Project Evaluation Series

Evaluation of project “Empowering youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema districts in Sierra Leone”

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Abstract

This report concerns the final evaluation of the project entitled 'Empowering youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts in Sierra Leone'. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach and is based on a set of main evaluation questions that have been developed according to the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability, as well as cross-cutting issues: social and environmental protection, gender mainstreaming, and conflict sensitivity. The results of this evaluation will be used to inform partners, other providers, and beneficiaries on project performance and lessons learned from implementation, and to inform decision-making for consolidating results and planning future interventions. The evaluation found that the project was largely relevant to the institutional and country context. It was implemented in synergy and was coherent with other interventions being undertaken by the implementing agencies and partners. In terms of effectiveness and progress toward impact, the project also helped support the economic and social empowerment of youth at risk and helped strengthen trust between beneficiaries and their communities. However, progress toward impact was impeded somewhat due to delays in finishing infrastructure meant to support community cohesion and youth livelihoods. In terms of efficiency, resources were used appropriately for planned activities in the project document, but delays in payment and construction activities led to cost increases due to inflation. Further, the project design was characterised by extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders that strengthened ownership of the project and increased the likelihood of sustainability. Despite this, the failure to finish and deliver youth livelihood infrastructure, equipment, and other project materials and the absence of clear communication and a well-defined exit strategy to exit the project poses a challenge to sustainability. The report ends with several important recommendations that are to: complete all project activities and engage exit plan, streamline future procurement mechanisms and process, engage systems that encourage local contractors, start drug and alcohol counselling at commencement of project, incorporate mental health and psychosocial counselling, encourage better data collection as part of project monitoring, and consider a longer-term timeframe for programming.

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The evaluation was managed by Aime Dongmo Ngoutsop from the OED and carried out by a team of independent consultants composed of Dariusz Dziewanski (lead evaluator and project theme specialist) and Hindowa Momoh (project theme specialist).

Abbreviations and acronyms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CARL | Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| CYC | Chiefdom Youth Council |
| DYC | District Youth Council |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FBO | farmers-based organisations |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| FINE | Fambul Initiative Network |
| GBV | gender-based violence |
| GoSL | Government of Sierra Leone |
| INGO | international non-governmental organisation |
| KII | key informant interviews |
| LPPB | Local Police Partnership Boards |
| MAFFS | Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security |
| MHPSS | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support |
| MoHS | Ministry of Health and Sanitation |
| MoYA | Ministry of Youth Affairs |
| NaCCED | National Council for Civic Education |
| NAYCOM | National Youth Commission |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| NYP | National Youth Policy |
| ONS | Office for National Security |
| RCO | Resident Coordinator’s Office |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SLCS | Sierra Leone Correctional Service |
| SLP | Sierra Leone Police |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| ToR | Terms of reference |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNSDCF | United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework |
| UN | United Nations |
| VSLA | Village Savings and Loans Associations |

Map of Sierra Leone

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Source: United Nations 2014. *Map of Sierra Leone* [online]. UN Geospatial. Monday, 01 September 2014 [Cited 23 October 2023] <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/sierra-leone>

Executive summary

###### Introduction

1. This report concerns the final evaluation of the project entitled ‘Empowering youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts in Sierra Leone, implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The project was designed to support youth at risk in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts to reintegrate into their community and families, and at the same time, advocate for institutional reforms that address the core question of recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs.
2. The objective of this final evaluation is to determine to what extent the project has achieved the expected results, how and why, were they achieved or not, and to what extent they are sustainable, gender-sensitive, and environmentally friendly. The evaluation is based on a set of main evaluation questions that have been developed in accordance with the following evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, progress toward impact, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation also takes into account cross-cutting issues: social and environmental protection, gender mainstreaming and conflict sensitivity.
3. The evaluation methodology relied on a mixed methods approach. Quantitative methods took the form of an endline survey; a total of 576 surveys were carried out in the four project chiefdoms targeted by the project, across three categories of respondents: 1) youth at risk, 2) general youth, and 3) community stakeholders. Qualitative methods – key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) – were also used to understand the underlying causal and explanatory factors affecting progress toward project outputs and outcomes. A total of 28 KIIs and eighteen FGDs carried out with stakeholders relevant to the project, including representatives of: implementing agencies, government partners, community stakeholder groups, beneficiary groups, etc.

###### Main findings

*Relevance*

1. **Finding 1: The project was largely relevant to the institutional and country context it was implemented in. It was aligned with key government priorities and policies promoting youth empowerment, improving the responsiveness of local institutions, and furthering social cohesion and economic development as a route towards building peace in project chiefdoms.**
2. **Finding 2:** **The project responded to the needs of the beneficiary communities, especially youth at risk.**

*Coherence*

1. Finding 3: The intervention has successfully created coherence with coordinated efforts under the sustainable development agenda, as well as internal coherence with other efforts being undertaken by FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA.

*Effectiveness and progress to impact*

1. **Finding 4. Civic education and counselling were successfully promoted under Output 1.1. and Capacity of District and Chiefdom Youth Councils (DYC and CYC) and local youth groups was strengthened under Output 1.2. Youth at risk beneficiaries feel involved and respected in their various communities and a greater proportion than in the past now believe they can influence decisions in their communities. Also, significantly more youth at risk report participating in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders in their community. However, there are barriers that prevent young people from participating in community activities, including lack of time and for some not feeling welcome or included.**
2. **Finding 5. Beneficiaries, community members and local security providers confirm a decrease in violence among the youth at risk and youth at risk state they would not consider engaging in politically motivated violence due to their participation in community and economic activities.**
3. **Finding 6: Youth at risk have become members of local youth groups and participate in DYC and CYC activities, risk analysis and response dialogue forums, and now believe that structural barriers to their reintegration are removed. They feel more empowered and safer to participate in community mechanisms and activities.**
4. **Finding 7. Increased knowledge towards gender, GBV, and sexual and reproductive health was achieved both with the beneficiary youth and the community members who attended the husband schools. Moreover, enhanced positive parenting, especially among males, was promoted through the husband schools that were established in all the eighteen communities in the target areas.**
5. **Finding 8. National and local institutions improve their response to the needs of youth at risk, through capacity strengthening in human rights, rule of law, negotiation and youth-sensitive approaches to improve their engagement with youth at risk under Output 2.1 and in youth responsive legal frameworks under output 2.2. However, the adoption and application of the procedures were not tracked. Nevertheless, through the project monitoring structures and based on qualitative feedback from youth at risk beneficiaries, youth at risk generally reported feeling of being more respected and considered within their communities and felt that stigma and discrimination decreased. Still, that more than half say they have experienced such infringements on their rights is troubling.**
6. **Finding 9. All three Correctional Service Facilities in Kenema, Magburaka, and Mafanta achieved the target of implementing the Earning Scheme policy, though endline research indicated that carpentry tools have not been supplied to Mafanta Correctional Facility at the time of the evaluation. Further, 100 inmates were engaged in life skills training.**
7. **Finding 10: The project supported the capacity building of 40 case managers from across the correctional facilities, more than the project target. However, there were only 87 cases heard across the two target districts, resulting in 52 inmates discharged, five sentenced, and three put on bail (much less than the target of 250 cases with 65 per cent case conclusions). Finally, there has been significant progress in the legislative process aimed at reforming criminal and correctional laws.**
8. **Finding 11. Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence were promoted by supporting joint socio-economic initiatives involving at-risk youth and community members and building their capacities, although delays and some gaps somewhat limited the expected effects.**
9. **Finding 12: Almost all youth at risk surveyed during the endline said they feel they are recognised as active members of the communities. While the project supported a joint community project in all eighteen target communities, there have been challenges, including delays and some projects remaining incomplete at the end of the programme.**
10. **Finding 13. Youth at risk were trained and their capacities strengthened to be able to generate their livelihoods.**
11. **Finding 14: The project TOC that integrated key areas of social, institutional, and livelihoods support and empowerment for youth can largely be said to have been effective, despite considerable challenges in implementation. There were no particularly high-risk interventions or approaches that should be highlighted. Importantly, the project created change in the lives of youth at risk through an integrated programming model that focused on economic empowerment, which was supported with efforts to also empower youth socially, as well as with efforts that are underpinned by institutional strengthening and reform. However, there also exists a disconnect between Outcome 2 and the rest of the project components.**
12. **Finding 15: While the holistic and integrated nature of the intervention means that all aspects of it contributed to the project objectives, the livelihoods component contributed most significantly to impacting the lives of beneficiaries, despite considerable implementation challenges related to the delays in providing inputs and building structures to support youth livelihood activities.**
13. **Finding 16: As mentioned above, the project targeting of youth at risk was largely effective.**
14. **Finding 17: The project has achieved its objectives in a gender-sensitive way, incorporating females as key project beneficiaries and achieving key impacts in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.**
15. **Finding 18: The project had considerable peacebuilding impacts, especially by bringing youth into development and decision-making processes.**

*Efficiency*

1. **Finding 19: The assessment of the project's efficiency reveals a mixed picture, and slow adaptation to changing economic conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation.**
2. **Finding 20: As often encountered in the region, the short duration of the project (two years initially, which required a no-cost extension of an additional six months, increasing the total project duration to two-and-a-half years) combined with the start-up delay hampered the finalisation of the work, particularly that of construction and provision of the infrastructure, equipment and inputs necessary to support resilience and socio-economic development of young people at risk.**
3. **Finding 21: The main features of the collaboration between FAO and its partners were oriented around key coordination structures leveraged to guide implementation.**
4. **Finding 22: Key staff were in place to undertake monitoring of key elements of the project, but joint monitoring was limited which affected the extent to which programming lessons and experiences could be learned and shared**.

*Sustainability*

1. **Finding 23: The project aimed to build local capacity at community and institutional level through its design and implementation and contributed to agricultural livelihoods and youth integration into local decision-making structures, impacts that are likely to remain after the project has ended.**
2. **Finding 24: Despite the progress made, key factors that could affect the sustainability of project benefits exist. Although some were mitigated during implementation, most are worth considering and mitigating. Examples include the excessive dependence of some beneficiaries on the project, which affects their ability to carry out independent agricultural activities; failure to complete and hand over development structures, equipment (bicycles) and materials (refrigerators, solar) to beneficiaries and other community members; insufficient communication about the end of the project and the prospects.**

*Cross-cutting issues*

1. Finding 25: The project included environmental safeguards and gender equality and women's empowerment in the design and implementation of the project in a number of areas.
2. Finding 26: The project included conflict-sensitivity in a number of areas of its implementation and project design, though feedback and communication from beneficiaries could have been improved.

###### Conclusions and recommendations

*Conclusions*

1. **Conclusion 1. The project’s approach, including the overall design of its objectives and strategy, was well aligned with the strategic peacebuilding priorities of the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone, and has targeted coherently the priority needs for sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion in Sierra Leone and particularly those related to youth at risk.**
2. **Conclusion 2. The project achieved a number of key successes in terms of effectiveness and made significant progress towards impact, which demonstrate that a judicious and timely combination and coordination of capacity building actions in three dimensions (individual, organisational, enabling environment); by its end, the project managed to generate changes and effects and significant progress towards sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion for the benefit of youth at risk and their communities in Sierra Leone. Key achievements include economic and social empowerment among youth at risk, and greater trust between youth and communities in intervention areas.**
3. **Conclusion 3. Despite its duration considered short given the nature of the planned activities and expected results, and a late start in a changing socio-economic context also marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has somehow managed to adapt its strategy and coordinate its interventions, which made it possible to carry out most of the activities, even if some were still not completed at the time of the evaluation.**
4. **Conclusion 4. The project strengthened capacities and coordination among key beneficiaries and stakeholders to continue generating effects and progress towards impact post-project, provided that certain factors identified as potential threats to the sustainability of project outcomes are managed.**

*Recommendations*

1. **Recommendation 1 (to all project stakeholders). FAO, UNDP and UNFPA, the Government of Sierra Leone and relevant project subcontractors must complete all project activities and FAO should initiate an exit plan that will ensure the consolidation of project benefits and sustain the project’s progress towards impact.**
2. **Recommendation 2 (to FAO). FAO must streamline procurement mechanisms and processes to better meet the specific needs of projects like this, which must be implemented within short time frames in unstable environments and with vulnerable populations where delays could create frustrations and even lead to conflicts.**
3. **Recommendation 3 (to FAO). In short term, FAO must implement systems that encourage local entrepreneurs and strengthen their capacities in order to guarantee the quality of services and products expected of them.**
4. **Recommendation 4 (to UNDP). UNDP must learn lessons from this project to improve the prioritisation and planning over time of its counselling and capacity building activities for the benefit of vulnerable people. More concretely for future similar projects, it must consider that counselling on drug and alcohol prevention and cessation has more impact at the start of the project.**
5. **Recommendation 5 (to UNDP and UNFPA). UNDP and UNFPA in their future interventions must also consider integrating evidence-based mental health and psychological actions that have been used elsewhere Sierra Leone and in West Africa when supporting youth dealing with the after-effects of violence. They must also strengthen the capacities of farmers-based organisations and of women’s groups as well as other peer support structures that can help creating awareness among youth at risks and survivors of GBV and provide concrete and useful advice.**
6. **Recommendation 6 (to all project stakeholders). For similar projects, partners must, under the leadership of the lead agency, design and implement a functional monitoring-evaluation system capable of collecting and providing conclusive and relevant data to measure the achievements and progress of the project and inform decisions.**
7. **Recommendation 7 (to PBF, FAO, UNDP and UNFPA). The PBF as well as the United Nations Agencies and the Government institutions responsible for project execution, must consider in future similar interventions, a duration and timeline better adapted to the nature of the activities, and integrate into the theory of project change, concrete and appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate risks likely to affect the project implementation and performance.**

# Introduction

1. This report concerns the final evaluation of the project entitled ‘Empowering youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts in Sierra Leone, implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The project was designed to support youth at risk in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts to reintegrate into their community and families, and at the same time, advocate for institutional reforms that address the core question of recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs (see section *2.2 Project background and description*). The intervention started in October 2020. Following a six-month no-cost extension in October 2022, the project finally ended in April 2022.

## Purpose of the evaluation

1. An independent final evaluation was planned from the project design with a dual purpose of accountability and learning. On the one hand, the evaluation will serve to inform the donor, regional bodies and national government actors and counterparts on the project execution. On the other side, this exercise will have a learning purpose, since, in the process of assessing the achievement of results, their impact and the contribution to the objectives set by the measures will be identified to consolidate the sustainability of the results of the project itself and in turn highlight main lessons learned that could serve future similar activities. This evaluation also aims to contribute to evidence-based policymaking for youth at risk, to assess the effectiveness of the approach of preventing violence towards youth (including men and women) and the effectiveness of PBF recipients’ organisations.

## Intended users

1. The results of this evaluation will be used to inform partners (PBF, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, the Government of Sierra Leone), other providers and beneficiaries on project performance and lessons learned from implementation, and to inform decision-making for consolidating results and planning future interventions. They will be used by the project formulators and relevant/authorised persons at FAO, UNDP, UNFPA and the Government of Sierra Leone to identify improvements to be made to the design and implementation of similar projects. They will allow local service providers, civil society organisations and beneficiary communities and populations to assess their contribution to the project and identify the actions to be taken to consolidate the achievements and ensure their sustainability.

