventures, hampers the assessment of impact and sustainability of the supported innovations. As innovations take time to mature and become fully marketable, there is a need to establish a system to track the success of the supported initiatives on a continued basis, including after their establishment, and disseminate learning among stakeholders.

Finding 9. The UNDP programme provided important policy support to youth development in Sierra Leone, including the launch and implementation of the National Youth Policy. Youth-related interventions have focused on entrepreneurship and social cohesion, but their effects have not been adequately tracked. There is also room to build greater synergy between these two areas.

The current CPD has a significant focus on youth. At policy level, UNDP has supported the creation of an enabling and conducive environment for youth empowerment through policy and strategy coherence, including the review and launch of the National Youth Policy. UNDP support helped the Government to improve its legal and regulatory framework for the youth sector. As a result, in 2020, MoYA adopted the National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone focusing on the theme “Empowered Youth Leading the Development of a New Sierra Leone”, to guide and promote youth development in the country.¹¹⁸ The Youth Policy outlines concrete actions to empower youth, with special emphasis on young women, youth with disabilities and other marginalized groups, to be key players in their own wellbeing and the socioeconomic and political development of their communities and the country.

UNDP also supported government partners to implement the Youth Policy. In 2020, UNDP secured funds to support the “Strengthening of Youth Meaningful Participation in Decision-Making Structures in Sierra Leone” project, which seeks to address challenges including capacity gaps of government and civil society actors in formulating, implementing and partnering for youth and gender-responsive policies.¹¹⁹ The aim of the project is to ensure meaningful youth engagement and contributions at both local and national levels, including skills training. Moreover, UNDP supported the establishment of the newly formed Youth

¹¹⁵ The UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre programme started in June 2019 and targets ten African countries, including Sierra Leone.

¹¹⁶ With the COVID-19 pandemic, informal cross-border traders have faced challenges to pursuing the activities. Government regulations and mechanisms to curtail the crisis caused the loss of jobs, SGBV and food scarcity. Studies conducted for the Emergency Food Monitoring Report by WFP and FAO indicated a 15 percent rise in food insecurity between January and June 2020, higher unemployment rate and increased SGBV cases reported to the Family Support Unit.

¹¹⁷ UNDP Sierra Leone (2022) Voices from UNDP Borderland Support: COVID-19 did not veer off our course to GEWE. <https://www.undp.org/sierra-leone/stories/voices-undps-borderland-support-covid-19-did-not-veer-our-course-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>.

¹¹⁸ Government of Sierra Leone (2020) National Youth Policy Sierra Leone. <https://www.yacansl.org/assets/files/National-YouthPolicy2020.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ UNDP (2021) Mainstreaming Youth Participation & Inclusion into Local and National Decision-Making. <https://www.undp.org/sierra-leone/news/mainstreaming-youth-participation-inclusion-local-and-national-decision-making>.

Basket Fund, which receives funding from each government revenue-generating institution mandated to accelerate youth development in the country.¹²⁰ Jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNDP supported the establishment of the Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment. This platform connects youth resources and serves as a one-stop shop for innovating integrated solutions to the challenges of lifting Sierra Leone's youth out of extreme poverty. As multiple and uncoordinated youth initiatives are supported by various partners, such as "Invest Salone" funded by the United Kingdom, this platform aims to pool these resources to increase the chance of maximizing impact.

UNDP support for youth development focused on livelihoods, through innovation, entrepreneurship and social cohesion. UNDP collaborated closely with NAYCOM with support for graduate training and internship placements.¹²¹ In 2021, alternative livelihoods options and job creation opportunities allowed 350 jobs to be created.¹²² UNDP supported the mapping of the ecosystem of emerging young entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone and the establishment and operationalization of YouthConnekt hubs to accelerate youth innovation and entrepreneurship.¹²³ These hubs are used as space for dialogue and training as well as the provision of youth employment information. Mentoring, financial literacy and networking support were provided through the "Accelerating Youth Innovation and entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone" project, for young men and women to identify opportunities and resources for employment and strengthen their capacity for entrepreneurship. According to beneficiaries interviewed for this ICPE, the training provided by UNDP has enabled them to develop income-generating activities or businesses. Based on the mapping exercise, and benefitting from the YouthConnekt hubs, UNDP supported young people to identify innovative solutions to grassroots development problems and challenges, and provided grants to 16 youth entrepreneurs to start business activities. Examples include solar-powered irrigation and borehole systems and the establishment of employment spaces and facilities in the form of car wash centres and fish farming facilities for young people.

UNDP contributed to addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth businesses. A significant number of businesses owned and operated by young people closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the Sierra Leone Emergency Response Preparedness Plan, UNDP collaborated with MoYA to initiate the "Stabilize affected communities" project to support the recovery of 100 youth-led businesses. In partnership with Restless Development Sierra Leone, a national NGO, this intervention identified affected businesses that had closed or significantly scaled down because of the pandemic, and provided training and a stimulus package to help revive and strengthen their business operations.¹²⁴ The delivery of this intervention was successful thanks to the contribution of various institutions: MoYA provided key logistics support; the National Commission for Social Action provided support on ensuring minimum standards and key requirements; and the National Youth Coalition provided guidance on managing public perception by maintaining equity and frequent clear communication and clarifications on complications and misconceptions. However, the project was of short duration (1 year) with limited funding (\$250,000), considering the high demand.

¹²⁰ The establishment of the Youth Basket Fund was a follow up to the review of the National Youth Policy, another major activity supported by UNDP.

¹²¹ Training was provided to 445 graduate interns on transformational leadership, professional development and life skills essential for employability in the job market. UNDP also supported the placement of 240 graduate interns (144 men; 96 women) in 58 placement institutions where they gained job experience, knowledge about workplace ethics and other professional qualifications.

¹²² See also: UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Local Economic Development Portfolio Annual Progress Report 2021.

¹²³ YouthConnekt is a global network of hubs that support young people's inclusion in entrepreneurship and community development. The YouthConnekt Hubs in Sierra Leone were supported by the "Accelerating Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone" project. As a result of direct support, four additional YouthConnekt hubs were set up in Sierra Leone.

¹²⁴ Restless Development Sierra Leone (2021) Narrative Financial Report submitted to UNDP.

In the area of social cohesion, UNDP supported the capacity strengthening of youth and youth organizations for increased civic knowledge, engagement and dissemination to other youth for improved civic responsibility. Finding 3 includes analysis of the UNDP work on peace and social cohesion, including interventions targeting at-risk youth.

Overall, UNDP has worked actively with youth in the most vulnerable communities to increase their contribution and encourage inclusive growth and employment through better access to markets, technical assistance and financial aid. However, the effects of this work in terms of youth employability and their role in the solution of local development problems need to be tracked and assessed more effectively by means of a consolidated M&E system (see Finding 17 on the current results-based management [RBM] approach at UNDP Sierra Leone). Youth-related initiatives for economic empowerment under the SLED Cluster need to be integrated more effectively with initiatives under the Governance Cluster targeting youth for social coherence and local governance, to promote youth empowerment and advance their social, political and economic rights.

Finding 10. In partnership with the Government, United Nations agencies and organizations of PwD, UNDP has contributed to advancing the inclusion and increasing the level of awareness of PwD, especially among policymakers. Although small scale in nature, this work has contributed to the improvement of key policy and institutional frameworks. UNDP support for promoting livelihoods and facilitating the COVID-19 response for PwD is valued by national partners.

Under the coordination of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, UNDP recently launched the “Advancing Disability Inclusion in Sierra Leone” joint project in support of PwD, in partnership with UNFPA (the overall focal point for the initiative) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), with funding from the global United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.¹²⁵ In partnership with MoSW, this initiative has supported the implementation of provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which underpins Sierra Leone’s commitments to PwD.¹²⁶ In this context, the project has supported the review of several laws and policies related to compliance with the UNCRPD. The project contributed to adjusting the country’s SDG Monitoring Platform to include disability- and inclusion-related targets.

Under the framework of the joint project, UNDP supported the review and validation of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2011, through a participatory process involving multiple key stakeholders.¹²⁷ A multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism was established to coordinate the implementation of the Act. An assessment and certification system was established for PwD to better claim their rights for social protection services, although the extent to which the new system will be used effectively remains to be seen.¹²⁸ Moreover, the project has supported the operationalization of the Disability Fund as a financial instrument for realization of the Act. The ICPE did not find any evidence indicating the effective functioning of the Fund in the country to date. This is thus an area that might benefit from further attention by the project.

¹²⁵ The project started in August 2022, for a period of 24 months with a budget \$600,000.

¹²⁶ Sierra Leone domesticated the UNCRPD in 2011 in the form of the Sierra Leone Persons with Disability Act. It has also signed (but not ratified) the Optional Protocol on Disability.

¹²⁷ Adopted in 2011, the Act provides rights and privileges to PwD in key areas relating to dignity, autonomy, independence, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, participation and inclusion. The law clarifies the concept of discrimination on the grounds of disability, although it only prohibits discrimination in specific circumstances such as education, employment, access to public premises, services and amenities.

¹²⁸ The National Social Protection Policy of 2011 did not provide a clear-cut definition of disability and disability assessment.

Overall, the joint United Nations project has improved implementation of the UNCRPD and disability-inclusive SDGs with the meaningful participation of PwD. Although UNDP work in this area has been limited to small-scale activities, it has encouraged policy initiatives that are crucial for the wellbeing of PwD, and has raised the level of awareness on disability in the country, especially among policymakers. It is also notable that UNDP work in this area has benefitted from collaboration and synergies with other United Nations agencies, especially those with expertise and experience in key aspects of disability inclusion such as UNICEF, the World Health Organization and UNFPA.