## Scope and objectives of the evaluation

1. The evaluation covers all components of the project, the total duration of its implementation and its entire area of intervention. The scope of work as described in the terms of reference focuses on the review of project implementation processes and peacebuilding outcomes, drawing on the integrated results framework (IRF) of the project, as well as other monitoring data collected on project outputs and results as well as context.
2. The objective of this final evaluation is to determine to what extent the project has achieved the expected results, how and why, were they achieved or not, and to what extent they are sustainable, gender-sensitive, and environmentally friendly.
3. The evaluation is based on a set of main evaluation questions (see Table 1) which have been developed in accordance with the evaluation criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD DAC): relevance, coherence, effectiveness, progress toward impact, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation also takes into account cross-cutting issues: social and environmental protection, gender mainstreaming and conflict sensitivity.
4. In considering these criteria, the evaluators also took care to ensure that the evaluation contributes to peacebuilding results as a main line of inquiry. In the case of this project, it required that the consultants reflect on the degree to which project progress may or may not have contributed to addressing relevant conflict factors associated with mitigating gang and cliques’ activities and their impact on youth at risk in the target areas, as well the extent to which it has addressed factors that drive youth to join gangs and cliques. Further, the evaluation looked at if and how the intervention contributed to sustainable peacebuilding through “catalytic peacebuilding” (Scharbatke‐Church et al. 2010, p. 9) that enables peace processes to become unblocked or if it creates larger or longer-term peacebuilding changes to occur.
5. The evaluation questions are detailed and specified in the evaluation matrix (see Appendix 2).

Table 1. Evaluation questions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Evaluation Questions |
| 1) Relevance | To what extent was the project design aligned with the strategic peacebuilding priorities of Sierra Leone Government, and UN recipient’s organisations?  To what extent were the project objectives relevant to the needs of the beneficiary communities, including youth at risk and broader communities with regards to community resilience and social cohesion? |
| 2) Coherence, catalytic effect and time sensitivity | To what extent has the project implemented means to optimise coordination between agencies and with other stakeholders and created catalytic effects and synergies with other projects implemented by FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA and/or funded by the PBF or by other donors in the same geographic areas?  What are the main features of the collaboration between FAO and its partners resulting from the project agreement[[1]](#footnote-2)?  How did the project monitor its progress and use the monitoring data to direct implementation? |
| 3) Effectiveness and progress to impact | To what extent have project objectives been achieved, and were there any unintended results?  What were the main interventions and strategies that have contributed to achievement of outputs and outcomes?  Did the project’s intended theory of change (ToC) work in practice?  Were there any particularly high-risk interventions or approaches that should be highlighted and did they prove to be effective?  How effective was the project targeting?  To what extent has the project achieved its objectives in a gender sensitive way?  What was the overall peacebuilding effects and potential impacts of the project? |
| 4) Efficiency | To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?  Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compared to that of similar projects? |
| 5) Sustainability | To what extent has the project built local capacity at community and institutional level, which will remain after the project end?  To what extent is the coordination established among beneficiaries and stakeholders, including ministries, likely to continue after the end of the project.  What is the likelihood that the results of the project will continue to be useful or remain after the project has ended?  What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project benefits? To what extent relevant/appropriate measures have been identified or applied to prevent or mitigate them? |
| 6) Cross cutting issues | To what extent have environmental safeguard and gender equality and women's empowerment considerations been included in the design and implementation of the project?  Did the PBF project apply an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity – Such as the Do No Harm Approach? |

## Methodology

1. The investigation phase commenced in August 2023, with the bulk of fieldwork taking place in mid-to-late August 2023. The analysis of data and the drafting of this evaluation report continued through mid-September 2022. The evaluation methodology relied on a mixed methods approach to answer the evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation matrix (see Appendix 1), which specifies each evaluation question and the indicators that were filled in to answer it, as well as the method and tools that were used to collect and analyse the data. Further, the evaluation team examined the project theory of change proposed in the ToR and associated IRF, analysing the results chain and highlighting the cause-effect relationships on processes from activities to outputs, outcomes and impact, including internal and external factors that influenced the project’s implementation and results. Quantitative methods were firstly used to measure project indicators and gauge progress towards project targets, while qualitative methods measured the intervention’s contribution towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding in consideration of the aforementioned evaluation criteria. The use of different methods aimed to gather and triangulate data from a variety of sources and provide richer data through which to contextualise the project indicators. The data was collected from different categories of stakeholders and resource persons selected in a directed and reasoned manner as described below and listed in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Appendix 1.

### Desk research

1. Desk research focused on project-related documentation, but also brought in external documents where necessary. The design of the endline survey relied on the design used in the baseline assessment. This baseline assessment was completed in May 2021 and was conducted by the project from its start to inform the indicators of the results framework. Other important project documents included the project proposal/document and the IRF, annual reports, progress reports, and joint monitoring reports. Key government policies and reports were also used to determine project alignment with important national development and peacebuilding priorities in Sierra Leone. Other relevant documents from national and international stakeholders included: research and policy reports from government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and multilateral organisations, as well as literature on topics related to the prevention of youth violence and the promotion of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone; all secondary sources were cited throughout the evaluation report, as necessary.

### Quantitative research

1. Quantitative methods took the form of an endline survey. The survey design and tool were largely based on those used during the baseline study for this project, so that endline indicators are comparable to those established at the start of the project. This baseline study was carried out by an independent consultant committed by the project. Survey questions formulated for the baseline study were designed based on project indicators in the IRF, with 2-4 questions formulated to capture each indicator in order to reinforce the overall survey consistency and avoid potential bias. Particular attention was dedicated to the formulation of follow-up questions in order to avoid common measurement errors and response biases.
2. During the baseline study, a total of 454 surveys were carried out in the four project chiefdoms. across three categories of respondents: 1) youth[[2]](#footnote-3) at risk, 2) general youth,[[3]](#footnote-4); and 3) community stakeholders. The endline survey was implemented using a sampling strategy and distribution[[4]](#footnote-5) that closely mirrored those used for the baseline[[5]](#footnote-6). The sampling of youth at risk randomly conducted from the population of project beneficiaries, while other general youth and community stakeholder respondents were purposefully selected from the households in the community. The endline focused on individuals of 18-35 years-of-age, but also on older age ranges for the community stakeholders category.
3. For the evaluation, the sample size is increased to 576 survey respondents. There were 32 surveys conducted per community, with an equal number of surveys – 288 – carried out per district. Every attempt was made to survey an equal distribution of each group in each community: sixteen youth at risk, ten youth, and six community stakeholders; in most cases this was possible, though in some instances unavailability of stakeholders on the day of the survey resulted in a slightly different distribution. The following table provides a breakdown of the sampling strategy across the three surveyed categories during the baseline and endline.

Table : Sampling for Baseline and Endline Surveys

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Baseline | Endline |
| Youth at risk | 51.1% | 50.3% |
| General youth | 27.5% | 30.9% |
| Community stakeholders | 21.4% | 18.8% |

1. The baseline survey finished with 60.6 per cent males and 39.4 per cent females surveyed, a similar sex-disaggregated sampling strategy, as shown in the table below.

Table : Sex-Disaggregated Sampling for Baseline and Endline Surveys

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Baseline | Endline |
| Males | 64.1% | 60.6% |
| Females | 35.9% | 39.4% |

1. Sampling of youth at risk was randomly conducted from the population of project beneficiaries. Other general youth and community stakeholder respondents were purposefully selected from the households in the community. In the end, each community had 32 completed surveys based on the composition in the following table.

Table 4: Sampling for Endline Survey

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Age of respondents | Contribution in the sample |
| 18-25 | 37.3% |
| 26-35 | 43.6% |
| 36-50 | 10.4% |
| Above 50 | 8.7% |

1. Surveys were carried out by eight enumerators, split into two teams that were divided by district. Prior to commencing the data collection, all members of the research teams received a three-day training (including a one-day pre-test) on the baseline study’s objectives, methodology, and tools, which included technical training sessions on tablets. Particular attention was also be given to the correct interpretation and translation of the survey questionnaire into local dialects in order to avoid possible misinterpretation among both enumerators and respondents. Following the training there was also a day of pre-testing of the survey tool in the field. Quantitative survey data was captured using tablet devices and the survey was designed and supported by the Kobo data collection tool.

### Qualitative research

1. Qualitative methods were also used to understand the underlying causal and explanatory factors affecting progress toward project outputs and outcomes. Qualitative research is key to measuring questions around evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability. Qualitative research was made up of key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) that were conducted with groups outlined in the following table.

Table 5: Stakeholders to Be Included in Qualitative Research

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Level | Stakeholder |
| Freetown | * KIIs with UN entities: FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA * KIIs with key government partners: Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) * KIIs with implementing partners: CARITAS, Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL), National Youth Commission (NAYCOM), Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) (Psychiatric Hospital), National Council for Civic Education (NaCCED), and Fambul Initiative Network for Equality (FINE) Sierra Leone |
| District/ Chiefdom | * KIIs with youth actors: NaCCED, DYC, CYC, NAYCOM, MAFFS, and Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) * KIIs with security actors: SLP, Local Police Partnership Boards (LPPB), and Office for National Security (ONS) * FGDs with District/Chiefdom stakeholders: Office of the Paramount Chief, youth leader, women’s leader |
| Community (FGDs) | * Youth at risk (male/female) * Parents/general youth (male/female) * Community stakeholders (traditional leaders, religious leaders, |

1. In total there were 28 KIIs and eighteen FGDs carried out with the actors listed in the table above, KIIs were first carried out in Freetown with national stakeholders. Then KIIs were undertaken at the district level with community-based beneficiaries, and FGDs were also carried out at community level (five communities in Tonkolili and five communities in Kenema, with at least two in each project chiefdom). All qualitative research was carried out by the international consultant and the national consultant. Data was captured through notetaking, with notes being compiled and analysed throughout the research process. KIIs and FGDs were based on a semi-structured format, which was tailored to the knowledge of informants and which guided conversations, but did not follow a rigid format. Initial interviews in Freetown yielded two categories of data: explanatory and exploratory data. Firstly, priority issues identified during desk research were cross-checked and explored in greater depth. Secondly, novel information on particular points of research interest was probed to identify data to also be included during fieldwork. Interviews and focus groups at the district and community levels provided further opportunities to gather more detailed information about the intervention and gauge key evaluation criteria. KIIs were made of 1-3 persons, whereas FGDs were made up of approximately 8-10 persons that were organised around a single category of actor to concentrate on the experiences of that group in each discussion. FGDs were divided into the same three categories used for the quantitative data collection (youth at risk, youth, and community). Individual discussions were held with males and females separately so that women and girls were able to comfortably express themselves in a female-only space. All research activities with external stakeholders and evaluators were informed by gender- and youth-sensitive approaches, also taking into consideration other relevant vulnerability characteristics, to ensure that all data collection methods sensitively address inclusion issues.

### Data Analysis and Reporting

1. Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies employed rigorous and systematic techniques to clean and analyse data. The project's theory of change and IRF served as a reference for the quantitative and qualitative data analysis and made it possible, for each evaluation question, to identify the internal or external key factors that have affected the performance of the project for each evaluation criterion considered and to establish the cause-and-effect relationship. Data analysis was organised and carried out in such a way as to answer the various evaluation questions formulated and broken down in the evaluation matrix. The data and information that emerged from this analysis helped to formulate the main findings for each question and serve to support them.
2. After survey data collected was cleaned to check for and eliminate inconsistencies using a number of techniques, including: checks for logic/sequencing and outliers, prevalence of non-response, high error rates, etc. Where sampling discrepancies exist between the baseline and endline, weights were applied to ensure the integrity of comparison across sampled categories (youth at risk, general youth, and community stakeholders) and sex (males and females). Analysis was conducted using statistical software – Excel and SPSS – to produce statistics that are understandable and useful and serve as broad an audience as possible. Importantly, it was disaggregated to generate statistics based on sex and age.
3. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis that identified key themes in responses between interviews and focus groups to give meaning to the data. Qualitative analysis involved coding of important issues and used these to determine qualitative trends to complement quantitative data. KIIs and FGDs were contrasted and compared with each other, as well as with quantitative data, to intersect and validate findings across data collection. This form of data triangulation was a key tool for the verification and confirmation of the information collected to support the findings. Within this process, the search for competing explanations and negative evidence was an important contribution to analysis procedures and implementing analytical controls (Firestone 1986). Preliminary research results were presented for feedback before leaving Sierra Leone, after which findings were compiled in a comprehensive report, approximately one month after the end of the field phase. Initial drafts of this report were circulated among relevant stakeholders for feedback and revision. The comments were processed to produce a definitive final report.

### Ethical Considerations

1. The highly sensitive nature of peacebuilding issues poses a unique set of challenges for any data gathering activity that touches on such issues. Therefore, a range of ethical and safety issues were considered and addressed prior to the commencement of this study in order to uphold the physical, psychological, and social well-being of those who participate in such research and can even put their safety at risk. To begin, conflict-sensitive considerations have been included in the design of both quantitative and qualitative tools, avoiding direct formulation of conflict-sensitive questions. Further, this study explicitly acknowledged that research must, at all times, consider the benefits and risks to respondents and communities. Prior to the field data collection, the research team was made aware of the main conflict dynamics particularly involving youth in the targeted areas, based on the findings of the baseline and other project documents. Importantly, it was deemed the role of the research teams to promote a secure and comforting environment, and to proactively appraise situations for potential sources of insecurity. If the security of any person was threatened as a result of research, research activities were to be terminated and insecurity was reported through a pre-established channel of communication.
2. The safety and security of all those involved in data collection was of paramount concern throughout the project, taking into account security as the overarching determination when determining research sites, sampling strategy, tools and questions, training, movement and logistics in-field, interviewing practices, etc. Only respondents who provided informed consent were to be interviewed. Those who did not grant consent were able to opt out of the study. Moreover, respondents were able to opt out at any other point during the course of the study/analysis. In the event of potential security risks data collection was to be stopped or amended in a way that such risks were addressed; this was preventative measure put in place and no such instances arose.
3. Comprehensive training was given to all members of the research team to help ensure that the study approach, methods, tools, and all principles and guidelines – including those outlining safety, respect, confidentiality and non-discrimination – were understood and adhered to throughout the research project. To this end, the study guidelines ensured that all data was anonymised and responses were not revealed to anybody other than the consultants and the research team. Additionally, the research team participants were trained in the potential types of physical and emotional harm that respondents could face by participating in the study. The team was also trained on appropriate research techniques, including how to ask questions about sensitive topics, in order to help ensure the physical and emotional well-being of all research participants.

## Limitations

1. In implementing the aforementioned methodology there were a number of limitations that impacted data collection. These limitations and their corresponding mitigation strategies are presented below:

* Due to the short timeframe, qualitative data collection sampled only a subset of the eight project communities: four communities in Tonkolili and four communities in Kenema, with two communities sampled in each project chiefdom. National level interviews with key project stakeholders were important for triangulating district and chiefdom level primary data. Secondary research – such as monitoring reports – was also used for additional triangulation of fieldwork data during analysis. Further, planning was important in overcoming challenges associated with the short timeframe associated with the endline. By working closely with FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, and others to plan activities in advance, the consultants were able to maximise the time spent in the field. This required close communication to prepare the inception report, travel schedule, workplan, and study participants. Mobilisation was conducted for all meetings scheduled with different stakeholder groups at community level. This included community mobilisation through the implementing UN agencies and partners, a key strategy to helping ensure that stakeholders are available when required to participate in interviews and FGDs.
* In some cases, baseline data was missing or unavailable for the evaluation due to an incomplete data set provided to the team. Those questions that required multiple responses during the baseline were not included in the dataset given to the team. Where baseline data for the evaluation was not available, endline data was used to provide context for the evaluation, rather than for comparison with baseline data.
* The international consultant’s inability to speak *Krio*, *Mende*, and *Temne* in project districts inevitability limited direct communication with research participants, especially for community level FGDs. Failure to address language barriers can threaten the credibility, transferability, and dependability of cross-language qualitative data. For this reason, the study relied on help from local staff FAO who assisted with translation and interpretation of research discussions. Though this mitigation measure also constituted an additional risk because the translation could be deliberately biased by a local agent to make it clear that the project worked well. In most cases there were at least some participants that could understand English, which acted as a safeguard against biased interpretation.