UNDP also collaborated with MoSW to promote livelihoods for PwD. Funds were provided to procure start-up tools and conduct entrepreneurship trainings for more than 300 PwD.¹²⁹ The UNDP contribution to targeting young people, women and people with disabilities for job creation and improved incomes has been well appreciated by all stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation. According to interviewees who benefited from UNDP support, skills development training was inclusive of men, women, young people and physically disabled people, and has enabled beneficiaries to develop income-generating activities or businesses.

As part of the COVID-19 response, UNDP provided support to Disability Rights and Inclusion Matters, an NGO in Sierra Leone, through the provision of food supplies and hygiene materials including a hand-washing station. An internal field monitoring report noted that, while collaboration and engagement was effective among stakeholders, including the paramount chief, local councils and Ministries, UNDP did not allocate resources to assess the effectiveness and impact of COVID-19 interventions in the communities.¹³⁰

2.3. Country programme design, implementation and other crosscutting issues

Finding 11. The UNDP country programme is aligned with the development priorities and needs of Sierra Leone. UNDP support for the COVID-19 response was quick, flexible and well-coordinated with the United Nations country team. Despite having a number of activities implemented at the local level, the country programme did not utilize an area-based development approach, as envisaged in the CPD, except for the recent Borderlands Initiative.

The UNDP CPD (2020–2023) was designed to respond to the Sierra Leonean context and priorities, and prepared in consultation with national partners to contribute to the goals of the MTNDP 2019–2023. UNDP has added value to ongoing national efforts at the country level, especially in areas such as elections (upcoming programme), youth development, social cohesion, among others. The UNDP programme has also been in line with the country's needs for developing extensive and long-term capacity for resilience-building and integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into the country's development model, as set out in the MTNDP 2019–2023.

The country office was quick to adjust its programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The country office repurposed over \$2 million from its core resources that were initially allocated for regular development programmes to support COVID-19 preparedness and response activities. Additionally, it allocated \$150,000 for the procurement of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and protective materials for ten slum communities and seven districts.¹³¹ Furthermore, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, UNDP deployed \$600,000 from the Rapid Financing Facility and \$100,000 from Regional Bureau for Africa COVID-19 funds.

¹²⁹ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Local Economic Development Portfolio Annual Progress Report 2021.

¹³⁰ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Field Monitoring Report Programme Support Unit, 4–10 April 2021.

¹³¹ These districts were Pujehun, Moyamba, Bonthe, Kailahun, Kambia, Port Loko and Falaba.

UNDP played a key role in the preparation of the United Nations COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan (SERP), which aimed to support the Government in mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.¹³² UNDP was also instrumental in the formulation of the Sierra Leone Humanitarian Response Plan (SLHRP), which was developed to tackle humanitarian needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and was included in the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan of the United Nations Secretary General.¹³³

Despite its limited resources, the UNDP contribution to the country's response to the COVID-19 crisis has been agile and substantive, concentrating on support for government institutions in the areas of impact assessment, policy development and awareness raising. UNDP supported HRCSL to raise public awareness, with specific messages on the need for security officers to respect and comply with human rights norms and standard operating procedures during the lockdown. The country office also worked with MPs and leadership to deliver COVID-19 prevention messages in their constituencies using radio and television stations. In 2021, the country office commissioned a study of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on the informal sector (microenterprises and small enterprises).

The CPD envisaged that UNDP would adopt an area-based approach to programming, based on the recommendation of the ICPE for the previous programme cycle. The potential for integration and efficiency is particularly significant, as during the current cycle UNDP has increasingly engaged in supporting local governance and development. However, there is limited evidence of the use of the area-based approach for implementation on the ground. The only evidence found by the evaluation was the Borderlands Initiative, in collaboration with the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre, for capacity building and financial support to women and youth entrepreneurs, including financial literacy training and start-up kits. This included cash grants to women in agriculture, farming tools for women-led businesses, installation of solar lamps and cold storage facilities, including post-harvest and during transportation, as well as support to police and border authorities with equipment and training.¹³⁴

Overall, there is potential for greater synergy in UNDP activities at the local level, where both clusters have ongoing initiatives. UNDP is well-positioned to contribute to local governance and community development in a cross-sectoral manner, but this will require an integrated approach to local development. Local governance interventions could be integrated with interventions focused on local economic development, natural resource management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

Finding 12. UNDP Sierra Leone faces a major challenge with regards to its financial sustainability, as the funding of the programme is not well diversified, relying primarily on a few donors and the use of core resources. Recent efforts indicate a positive trend in resource mobilization, while funding opportunities for Sierra Leone remain narrow.

While the CPD is ambitious, in practice the UNDP programme has been constrained by limited funding. UNDP overestimated resource availability in the formulation of the CPD. Based on CPD projections, a significant amount of funding has yet to be mobilized and many activities envisaged under the CPD remain unfunded. Financial sustainability was a significant challenge identified in the previous ICPE, and continues

¹³² Aligned to the UNSDCF 2020–2024, SERP was completed on 23 October 2020 and costed at \$98 million.

¹³³ The SLHRP was formulated to complement measures introduced by the Government of Sierra Leone, such as the COVID-19 Health Response Plan and QAERP. The overriding purpose was to proactively take steps to control the escalation of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone and avoid devastating impacts like those of Ebola Virus. SLHRP identified immediate humanitarian needs, including WASH, food security and nutrition, livelihoods and agriculture, the sustainable provision of critical services, psychosocial support, education and logistics and supply chain. The activities undertaken to address these needs were tracked in the SERP results framework, which was developed after the SLHRP. Whilst the SLHRP addressed the immediate humanitarian impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it also contributed to the strategic priorities of the UNSDCF 2020–2024.

¹³⁴ UNDP (2022) Africa Borderland Centre, June 2022 presentation—Sierra Leone.

to be precarious in this programme cycle as the programme relies on a narrow funding base and a limited number of donors. The country office is using core funding to fund regular activities envisaged under the CPD in areas where it has not been able to leverage additional funds.

Several national partners interviewed for this ICPE identified the scarcity of programme resources as a challenge for the UNDP programme in Sierra Leone, especially for the Local Economic Development portfolio (Outcome 3, see Figures 5 and 6 above). The Strengthening Democratic Institutions portfolio and parts of the Rule of Law portfolio in the Governance Cluster (Outcome 2) are also particularly reliant on core funding. Environment-related activities continue to benefit from GEF funding (Outcome 1). Over the last two cycles, partnerships with development partners and donor funding have been on a declining trend, with Irish Aid, the European Union and the United States remaining the key external donors. United Nations trust funds (PBF, HSTF and Joint SDG Fund) have been a crucial source of funding for the Governance Cluster in the current cycle. The country office was also able to obtain resources from UNDP funding windows. UNDP has not mobilized any private sector funding, but this is understandable since private sector development in Sierra Leone is limited and largely informal.

FIGURE 7. Budget and expenditure by funding category

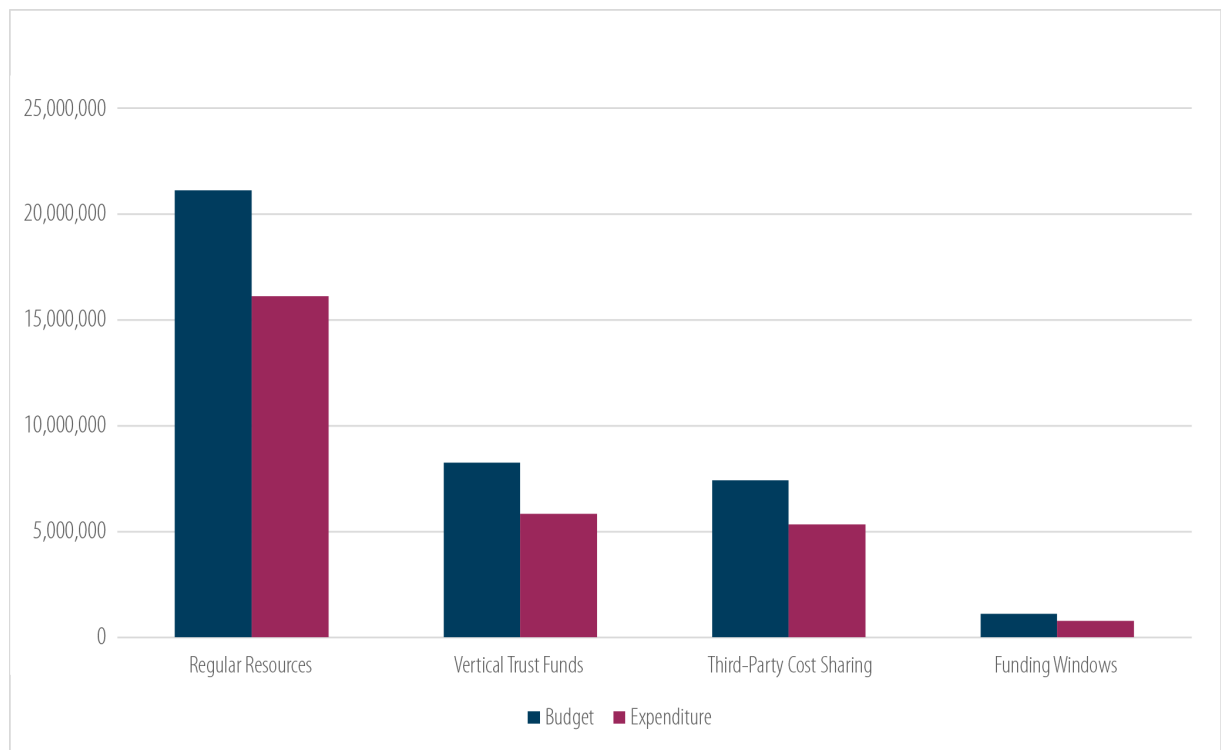


FIGURE 8. Top ten donors for the country programme cycle

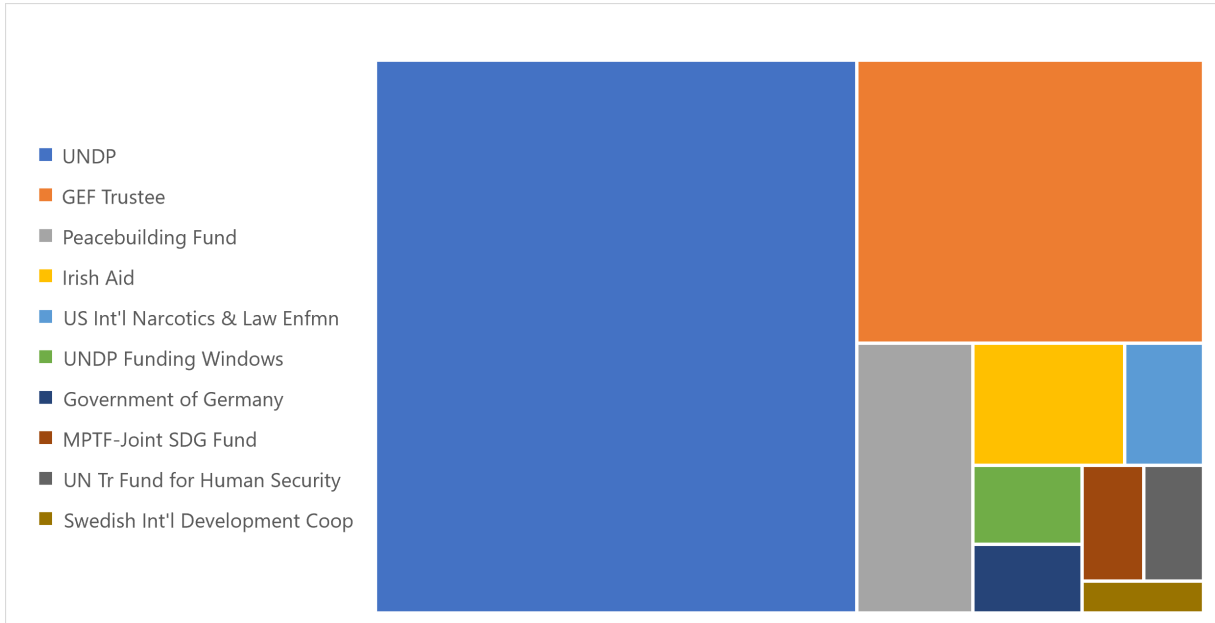
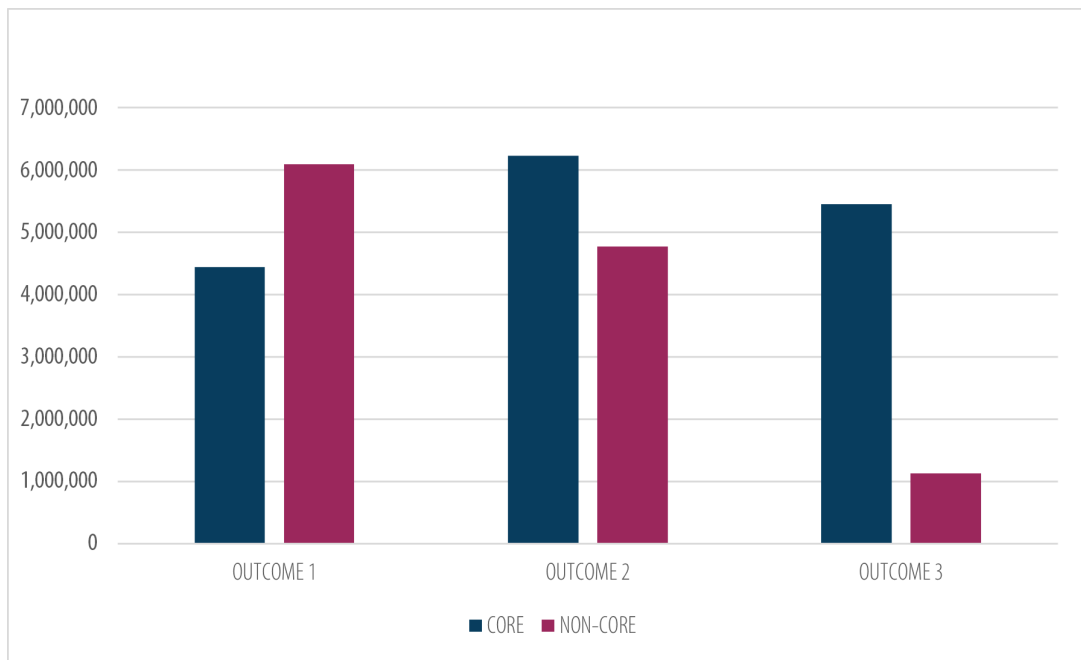


FIGURE 9. Core vs non-core expenditure by outcome



There are multiple external reasons for this situation. The donor space has shrunk as the security situation in the country has stabilized and donors have focused on other countries in the region.¹³⁵ Also, in the wake of COVID-19, it has been difficult for the country office to mobilize co-financing from the Government, due to the financial requirements of the pandemic response. However, there is also an element related to UNDP performance that has led to a decline in resource mobilization results. Some development partners

¹³⁵ For example, the country office has reported that the United Kingdom has reduced its development aid for Sierra Leone by 60 percent.

interviewed for this evaluation believe that UNDP does not have the requisite capacity to effectively implement large programmes. The main concerns that have undermined the trust of some development partners are related to weak programme management and accountability, also reflected in challenges with programme delivery (see Finding 14 below). Development partners have also voiced the need for better-quality communications and reporting by the country office (see Finding 17 below).

The country office has taken a number of positive steps to address this financial sustainability challenge. In 2021 and 2022, it undertook an assessment of the Governance and SLED clusters, the latter ongoing at the time of this evaluation, with the aim of creating greater focus in the clusters. It also developed a Partnerships and Communications Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2020–2023. The country office has recently recruited a donor relations and reporting specialist, who is leading its work on developing funding proposals in a range of areas. A number of funding proposals have recently been developed and submitted to various donors for funding. Some results from these steps are already visible. With financial support from PBF, the European Union and Irish Aid, the country office is reengaging with the electoral process. The upcoming “Elections” project is a good example of a coherent approach to implementation as it involves a basket funding approach, integrating the contributions of PBF, the European Union and Irish Aid, as well as UNDP core funds. The country office also expects an upcoming project on youth to be funded by the PBF. Additionally, the country office is pursuing partnerships with non-traditional donors such as China and Japan. However, the UNDP funding base in Sierra Leone remains quite narrow.

Finding 13. While the portfolio approach has been a positive step to integrate planning and programme management, its full potential remains unrealized. Several challenges have frustrated programme implementation. There is inconsistency in how programming and reporting are carried out. In many cases, activity areas envisaged by portfolio-level programming remain unfunded, resulting in gaps for achieving set targets. The design and implementation of projects are still done in silos. The country office has yet to take full advantage of opportunities for cooperation and synergy between projects across clusters.

In this programme cycle, the country office adopted a portfolio approach, under which the country programme is organized into two clusters (Inclusive Democratic Governance and Sustainable and Local Economic Development), with each cluster consisting a few portfolios. Planning is done primarily at the portfolio level, with the portfolio playing the traditional role of the project. Planning instruments such as portfolio programme documents and integrated AWP determine the overall programming and envisaged funding envelope for the totality of resources required for the execution of activities identified under each portfolio. The intention of the portfolio approach was to consolidate activities under a larger framework, thus addressing the perennial problem of small scale and fragmentation.

However, the portfolio approach has also introduced challenges in programming and planning. Many activities identified at the portfolio level remain incomplete, because required resources have not been fully mobilized. Several sections of the portfolio programme document thus become placeholders for activities that remain to be funded. This has created a gap between the way the programme looks on paper and what is being implemented in reality. For example, the Strengthening Democratic Institutions portfolio was conceptualized as a fully-fledged programme with an ambitious set of activities targeting several prominent governance processes and institutions in the country. The country office used this overarching framework to solicit funding from various donors, but only partial funding has been secured for this portfolio.¹³⁶ In

¹³⁶ Mainly from Irish Aid and HSTF, as well as the European Union for the upcoming work on elections.

areas where donor funding has not been mobilized, UNDP has used core resources for a limited number of activities. This approach has led to small-scale and fragmented activities in areas where funding has been limited and a less than optimal use of core resources.

If and when funding is committed by donors, project documents are developed for that set of activities, underpinned by project work plans agreed with the respective donor. Several ICPE interviewees reported that this planning approach, with project and portfolio layers of planning, has introduced complexity in obtaining the necessary approvals from national authorities, resulting in significant delays. For example, programme planning for the Governance Cluster for 2021 was completed only in April of that year, and implementation started in June. This approach has also resulted in the overlap or repetition of activities between work plans, as reported by interviewees.