## Structure of the report

1. Following this introduction, section 2 presents the background and context of the project/programme. Section 3 presents the main findings for each evaluation criterion. Cross‑cutting issues are presented in section 4, followed by conclusions and recommendations in section 5 and lessons learned in section 6. The report is accompanied by the following annexes:

* Annex 1. Terms of reference for the evaluation <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/>

# Background and context of the project

## Country context

1. Sierra Leone is a small West African country along the Atlantic Ocean, bordering Liberia and Guinea, with an estimated population of 8,306,436 people in 2022. It is sustained by a population current growth rate of 2.1 per cent which is expected to decline to 1.22 per cent by the year 2050 (World Population Review). The country is endowed with rich mineral resources including diamonds, gold, rutile, iron ore and bauxite, and a favourable agricultural environment suitable for the cultivation of a wide range of crops including rice, oil palm, cocoa, coffee, cassava, groundnut, vegetables, fruits, and livestock that are the leading agricultural commodities. It is one of the world’s richest fishing grounds, with more than 500 kilometres of coastline and a continental shelf of 30,000 square kilometres fed by seven major rivers.
2. The agricultural sector, including livestock, forestry and fishing, is an essential component of the economy which contributed 60 per cent of gross domestic product in 2020 and employed two-thirds of the national labour force. Smallholder subsistence farmers using local traditional tools, outdated techniques and limited farm inputs, dominate the agriculture sector. Food sovereignty has not yet been achieved. About 80 per cent of foodstuffs consumed in the country are imported. Even the rice that is the main staple crop in Sierra Leone is still subject to import. For example, 530,000 tonnes of rice were imported in 2019 to complement the local production (947,000 tonnes) and meet the domestic needs estimated at 1,507,000 tonnes.
3. In 2021, the country was ranked 45th out of the 179 states classified as fragile. After suffering a long civil war, which started in March 1991 and finally ended in 2002, peace has been consolidated and considerable progress made in economic management, governance, transparency and accountability and in improving social conditions (GoSL 2012) . However, the country still carries its post-conflict attributes of high youth unemployment, poverty, corruption, and weak governance. The poverty rate (as measured by USD 1.90 poverty line) was estimated at 43 per cent of the population in 2018 (GoSL 2018) . In 2021, about 10.8 per cent of the total labour force ages 15-24 in Sierra Leone were unemployed. Many of them are illiterate, equipped with few employable skills, and lack work experience due to the conflict that affected their formative years. The recurrent lack of recognition by society and the lack of easy access to education and employment opportunities have been stimulating the formation of a substantial group of frustrated and hopeless youth, who are likely to turn to violence and crime as a means of survival.
4. Presence of youth at risk and former combatants organized in cliques and gangs has been recorded since the end of civil war, particularly during electoral events, when youth and ex-combatants, organized in cliques and gangs, are employed as political parties’ “security taskforce” to intimidate political rivals and voters and disrupt political rallies and the electoral process (PBF, 2020). During the 2018 elections, attempts to replace the parties’ “security taskforces” with state security agents to protect candidates were partially successful and political violence committed by cliques and gangs was less in Freetown. But there were more incidents of violence outside Freetown, especially in the so-called “swing areas” in the countryside, including in Tonkolili and Kenema districts (PBF, 2020).
5. According to Mitton (2022), within two decades, Sierra Leone’s ‘cliques’ have transformed from peripheral social clubs to warring Crips, Bloods, and Black street gangs at the heart of criminal and political violence. The increased presence of ‘cliques and gangs’ that attract vulnerable young women and men is a source of insecurity for communities countrywide and an increased challenge to the hard-won peace in post-war Sierra Leone (PBF, 2020). According to Office of National Security (ONS) in 2029, there are over 2,500 cliques and gangs across Sierra Leone, which are organized in different type of structures with varying level of capacity, influence, and network. Certain groups possess “a clear chain of command, exert territorial control and are able to project their influence,” while other gangs are highly fragmented or localized (UN and GoSL, 2019). The involvement of the cliques and gangs in violent crimes—frequently using intoxicants (drugs and alcohol)—prompted ONS in 2019 to consider cliques and gangs as a national security threat (PBF, 2019).
6. In response to the above-mentioned challenges, the project was designed to support youth at risk in Tonkolili and Kenema districts to reintegrate in their community and families, and at the same time, advocate for institutional reforms that address the core question of recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs. Experiences worldwide have indicated that demobilisation and reintegration of members of violent gangs is based on a process of empowerment that includes education, economic inclusion and political participation.

## Project background and description

1. The project was signed in October 2020 between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), the United Nations Secretary-General's PBF and three United Nations Recipient Organisations for two years of implementation in Sierra Leone. It was declared operational in October 2020 and officially closed in April 2023. The total project approved budget is USD 3,000,000, financed by the PBF.

Box 1 – Basic project information

|  |
| --- |
| * Recipient country: Sierra Leone * UN executing organisations: FAO (convening Agency); UNDP; and UNFPA * Government Counterpart: MoYA (lead Ministry), Ministry of Internal Affairs; MAFFS; Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs; Ministry of Social Welfare, MoHS. * Date of project start: 28 October 2020 * Initial date of project completion: 27 October 2022 * Revised date of project completion: 27 April 2023 * Budget: USD 3,000,000 of which USD 1,750,000 (FAO), USD 850,000 (UNDP), USD 400,000 (UNFPA) |

1. The project aimed to empower youths at risk to become resources for sustained peace, community resilience, and social cohesion in the targeted districts. It includes 34 activities planned to achieve seven outputs and three outcomes:

* Outcome 1, under UNFPA responsibility is: Youth (men and women) are empowered and included in decision-making processes in their communities in the target districts.
* Outcome 2, led by UNDP is: National and local institutions improve their response to the needs of youth at risk.
* Outcome, led by FAO is: Social cohesion strengthened and youth at risk socially and economically empowered to meaningfully reintegrate into their families and communities.

1. Details on outcomes, outputs and indicators are presented in Appendix 3. Project result framework after baseline survey exercise). The project stakeholders and their roles are presented in Table 6 while the Theory of Change (TOC) mapped for this evaluation can be found in Figure 1.

Table 6: Project stakeholders and roles

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stakeholders | Roles |
| 1. Recipient UN Organizations (RUNO): Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project | |
| FAO | Convene and manage the project; responsible of Outcome 3 (Outputs 3.1 and 3.2). |
| UNFPA | Responsible of Output 1.3 under Outcome 1 and provide Gender and Rights Specialist, to mentor and strengthen capacity of implementing partners. |
| UNDP | Responsible of Outcome 1 (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2) and Outcome 2 (Outputs 2.1 and 2.2). |
| 2. Active stakeholders with authority to make decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC | |
| Project Steering Committee | Co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and MoYA; provide strategic direction, monitor actual delivery, advise on risk mitigation strategy, identify lessons learned to develop best practices, methods for dissemination and roll-out of tested approaches. |
| Technical Committee | Made up of resource persons from Government Organizations and UN Agencies, the Project coordinator and project technical specialist(s) and the PDA. It will enhance coordination of the project activities at the technical level, monitor the implementation, address challenges, document best practices and lessons learned. |
| The UN RCO and RUNOs | The UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) - as the PBF focal point in the country, provides overall strategic oversight of the project implementation: monitor the achievement of its peacebuilding objectives and advise Agencies, MoYA, and PBSO on any required modification, suspension, and/or redirection of the project, as needed. |
| Government Ministries | MoYA (Lead Ministry) and the supporting ministries (MIA; MAFFS, MSWGCA; MoH), ensure the support of the state institutions to the project. |
| 3. Implementing partners | |
| NaCCED | Promote civic education and counselling to enable the reintegration of youth at risk into families and communities and in decision-making processes (Output 1.1.) |
| MoHS | The Department of Mental Health of the MoHS assess the psychological status of the youth engaged in the project and refer them for counselling services on prevention/treatment of drug/alcohol addiction (under Output 1.1) |
| NAYCOM | Strengthen Capacity of DYC and CYC and local youth groups to promote their leadership and influence in district and local decision-making processes (Output 1.2.) |
| FINE | Increase awareness among key stakeholders and youth at risk in targeted communities on women and girls’ rights and increase male involvement to reduce GBV (output 1.3.) |
| Rainbo Initiative | It is a strategic partner of UNFPA but is not receiving funding under this project. Committed to end SGBV in Sierra Leone, it will work on providing free quality, age-appropriate response services to survivors of SGBV, increasing awareness of SGBV at community and national levels, influencing National SGBV Policy by Evidence-Based Advocacy and Organizational development and strengthening. |
| CARL | CARL and Don Bosco Fambul will enhance the capacity of local institutions - SLCS, FSUs of the SLP, and LPPBs - in human rights, rule of law, negotiation and youth-sensitive approaches to improve their engagement with youth at risk (Output 2.1). CARL is working to strengthen the capacities of SLP, Magistrate Courts and SLCS in project targeted areas and responsive youth legal frameworks to monitor detention conditions and support decongestion of overcrowded facilities (Output 2.2). |
| RWI | RWI are engaged to facilitate targeted trainings aiming at strengthening the capacities of key authorities in and around correctional facilities (Output 2.2). |
| Caritas Bo and Caritas Makeni | On-site support to the implementation and monitoring of Output 3.1 and 3.2: Promotion of Social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence by supporting joint socio-economic initiatives that involve youth at risk and community members (Output 3.1.).; and increase the capacity and empower Youth at risk Increase to generate their livelihoods (Output 3.2). |
| 4. Stakeholders at grassroots level who benefit directly or indirectly from the intervention | |
| Local and State Entities | Tonkolili District Local Council, Kenema District Local Council, FSU of SLP, LPPB, National Youth Commission, APPYA and APPWA, ONS, PPRC, NaCCED; DYC; CYC. |
| NGOs | CARL; SLYDCL, Don Bosco Fambul, Caritas Makeni/Bo, FINE, YMCA and Rainbo Initiative. |
| Intermediate beneficiaries | Representatives from the magistrate courts and SLCS, PCC, SLP, ONS, FSU, NDLEA, DYC and CYC, local youth and women associations, and local branches of political parties, local authorities, local political stakeholders and district offices of the PPRC and Human Rights Commission, LPBBs, DISECs, CHISECs, ‘Okada’ Riders associations and trader associations, who have links with and knowledge of the cliques and gangs operating in the areas |
| Final beneficiaries | Youth at risk, FBO, JFF and Youth Agri-Enterprises, Young farmers. |
| *Caption: APPWA: All Political Parties Women’s Association; APPYA: All Political Parties Youth Association; CARL: Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law; CHISECs : Chiefdom Security Committees; CYC: Chiefdom Youth Councils; DISECs: District Security Committees; DYC : District Youth Councils ; FBO: Farmer Base Organizations ; FINE: Fambul Initiative Network for Equality ; FSU: Family Support Unit; GBV: Gender-based violence; JFF Junior Farmer Field Schools; LPPB: Local Police Partnership Board ; MAFFS: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security; MIA: Ministry of Internal Affairs; MoHS: Ministry of Health and Sanitation; MOYA: Ministry of Youth Affairs; MSWGCA: Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs; NaCCED: National Council for Civic Education; NAYCOM: National Youth Commission; NDLEA: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency; ONS: Office of National Security; PCC: Paramount Chiefs Council; PDA: Peace and Development Advisor; PPRC: Political Party Registration Commission ; RCO: UN Resident Coordinator's Office; RWI: Raoul Wannenberg Institute ; SGBV : Sexual Gender-based violence; SLCS: Sierra Leone Correctional Services; SLP: Sierra Leone Police; YMCA: Young Men Christian Association ;* | |

1. The project directly targeted 418 at-risk youth beneficiaries in 18 communities in the two districts (Tonkolili and Kenema). A baseline study was carried out to readjust indicators and targets (FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA. 2021).
2. The mid-term perception survey planned for month 18 of the project was not carried out[[6]](#footnote-7), because the project, given its short duration (24 months) as well as the high costs of survey logistics due to the global fuel crisis, decided instead to give priority to an end line study. This was indicated in the semi-annual progress report to PBF (June, 2022). As per updated project budget (accessed on 10 December 2023), the total expenditure related to the intervention was USD 2,424,031.84 – 81 per cent of the total project budget USD 3,000,000.
3. A revision of the overall project budget was made and approved in January 2022, following the final needs assessment, which helped to refine the content and targets of some activities, outputs and outcomes. So, within Outcome 1 led by UNFPA, the budget for Output 1.1. (USD 225,000 initially) has been reduced by USD 2,500 and reused to increase by USD 12,500 the initial budget of Output 1.2 (inside Outcome 1) to reach USD 74,284, and to increase by USD 40,000 the budget of Output 2.2 (within Outcome 2 led by UNDP) to reach USD 139,608.52. Also, inside Outcome 3 led by FAO, the budget of output 3.1 (initial amount of USD 450,460.02) underwent a cut of USD 19,000 that served to increase the budget of Output 3.2 to reach USD 1,013,198.

## Theory of change

1. The theory of change stated in the project document was schematised by the Evaluation Manager for the evaluation (Figure 1). The project seeks to change the lives of youth at risk through an integrated programming model that combines efforts to promote economic empowerment with those looking to strengthen the social empowerment of youth, through efforts that are underpinned by institutional strengthening and reform. Further, the intervention seeks not only to reduce youth participation in gang and clique activities, but also the impact of these on youth at risk and the community in the target areas by addressing factors that drive youth to join gangs and cliques. Of course, successful changes at the individual and group level are premised on the timely, well-coordinated, and complete implementation of the theory of change through the project model (see 3.3.2. Effectiveness of the project theory of change).
2. The project was designed to pursue its outcomes through and integrated programming model that focused on economic empowerment, which was supported with efforts to also empower youth socially, as well as with efforts that are underpinned by institutional strengthening and reform. The assumption is that if youth are economically and socially empowered, then the incentives for youth at risk to join gangs and cliques will reduce significantly. This will mitigate the exploitation of youth at risk for political gains and of young women for sex work and gendered violence and the voices of youth in decision-making will become stronger, thereby contributing to sustaining the peace and social cohesion in Sierra Leone. The evaluation findings show these assumptions to be true.

Figure 1. Project theory of change schematised for evaluation.



1. Less clear, however, is the connection between Outcomes 1 and 3, on one hand, and Outcome 2, on the other. Indeed, there is a gap between Outcome 2 and the rest of the project components. The focus of Outcome 2 was national and local institutions – in particular security and correctional institutions – while the focus of Outcomes 1 and 3 were individuals and communities. There should have been more emphasis on better connecting the outcomes and activities of Outcome 2 with other project outcomes, rather than allowing them to exist as a stand-alone programming element. For example, there was a notable gap between the behavioural change component (Outcome 1) and the life skills component (Outcome 3) on the ground due to delays in the supply of farm inputs (tools and seeds) and construction works (such as poultry houses and bakeries). Some of the youth who had received behavioural change interventions (civic education and counselling) under Outcome 1 lacked the necessary support to engage in livelihood activities, hindering their behavioural change process and undermining the synergy essential for achieving the project goal in line with the ToC.