Although the portfolio approach integrates planning at the portfolio level, the design of projects is still done in silos, with separate processes for each project. Project staff provide their input to portfolio leads who integrate these contributions into a single plan, but there is no vigorous discussion and debate between staff members across projects or clusters during the design phase. Government and donor representatives also brought up the need for greater involvement of their experts in the design of UNDP interventions, rather than only reviewing the final versions of project documents.

Reporting is mostly done at the level of projects and of the country programme. For the Governance Cluster, the only 2021 annual report produced at portfolio level was for the “Rule of Law and Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion” portfolio. However, this report did not include PBF-funded projects for peace and social cohesion that are also part of the portfolio. For the SLED Cluster, the “Local Economic Development” and “Natural Resources Management, Climate Change, Adaptation and Disaster Resilience” portfolios produced 2021 annual reports, but they were not results oriented.¹³⁷ Moreover, while the latter portfolio title included climate change and disaster, the report did not include the “coastal risk management” project, which required separate reporting for GEF. These irregular and incoherent reporting approaches are confusing for staff members, partners and donors and need to be harmonized across the country programme. Moreover, some projects are registered as a “project” on ATLAS, while others as an “output” under the portfolio. This creates confusion, including for this ICPE, hampering attempts to draw a clear picture of the UNDP programme and ensure accurate corporate-level monitoring and reporting.

The country office has yet to establish adequate structures and processes to incentivize joint project design at the portfolio level, including cross-portfolio and cross-cluster collaboration and synergy building. While there has been sharing of information at office meetings, and some events have been organized jointly by different projects, cooperation between the clusters has not taken full advantage of the commonalities they share. In some cases, stakeholders from one cluster were not aware of UNDP projects in the other, and could not speak to joint initiatives. Also, a quick review of country office project documents revealed that most do not contain linkages to other projects.

The potential for synergies across the clusters is significant, given that the country office is implementing projects with shared objectives. For example, the “Strengthening Human Security in the Remote Chiefdoms of Gbense, Soa and Kamara in Kono District of Sierra Leone” project from the Governance Cluster had a significant number of activities focused on entrepreneurship and business development for youth and women, similar in nature to interventions under the SLED cluster. Work on youth empowerment under the Governance Cluster

¹³⁷ Indicators used in the report are transactional and activity-focused, such as the number of consultants hired, number of stakeholders consulted, etc. They are not based on a theory of change.

is complementary to the work on youth economic empowerment under the SLED Cluster. Human security and social cohesion are intrinsically linked to economic development, yet activities in these areas are not well integrated. Overall, the ICPE found limited evidence of joint activities across the clusters.

Finding 14. The country programme continues to experience significant delivery challenges in this programme cycle. Late approval of the AWP, operations capacity and the restrictions introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic have been the key factors.

The country programme has experienced delivery challenges. In the last two years, the overall delivery rate has been low (96 percent in 2020, 80 percent in 2021 and 51 percent in 2022 as of 31 December), with execution generally rushed in the last quarter of the year. For instance, according to CPD Board minutes, the delivery rate as of 30 June 2021 was merely 14 percent, and by 31 August only 24 percent. For 2022, by April, the delivery without commitment was at 11 percent of the annual budget and by mid-October, 35 percent. Programme documentation shows that weak delivery has been a central issue in the CPD Steering Committee discussions.

One significant challenge is the late approval of AWPs, and subsequently the late start of implementation. Interviews with country programme staff confirmed that, in 2022, substantial implementation did not start until the second quarter or even the second half of the year. The rush to deliver in the last quarter of the year risks undermining programme accountability and results orientation. According to CPD Board minutes of December 2020 and August 2021, discussions took place on realigning the unused resources. In the latter, faced with the risk of losing core funding in the event of the delivery rate not reaching 40 percent at the end of the month, the Board decided to reallocate all unused core in the style of a basket fund, to accelerate the delivery of activities. Resources were redirected to existing high-performing projects.

These delivery challenges are indicative of capacity and management challenges that have hampered the efficiency of programme implementation. These problems have been inherited from the previous programme cycle and the previous country office management. The country office lacked an operations manager, a key position for the oversight of procurement, recruitment, financial management and other key functions. Several ICPE stakeholders from government institutions, CSOs and communities identified the problem of delays in administrative and financial processes, which have consequently delayed project activities. The issue of implementation delays was also brought up by community groups during site visits for this ICPE, and identified in project annual reports. The November 2021 audit of the Sierra Leone country office identified several issues in procurement and delays in processing payments, indicating inadequate management and supervision capacity in the country office. These challenges are also confirmed by other sources, such as monitoring visits undertaken by donors and project evaluations.

The change of management in 2021 resulted in some positive effects for the country office. The new management recognizes the challenges faced by the country office and has taken some important steps to address the shortcomings. The country office has on-boarded an oversight and compliance specialist for the operations team, and an external expert is being recruited to review the operations system and procedures and provide recommendations for a thorough overhaul. The positive changes happening in the country office were recognized by several national stakeholders and development partners involved in this ICPE.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on UNDP programme activities in Sierra Leone during the current programme cycle. Travel limitations, lockdowns and restrictions on mass gatherings delayed the implementation of a range of activities that required interpersonal contact and direct dialogue with government counterparts. The country office was quick to switch key meetings and events to virtual or hybrid formats. However, at the local level where internet connectivity is weak, programme activities

were cancelled or significantly delayed.¹³⁸ Seasonal time-bound farming activities were also delayed, as agricultural group work was strongly discouraged in Sierra Leone. The pandemic also affected activities that involved international travel and the input of international experts. Furthermore, a rise in fuel prices increased transaction costs through productivity losses, transportation costs and energy shortages.

Finding 15. UNDP has actively partnered with the Government and CSOs for programme implementation. Some partners raised concerns about the capacity of CSO implementing partners utilized by UNDP, pointing to the need for measures to improve programme monitoring and accountability. Engagement with the private sector is limited to small-scale activities.

UNDP is one of the country's leading development partners with high visibility among communities, government institutions and CSOs. UNDP has actively involved government and civil society stakeholders in programme implementation, which has overall improved national ownership. However, representatives of government institutions and development partners interviewed for this ICPE voiced the need for greater involvement of their experts in the design of UNDP programmes and projects.

The engagement of CSOs in this programme cycle seems to have increased, compared to the previous CPD cycle. UNDP has engaged CSOs as implementing partners in various projects, in particular those with operations at the local level. This has given them voice and enabled them to participate in governance processes, especially in the areas of human rights and social cohesion. CSOs have played an important role in assessing the implementation of UPR recommendations, preventing and mitigating conflicts between communities and mining companies, and raising awareness on SGBV. As part of the COVID-19 response, UNDP supported five CBOs and NGOs and 65 PwD organizations to deliver COVID-19 prevention measures in eight districts, resulting in the formation of social mobilization committees which raised awareness on the pandemic.

However, there are challenges that require further attention from the country office. ICPE interviewees raised concerns about the use of implementing partners, especially CSOs, as contractors for the implementation of programme activities. Stakeholder concerns included a lack of variety in the selection of contractors, resulting in the use of the same implementing partners over time and across activities. Some ICPE participants suggested that the country office needs to diversify the CSOs it engages. Furthermore, challenges related to the quality of work of some implementing partners and their timely submission of work plans have been raised in CPD Steering Committee meetings, indicating a need for more rigorous monitoring and oversight by the country office.

Some partners raised concerns about the capacity of CSO implementing partners utilized by UNDP. Though UNDP has improved the capacity of CSOs to engage communities, work with youth, advocate for gender equality, provide legal aid, etc., their capacities remain weak. CSOs in Sierra Leone are largely reliant on donor funding for their existence. To make civil society contributions sustainable, there is a need to establish mechanisms that ensure the financial sustainability of CSOs independently of donor support. This is an area where UNDP can play a major role, given its engagement with civil society.

The engagement of the private sector in the current programme cycle has been limited and, overall, UNDP does not have a strategy for private sector engagement. Interaction has been at the level of community development, where UNDP has supported youth and women in establishing small businesses. UNDP supported a baseline mapping of private sector businesses in 12 chiefdoms, five of which were encouraged

¹³⁸ For example, bringing together beneficiaries of the "Mitigating localized resource-based conflicts and increasing community resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba districts of Sierra Leone" project was hampered by the imposition of curfews and limits on public gatherings.

to provide internships for youths. UNDP also engaged the private sector in promoting innovation and local development solutions. In the Governance Cluster, the “Mitigating Conflict” project has involved mining companies to mitigate conflict over mining resources. Despite the small scale of the private sector, stakeholders considered that UNDP has the opportunity to tap more effectively into the resources and potential of the private sector in the next programme cycle.

UNDP collaborated with national implementing partners for programme implementation. According to financial data extracted by IEO, about 34 percent of the total country programme expenditure from 2020 to the end of 2022 was delivered by national implementation partners. According to the country office, 82 percent of this expenditure was implemented by government partners and 18 percent by CSOs.

Finding 16. UNDP has actively engaged with country-level United Nations coordination structures and participated in joint projects with other United Nations agencies. However, the planning and implementation of joint projects requires stronger collaboration with other United Nations agencies. UNDP has actively assisted the Government of Sierra Leone with the coordination of development partners, contributing to development effectiveness in the country. Closer engagement with development partners at the technical level could have benefited the programme.

UNDP has actively participated in United Nations country team structures, and has led some of them in areas where it has greater programmatic engagement. ICPE interviewees indicated that UNDP has been a key participant in structures including the Gender Thematic Group, Youth Task Team, Disability Inclusion Group, M&E Group, United Nations Network on Migration, Operational Management Team, Programme Management Team, and Socioeconomic Crisis Response Group. UNDP has led the UNSDCF Result Group 2 on Transformational Governance, and made substantive contributions to peacebuilding and human rights. One key example is the UNDP support for the preparation of the report to the Human Rights Council for the third cycle of the UPR of Sierra Leone’s performance on the protection of human rights.

UNDP has engaged in joint United Nations projects in the areas of social cohesion, human security, SDG financing and disability inclusion.¹³⁹ However, joint projects have been more the result of financial incentives created by funding entities such as PBF and HSTF, rather than systematic joint programming and implementation. Even when joint programming has taken place, implementation has been siloed, with each agency taking care of its own portion of the project. For example, the final evaluation of the PBF-funded “Mitigating localized resource-based conflicts and increasing community resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba districts of Sierra Leone” project noted that “both UNDP and WFP worked with different categories of beneficiaries and the outcomes of the project were viewed as two separate interventions from the perspective of communities.”¹⁴⁰

Interviews for this ICPE indicated that UNDP could do more to strengthen collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies. Interviewees indicated that meetings with other United Nations agencies to discuss joint programmes such as the PBF-funded projects do not take place on a regular basis. Also, information sharing is not effective, which leads to compartmentalized knowledge about projects that are implemented together. Several representatives of United Nations agencies interviewed for this ICPE noted challenges in coordination, especially for implementation at subnational level, where there is no clear agenda and multiple actors operate with limited coordination.

¹³⁹ Joint projects with FAO—Human Security Project, WFP—Mitigating, UNFPA/FAO—Youth at Risk, UNICEF/WFP—Disability Inclusion, UNCDF—SDGs financing.

¹⁴⁰ WFP, UNDP and PBF (2022) Draft Endline Evaluation of the project: Mitigating Localised Resource-Based Conflicts and Increasing Community Resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba Districts of Sierra Leone.

Under the SLED Cluster, while UNDP has collaborated with United Nations agencies within the country team structures, it has not worked with other agencies in the design and implementation of the activities in the same sectors. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is working on the development of a land policy for Sierra Leone. Although the International Fund for Agricultural Development is working on GEF-funded projects as well as on natural resource management and sustainable agricultural development, UNDP did not attempt to work with them in disseminating the land policy or testing and scaling up innovative energy and climate resilient technologies, thus missing an opportunity to jointly achieve higher levels of outcome.

UNDP has supported MoPED in establishing the coordination infrastructure for development effectiveness. In this context, it has supported the Ministry to convene the quarterly DEPAC meetings, which development partners have found particularly useful for aid coordination (See Finding 6).¹⁴¹

At a thematic level, UNDP has an inherent comparative advantage in the coordination of development assistance due to the broad nature of the CPD, and in particular the governance programme. UNDP has actively participated in the Governance and Accountability Working Group, a structure that brings together development partners operating in the governance sector. In the area of electoral support, UNDP clearly has a comparative advantage and its coordinating role is appreciated by development partners. UNDP has established strong collaboration with development partners, convened meetings of the Elections Steering Committee and been an observer of the European Union National Election Commission Technical Committee on Electoral Reforms (See Finding 2). In the area of parliamentary support, UNDP has established a good working relationship with the European Union, cooperating and sharing information on a regular basis with their team (See Finding 2).

Despite the role that UNDP has played in the coordination of development assistance in Sierra Leone, there is room for improvement and higher visibility. Some ICPE interviewees pointed out that UNDP could be more active, structured and strategic in networking with development partners, especially at the technical level. For example, in the area of local governance and development, UNDP needs to coordinate more closely with the European Union, which has substantive operations at the subnational level. UNDP also needs to share more information with development partners on its work on civil registration. Furthermore, some development partners see UNDP as well-positioned to play a more prominent role as an intermediary between them and government institutions. In some areas where UNDP has substantial involvement, such as local governance and social cohesion, it can play a more active role in the coordination of development assistance.

Finding 17. Results-based programme management remains a challenge for the country programme due to an inadequate M&E system. Institutional memory has been limited by inadequate information management tools and systems, combined with high staff turnover. Oversight structures do not operate as effectively as planned. The country office has recently taken positive steps to strengthen its results-based programming.

In the present programme cycle, UNDP Sierra Leone has made efforts to ground programme management in results and evidence. However, a key observation of this ICPE is that the programme lacks reliable and consistent data collection and frameworks for analysis, exacerbated by the limited availability of data and statistics at the national level. For most of the country programme cycle, the country office did not have a functional results framework to consolidate the data collection frameworks of all projects and enable

¹⁴¹ The DEPAC forum is the main forum that brings together Government and development partners to discuss development effectiveness issues. Themes for each DEPAC meeting are agreed on between Government and the United Nations Resident Coordinator, representing development partners represented.

the monitoring of results at CPD level. Country office monitoring activities take place primarily at the project level, based on project documents and associated results frameworks agreed with the respective donors. Only recently, after the recruitment of an M&E specialist in 2022, did the country office formulate a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and a framework for tracking CPD indicators and targets.¹⁴²

Country office project monitoring is limited to the implementation of activities and the achievement of outputs. The country office reports information on the achievement of physical and financial targets, but not on the outcomes and effects of project interventions. Available results frameworks and AWPAs examined for this ICPE reveal weaknesses related to the quality of indicators used and data collected. For example, the country office needs to collect better disaggregated data for several key activity areas (e.g., trainings, human rights complaints, etc.). There is also a need for more meaningful indicators on the quality and effect of programme interventions (e.g., on how local councils are performing, whether courts are dealing with SGBV cases adequately, etc.). Progress reports are crafted primarily at the project level and primarily intended for the donors who fund the activities. Reporting is absent at the cluster level, though some portfolio-level reporting exists, making it hard to paint a clear picture of what is being achieved at the level of the cluster.

The country office has struggled with the production of CPD-level annual reports for an external audience. The country office annual reports for 2020 and 2021 were completed only recently (after initiation of this ICPE) and have yet to be published on the country office website. For the most part, country office annual reports (both internal and external) do not report on CPD indicators and targets. Reporting is primarily done through narratives at the activity level, with insufficient focus on results grounded in clearly framed outcome indicators. ICPE interviewees indicated that reporting is done in silos, with each project team contributing their own portion of reporting, which is subsequently stitched together at the CPD level without any meaningful discussion of how these activities relate to each other and contribute to shared outcomes.

There is a need for a well-organized system for the collection, storage and organization of programme information, which presented a challenge for the conduct of this ICPE. Until recently, the country office had no systems in place for storing and managing country programme information. To collect the documentary evidence necessary for the ICPE, the country office had to undertake a time-consuming process of tracing documents from various current and former staff members.¹⁴³ A similar situation was identified in the previous ICPE, as well as in the audit of the country office that took place in November 2021 and encountered the same challenge.¹⁴⁴ High staff turnover has led to weak institutional memory, as newly-hired staff are not aware of the historical background of projects.¹⁴⁵ Country office staff noted that recently some efforts have started to systemize documentation from 2021 on the office SharePoint.

The country office did not upload an evaluation plan to the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre until this was pointed out by the ICPE team. All project evaluations conducted in this cycle were for GEF-funded projects in the SLED cluster. Evaluative work in the governance sector is limited, with only one evaluation managed by WFP for a joint project conducted under the Governance Cluster in the current cycle. Some portfolio-level evaluations were planned at the time of the ICPE. Of the three project evaluations commissioned by country office, two were quality assured, both with a score of 4 (moderately satisfactory).

¹⁴² UNDP Sierra Leone (2022) Consolidated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

¹⁴³ For certain activities, information was simply not available. For example, information on the global "Legal Identity for All" project was not available at the country level, indicating a lack of proper systems for coordination and transfer of information.

¹⁴⁴ The audit draft report highlights a series of challenges with regards to how financial and administrative information is collected, stored, organized and utilized by the country office.

¹⁴⁵ Staff members in key positions in the country office have changed only recently. This includes the Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative, M&E Officer, Head of Governance Cluster, portfolio leads, etc.

Some of the reasons for the M&E challenges listed above are structural. For example, the country office lacked a dedicated M&E specialist from September 2021 until the position was filled in early 2022. Interviews conducted by the ICPE revealed that the vacancy of this position not only affected the country office M&E activities, but also UNDP reporting and collaboration at United Nations country team level.

The CPD Board exercises oversight of the country programme implementation. The Board consists of senior executives (key government partners), senior stakeholders (key civil society partners) and senior development partners (key donors, bilateral/multilateral actors). The Board is supposed to meet twice per year, in addition to ad hoc meetings, but in reality, the meetings have not taken place with regularity. The minutes of the December 2020 meeting indicated that the following Board meeting would be organized in early 2021 to approve the annual work plan and budget. However, the first meeting in 2021 did not take place until July, and the minutes of that meeting did not include any discussion of the AWP, but focused mainly on the issue of low delivery. An *ad hoc* meeting took place one month later, in August 2021, to monitor the delivery of the country programme. No board meetings took place between August 2021 and August 2022.

The country office has established cluster committees that comprise representatives of government agencies, donor organizations and CSOs. The cluster steering committees are mandated to provide strategic guidance for the programme, approve programme results and targets, identify lessons learned and advocate for the programme, and is expected to ensure synergies with other clusters and alignment with the UNSDCF. Portfolio boards are designed to provide a forum for the coordination of portfolio activities, discussion of implementation challenges at the technical level and documentation of best practices and lessons learned, and to update the relevant cluster steering committee on portfolio activities.