# Findings

## Relevance

**Finding 1:** **The project was largely relevant to the institutional and country context it was implemented in. It was aligned with key government priorities and policies promoting youth empowerment, improving the responsiveness of local institutions, and furthering social cohesion and economic development as a route towards building peace in project chiefdoms.**

1. The project connects to Sierra Leone’s *Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019-2023*, and contributes to Goal 3: a society that is peaceful, cohesive, secure, and just (GoSL 2019). Relevance of the peacebuilding and security-related impacts of this project were validated in the lead-up to Sierra Leone’s Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Councils elections, which were held on 24 June 2023. Prior to the elections, Sierra Leone found itself amid political violence, including physical clashes between supporters of political parties, security institutions and communities, triggering hate speech on social media (ACLED 2020). Thus, the peacebuilding and security concerns addressed through this project were extremely relevant to the priorities of the country. This was most evident when violence flared up in August 2022, resulting in the deaths of six police officers and more than twenty protesters and bystanders (Amnesty International 2023). These were among the highest levels of political instability since civil war ended in the country, with electoral-related violence in Sierra Leone accounting for 26 per cent of all forms of political disorder (ACLED 2020). Thus, keeping the peace and maintaining security were key national priorities during that project’s implementation.
2. The project also targeted different security actors to promote human rights, rule of law, negotiation, and youth-sensitive approaches to improve their engagement with youth at risk. Trust in security actors such as police has been decreasing for some time in Sierra Leone. In 2022, a survey from the International Republican institute showed that 41 per cent Sierra Leoneans reported a great deal of distrust and 24 per cent somewhat distrust the police (IRI 2022). This low and declining trust in SLP is a potential threat to peace and security, as was found by a threat assessment carried out by ONS[[7]](#footnote-8). Therefore, ensuring security actors in project targeted areas have strengthened capacities and youth responsive legal frameworks to monitor detention conditions and to decongest facilities is a relevant important action to support peacebuilding through the security system.

**Finding 2:** **The project responded to the needs of the beneficiary communities and youth at risk.**

1. Youth are often at the centre of violence in Sierra Leone (Special Investigation Committee 2023), in particular as they are recruited from cliques and gangs by political actors (Momoh et al. 2022). Thus, the project has targeted specific and appropriate groups of youth, addressing the risk factors that drive the participation in gangs and violence.; specifically, the project addressed the poverty and lack of social empowerment make youth susceptible to recruitment into gangs and violence (Mitton 2013). In its focus on youth, the project is also firmly aligned with the *National Youth Policy (NYP)* in terms of the objectives of advancing youth and youth concerns in programme design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation; to identify, build on, and recognise existing skills; and to ensure that all youth access and utilise opportunities and services provided by the government, and development partners at the national, regional, district, chiefdom, and community levels (GoSL 2003). The project contributes directly to the goal of the *NYP* in enabling Sierra Leonean youth of all categories to develop their full potential and self-esteem while institutionalising youth participation at all local and regional levels in decision-making processes.
2. Importantly, the project addressed key contributing factors to insecurity among women and youth: gender-based violence (GBV) and abuses by security forces, respectively. In terms of GBV, discriminatory social norms about appropriate roles and responsibilities for women and men are key contributors to GBV, which is still a big problem in the country (UNDP 2022); out of the whole population of Sierra Leone , 60.7 per cent of the women aged 15-49 say they have experienced physical violence since age fifteen and 7.4 per cent have experienced sexual violence (Demographic and Health Survey 2019). The problem of GBV is extremely serious – serious enough for the president to declare it a national emergency (Martin and Koroma 2020). In this regard, the project design was rightly aimed at Increasing awareness among key stakeholders and youth at risk in targeted communities on women and girls’ rights, with increased male involvement to reduce GBV.
3. Given that agriculture is still the backbone of the Sierra Leonean economy, and is responsible for some 54 per cent of total employment in the country (World Bank[[8]](#footnote-9),), supporting this key sector is vital to national and sub-national economic development. By providing agricultural production inputs and value addition equipment, training the youth at risk on good agronomic practices, agricultural machine operation, climate-smart agriculture, agribusiness development and financial management, harvest and postharvest management and value addition of selected value chains (for example: crops, livestock, fisheries, and poultry) the project directly contributes to the achievement of the objectives outlined in the national *Gender in Agriculture Policy* which seeks to increase economic growth through agricultural development and gender equality; improve women’s access to productive resources; and develop investment in agri-business (GoSL 2020). These activities further contribute to the objectives of the *National Climate Change Policy* through the reduction of climate-related loss and damage across all productive sectors; protection of livelihoods, food security and standard of living; and sustainable use and conservation of Sierra Leone’s natural capital (GoSL 2021).

## Coherence

**Finding 3: The intervention has successfully created coherence with coordinated efforts under the sustainable development agenda, as well as internal coherence with other efforts being undertaken by FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA.**

1. For example, it was aligned with what these UN agencies and others are contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. The most directly applicable SDGs under the 2030 Agenda is Goal 16, which calls for the creation of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. It also contributes to the following interrelated development goals: SDG 1: no poverty, zero hunger; SDG 5: gender equality; SDG 8: decent work and economic growth; and SDG10: reduced inequalities. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Sierra Leone defines how the UN Development System will support progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in the country. Under the UNSDCF, the intervention is relevant to the strategic and mutually reinforcing priority areas of : sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security, and climate resilience; transformational governance; and protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable (UN 2019).
2. Pursuing pro-poor growth by improving the livelihoods of the most disadvantaged populations – namely, youth at risk – is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda’s objective to ‘leave no one behind’ (UN Sustainable Development Group). Further, the project also aligned coherently with priorities under Sierra Leone’s UNSDCF, which gives coherence to collective efforts undertaken by the UN Development System in Sierra Leone can support progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in 2020-2023 and important national goals laid out earlier. Under this framework, the intervention connects to strategic and mutually reinforcing priority areas of: sustainable agriculture, food, and nutritional security; transformational governance; and protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable (UN 2019)[[9]](#footnote-10).
3. Further, the project model and joint programming approach were designed to create coherent programmatic connections along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (Oxfam 2019). It focused on the inter-linkages between development and peace based on an understanding that development cannot come about in the absence of peace and that equitable sustainable development undergirds any peacebuilding process (Inter-Agency Standing Committee and UN Working Group on Transitions 2016). Both peace and development are in their own ways dependent on addressing the root causes and drivers of insecurity and violence. In addition, the project is coherently aligned with the global development efforts set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. The project's objectives, particularly outcome three, align closely with the fundamental mission of the FAO: "to achieve food security for all and ensure that people have access to sufficient high-quality food, enabling them to lead healthy and active lives"[[10]](#footnote-11). This project has drawn upon the FAO’s extensive experience gained through previous PBF initiatives related to natural resource management and the empowerment of women in Sierra Leone. The project is consistent with FAO’s other work in Kono District and is focused on supporting youth groups in transitioning from illegal and unsustainable mining practices to more sustainable and productive activities such as poultry and fish farming/aquaculture. This shift not only contributes to food security but also promotes responsible and environmentally conscious economic opportunities. The project is also coherent with UNDP’s global focus on poverty and inequality, gender equality, environment, resilience, and governance (UNDP 2022), and its focus in Sierra Leone on inclusive democratic governance, sustainability, inclusive local economic development, and gender equality and women's empowerment[[11]](#footnote-12). Programming for this project builds on UNDP’s expertise in these areas, and leverages its experience and capacities in implementing interventions around the project themes. Likewise, the project strongly aligned with UNFPA's overarching global objective of advocating for the rights and well-being of all individuals, with a specific emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights. It effectively harnessed UNFPA's substantial expertise in collaborating with the Sierra Leonean government and local partners, notably the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, to combat GBV and advance the rights of girls in Sierra Leone. Moreover, the project's synergy with the Fambul Initiative Network (FINE), a prominent NGO specialising in promoting male involvement in GBV prevention, reinforced its alignment with UNFPA's mission. Furthermore, the project maintained consistency with UNFPA's ongoing collaboration with the Rainbo Initiative since 2019, concentrating on enhancing responses to sexual and gender-based violence through a multifaceted approach encompassing service provision, awareness campaigns, advocacy, and organisational development initiatives[[12]](#footnote-13).
5. The outcomes and activities of this project align well to create a comprehensive approach to empower youth at risk. The outputs were mutually supportive and had strong linkages to the outcome they supported. As such, a strong causality can be observed between the Project’s outputs and the outcome they support. By addressing their psychological well-being, community involvement, legal support, social cohesion, and economic empowerment, the project ensures a holistic response that increases the likelihood of successful reintegration and improved well-being for these youth. The project stakeholders and particularly the youth tended to cite the different components together and saw this as cohesive and holistic. Most often cited drug counselling and livelihoods as the key components.

## Effectiveness and progress to impact

### Effectiveness in achieving results

#### Outcome 1

**Finding 4. Civic education and counselling were successfully promoted under Output 1.1. and Capacity of District and Chiefdom Youth Councils (DYC and CYC) and local youth groups was strengthened under Output 1.2. Youth at risk beneficiaries feel involved and respected in their various communities and a greater proportion than in the past now believe they can influence decisions in their communities. Also, significantly more youth at risk report participating in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders in their community. However, there are barriers that prevent young people from participating in community activities, including lack of time and for some not feeling welcome or included.**

1. Through the project Youth at risk have participated in DYCs/CYCs, as well as Youth Dialogue and Duty Bearers’ and Stakeholders’ sessions. These activities increased representation and participation of youth at risk in district and chiefdom youth structures. Beneficiaries are also now more involved in local decision-making mechanisms, which the project facilitated though Youth and Duty Bearers’ dialogue sessions and increased representation and participation of youth at risk in DYCs/CYCs structures across the project communities.
2. **The value found for *Outcome Indicator 1a*** clearly confirms the evolution of the perception that youth at risk have of their role in the community. The project met the 70 per cent target for this indicator. There was a large increase in perceptions among youth at risk that their opinions can influence decision-making – from 56.7 per cent at the baseline to 86.5 per cent at the endline (see Table 7). Overall, 88.4 per cent of endline respondents – including youth at risk – at the endline have this same perception compared to 71.2 at the baseline.

Table 7: Agreement that opinions can influence decision-making, by district, respondent category, and sex.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Breakdown by category | | Baseline | Endline |
| Respondent category | Youth at risk | 56.7% | 86.5% |
| Youth | 79.7% | 85.2% |
| Community | 94.7% | 99.0% |
| Sex | Males | 72.3% | 89.8% |
| Females | 68.9% | 86.1% |
| District | Tonkolili | 91.1% | 85.2% |
| Kenema | 47.8% | 91.3% |
|  | Overall | 71,2% | 88,4% |

1. Qualitative research also supports these findings, revealing that beneficiaries across all project sites report that they are more likely to be included in decision-making processes, and even in community life in general. Community leaders, family, and neighbours acknowledged the changes that youth at risk had made in their lives, they were also more willing to include them in community decision-making processes. Indeed, the work that the project did to create buy-in among stakeholders helped facilitate these processes of integration. As well, youth stated that they were able to give input in community issues such as plans for community cleaning and security, as well as in some instances into development decisions affecting youth.
2. Figure 2 shows that youth leaders, chiefs, NGOs, and community leaders best represent – or advocate for or are willing to defend – youth interests at the local level. Focus group discussions with youth indicated that prior to the project youth were not included in most development activities by community leaders. Now youth – and importantly youth at risk – are given responsibilities, assisting stakeholders in a number of communities with local development projects. As well, youth at risk generally stated that they are able to raise issues, concerns, and/or problems to local leaders in a way that they could not previously.

Figure 2: Who best represents youth interests according to youth at risk respondents of the endline survey?

1. For instance, in some community leaders were instrumental in supporting the process by which project beneficiaries acquired land. In other areas, the local leadership is highly involved and invested in monitoring project progress and assisting where possible. After a theft of project supplies occurred from one project site, the community leaders led a thorough investigation of the matter. “We did not find the [missing] fertiliser, but we still appreciated the chief and the efforts [made to find it. Before he would just call and blame us if something goes missing. Now we are considered in the community”, said one youth from the community. Youth from other areas expressed similar statements as an indication of the success of reintegration and the level of support and welcome they felt from leadership in their communities – especially concerning previous relations that were defined by acrimony, isolation, and stigmatisation. Said one youth, “before the community leaders would not even give us any time. But even now they took time to investigate the matter. So, we can see that they are with us”. Such statements were representative of others that were made across other communities, who indicated that the project gave youth at risk an avenue for earning respect and acceptance in their communities. In particular, youth at risk noted that community leaders and members “respect that we are going now busy with the farm work every day”. Therefore, the project created avenues whereby the youth could find social acceptance by adhering to social norms that valorise hard work, and especially agricultural work. In this way, the programming model facilitated community reintegration through the economic reintegration of youth at risk.
2. **Regarding *Outcome Indicator 1b*, considerably more youth at risk – 37.9 per cent at the time of the endline compared to 3.7 per cent at the baseline –said that they often participate in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders in their community (See Figure 3). Another 52.4 per cent said they sometimes participate in such activities, which is an increase from 33.6 per cent from the baseline.** **So, the target for this indicator (set at 50 per cent) has been achieved.** However, the indicator is ambiguous, as it does not specify whether it aimed to always or sometimes include youth at risk targeted by the project in decision-making mechanisms at the local level.

Figure 3: Participation in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents

1. Sex-disaggregated data in Table 8 indicates that more males than females at the endline often participate in Youth Council activities, while about the same number of males and females sometimes participate. The same table also indicates that many more males and females expressed Youth Council participation during the endline than during the baseline.

Table 8: Participation in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents, by sex

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Baseline |  | Endline |  |
|  | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Often | 4.7% | 1.4% | 46.5% | 25.8% |
| Sometimes | 40.5% | 18.8% | 42.9% | 65.8% |
| Never | 54.7% | 79.7% | 10.6% | 8.3% |

1. Results in Table 8 also show that among youth at risk around 90 per cent of males and females participate either often or sometimes, in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders. However, a higher percentage of male respondents participate often.
2. Still, there are impediments to young people joining community activities such as Youth Councils. The preceding figure indicates that lack of time is the reason given most often for youth at risk not attending community activities. Worryingly, even though youth now feel more included in community decision-making and other community processes, almost half (49.3 per cent) of project beneficiaries still said that not feeling welcome or included is a reason they do not participate in community meetings and other activities.

Figure 4: Main reasons for not participating in community meetings among youth at risk endline respondents.

##### Output 1.1

**Finding 5. Beneficiaries, community members and local security providers confirm a decrease in violence among the youth at risk and youth at risk state they would not consider engaging in politically motivated violence due to their participation in community and economic activities.**

1. **Concerning Output indicator 1.1.1,** the vast majority (88.2 per cent, so exceeding the target of 80 per cent set) of youth at risk endline respondents said that the use of violence is never justified to resolve conflicts, achieve political objectives, or for any other reason – a huge improvement over the 16.8 per cent that said this during the baseline. Looking at sex-disaggregated data, there was no difference between male and female endline respondents in their belief that the use of violence is never justified. Out of the 35 total project beneficiaries that said that violence could be justified for any reason, the most popular responses were for justice (29 youth at risk respondents said this) and for money (23 youth at risk respondents said this).
2. **Regarding Output indicator 1.1.2,** the results far exceeded the indicator target of 70 per cent. Among the beneficiaries, 336 were directly counselled on the risks of drug use. They were reached through community-level psycho-education sessions to raise awareness on bio-psychosocial effects of substance abuse and many made a commitment to quit drugs after receiving the counselling. While youth widely reported having left drugs permanently due to a combination of factors – counselling, engagement in livelihoods opportunities, community integration, etc. – no follow-up medical screening was done to confirm whether youth had quit and stayed off drugs. Ambassadors who have been trained on conflict mapping and resolution are active in most of the target communities. Community health workers have also been trained on the basic skills to conduct counselling sessions in the communities and they are expected to start holding the counselling session with support from the Sierra Leone Psychiatric Teaching Hospital.
3. The project first worked with the local structures of the Department of Mental Health of the MoHS to make an assessment of the psychological status of the youth engaged in the project and refer them for counselling services on prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol addiction. Later, there was a transition from working directly with MoHS to privately contracting the head psychiatrist from the national psychiatric hospital for the project as a consultant. This occurred due to the liquidation of finances owing to the bureaucratic accounting processes used by the MoHS. **All project activities related to this output were eventually carried out**. Figure 5 shows that almost all beneficiaries reported receiving drug counselling, along with counselling on other issues, with little difference between male and female respondents. However, some have lamented that Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) had not been included in the counseling services provided. Counselling received on abuse of drugs and alcohol was useful but would have been more impactful if implemented earlier in the programming cycle.