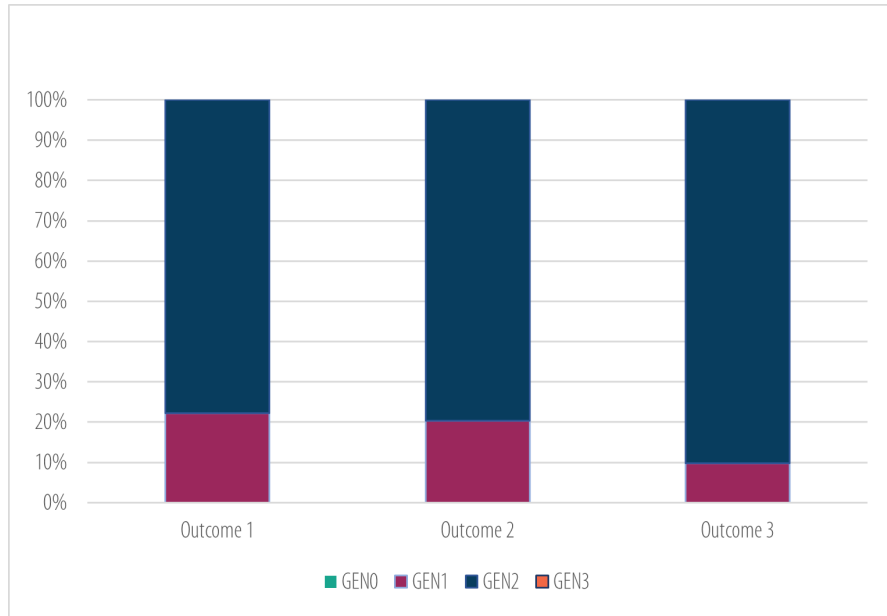
The country office has experienced challenges with the functioning of these structures. ICPE interviewees noted that cluster and portfolio boards do not meet regularly and are not well attended, although partly this has been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. When they meet, their focus is mainly on the approval of workplans and budgets, rather than providing the programme with a strategic vision or ensuring accountability. Portfolio boards have not engaged with each other and have not contributed to strong synergies between portfolios. Some staff members are not fully aware of what is happening outside of their portfolio or project, a sign that coordination needs to be strengthened within clusters. Several national counterparts interviewed for the ICPE seemed unaware of these structures. Furthermore, information about what was discussed and decided in these meetings is generally missing or incomplete. There is clearly a need for better management of records and information in the country office.

Finding 18. UNDP has contributed to improving women’s participation in livelihoods and social cohesion activities and to combatting violence against women and girls. However, there is no project with a primary purpose for GEWE in this programme cycle.

In the current CPD cycle, the country office has taken several measures to improve gender mainstreaming in its programme. The previous country office Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2021) has been revised to align with the UNDP Global Gender Strategy 2022–2025. The country office has recruited a gender analyst, who serves as the gender focal point and is also a member of the United Nations Gender Thematic Group. The gender analyst examines all project documents to ensure the mainstreaming of gender. UNDP has played a key role in the United Nations Gender Thematic Group, which in this cycle has focused on mitigating gender inequalities within the national COVID-19 response.

As a result, 80 percent of programme expenditure was for activities with a significant contribution to gender equality (Gender Marker 2). However, the country office is lacking in activities with a primary purpose for GEWE (Gender Marker 3), and at the time of this ICPE there had been no expenditure with Gender Marker 3 in this programme cycle.¹⁴⁶

FIGURE 10. Expenditure by gender marker per outcome



UNDP has contributed to GEWE in multiple ways. At policy level, UNDP has supported the development of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy, which informed the GEWE Bill which was enacted into law in November 2022. UNDP supported the amendment of the law on Sexual Offences to increase protection for women and girls. The revised Criminal Procedure Act integrated women’s needs and interests relating to the proceedings of arrest and court adjudication for lactating, pregnant and illiterate women. UNDP has also supported the formulation of recommendations and actions for promoting the equal representation of women which informed the electoral roadmap, the GEWE Bill and the review of the Political Party Registration Act.

At subnational level, UNDP supported the assessment and capacity development for addressing SGBV. It also supported a gender needs assessment in Kono District. A quantitative ethnographic study of the drivers and enablers of SGBV was conducted in partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone in 2021. UNDP supported the development of a community referral pathway, and improved the knowledge of 40 CSO representatives from 16 districts and chiefdoms (21 men; 19 women) to support the referral and redress of SGBV matters from remote communities, working closely with traditional authorities and local institutions of redress.¹⁴⁷ UNDP has supported the training of 100 managers of correctional institutions and centres (73 men, 27 women) on the application of the “Mandela Rule”, which improved the auditing system of male and female inmates by taking into account their sex.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ The country office informed the ICPE team that a GEN3 project has been developed and approved for PBF funding at the end of 2022 to be implemented in 2023 and 2024.

¹⁴⁷ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) Rule of Law Annual Report 2021.

¹⁴⁸ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) ROAR 2021.

UNDP activities have promoted the livelihoods of women and their households. UNDP supported the design of adaptation strategies for alternative livelihoods to strengthen the resilience of women and youth associations on the coastal zone to climate change impact. Women have been involved in income-generation activities of UNDP projects, as well as in capacity building. For instance, to enhance innovative enterprises and diversify livelihoods, UNDP provided training to women and youth entrepreneurs on financial literacy and business development skills, as well as business coaching, mentorship and access to finance, all aimed at improving business and economic opportunities for the women entrepreneurs and their households (see Findings 8 and 9).

UNDP interventions helped to increase the representation of women and youth in community structures for social cohesion. Through awareness raising and empowerment, women's participation and responsiveness increased in addressing conflicts and issues emerging within communities and between mining companies and communities. Most of the communities interviewed for this ICPE noted that the inclusion of women had been a main feature of the community structures established with the support of UNDP. UNDP has also supported training sessions to boost women's empowerment, thereby accelerating their participation in leadership and decision-making processes in their communities. Women peace ambassadors were trained to identify early warning signs of conflict. With funding from the Norwegian Government, UNDP supported all 16 female Members of the Sierra Leone Parliament to organize over 300 district stakeholder engagements on breaking the silence on women, peace and security issues.¹⁴⁹ Whilst efforts have been made to increase women's participation in peacebuilding, the local institutions that promote peace and security are not yet inclusive and supportive of gender equality. Further improving the gender balance of these local institutions will be key to enhancing an institutional culture that promotes inclusive peace and gender equality. The country office is well positioned to support the Government to further develop the knowledge base on GEWE for policymaking, budgeting and M&E to be grounded more firmly in evidence and data disaggregated by sex. This will require stronger engagement and partnership with the executive branch of the Government.

2.4. Country programme performance ratings

The following table provides an overview of the performance of the country programme, using the five internationally agreed evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and a set of parameters for each. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest.¹⁵⁰ This rating table should be read keeping in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings.

¹⁴⁹ UNDP Sierra Leone (2021) 2020 annual report (draft shared by country office).

¹⁵⁰ 4=Fully Achieved/Exceeds Expectations; 3=Mostly Achieved; 2=Partially Achieved; 1=Not Achieved.

TABLE 1: COUNTRY PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/Justification
1. RELEVANCE	3	
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	4	The UNDP country programme is aligned with national development priorities and strategies, the UNSDCF and the UNDP Strategic Plan. UNDP was quick to adapt to changing demands due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme emphasized gender equality and youth inclusion. However, there is no project with the primary purpose of GEWE in this programme cycle. South-south cooperation is not prominent.
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/UNDP goals	3	
1.C. Relevance of programme priorities	3	
2. COHERENCE	2	
2.A. Internal programme coherence	2	While the country office made efforts to adopt a portfolio approach, there are inconsistencies in how the programme is formulated and implemented, and inadequate staff understanding of the programme logic. Project interventions are not well integrated within and across the clusters. UNDP developed sound partnerships with government counterparts and actively participated in the United Nations country team and joint programmes. CSOs are engaged primarily to implement project activities. Collaboration with IFIs and the private sector remains limited.
2.B. External programme coherence	2	
3. EFFICIENCY	2	
3.A. Timeliness	2	Multiple challenges have frustrated programme implementation, including inconsistent programming and reporting, gaps in programme implementation due to funding shortfalls, the design and implementation of projects in silos, and limited collaboration across clusters. Resource mobilization and results-based management continue to be challenging, despite recent improvements. The country office does not have a strong monitoring and evaluation system, adequate information management tools or effective functioning of oversight structures. Delivery remains a significant concern for this programme cycle.
3.B. Management and operational efficiency	2	

◀ Table 1 (cont'd)

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/Justification
4. EFFECTIVENESS	3	
4.A. Achievement/eventual achievement of stated outputs and outcomes	3	<p>The UNDP governance programme has provided support to key State institutions, such as the Parliament, HRCSL, the judiciary, ministries and local authorities, as well as media and CSOs. It has contributed to improvements in key governance processes, the rule of law, human rights and access to justice. Nevertheless, the scope and size of the governance programme has been on a declining trend, with resources spread thinly across many areas of work. UNDP provided important support to MoPED for development planning, aid coordination and SDG localization. Concrete results were also achieved in the areas of disaster risk management and livelihood interventions, including support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite appearance in the CPD, UNDP support for natural resource management has been limited in this programme cycle. UNDP actively promoted the inclusion of women, youth and PwD in economic and social interventions. There have been increasing efforts to promote local innovations. For these efforts to become impactful, an efficient and systematic approach to upscaling is required.</p>
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	3	
4.C. Prioritization of gender equality and women's empowerment	3	
4.D. Prioritization of development innovation	2	
5. SUSTAINABILITY	2	
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	<p>UNDP promoted national ownership, but the capacity of local institutions and CSOs remains low. UNDP has promoted sustainability through institutionalization, but the future of some of the community structures introduced by UNDP interventions after the completion of UNDP support remains uncertain. There is limited evidence of initiatives being scaled up by national partners. UNDP supported the Government in areas of aid coordination and development financing, but collaboration with IFIs in this area has been limited. Private sector financing, and collaboration with the private sector in general, have been limited in this programme cycle.</p>
5.B. Financing for development	3	

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Sierra Leone, along with the recommendations and management response.