Figure 5: Counselling among Youth at Risk Baseline and Endline Respondents

1. Analysis of qualitative data also reveals that drug and alcohol abuse counseling was important element of the project. Most youth at risk reported consuming alcohol and drugs every day before the project started. One said: “we were all doing drugs. I would do them every day – alcohol, weed, tramadol, and others. As soon as I woke up, I would start”. Another stated that, “we were taking tramadol, diazepam, weed, and alcohol, and these we would use every day. Even in the mornings, after the night we would come together and put our money in and find some alcohol or drugs”. Even though some reported using *kush* as well, most said that they stopped using drugs before *kush* use became widespread in Sierra Leone. Especially impactful was counselling, which communicated the economic impacts of drug abuse. By having their drug expenditures estimated and quantified on a yearly basis, one youth said “I saw how much I was wasting in my life, so I decided to stop. That one person spends SLL 5 million (the equivalent of USD 254), and this really opened my eyes”. This was an opinion widely shared by project beneficiaries. Also important was sensitisation related to the health-related effects of persistent alcohol and drug use. Beneficiaries stated that receiving education and training in this area was another motivating factor in getting them to quit and stay off of the substances they were abusing.
2. Despite the positive impact just highlighted under this output, it was also noted that because substance abuse counselling activities did not occur until quite late into project implementation – in November 2022. The delays were the result of the lengthy processes of the MoHS’ accounting/financial systems, which required considerable time to process payments and expenditures. Ultimately, the systems were deemed too bureaucratic and the project instead contracted out this component of the project to an independent consultant from the MoHS, rather than going through the ministry directly. However, finalising the arrangement further delayed the implementation of the counselling component of the project. As a result of these delays, some of the other impacts may have been affected. For instance, it was widely reported that beneficiaries were often still using substances in the initial stages of the project and even using some of the funds they received through their participation in project activities to finance their addictions. Leaving alcohol drugs did not occur automatically but took youth anywhere from 6-18 months to leave drugs. Gradually many reduced their usage as they became involved in the project, even before they participated in counselling. After the counselling those who were still using reportedly ceased to do so. Some key informants suggested that if counselling was provided earlier, it may have accelerated desistance from alcohol and drugs during the project.
3. As well, project beneficiaries mentioned that Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) could have been included as part of the counselling services provided to them. The need for MHPSS is high across Sierra Leone. While mental health is included as an essential service in the Sierra Leone Basic Package of Essential Health Services (GoSL 2015), care and response services around the country are severely lacking (WHO 2022). There is only one psychiatric facility in the country (WHO 2016). Integrating MPHSS counselling into work with vulnerable populations – especially with females still processing traumas associated with GBV – can greatly assist with the reintegration of beneficiaries in their communities, in a way that allows them to fully participate in economic and social life. Most relied on each other for support when dealing with their respective traumas, saying for instance that “sometimes when I remember things about the past I talk to others from the group. So we can sit together like that and speak about our lives”; or that “we have no counselling, but we can come as a group to talk if there are problems that we are feeling. Others would suggest that stress, anxiety, sadness, and other feelings associated with the past could be alleviated in the short-term by focusing on their agricultural livelihoods.

##### Output 1.2

**Finding 6: Youth at risk have become members of local youth groups and participate in DYC and CYC activities, risk analysis and response dialogue forums, and now believe that structural barriers to their reintegration are removed. They feel more empowered and safer to participate in community mechanisms and activities.**

1. **Regarding *Output Indicator 1.2.1.,* the targets were achieved.** Eight youth at risk have been nominated to become members of the DYCs/CYCs and participate in their activities, including meetings and decision-making in the two target districts. 90 per cent of all beneficiaries reported permanent membership in at least one group. Looking specifically at Youth Council activities, the figure below indicates that 44.5 per cent of youth at risk said they now often participate in DYCs/CYCs, which is up from just 10 per cent at the beginning of the project. As well, the proportion that sometimes participates went up from 33.8 per cent to 44.5 per cent. No target was set for this indicator.
2. **Concerning *Output Indicator 1.2.2,*** sixteen dialogues sessions have been held between youth at risk and local authorities with 439 in attendance to discuss issues around reintegration and inclusion of youth at risk in decision making in target communities, chiefdoms and districts. Further, previous barriers to youth at risk participation and feeling of inclusion, such as marginalization and stigmatization (from community members, leaders and local service providers), have been decreased, and the beneficiaries feel more empowered to participate in decision-making and other community activities.

Figure 6: Participation in activities with youth councils among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents

1. Results in Table 9 show that among youth at risk around 90 per cent of males and females participate either often or sometimes, in meetings, dialogues, or consultations with stakeholders. But a higher percentage of male respondents participate often.

Table 9: Participation in activities with youth councils among youth at risk respondents, by sex

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Baseline | | Endline | |
|  | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Often | 4.7% | 1.4% | 46.5% | 25.8% |
| Sometimes | 40.5% | 18.8% | 42.9% | 65.8% |
| Never | 54.7% | 79.7% | 10.6% | 8.3% |

1. Key informants intimated that a key project impact is that beneficiaries are represented in DYC and CYCs. Further, informants noted that having youth at risk participate in the DYCs/CYCs has empowered the youth. DYCs/CYC are an important form of decentralised representation that play central roles at district and local levels in the implementation, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation of *the National Youth Policy*. For youth in the project, these forums were a mechanism to enable youth at risk to participate in local development and to promote good governance, responsible citizenship, and leadership among young people in their areas. Since these community mechanisms are now more inclusive of youth, there is more input from youth in terms of community development. “Youth that were on the margins were not participating in these Youth Council structures, so the project tried to bring them into the DYC and CYCs through the reintegration activities. They used to be [youth] at risk, but now are now considered to be part of – and even as leaders in – some of the Youth Councils”, said one key informant. The DYC/CYCs are also the leads of youth within the chiefdoms, bringing them into the project is a way of trying to sustain the project.
2. **With respect to *Output Indicator 1.2.3*., at the baseline, 59.1 per cent of youth at risk stated that they feel safe in their communities. This went up to 98.6 per cent at endline. No target was established for this indicator.** After disaggregating data, there were no significant differences among beneficiaries when it comes to perceptions of safety across sexes or districts. Interestingly, during the endline survey 84.1 per cent of beneficiaries said that young people engaging in criminal activity is a big problem in their community, despite the fact that qualitative research largely suggested that crime went down considerably in all project communities. Quite possibly these responses reflect a misinterpretation of the question among respondents, who largely believe that youth crime is problematic – or unethical – even if it is becoming less of a problem in their communities. Figure 12 (under Outcome Indicator 3c) supports this analysis; it shows that the vast majority of people believe that compared to last year the level of violence committed by gangs and cliques has decreased.

Table 10: Experiences of aggression or assault in last three months among baseline and endline respondents, by district, respondent category, and sex.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Breakdown by category | | Baseline | Endline |
| Respondent category | Youth at risk | 79.7% | 32.8% |
| Youth | 78.4% | 9.6% |
| Community | 78.4% | 1.9% |
| Sex | Males | 77% | 20.3% |
| Females | 79.1% | 18.9% |
| District | Tonkolili | 71.1% | 34.7% |
| Kenema | 87.6% | 4.9% |

1. Among all categories of baseline respondents, 79.1 per cent said they had in the past three months experienced direct aggression or assault from a young person, while 19.8 per cent of all respondents said this at the endline. Of those that had experienced such an event, 69.3 per cent experienced a theft or robbery, 37.7 per cent experienced violence, 34.2 per cent experienced verbal assaults or threats, and 3.5 per cent experienced sexual abuse. Looking at disaggregated data for this measure, the table above shows that project beneficiaries were more likely than other groups to say they had been victims of aggression or assault. Although the following table does not indicate sex-disaggregated differences in experiences of these types of violence, it does show that endline respondents from Tonkolili were more likely to report having experienced aggression or assault in the three months preceding the survey. However, the number of youth at risk that experienced such an incident decreased considerably since the start of the project. In addition, Table 10 reveals that at the endline, only 32,8 per cent of youth at risk said they had in the past three months experienced a direct aggression or assault from a young person, while 79,7 per cent said this at the baseline.

##### Output 1.3

**Finding 7. Increased knowledge towards gender, GBV, and sexual and reproductive health was achieved both with the beneficiary youth and the community members who attended the husband schools. Moreover, enhanced positive parenting, especially among males, was promoted through the husband schools that were established in all the eighteen communities in the target areas**

1. The Husband Schools approach was instrumental to address toxic masculinity, fiscal responsibility, violence against women and girls, negative spousal relationship. This targeted male adults of the communities, fathers, traditional and religious leaders to address issues as change makers and influencers within their communities. Finally, monthly radio discussions were frequently held by key players to spread GBV messages – as well as messages sexual and reproductive health -that were used to promote positive change for stakeholders in the implementation areas.
2. **According to the baseline study for this project, “A premise to the baseline findings for *Output Indicator 1.3.1* is that the large majority of respondents were not involved in male youth clubs.** Therefore, measurement have been done on youth at risk respondents similarly to other indicators, who are indeed the youth beneficiaries who are to be targeted with sensitisation activities and who will thus be surveyed at end-line stage” (FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA 2021).
3. **Based on the above, *Output Indicator 1.3.1* was measured according to beneficiary’s attitudes towards GBV.** Looking at one key measure, 81.4 per cent of youth at risk respondents to the endline survey stated that it was never acceptable to beat a woman, a modest increase from the 75 per cent that said the same thing at the baseline. More female endline respondents than male endline respondents – 83.3 per cent versus 80 per cent – said this. No targets were set for this indicator.
4. Almost two-thirds (66.2 per cent) of youth at risk participating in the endline survey agree that GBV is a big problem in their community, down from 99.3 that said this at the time of the baseline. Results from **Figure 7** indicate that youth at risk were most likely to justify violence against a female for the following reasons: she goes out without informing her husband, she disrespects her husband, or she cheats. Both males and females held these views. Globally, discriminatory gender norms have proven to be an important risk factor in protection issues such as GBV (Krug et al. 2002). In Sierra Leone, as well, an underlying factor to many gendered protection risks are the social norms that subjugate women in the sampled communities; this includes discriminatory norms the underpin the acceptability of violence as a form of punishment for women and girls that deviate from expected behaviour, and in particular the expectation that women subordinate themselves to their husbands in fulfilling duties associated with their marital and domestic obligations (Dziewanski 2023).

Figure 7: Justifications towards assaulting females among youth at risk respondents

1. **Regarding *Output Indicator 1.3.2.,*** Figure 8 indicates that almost all project beneficiaries had received some information on sexual violence and other forms of GBV by the time of the endline survey; 99 per cent of youth at risk respondents said they had received such information, compared to just 77.1 per cent who said the same at the time of the baseline.

Figure 8: Proportion that have received information on sexual and gender-based violence among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents.

1. The stated target in the IRF for this indicator is 40 per cent. This target was already exceeded at the time of the baseline, with the project reaching almost all beneficiaries with GBV information by the time it had been completed. Qualitative data shows that the impacts on the lives of female beneficiaries were many, and in many ways different from those in the lives of male beneficiaries. Most female beneficiaries reported being frequently engaged in transactional sex to earn income, which put them at risk of GBV and sexually transmitted infections. Many of them were also estranged from their families, and trapped in precarious living conditions, often with many other female peers trapped in the same circumstances. Thus, training on GBV and sexual and reproductive health, when integrated into other aspects of the project, helps change the lives of many female beneficiaries – reducing the risks of GBV and detrimental health effects that they constantly face in their lives.
2. **Concerning *Indicator 1.3.3.,* the baseline for this project did not identify a specific measurement for this output indicator. However, its similarity to measures and targets to those for Output Indicator 1.3.1, suggest that these could serve as a good proxy for beneficiaries’ improved perception and attitudes towards gender and GBV.** As shown earlier, at the time of the endline 81.4 per cent of youth at risk stated that it was never acceptable to beat a woman, which was up from 75 per cent that said the same during the baseline. This far exceeds the 40 per cent target for this indicator. However, when at beneficiaries’ likelihood of reporting GBV, the vast majority (94.8 per cent) of project beneficiaries said they would report a case of GBV if they ever experienced or witnessed one. Of those that would report such causes, almost all (95.3 per cent) would go to the police, followed by chiefs (77.5 per cent) and family (56.7 per cent).

#### Outcome 2

**Finding 8. National and local institutions improve their response to the needs of youth at risk, through capacity strengthening in human rights, rule of law, negotiation and youth-sensitive approaches to improve their engagement with youth at risk under Output 2.1 and in youth responsive legal frameworks under output 2.2. However, the adoption and application of the procedures were not tracked. Nevertheless, through the project monitoring structures and based on qualitative feedback from youth at risk beneficiaries, youth at risk generally reported feeling of being more respected and considered within their communities and felt that stigma and discrimination decreased. Still, that more than half say they have experienced such infringements on their rights is troubling.**

1. ***Outcome indicator 2.a*** aimed to measure the extent to which targeted local institutions, including law enforcement agencies and community structures, adopted improved procedures to ensure youth-responsive approaches to detention, reintegration, and rehabilitation. The goal was to enhance the capacity of these institutions to handle youth at risk in conflict with the law more effectively and responsively. The baseline for this indicator was two targeted local institutions, and the target was set for all institutions involved in the project to adopt improved procedures for youth-responsive approaches to detention, reintegration, and rehabilitation.

All seven local security institutions and community structures (including the SLP, Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SLCS), LPPB, Independent Police Complaints Board, Paramount Chiefs, CSOs, and youth at risk, totalling 65 people) participated in a two-day capacity building training providing knowledge and understanding of the concept of rule of law, human rights and responsibilities, and approaches to improving collaboration between the security sectors and local structures in addressing issues of youth at risk in conflict with the law. This initiative could significantly expand youth-responsive approaches in the project areas, thereby enhancing community resilience. The adoption and application of the procedures were, however, not tracked. There was a plan to conduct a follow-up engagement with these institutions at the district level, unfortunately, this was not possible due to the end of the funding period.

1. ***Regarding Outcome Indicator 2b****,* Figure 9 below indicates that respect for youth rights has increased, evidenced by the lower proportion of youth at risk that have experienced unfair treatment and discrimination between the endline and baseline. At the baseline, 78 per cent of youth at risk said they experienced unfair treatment or discrimination. This fell to 55.8 per cent by the endline. No target was indicated in the IRF for this outcome indicator.

**Figure 9: Proportion that have experienced unfair treatment or discrimination among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents.**

1. It is encouraging to see that unfair treatment and discrimination have decreased among beneficiaries. It is nevertheless disturbing to note that more than half report having suffered such violations of their rights. Of the beneficiaries who reported unfair treatment or discrimination, most said they experienced this in interactions with police (47.2 per cent) and health facilities (42.8 per cent), while relatively fewer said they experienced such treatment from community leaders (22.6 per cent) and other community members (18.9 per cent). As was already mentioned, the improvement of social relations between youth and community members was a key impact of the project. As noted by one project beneficiary, “before the project came, the community stakeholders would make remarks around us. They would call us thieves and drug addicts and such stuff. Now I can see that how they consider us has changed”. Indeed, across all interviews and discussions, community stakeholders and youth indicated that stigmatisation of youth at risk by community leaders and the community, in general, had decreased, and that respect for youth and their inclusion in community life and decision-making had widely improved. “They used to look at us like thugs and criminals and blame us for everything in the community. But now we can see that there is even respect for this group [of youth]”, said one beneficiary. Many youths would express similar statements. One said previously the community that gave him the reputation of a “notorious thug” and “now they stop to speak to me in the community and come and even ask my opinion on community matters sometimes”. Importantly, youth said that their social profiles and personal esteem were further boosted through participation in key events like World Food Day and their roles as Peace Ambassadors.

##### Output 2.1

**Finding 9. All three Correctional Service Facilities in Kenema, Magburaka, and Mafanta achieved the target of implementing the Earning Scheme policy, though endline research indicated that carpentry tools have not been supplied to Mafanta Correctional Facility at the time of the evaluation. Further, 100 inmates were engaged in life skills training.**

1. ***Output indicator 2.1.1*** sought to assess the implementation of the Earning Scheme Policy in targeted correctional centres. The Earning Scheme Policy was designed to provide inmates with opportunities to earn and save money, which can contribute to their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The baseline indicated two correctional centres, with a target of three centres implementing the Earning Scheme Policy. All three Correctional Service Facilities in Kenema, Magburaka, and Mafanta achieved the target of implementing the Earning Scheme policy. Furthermore, the Correctional Service has engaged local banks for the opening of accounts for 100 inmates across the two target districts, promoting reintegration and rehabilitation efforts. This success not only met the set target but also enhanced the inmates' opportunities for skill development and reintegration into society.
2. One challenge noted during the endline research is that carpentry tools have not been supplied to Mafanta Correctional Facility in order to support the Earning Scheme. According to stakeholders from UNDP, this task is expected to be completed. But the initial list of tools submitted by the SLCS was so extensive that the available project budget could not meet the demand. The list was sent back to the SLCS for further review and consideration, which delayed procurement. A contract for procuring the tools has finally been awarded to supply the tools, and a tripartite meeting of UNDP, SLCS, and the supplier was organised to introduce the supplier come to a shared understanding of how the task will be carried out.
3. ***Output indicator 2.1.2*** focused on the number of youth at risk deprived of liberty who received improved life skills. The goal was to equip incarcerated youth with essential life skills, such as communication and problem-solving, to enhance their chances of successful reintegration into society after their release. The baseline stated 60 youth-at-risk deprived of liberty, including 55 males and 5 females, with a target of 90 (80 males and 10 females) to receive improved life skills. The programme exceeded its target by engaging 100 inmates (90 males and 10 females) in life skills training. This training aligns with the national life skills curriculum and is adapted to the project's youth. This achievement highlights the project's success in providing essential life skills to incarcerated youth, enhancing their potential for a successful reintegration into society.

##### Output 2.2

**Finding 10: The project supported the capacity building of 40 case managers from across the correctional facilities, more than the project target. However, there were only 87 cases heard across the two target districts, resulting in 52 inmates discharged, five sentenced, and three put on bail (much less than the target of 250 cases with 65 per cent case conclusions)[[13]](#footnote-14). Finally, there has been significant progress in the legislative process aimed at reforming criminal and correctional laws.**

1. **In pursuing activities intended to achieve the target of *Output Indicator 2.2.1*.*,*** the project worked with the Sierra Leone Correctional Service to improve the treatment of inmates in correctional facilities and advance compliance with the Mandela Rules accentuating on inmates’ human rights. Capacity building on the implementation of the Mandela Rules focused on junior officers, training them on long-lasting skills that will serve them throughout their careers. According to the baseline study for this project, in Mafanta and Kenema Correctional Centres junior ranking officers, which are targeted by indicator 2.2.1, had not been formally trained on the Mandela Rules. In Kenema, though no junior ranking official has directly received the training, “Mandela Rules are currently being implemented in the Correctional Centre and both male and female junior ranking officials are currently receiving guidelines on the implementation of the rules during daily morning debriefing” (FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA 2021, p. 31).
2. Since the project started, it supported the capacity building of 40 case managers – 35 males and five females – from across the correctional facilities. This exceeded the expected target of 30 – 25 males and five females. Training provided for the project utilised the Mandela Standard Workbook and Case Management Forms on how to identify critical cases and provide support to inmates in need of assistance. Case managers were trained on issues relating to the provision of mental and psychosocial assistance to inmates, and were also provided with rehabilitation, reintegration, and case management skills to provide support to inmates. To provide additional oversight and monitoring of its activities, the project also supported a fifteen-day human rights audit and monitoring inspection exercise of eight SLCS Correctional Facilities, which included Mafanta and Kenema. The completion of the monitoring provided vital insights into issues faced in SLCS Correctional facilities and identified best practices that can be replicated in other facilities; this included a three-day workshop on the findings of the audit of correctional facilities.
3. **Regarding *Output Indicator 2.2.2.* and *Output Indicator 2.2.3.*** which aimed to track the number of cases resolved by prison courts (virtual courts) in the project areas, focus was on improving the efficiency of the legal process within correctional facilities, ensuring timely case resolutions, and facilitating the release or sentencing of inmates, as appropriate. The baseline indicated 32 cases resolved in 2019 in Kenema Correctional Facility, with 29 cases involving males and three cases involving females. The target was set at 250 cases with 65 per cent case conclusions, comprising 80 per cent males and 20 per cent females. The achieved total was only 87 cases heard across the two target districts, resulting in 52 inmates discharged, five sentenced, and three put on bail. The programme's impact on case resolution is evident, with a significant increase in the number of cases heard and concluded successfully, which aligns with the programme's objectives.
4. ***Output Indicator 2.2.4*** was directed at amending the *Correctional Act* and *Criminal Procedure Act* *(CPA)* to enhance legal frameworks related to correctional facilities and criminal procedures. The goal was to strengthen the legal foundation for corrections and the judicial system in Sierra Leone. The baseline mentioned that the *CPA* and *Correctional Act* were under review, and the target was set for the amended acts to be submitted to the Attorney General and Parliament by December 2021 or the latest by March 2022. As part of this project output, the Justice Sector Coordination Office and the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law successfully organised workshops for the full technical review of the CPA through a technical working group chaired by a respected Supreme Court Judge (now Acting Chief Justice). However, due to the 2023 national election the most experienced judges of the technical working group had to go prolonged and intensive training on matters of electoral justice, which were the national focus and priority in the lead up to balloting. This prolonged the review process. Subsequently, the end of the review process coincided with Parliament going on a recess for two-month. When government returned, the plan to engage with the parliamentarians on both the Correctional Act and CPA could not be completed because the main opposition party – the All People's Congress – boycotted their participation in governance institutions, including Parliament. Nevertheless, as a result of the inter-party dialogue, the main opposition Members of Parliament have returned to government. Following this development, Justice Sector Coordination Office and the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law organised a workshop and presented the documents to the legislative committee comprising the two political parties in preparation for the legislative review process in Parliament. The focus is now on the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice to formally present the bills to Parliament for the legislative process.
5. Because this output necessitates engagement with the national legislative and executive bodies, its completion is beyond the control of the implementing agencies. To continuing supporting the legislative review beyond the project period and UNDP used USD 45,000 of core funding[[14]](#footnote-15). These developments indicate a commitment to improving the legal framework for correctional and criminal procedures in Sierra Leone, even though the timeline extended beyond the initial target.

#### Outcome 3

**Finding 11. Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence were promoted by supporting joint socio-economic initiatives involving at-risk youth and community members and building their capacities, although delays and some gaps somewhat limited the expected effects.**

1. According to the youth at risk beneficiaries themselves, they are no longer engaged in crime activities for economic purposes, as all have now been trained on alternative livelihoods. Through engagement with the project, youth at risk have changed their attitudes and behaviours and are now too busy with their farming activities to be in the streets engaging in crime and anti-social behaviours. Their confidence and ownership towards their agricultural livelihood activities has increased significantly, and they express pride and motivation for what they have achieved.Both youth at risk and community respondents are now more likely to say they believe that young people play productive roles in their communities, and that community respondents widely believe that levels of violence committed by gangs and cliques in the project areas has decreased in the last year.
2. **Regarding Outcome Indicator 3a.,** while it was noted in the baseline study for this project “that presently [youth at risk] YAR to a large extent rely on crime activities, proxy measures of self-esteem and self-reliance outside of crime activities cannot be measured. An alternative formulation which has been used to measure the baseline is hereby suggested” (FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA 2021, p. 41). However, the endline consultants suggest a better measure of this indicator is: perceptions that young people are currently playing productive roles in the community, as it more broadly captures feelings of youth self-esteem and empowerment. Thus, it has chosen to reformulate the indicator according to this measure, as per the figure below.

Figure 10: Perceptions young people are playing productive roles in the community among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents.

1. Youth at risk are now more likely to say they believe that young people play productive roles in their communities. The figure above also shows that almost all (96.6 per cent) youth at risk responding to the endline survey said this, while only 69 per cent stated this opinion at the baseline. No target was set for this indicator. As has already been documented in this report, qualitative data broadly demonstrates – across all stakeholders and project areas – that beneficiaries feel more empowered and like they are playing more productive roles across their communities.
2. **With regards to *Outcome Indicator 3b***, Figure 11 shows that community respondents also were more likely at the end of the project than at its beginning to say they believe young people are playing productive roles in their communities. Of endline respondents from the community category, 92.6 per cent said this is the case, as compared to just 60.4 per cent at the baseline. As with the previous indicator, this one also had no target.

Figure 11: Perceptions young people are playing productive roles in the community among community baseline and endline respondents.

1. Again, it should be noted that qualitative data shows that community members broadly now believe that project beneficiaries have productive contributions to make to community life, and are engaging with youth in a way that makes them feel valued, respected, and empowered.
2. **Regarding Outcome Indicator 3c,** the following figure indicates that community respondents widely believe that levels of violence committed by gangs and cliques in the project areas has decreased in the last year. More than three-quarters (77.6 per cent) of endline respondents in the community category said that this type of violence had decreased in the last, compared to less than half (45.3 per cent) that said this at the time of the baseline. Again, this indicator had no target.

Figure 12: Perceptions of changes in levels violence committed by gangs and cliques in the last year among community baseline and endline respondents.

1. Qualitative data also indicates that crime and violence are going down across project communities. Although this evidence is anecdotal, and no statistics were available to back up qualitative data, the frequency with which research participants indicated that crime decreased makes these claims reliable. As said by on DYC, “if issues of crime were involved then they would let the DYC know because I and other leaders all get reports from the Local Unit Commander when it comes to crime. So, like, stabbing, theft, harassment these have all decreased in project areas”. “The section chief [for Court Barray] said that the crime rate has reduced. He’s not receiving reports of theft, fighting, and violence. They don’t even consider themselves YAR [anymore]”, stated another.
2. Youth at risk also reported that gangs and cliques in project communities have largely disappeared, because they “were the ones in the gangs, so the youth rightly targeted were the main perpetrators of the crime and violence”. Decreases in gang activity are attributed in increased opportunities that the project provided to youth at risk to engage in pro-social economic and community activities, which pulled them away from the anti-social, criminal, and sometimes violence activities they had been engaged in before as a means of survival. Previously some had engaged in serious cases of collective violence, for example, fighting gangs from other communities with knives and cutlasses so that military forces had to be called in from the district headquarters. Many of the male youth also reported previously participating in political violence. Politicians in Sierra Leone are actively recruiting youth from cliques and gangs, ‘employing’ these groups to increase numbers at their rallies or more directly as a type of security force and there is an increasing role of gang members as perpetrators of political violence (ACLED 2020). Notably, there were no incidents of electoral violence in the project communities, which stakeholders generally took as an indication of the peacebuilding effects of the project. Said one such stakeholder: “around election time the youth were used as security – as thugs – and they would fight [the youth from] other communities. This year there was nothing like this [previous electoral violence]. Now the youth are involved in community development. Even their parents will meet with you, and say thanks”.

##### ****Output 3.1****

**Finding 12: Almost all youth at risk surveyed during the endline said they feel they are recognised as active members of the communities. While the project supported a joint community project in all eighteen target communities, there have been challenges, including delays and some projects remaining incomplete at the end of the programme.**

1. In Kenema District, there were community infrastructure projects in four communities that were completed, and five communities remained incomplete, whereas for the youth livelihood Infrastructure projects one community was totally completed, four remained incomplete,[[15]](#footnote-16) and four were not started (see Appendix 4 for more detail). In Tonkolili District, eight community infrastructure projects were completed and in one community it remained incomplete. Out of the youth livelihood infrastructure projects in the district, two communities were completed, while four were incomplete and two were not started (info on one was not available). As already mentioned, feedback from the beneficiaries indicates that the overwhelming majority now feel well integrated in and part of their communities.
2. ***Output Indicator 3.1.1*** centred on promoting joint socio-economic initiatives in target communities to foster social cohesion, community reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. The aim was to engage communities in collaborative projects that would bring people together and contribute to community resilience and peaceful relations. The baseline set for the number of joint socio-economic initiatives to promote social cohesion, community reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence was two, with a target of ten. The project successfully supported a joint community project in all eighteen target communities, focusing on social and economic community infrastructure. This included the construction of community *barrays*, youth centres, a market structure, and community rice mills. While these initiatives have contributed to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, and extended project benefits to communities (beyond beneficiaries) there have been challenges, including delays and most projects remaining incomplete at the end of the programme. Delays resulted from challenges undertaking the tendering process with FAO’s procurement systems, as well as the requirement that contractors to prefinance their building costs. However, failure by FAO to pay within the original expected four-month period exposed the contractors to inflationary risks, so they delayed, and in some cases ceased, work until the contracts could be renegotiated.
3. As the FAO looked for a solution the end of the project passed. Because key agricultural supplies were contingent upon the completion of youth livelihood infrastructure projects, these could not be delivered until the structures had finished. Additionally, the aforementioned delays were compounded by a tendering process that was based on an online system that largely excluded contractors outside of Freetown with lower technological skills. The result was that the companies that won the tenders were forced to travel from the capital to the project locations, something that was both time-consuming and costly. These challenges may require continued attention and support to ensure the full realisation of the intended impact on community resilience and reconciliation.
4. **Concerning *Output indicator 3.1.2*,** almost all (98.6 per cent) youth at risk surveyed during the endline said they feel they are recognised as active members of the communities, as is shown in the figure below. Only two-thirds (66.7 per cent) said this during the baseline survey. No target was set for this indicator.

Figure 13: Feelings that youth are recognised as active members of their communities among youth at risk baseline and endline respondents.

1. As already stated repeatedly throughout this report, qualitative data supports findings that project beneficiaries now widely feel like they are recognised as active members of their communities.

##### Output 3.2

**Finding 13. Youth at risk were trained and their capacities strengthened to be able to generate their livelihoods.**

1. Under this output, 418 youth at risk trained on gender and livelihood, nutrition and food-based dietary guidelines, VSLA, good agricultural practices a for crop production, basic business management, post-harvest management for maize and poultry feed production. As well, thirty youth at risk were trained on cassava processing; twenty on groundnut processing and management, 24 on post-harvest management for rice, 275 on poultry and animal husbandry management, and 49 on bakery management, while 256 youth at risk trained in advance business management skills. Further eighteen youth at risk groups have been established and are being trained in cooperation with the MAFFS structures and all eighteen have been registered as FBOs with MAFFS and local councils and have established bank accounts.
2. **Concerning *Output Indicator 3.2.1*,** the baseline for the project indicated that lack of skills to embark on income income-generating agriculture is a significant obstacle for youth at risk to be meaningfully engaged in agriculture beyond a subsistence level. Although the baseline also revealed that many of the target beneficiaries have previous farming experiences from the past having worked on their family farms, only 24 per cent of respondents indicated that they had ever received formal trainings on topics such as innovative practices, good agronomic practices, technologies for climate-smart resilience farming, and enterprise development. By the end of the project, 96.6 per cent of respondents indicated that they had received some form of formal training in agriculture.