3.1. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The UNDP programme for Sierra Leone has addressed the development priorities of the country and made important contributions in areas such as social cohesion, human rights, parliamentary development, SDG localization and disaster risk management. It has promoted the inclusion and empowerment of women, youth and persons with disabilities. However, coherent planning and synergies across portfolios and clusters have not been sufficiently promoted in the current programming practices.

UNDP Sierra Leone closely aligned its programming with the country's development priorities as presented in the MTNDP and other national policies, United Nations frameworks and the SDG instruments. UNDP work to assist the Government to strengthen the systems for development coordination, aid effectiveness and SDG implementation is highly strategic. UNDP has provided crucial contributions to flagship policy instruments such as the MTNDP, VNR, UPR and INFF, among others, that anchor key principles of sustainable development into the country's policy and development framework.

The UNDP Inclusive and Democratic Governance Cluster has provided support to key State institutions, such as Parliament, HRCSL, the judiciary, ministries and local governments, as well as media and CSOs. This work has contributed to improvements in key governance processes, the rule of law, human rights and access to justice. However, the governance programme has been underfunded. The scope and size of the governance programme has been on a declining trend, with resources spread thinly across many areas of work. Local governance support has been an emerging theme in the current programme cycle, which is expected to increase in intensity in the near future. UNDP support for the upcoming 2023 general elections is of critical importance.

The UNDP Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster has made important contributions to strengthening the policy framework and capacity of national institutions for disaster risk management and livelihoods promotion, especially in coastal areas. However, UNDP programming did not adequately adopt the resilience approach to promote the nexus between reducing environmental vulnerability, building disaster resilience and poverty eradication, despite this being emphasized in the CPD. UNDP support for natural resource management has been limited in this programme cycle. UNDP has increasingly promoted innovation in the context of entrepreneurship development and local development solutions, but work in this area needs to be scaled up if substantive impact is to be achieved.

The country office acted in a timely and flexible manner to provide support to the COVID-19 response. UNDP programming has a strong focus on promoting the inclusion of youth and PwD and mainstreaming GEWE in its activities.

Despite the intention to integrate planning and programme management at the portfolio level, the full potential of the portfolio approach remains unrealized. Current programming practices have not been coherent or based on clearly and soundly articulated theories of change. Gaps exist in achieving portfolio-level objectives due to lack of funding, and interventions continue to be fragmented and organized around small-scale projects. Planning and programme design are still done in silos. Synergies within and across portfolios and clusters has not been adequately explored, especially at the subnational level. The area-based approach for local development, emphasized in the CPD, has not been properly utilized in programme implementation.

Conclusion 2. UNDP continues to experience significant programme management issues, including delivery challenges and weaknesses in results-based management.

Delivery remains a significant concern in this programme cycle. Delivery challenges resulting from factors such as the late approval of the AWP, operations capacity and the restrictions introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, have slowed down programme implementation. The country office needs stronger management practices that enable it to quickly identify and address problems and bottlenecks. The country office has lacked key positions such as the operations manager and M&E officer for a prolonged period. This has resulted in inadequate accountability and delivery problems, which have become a concern for staff members, national partners and donors.

A serious challenge has been the use of RBM. Multiple systemic issues have been identified throughout this report in relation to the poor quality of data, lack of results frameworks and theories of change, inadequate monitoring of implementing partners, inconsistent reporting, inadequate functioning of programme management structures, among others. The new country office senior management has recently initiated several measures to strengthen accountability and improve RBM practices. Nevertheless, delivery and programme management challenges remain significant for UNDP Sierra Leone and will require continued attention and substantial efforts to address them.

Conclusion 3. Financial sustainability remains a major challenge for UNDP, as resource mobilization has been characterized by limited diversification and insufficient identification of opportunities. The programme has relied on a few donors and the use of UNDP core resources. Recent efforts of the country office have indicated a positive trend in improving donor relationships and programme funding. The country office has engaged the Government and civil society in programme implementation, and actively participated in the United Nations country team and joint programmes. Partnerships with IFIs and the private sector have been limited.

Continued challenges to financial sustainability are visible in the country office resource mobilization results. The programme relies on a few donors and the use of core resources. Besides the diminished donor space, weak performance of UNDP in delivery, programme management, reporting and communication have raised concerns among development partners and thus contributed to the decline in resource mobilization results.

The country office has recently taken steps in the right direction to address this challenge, which have already yielded some positive results. Relationships with donors have significantly improved, especially key donors that have traditionally funded important parts of UNDP work in the country. These efforts will need to be further consolidated in the next programme cycle, especially at the technical level. More efforts will also be needed, especially in building partnerships with IFIs and, where possible, the private sector, which have been limited in this programme cycle.

UNDP has partnered with government institutions and CSOs for programme implementation. Stakeholders voiced the need for more engagement of subnational governments. CSO capacity and financial sustainability remains low. UNDP has engaged in country-level United Nations coordination structures and participated in joint projects, but the planning and implementation of joint projects requires stronger collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

3.2. Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP Sierra Leone should improve the coherence of its programming approach and strengthen cross-sector collaboration and synergy. In particular, UNDP should strengthen its programming approach for resilience building and governance sector support. UNDP should further its efforts in promoting local development in collaboration with local governments and other actors operating at subnational level.

The country office should ensure greater clarity and coherence in programming at the levels of CPD, cluster, portfolio and project. UNDP should clearly articulate a strategic framework and operation approach for resilience building in the context of Sierra Leone, connecting the various areas of UNDP support in reducing environmental vulnerability, building disaster resilience and eradicating poverty. A comprehensive theory of change should be developed in this regard, showing an impact pathway across themes as diverse as disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, environment, adaptation to climate change, management of solid waste and the promotion of livelihoods.

UNDP should articulate a clear strategy for its Governance Cluster, building on the experience gained in supporting central and local level governments, the judiciary and HRCSL. It should further support Sierra Leone to address SGBV, the conditions of detention centres, public sector transparency and accountability and youth violence. UNDP should involve national and subnational government entities more actively in the formulation and design of its programme and interventions.

UNDP is uniquely positioned to contribute to local development and community resilience in a cross-sectoral fashion. It should adopt an area-based approach to strengthen the synergy of its activities at the subnational level where both clusters have ongoing interventions. Local governance, justice, peace and social cohesion interventions should be further integrated with interventions focused on local economic development, natural resource management, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and inclusion and empowerment of women, youth and PwD. UNDP should strengthen its collaboration with district councils for formulating district-level development plans and assist local governments in implementing these plans. There is also potential to strengthen coordination with other United Nations agencies at subnational level, where multiple agencies currently operate with limited coordination.

The country office should strengthen the logic it uses for the organization of projects and activities under portfolios based on well-developed theories of change, and communicate it more clearly to staff and partners. For the design of the theories of change, the country office should reassess programme priorities and realistically consider funding opportunities, so that the strategic objectives of the portfolios may be coherently achieved with the available resources. UNDP should incentivize joint project design at the portfolio level, within and across the clusters, based on meaningful discussions and the contributions of all relevant staff members with different experience and expertise. The country office should more effectively identify opportunities for cooperation and synergy between projects across clusters. The country office should also establish procedures which allow for more effective engagement of representatives from the Government, civil society and development partners in the design of projects and programmes.

Strengthening programme coordination structures will also contribute to the cohesion of the programme. The country office should improve the functioning of structures such as the cluster steering committees and portfolio boards, operationalizing them more effectively as instruments that create synergies within and across portfolios. The country office should also encourage more active participation of national partners in these structures.

Management response: Partially Accepted

The country office partially accepts this recommendation. With support from the UNDP Regional Service Centre, steps have already been taken to review United Nations Sierra Leone projects and programmes and develop portfolios. The review team will develop the theory of change and revise programme documents by engaging national and subnational governments, development partners, and beneficiaries for extensive consultations on the process. The internal review of the SLED Cluster already took place in June 2022 with the involvement of all programme colleagues. The portfolio development is ongoing. A similar assessment was done for the Governance Cluster, and the report is submitted with recommendations which are guiding the development of a portfolio document.

For most of the projects under the Governance Cluster, a consultative approach involving the national and subnational governments has been the guiding principle in designing and approving projects. Partners like the Human Rights Commission and justice institutions have participated in such coordination forums. UNDP has made joint efforts to address SGBV through support to enact the Sexual Offences Act 2012 and its amendment in 2019. The work will continue to address gender-based violence, conditions of detention centres, public sector transparency and accountability, and violence.

The Sierra Leone country office has taken steps to build synergies among clusters in 2023 AWP. During the 2023 AWP exercise, the country office has dedicated extra effort to streamline the AWP along aligned impact areas and identified cross-thematic synergies to be better harnessed at the implementation level. These synergies will especially speak to the area-based approach but also create micro-macro linkages between local and national-level interventions, which support sustained impact. In support of district councils, the country office accepts the recommendation and will take necessary steps to adopt an area-based approach to support local development and community resilience. To strengthen subnational government through an area-based approach, the country office has supported the local councils in developing strategic and M&E plans. In 2023, the country office will further capacitate the M&E officers across the 22 local councils. UNDP contributed to revenue generation at the district level, which is crucial to the success of implementing efficient district-level development plans and the sustainability of the decentralization programme of the government of Sierra Leone. In collaboration with the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce and the Fiscal Decentralization Unit of the Ministry of Finance, UNDP supported the NRA to improve tax compliance and revenue generation in the informal sector. The training also includes hands-on training in revenue and expenditure forecasting, collection strategies, and reporting for fiduciary staff of local councils. The United Nations country team has formed a task team to review the current working approach and take steps to strengthen coordination with other United Nations agencies.