Figure 14: Agricultural training received among youth at risk endline respondents.

1. The figure above breaks down the type of training received by youth at risk. It indicates that almost all youth at risk respondents said they received training on good agronomic practices (91.7 per cent) and climate change / environment (89.7 per cent), whereas a smaller percentage reported receiving training on processing (44.1 per cent) and marketing and business management (27.6 per cent).
2. **For *Output Indicator 3.2.2***, at the time of the baseline, membership in farming groups was low among beneficiaries, with only about 6 per cent of females and 9 per cent of males stating that they belonged to a farming group. Organising youth into agricultural groups and providing them training and other support was an important project contribution. By the end of the project, it was reported that all farmers groups had been formalised into independent FBOs by MAFFS, and had banking accounts opened, making them eligible for support from the ministry. Further, it should also be mentioned that the project supported each FBO in establishing Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). At the endline, 56.7 per cent of youth at risk said they belonged to a VSLA. Indeed, qualitative research also found that many VSLAs were still operating at the time of the evaluation. In Kenema all VSAL seemed to be functional, while in Tonkolili four were not. The project did not collect any systematic data on VSLAs, though Bo Kenema did collect some data on VSLAs in their district between January and March 2022 that showed a total savings from the nine communities in the district as amounting to SLL 10,450,000. As well, through the endline the consultants did collect some additional data on activities and impacts related to VSLAs. Most functional groups were making weekly payments of around SLL 5,000 per member, though some could not always meet this threshold. Of course, participation in VSLAs is dependent on earning sufficient income to contribute, and lost agricultural activities from delayed disbursement of project equipment affected the ability of youth to contribute to these loans schemes. Where VSLA groups were functional and had reported completing cycles of savings and paid out typically reported savings around SLL 8-10 million. In the case that loans had been taken for the VSLA, it was for agriculture, investment in small business, healthcare, and for the paying of school fees. In the end, VSLAs provided an important source of financing as there is no other place to get loans in the community.
3. **Regarding *Output indicator 3.2.4*,** in all research visited, the beneficiaries – both males and females – confirmed the impacts of agricultural training. All confirmed that training on good agronomic practices, climate-smart resilience farming, enterprise development, etc. had a significant impact on improving their capacities to farm. Training activities were carried out successfully and generally better agronomic practices and other aspects of the training are now being adhered to. Better agronomic practices and stronger capacities for youth at risk farmer groups help strengthen food security and improve productive capacity. Though FGDs generally indicated that training had been sufficient, there was an expressed desire by beneficiaries to gain better understandings of post-harvest training – for instance, on basic processing and food preservation methods. Nevertheless, by successfully supporting youth at risk farmers, the project demonstrated to others the benefits of farming and created champions for farming practices that can serve as examples to other youth at risk. Further, the project attempted to build long-term agricultural productivity and sustainability by supporting smallholder farmers with interventions that increased productivity across different agricultural and value chain activities. Across all communities, youth indicated that they had the intention to continue using their newly acquired skills to make a living, with the caveat that the remaining project activities must be delivered. Failure to deliver on these activities presents a considerable sustainability risk to the livelihoods component – and indeed to the entire project.

### Effectiveness of the project theory of change

**Finding 14: The project TOC that integrated key areas of social, institutional, and livelihoods support and empowerment for youth can largely be said to have been effective, despite considerable challenges in implementation. There were no particularly high-risk interventions or approaches that should be highlighted. Importantly, the project created change in the lives of youth at risk through an integrated programming model that focused on economic empowerment, which was supported with efforts to also empower youth socially, as well as with efforts that are underpinned by institutional strengthening and reform. However, there also exists a disconnect between Outcome 2 and the rest of the project components.**

1. The project was designed to pursue its outcomes through and integrated programming model that focused on economic empowerment, which was supported with efforts to also empower youth economically and socially, which has been shown by the evaluation findings to mitigate the exploitation of youth at risk for political gains and of young women for sex work and gendered violence. However, there exists a disconnect between Outcome 2 (which focuses on national and local institutions) and Outcomes 1 and 3 (which focus on individuals and communities). Greater efforts could have been made to connect the outputs and activities under Outcome 2 to the other outcomes of the project, rather than letting them exist at was essentially a stand-alone programming element.
2. Still, based on its ToC the project achieved several key successes. Most importantly, violence and crime in project communities have decreased, and clique and gang activity have almost vanished. As a testament to the peacebuilding effects of the project, there were no incidents of electoral violence among project communities during the 2023 presidential elections. Further, qualitative data indicates that most project beneficiaries – most of whom were previously living on the margins of their communities and risky circumstances – have now been reintegrated into their communities and families. Thus, the ToC that the integrated nature of the project can largely said to be effective and impactful. It is important to note that there were synergies gained through many of the different project components. For instance, economic reintegration through agricultural livelihoods activities also facilitated social integration; as community stakeholders and members saw the youth at risk engage in agricultural enterprise, they began to believe that the transformation beneficiaries were making was genuine. This, in turn, facilitated community reintegration. It also increased the standing and respect that youth had in their communities and made it more likely that they would be integrated into community activities and decision-making. Also, counselling on drugs and alcohol had important impacts on youths’ ability to participate more fully in other aspects of the project and made it more likely that project impacts could be sustained in the long-term. While institutional reform was important and it had an important impact on youth in contact with the law and corrections system, the integration of this project element into other activities could have been strengthened. Further, impact and change ‘in theory’ are premised on the timely, well-coordinated, and complete implementation of the ToC through the project model. However, the possibilities for change and the potential for impact was undercut by considerable project delays and unfinished activities (at the time of the evaluation). That the project managed to achieve what it did despite these challenges is impressive and speaks the potential of key aspects of the ToC.

### Effectiveness of project components and strategies

**Finding 15: While the holistic and integrated nature of the intervention means that all aspects of it contributed to the project objectives, the livelihoods component contributed most significantly to impacting the lives of beneficiaries, despite considerable implementation challenges related to the delays in providing inputs and building structures to support youth livelihood activities.**

1. Qualitative data indicates that most stakeholders – including beneficiaries themselves – largely believe that the agricultural component of the project as the most impactful to generating and sustaining change in beneficiaries’ lives. The main reason for this is that being engaged in agriculture provided youth with an income away from criminal activities. The livelihoods component was also a necessary supporting component integrated into other aspects of the project such as counselling given to move youth away from substance. As said by one key informant, “when people leave drugs they need to have something meaningful to move into. So getting the job [and livelihoods] aspect of the project right is very important”. Currently, there are no indications that youth are returning to substance abuse. But further failures to complete livelihoods components of the project in a timely way could push beneficiaries to do so. Indeed, some attrition has already been noted, with some beneficiaries across the project dropping out because of dissatisfaction due to delays in delivering on key project milestones. In general, engaging in agriculture also helped build a sense of positive identity among the beneficiaries, and helped to validate their change into active community members among stakeholders, neighbours, and family who previously had considered youth at risk as idle and troublesome. There were also important peacebuilding effects from the agricultural livelihoods part of the project. As stated by a key informant from MAFFS, “in terms of peacebuilding, if people are fully engaged in jobs, they will not be taking part in conflict and violence. If youth stay idle, they will embark in activities that are not positive – like conflict and violence, and through that there will be peace amongst our populations”.
2. The baseline assessment engaged in a thorough agricultural livelihoods assessment, in order to set the groundwork for understanding the project’s contribution towards increasing youth at risk’s capacity to generate livelihoods outside of crime activities. Building on analysis done during the baseline, this endline also engages in a thorough assessment of agricultural livelihoods activities as a way of evaluating activities carried out under Output 3.2.

Table 11: Agricultural Participation among Youth at Risk Baseline and Endline Respondents, by District, Respondent Category, and Sex

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Baseline | Endline |
| Males | 35.8% | 71.8% |
| Females | 51.1% | 65.0% |
| Total | 39.4% | 69.0% |

1. The table above indicates that considerably more beneficiaries reported that they were involved in agricultural activities at the end of the project than at the time of the baseline. While females were more likely to say they were doing agriculture during the baseline than were males, now more males report participating in agricultural activities than do females. When beneficiaries were asked about their main source of livelihood during the endline, 36.2 per cent said it was from agriculture – the highest-ranking response for this question – while 24.5 per cent said it was from petty trading – the second highest response.

Figure 15: Type of agricultural activities among youth at risk endline respondents

1. Figure 15 indicates that 66.2 per cent of project beneficiaries are involved in food crop agriculture, while 57.2 per cent are involved in cash crop agriculture. Over three-quarters (76.5 per cent) of beneficiaries said they have access to land for farming in their community; about the same number of males (78.1 per cent) and females (74.1 per cent) said they have land for farming. During the baseline, only 55.8 per cent of all respondents said they have access to land for agricultural activities. At that time, 54.1 per cent of males and 61.2 per cent of females said this.

Figure 16: Contributions to their households among youth at risk endline respondents

1. The survey also asked youth about their living arrangement and about how they contribute to their households. One of the important impacts of the project was the reintegration of youth at risk into their families. Across qualitative research, youth indicated that the project as a way of allowing them to reconcile and return to their families. As a result, 40.3 per cent are now living with their parents, 25.9 per cent are now living with a spouse, and 21 per cent are living with some other family members. Only 12.8 per cent are living alone or with friends. In addition, the figure above shows that followed by household work (which 86.6 per cent of beneficiaries contribute to) 71.4 per cent contribute to their household’s agricultural work. Only a small percentage (4.1 per cent) is not contributing at all to their households, meaning that most youth at risk are now productively engaged in family- and household-life.
2. Interest in farming is widespread among the youth at risk, and the livelihood component proved to be very important among the participants. Although some of the project beneficiaries had previous experiences with agriculture, none were experienced farmers or had formed cohesive pre-existing farming groups. Therefore, the support they received in the provision of inputs, supplies, equipment, and technical training on good agronomic practices, as well as the activities undertaken to strengthen internal group building, group cohesion, and group management, were important to improving their productivity. Land was provided to youth at risk through the participation of community stakeholders, who either offered their own land or facilitated access land that others owned. Though no project data exists to systematically measure agricultural income or yields, qualitative research carried out as part of the endline did capture some impacts in this regard. Youth at risk utilised agricultural outputs for partly for their own consumption, and for sale in markets that they accessed around their communities. For instance, one community reportedly harvested the cassava from the first cropping season, which they sold for approximately SLL 10 million[[16]](#footnote-17) because the cassava grinder has not been installed to make *garri*. The group retained SLL 8 million in the bank account that was started for them as part of the project, using the remaining SLL 2 million for labour, feeding, and reinvestment in agriculture. Other groups shared similar experiences and usually reported profits between SLL 2-10 million, depending on the crop.
3. Although project beneficiaries are benefiting from their engaged in agricultural activities, in most cases agriculture is being done at subsistence levels. As said by one beneficiary, “the money they get in agriculture currently it’s not enough to satisfy her family. The agriculture is for subsistence only. So, if we want to make and save money for example for school, we cannot”. This is partly explained by the fact that at the time of the evaluation, agricultural equipment promised by the project had not yet been distributed to beneficiaries. This is the knock-on effect of delays completing infrastructure to support community cohesion and youth livelihood activities – processing centres, poultry houses, and other agricultural structures; until these facilities are finished, other equipment and supplies linked to agricultural processing could not be distributed; agricultural equipment could not be distributed by the project until the infrastructure need to support agricultural activities could be finished. Therefore, rather than engaging in their preferred activities – like poultry farming or cassava processing – youth were instead growing and selling maize feed and unprocessed cassava.
4. So, instead of using maize to feed poultry, beneficiaries were advised to sell their produce rather than suffering further post-harvest losses. While waiting for instructions about what to do with their maize, many communities noted that their harvest had become infested with weevils, they managed to sell the grain to poultry owners for feed. Some were able to reinvest these proceeds into seed rice and seeds from other agricultural activities. Further, communities received instructions that they should sell the maize, incurring even further post-harvest losses, while others reportedly did not know how to bring the product to market – even though MAFFS Extension Officers linked to the project should have supported them in this regard.
5. Looking at the distribution of other equipment, in Kenema, only one community – Geima – has received tricycles, the rest have not. No distribution of agricultural equipment was carried out in any of the communities where livelihoods infrastructure was yet to be completed (see analysis of Output Indicator 3.1.1 and Appendix 4 for more detail. All remaining tricycles and other equipment are at the District Council. But even in Geima, where the tricycle came on time, but was not assembled on time and there were missing parts. The supplier was paid and has not responded to requests to bring the remaining parts. Youth now rely on public transport to move their agricultural equipment and produce, which is expensive. Also, without the promised transportation equipment they are unable to access markets in Kenema Town, where they would be able to access higher prices for agricultural commodities. Also, agricultural productivity was affected by late delivery of inputs for some communities. While, in Kenema, inputs reportedly were provided in time for the planting season, in Tonkolili, farming inputs were received late, affecting the yields because they delayed planting. Agriculture is a timebound activity, so this created challenges for some groups. For those involved in cassava production, yields were not affected as much, because cassava can grow will less rain. But for those that grow maize – a more water-dependent crop – delays in planting that season resulted in a smaller yield for project beneficiaries.
6. Overall, the agricultural livelihoods component of the project yielded important benefits. But these were diminished by the aforementioned challenges in implementing agricultural livelihoods components of the project had important effects on agricultural productivity and ability to engage in preferred agricultural activities, which considerably diminished the impact that the project could have had on beneficiaries lives. Delays related to delivering project outputs – youth livelihood infrastructure and agricultural equipment – on time had the most significant effect on impacts. In addition, we will see below that these challenges also have key implications for the efficiency and sustainability of the project.

### Effectiveness of youth targeting and gender integration

**Finding 16: As mentioned above, the project targeting of youth at risk was largely effective.**

1. Youth are often at the centre of violence in Sierra Leone (Special Investigation Committee 2023), especially cliques and gangs that are involved in violent criminality in their communities and political violence. After the project, various stakeholders indicated that gangs and cliques in project communities have largely disappeared. As a result, it was reported that criminality and violence had also decreased. The implication is that the appropriate groups of youth had been targeted by the project. In addition, there were no incidents of electoral violence in the project communities, which stakeholders generally took as an indication of the peacebuilding effects of the project.

**Finding 17: The project has achieved its objectives in a gender-sensitive way, incorporating females as key project beneficiaries and achieving key impacts in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.**

1. In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, the analysis above already covered key elements of how gender was integrated into the programming design. For instance, the project made conscious efforts to include young women in agricultural groups to improve their livelihoods, as well as in DYCs/CYCs to increase their participation in local decision-making; the project involves 46 per cent young females across all components, including the livelihood component. Also covered were some of the key gender-related impacts of the intervention. This section synthesises the aforementioned analysis and findings, and where possible further adds to it. Project activities broadly incorporate female beneficiaries across all project outcomes and the majority of project outputs. Overall, 30 per cent and USD 900,000 of the total project budget allocated to activities in direct pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Still, it was Output 1.3 (increased awareness among key stakeholders and youth at risk in targeted communities on women and girls’ rights, with increased male involvement to reduce GBV) that had probably the most direct focus on gender (Activities 1.3.1 to 1.3.7).
2. As a result, 81.4 per cent of youth at risk respondents to the endline survey stated that it was never acceptable to beat a woman, an improvement from the 75 per cent that said the same thing at the baseline. By the end of the project, all project beneficiaries had received some information on sexual violence and other forms of GBV. Critically, the project model did not limit gender-transformative work to women and girls, but worked to change social norms around gender, power, and violence are adhered to by *both* males and females. Evidence suggests that interventions working with males, as well as females, are more effective at reducing violence than single-sex interventions (Jewkes, Flood, and Lang 2015). Indeed, there is a growing acceptance that men and boys must be included in interventions aimed at GBV, especially given the role of males in the perpetration of violence, and recognition that masculinity and gender-related social norms are implicated in GBV (Ricardo, Eads, and Barker 2011). Engaging constructively with men to examine the gendered impact of conflict and how they have been socialised is a crucial step in creating a world where women and girls are valued, equal, and free from violence (IRC 2013). Such a methodology was found to be effective in reducing some forms of GBV in other contexts (Dziewanski 2013). Behavioural change programming that works with male stakeholders can establish male ‘champions’ in their respective areas of influence. Doing so, can encourage men to speak and act against GBV in a society where they hold most of the power and control over resources and decision-making at household, community, and national levels (Oxfam 2016).