The country office accepts the recommendation on strengthening the programme coordination structures and will adopt an integrated approach for designing and implementing interventions, including the participation of national partners. In the leadership of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, and in collaboration with United Nations agencies and development partners, UNDP has taken steps to revise the programme coordination structures.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Finalize the development of portfolio documents for SLED and Governance clusters	2023.12.31	SLED, Governance and Strategic Advisory Unit (SAU)		

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.2 Review the Rule Law, Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion Portfolio AWP 2023 to integrate interventions that address gender-based violence and continue support to improve conditions of detention service, issues of youth violence, public sector accountability, and transparency wherever possible	2023.02.28	Governance, PSU		
1.3 Build synergies across its programme by ensuring joint programme planning and reviews to foster coherence and clarity in programme design	2023.12.31	SLED, Governance, and SAU		
1.4 Review the member of programme coordination structures to ensure the active participation of national partners	2023.12.31	PSU, SLED, Governance, and SAU		
1.5 Use the study on the Community-Based Social Protection Mechanisms (CBSPMs) in the borderlands of Liberia and Sierra Leone to advocate for and to strengthen social protection for the borderland communities, analyse factors that could increase the resilience of the communities and CBSPOs, the sustainability of their operations, enhance communities' participation in local governance, identify practices and innovations to scale up and inform inclusive and integrated programmatic solutions in this area	2023.12.31	SAU		
1.6 Undertake the Voluntary Local Reviews (subnational review) to empower and support local authorities and communities in monitoring, implementing, and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals	2023.12.31	SAU		

RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP Sierra Leone should strengthen the programme management and accountability practices for the execution of the country programme. The country office needs to make increased efforts to address implementation barriers and ground the management of the programme more soundly in results and evidence.

The country office management should give utmost priority to timely completion of the AWP, tracking programme delivery more rigorously and proactively addressing delays and implementation bottlenecks. The country office should strengthen the monitoring of programme implementation and institute solid accountability processes. The country office should establish stricter monitoring of the quality of the work of the implementing partners and strengthen their accountability. The country office should also provide implementing partners with greater capacity-development support.

The country office should establish a strong M&E system for its activities and results, in a consistent fashion at all levels (CPD, cluster, portfolio and project). The country office should record project information consistently in UNDP systems. The country office should improve its results framework with more meaningful indicators that will provide a better picture of the results being achieved, and establish clearer baselines and measurements to provide a better understanding of the results it is achieving. The country office should further consolidate the data collection frameworks for all projects under one framework, to enable the monitoring of results at CPD level. The country office should continue to improve its SharePoint for the collection, storage and sharing of programme information.

The country office should strengthen reporting at all programme levels and ensure that reporting is carried out consistently and regularly and shared with partners in a timely manner. The country office should institute a clear and integrated process for the timely production of annual reports at the CPD level, through the coordinated contribution of all programme teams. These reports should be published in a timely manner on the country office website and disseminated to stakeholders. Reporting should be results-based and informed by clearly articulated outcome indicators.

Management response: **Partially Accepted**



The country office partially accepts the recommendation on timely completion of the AWP, tracking programme delivery, and addressing any delivery bottlenecks. The country office has been discussing delivery issues in a senior management meeting on a weekly basis and in all programme coordination meetings. As a result, country office delivery improved from 10.7 million in 2021 to 13.3 million in 2022. The delivery was 12.6 million in 2020. The country office has taken steps to improve the monitoring of the programme implementation by ensuring periodic reporting and joint monitoring visits from the ministers and development partners. The country office has been providing technical support to the ministries and departments with full-time staff based in the partner office and will further provide capacity-development support.

The country office has taken steps to improve the monitoring and evaluation system by developing an annual M&E plan and performance indicator tracking table at CPD, portfolio, and project levels. The country office will further strengthen field monitoring, including the use of distance monitoring tools and strengthening periodic reporting. The country office has started incorporating meaningful indicators in the 2023 AWP, and will further consider the review of the result frameworks in portfolio development, ensuring meaningful indicators with baseline and milestones are incorporated in revised portfolio documents. SharePoint is a great platform for information management and digital collaboration, there will continue to be timely publication and dissemination of the Annual Report with clearly articulated outcome-level results.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Put in place a beneficiary feedback system to track and monitor the quality of work of implementing partners	2023.06.30	PSU, SLED, and Governance		
2.2 Develop a result tracker to track the results at project, portfolio, and CPD levels on a regular basis, and build the capacity of partners for results reporting	2023.06.30	PSU, SLED and Governance		
2.3 Develop and publish timely the country office annual report	2023.05.31	Communication, SLED, Governance, SAU and PSU		

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP should further consolidate and expand its partnerships with development partners, IFIs, CSOs and the private sector. Knowledge sharing, coordination and capacity development should be strengthened as integral parts of partnership building.

Recently-achieved resource mobilization results demonstrated that funding opportunities do exist, but UNDP needs to adjust its approach to seek new opportunities more proactively. UNDP should engage with development partners in a more active, structured and strategic manner, especially at the technical level. Although some steps have already been taken by country office management to improve relations with donors, there is a need for a more proactive and strategic approach. To start, UNDP needs to improve its reporting to donors and its programme delivery (see Recommendation 2). Moreover, regular exchange and knowledge sharing should take place at technical level, in addition to existing mechanisms at the senior management level, to increase the visibility of UNDP programmes, improve coordination and stimulate cooperation. Technical-level exchange and knowledge sharing with development partners should be integrated into the country office resource mobilization strategy as efforts to intensify partnership building.

Moreover, the country office is well-positioned to play a more prominent role as an intermediary between development partners and government institutions, especially through its support for MoPED on development effectiveness and SDG financing. This area also has potential for better coordination and collaboration with IFIs.

UNDP should diversify the CSOs it engages in the implementation of the programme and include capacity development and financial sustainability strengthening as central elements of its partnerships with CSOs, beyond the implementation of activities. The country office should establish an overarching coordination mechanism for its collaboration with CSOs which embeds the oversight and handholding functions to be performed by UNDP. The goal is to make civil society contributions more effective and sustainable. This is an area where UNDP can play a major role, given its engagement with civil society.

UNDP should tap more effectively into the resources and potential of the private sector, both as an actor in support of the country's development agenda and as a potential partner in joint activities. As the country office has increasingly been working on entrepreneurship development and the promotion of local innovations, UNDP should work with actors from both public and private sectors to establish an efficient and systematic approach to upscaling, for these efforts to achieve impactful results.

Management response: **Partially Accepted**

The country office partially accepts the recommendation on engagement with development partners for resource mobilization. While the country office is making strategic efforts to strengthen partnerships and mobilize resources, the limited donor presence in the country poses some challenges. Over the life of the CPD, Ireland has contributed \$1.1 million to support programmes. In addition, they have contributed 1.5 million Euro towards the UNDP Election Basket Fund. Other contributors are the European Union (1 million Euro), Canada (1 million Canadian dollars), and Iceland (\$200,000). It is our hope that as we sharpen our programmes, portfolios, and resource mobilization strategy, more donors will come on board to support UNDP. The country office has contributed to enhancing Government-donor relations and strengthening development cooperation for greater effectiveness and alignment with national priorities. UNDP supported the establishment of the Development Assistance Database, updated and used by development partners, Sierra Leone National Development Encyclopaedia, regular publications of development assistance reports used by the Government in the preparation of the national budget and development partners to understand the dynamics of the development finance landscape. It also ensures complementarity by not duplicating interventions in the most needed areas. UNDP Sierra Leone will take steps to improve donor reporting, communication, visibility, and branding.

The country office has a Partnership and Communication Plan in place for strategic engagement with donors and partners and will ensure and enforce regular technical-level exchange and knowledge sharing. UNDP Sierra Leone accepts the recommendation of diversifying the CSOs based on their expertise, building their capacities, and strengthening their functionality. As such, the country office has taken steps in diversifying CSOs to promote electoral awareness for enhancing the participation of voters and vulnerable groups in the electoral process.

The country office further accepts the recommendation to improve partnerships with private and public sectors using the available UNDP instruments. The country office has already taken steps to build partnerships with financial institutions and the private sector, particularly in the ICT sector through the University Innovation Pod Programme. The country office is working closely with financial institutions at a technical level and will further improve the partnership by improving the UNDP programme and operational system with the aim to build mutual trust and confidence.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Publish the knowledge products, disseminate, and organize regular knowledge exchange events	2023.12.31	SAU, SLED, Governance, and PSU		
3.2 Scale up the local innovation and entrepreneurship partnership with the public and private sectors	2023.12.31	Accelerator Lab, SLED, SAU, and Governance		

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/22490>

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix

Annex 3. People Consulted

Annex 4. Documents Consulted

Annex 5. List of Projects

Annex 6. Summary of CPD Indicators and Status as Reported by Country Office

Annex 7. Rating Matrix

Annex 8. Country at a Glance



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

Independent Evaluation Office
United Nations Development Programme
One UN Plaza, DC1-20th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel. +1(646) 781 4200

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