### Progress to impact

**Finding 18: The project had considerable peacebuilding impacts, especially by bringing youth into development and decision-making processes.**

1. As part of its peacebuilding objectives, this project aims to empower youth at risk to become resources for sustained peace, community resilience, and social cohesion in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts, by providing increased possibilities for youth to participate in decision-making spaces, for securing their sustainable livelihoods, and increasing access to prevention and protection services. The project also seeks to strengthen the capacities of security and civilian authorities, as well as civil society organisations, to deal with youth at risk issues adhering to respect for human rights and dignity. Youth at risk have recently been considered the highest threat to peace and security in the country, especially around national elections. For instance, the Special Investigation Committee tasked with investigating the August 2022 protests stated in its findings that vulnerability among “large numbers of unemployed youth creates potential for insecurity because they become more susceptible to recruitment political campaigning” and that “unemployed youth are recruited, trained, instigated, and financed to perpetrate violence and other forms of social unrest” (Special Investigation Committee 2023, p. 39). Politicians actively recruit vulnerable youth from cliques and gangs to ‘employ’ them groups to increase numbers at their rallies or more directly as a type of security force (Momoh et al. 2022). Further, there is an increasing role of clique and gang members as perpetrators of political violence, which is particularly clear in the party militias (ACLED 2020).
2. Recent economic hardship in Sierra Leone has made it even easier for political actors to co-opt young people into political violence. Sierra Leone is already among the world’s least developed countries[[17]](#footnote-18). But with rampant inflation[[18]](#footnote-19) – the country is among the ten countries with the highest food price inflation in the world (*Awoko Publications* 2023) – living conditions are deteriorating rapidly for many people. Troublingly, according to the World Food Programme’s *Sierra Leone Food Security Monitoring System Report*, published in February 2023, 66 per cent of households spend more than 75 per cent of their total expenditure on food (WFP and GoSL 2023) ; the same percentage said that 78 per cent of the population is food insecure. Further, the largely youthful population of Sierra Leone faces challenges finding work in the job market. Structural unemployment among youth is estimated at 60 per cent, and Sierra Leone has among the fastest growing numbers of young workers living on less than USD 10 per day (National Youth Commission, and Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports 2012). For these reasons, providing livelihoods opportunities to this important segment of the Sierra Leonean population makes the project very relevant to consolidating security in the targeted communities. In particular, stakeholders interviewed for this endline stated that providing alternative livelihoods for youth at risk helped to break the hold gangs and cliques have on youth at risk and assisted in reintegration of those youth. The project’s work to create livelihood and income-generation opportunities (Output 3.2, Activities 3.2.1-3.2.7) helped reorient public perceptions of youth at risk to counter stigmatising stereotypes of youth as idle troublemakers, creating spaces for youth to actively participate in economic and social life in the places where they live.
3. Very often youth in Sierra Leone find little space for empowerment relative to older actors in their community who are likely to hold a negative opinion of young people. Youth might be excluded from decision-making in Sierra Leone for a number of reasons that includes: a general lack of trust in the youth and intimidation from elderly decision-makers (IGR 2017). Alienation from decision-making a is key frustration that has long underpinned youths’ frustrations related to being excluded from Sierra Leonean society. Military participation during the war offered Sierra Leone’s “young people a chance to make their way in the world” (Peters and Richards 1998, 183). It provided them with an opportunity to turn against the society that socially and economically disadvantaged them (Peters 2011). Thus, work being undertaken through the project under Outcome 1 (Output 1.1, Activities 1.1.1 to 1.1.4; and Output 1.2, Activities 1.2.1 to 1.2.3), is especially important to bringing youth into development and decision-making processes. In particular, the endline noted that now youth at risk have a better understanding of their rights and possibilities to participate as citizens, and that they also have developed the confidence and abilities to engage with authorities, especially with local and traditional authorities and security agents in a non-violent manner. In addition, youth at risk have been empowered through the DYCs and CYCs to participate in youth leadership and influence district and local decision-making processes that affect youth at risk.

## Efficiency

**Finding 19: The assessment of the project's efficiency reveals a mixed picture, and slow adaptation to changing economic conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation.**

1. To a very large extent, resources were used appropriately for planned activities in the project document (PBF 2020)[[19]](#footnote-20). Resources were utilised to advance the achievement of the objectives of empowering youth, supporting livelihood and dignity of people particularly those who are at risk. The efficient use of resources includes the absence of duplications of initiatives achieved through complementarities and coherence with ongoing interventions within the UN and other agencies. For instance, by sharing project concept and update with other UN Agencies through the UN Country Team, the FAO, UNDP and UNFPA avoided possible duplication with UN projects.
2. One overarching issue affecting cost efficiency was the occurrence of delays in payment and construction activities. These delays had several cascading effects that impacted the overall efficiency of the project. Notably, they resulted in price increase, thus diminishing the cost-effectiveness of planned activities. In particular, activities fell behind schedule, and in some cases, the prices of planned activities escalated before they even commenced. Delays in payment also had a ripple effect on project outcomes. These impacts included incomplete projects such as the community centre and storage facilities, a lack of progress in capacity building and skills training (e.g., soap making, *gara* dying, tailoring), and the non-provision of essential resources like poultry houses, equipment, freezers, and bikes. These resources could have been leveraged to generate income and enhance the project's cost efficiency. The requirement for tenders to be submitted through an online system created hurdles for smaller businesses, exacerbating challenges in procurement processes.
3. Furthermore, the slow pace of implementation of the infrastructure projects due to delays in the procurement process contributed to increased costs of programme management. The extended implementation period added to overhead costs, although the impact on overall efficiency was limited, given that the budget was not significantly adjusted. Additionally, the delayed delivery of inputs – again, linked to procurement delays – particularly for crops like sorghum and pigeon peas, posed challenges to project effectiveness. This delay hindered the timely execution of agricultural activities and suggests a need for improved communication and adherence to project timelines.
4. There were a number of areas in the project where issues related to financial liquidation also presented significant hurdles to time efficiency. For example, delays in financial liquidation were attributed to the bureaucratic processes at the MoHS, with multiple systems in place, as well as challenges related to the accountant's mobility between the psychiatric hospital and the ministry. This aspect of project execution, beyond the control of project personnel, necessitated consultation with external expertise and intervention by UNDP, which handled procurement as part of the project. As well, procurement challenges affected the project efficiency through the late arrival of inputs and fertilisers, which affected the project's time-bound agricultural activities. The timeliness of project execution was critical, as agriculture inherently follows a specific seasonal schedule. These delays had a cascading effect on agricultural activities, with farmers resorting to replanting crops to compensate for time lost. Delays in agricultural activities generated stress for key project stakeholders, including Youth Officers, DYC, and CYCs, as youth beneficiaries would reach out to them when problems arose due to these delays.
5. The project also encountered challenges related to its joint implementation, which raised issues of organisation and cooperation, potentially affecting long-term sustainability. Moreover, the project faced challenges in promoting national ownership of monitoring activities with GoSL counterparts, due to the government's lack of funding for externally implemented projects. The resultant absence of regular field visits until January 2023 by the MoYA contributed to delays and unimplemented activities. The focus of community activities on infrastructure added complexity to the project, leading to issues in conducting tenders and making payments. FAO's contracting and procurement processes were not conducive to timely execution, leading to delays and rising prices.
6. The decision to use contractors from Freetown created inefficiencies and delays due to the long distances they needed to travel and their lack of accountability to communities. Using local contractors in the construction of project structures would have offered several advantages in terms of cost-efficiency. Local contractors typically result in cost savings due to reduced overhead and logistical expenses. This is particularly crucial for projects with limited budgets, as it allows for the optimisation of available resources. Additionally, engaging local contractors fosters a sense of community ownership and accountability, leading to increased community benefits. The evaluation also found concerns with the quality of work delivered by Freetown-based contractors. Several concerns regarding the quality of labour and contractor-related issues emerged during the evaluation. Contractors did not heed the Youth Officer's instructions, attributing this to FAO's contractual authority.
7. Delays in the execution of agricultural and construction activities had an unintended impact on the trust and confidence built with beneficiary groups, as well. This trust was undermined the project experienced setbacks related to completing project activities. Youth at risk and other stakeholders reported that they were inadequately informed about these delays, even during coordination meetings. The resultant frustrations felt among youth at risk beneficiaries caused some to drop out of the project, in the process decreasing the impact gained from the resources invested in the project. This disconnects between reported progress and ground-level realities resulted in efforts to re-emphasise the project's core values, such as patience and perseverance. Each time that frustrations surfaced among beneficiary groups, these needed to be addressed by the Project Manager and others, using up time and human resources that would have otherwise been put towards project implementation, coordination, etc.

**Finding 20: As often encountered in the region, the short duration of the project (two years initially, which required a no-cost extension of an additional six months, increasing the total project duration to two-and-a-half years) combined with the start-up delay hampered the finalisation of the work, particularly that of construction and provision of the infrastructure, equipment and inputs necessary to support resilience and socio-economic development of young people at risk.**

1. While it is not possible to judge the project’s efficiency relative to other projects, it can be said that the experience of FAO, UNDP and UNFPA in working on similar fields of Sierra Leone with structures already on the ground facilitated transitioning from design to implementation. The initiative expanded on best practices and methods from prior work and built on community insights and partnerships formed by FAO, UNDP and UNFPA with local stakeholders and civil society groups. Lessons from the experiences of FAO, UNDP and UNFPA in working on similar interventions helped in shaping the activities under this project through the adoption of tried and tested mechanisms without the need for trial and error. The inclusion of climate change and environmental concerns into the project design and activities enhanced the efficiency of the project when resources are considered in terms of its full economic cost (human, environmental, financial and time) and in terms of contribution to the SDGs.
2. There were also additional challenges that impeded progress in adhering to the planned timeline. The project's ambitious two-year timeframe for engaging with youth at risk was deemed short, necessitating a six-month no-cost extension. However, since the project itself began six months late, the extension had limited impact on addressing delays. Thus, bridging funds were required for some project activities from the implementing agencies. Several project activities faced delays or remained incomplete, including the construction of key infrastructure such as poultry houses, bakeries, and community centres. Delays were particularly evident in Tonkolili, where construction had not even commenced, while Kenema had seen progress ranging from 70 per cent to 80 per cent completion for various structures, including a rice mill and community centres. These incomplete structures not only affect the project's overall completeness but also impact community members, causing frustration, and resource losses.

**Finding 21: The main features of the collaboration between FAO and its partners were oriented around key coordination structures leveraged to guide implementation.**

1. **In terms of project coordination,** the Public Service Commission played a pivotal role in overseeing and guiding project activities at the national level. This institutionalised involvement of stakeholders demonstrates a commitment to collaborative governance and project sustainability. FAO, as the Convening UN Agency, recruited a Project Manager with expertise in peacebuilding and livelihoods who was responsible for coordinating project implementation, collaborating with government counterparts and partners, facilitating technical and Project Board meetings, and leading Outcome 3. Also, communication channels existed between the three implementing agencies (FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA) through the Project Manager role, which was used to troubleshoot programming challenges and share experiences, challenges, and lessons learned during project implementation.
2. The synergy between project components was further affected by ineffective coordination among the UN agencies themselves and the various civil society organisations (CSOs) and local partners subcontracted by the different agencies to implement the project. Coordination meetings between the three agencies were not sufficient to bring together all partners towards a more synergistic approach to programming, with each agency primarily focusing on managing its respective component without effectively considering the activities of the others. Even within individual components, there were instances of limited information flow between the UN agencies and local partners, leaving stakeholders uninformed about reasons that structures supporting community cohesion and youth livelihood activities, payment releases, and the project's overall progress, with many unaware that the project was nearing its completion and only to be informed during this evaluation.

**Finding 22: Key staff were in place to undertake monitoring of key elements of the project, but joint monitoring was limited which affected the extent to which programming lessons and experiences could be learned and shared.**

1. FAO deployed a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to oversee the tracking of progress for all project outcomes and outputs. UNFPA was in charge of coordinating the submission of joint progress and financial reports and oversaw the overall project monitoring system. UNDP assigned its Chief Technical Specialist, who was responsible for managing all Peacebuilding Fund projects within the UNDP Country Office, to coordinate, implement, and provide technical oversight for UNDP's components within the project. A Rule of Law Specialist handled activities under Outcome 2, focusing on prison courts, legal framework review, and Mandela Rules. An expert specialising in youth issues was recruited to work in the field, supporting community-based activities, engaging with youth at risk, local youth councils, and other stakeholders, providing mentorship, and ensuring regular tracking of project interventions and risks. UNFPA on the other hand contributed by providing a Gender and Rights Specialist who mentored and enhanced the capacity of implementing partners. However, only three joint monitoring visits were conducted by the agencies throughout the implementation period, and stakeholders perceived limited interest in using the findings and recommendations that emerged. The results of the joint monitoring helped project implementing partners to identify what was working well in terms meeting the overall project goals, targets, and objectives as stipulated in the project workplan and logframe. In the process, implementing partners were also able to identify certain success stories in terms cliques and gangs who have transformed. Some of these youths became ambassadors and agent of change. The information that came out of the joint monitoring further highlighted interests from youths for the scalability of the projects, which offered the implementing agencies the opportunity to understand the level of interest generated among youth in other chiefdoms for the rollout of similar interventions. Also, the implementing agencies use monitoring report to improve on aspects that are challenging or not going as planned.

## Sustainability

**Finding 23: The project aimed to build local capacity at community and institutional level through its design and implementation and contributed to agricultural livelihoods and youth integration into local decision-making structures, impacts that are likely to remain after the project has ended.**

1. To ensure sustainability, the project has motivated community ownership among a range of stakeholders that includes: youth, community stakeholders, and government representatives. To begin with, the project design was characterised by extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders. This includes national stakeholders, local communities, international organisations, and civil society organisations. Such inclusive engagement helped to strengthen ownership of the project and increase the likelihood of the sustainability of its interventions. It is evident that the project team recognises the importance of involving various stakeholders in the decision-making process. These efforts significantly increased the relevance of the project's interventions by aligning them with the actual needs and aspirations of the local communities.
2. Government entities, including the DYC, CYC, and Youth Officer, have been central to the project’s implementation. Youth at risk have been included in these structures in a way that will continue beyond the project. DYCs/CYCs are local state institutions that are enshrined in the *National Youth Policy*, and which therefore be sustained by the GoSL after the project ends. As well, the organisation of youth into FBOs means that they are eligible for MAFFS support for their agricultural activities. The inclusion of key ministries – MoYA and MAFFS – in throughout the project cycle signifies a commitment to its long-term success. However, there is some question as to whether the government has the necessary capacities to support project beneficiaries in the long-term. For instance, while the MAFFS possesses the technical capacity, resource limitations, and competing priorities raise questions about the likelihood of prioritising small-scale farming over other larger-scale activities.

Buy-in has also been created among youth at risk, who widely expressed a willingness to take on roles as Peace Ambassadors and engage in community sensitisation efforts. These activities not only contribute to the sustainability of the project but also provide meaningful roles for beneficiaries once they have completed their counselling and rehabilitation. The commitment of stakeholders appears to be linked to the continued dedication of youth participants to training and agriculture. Risks to sustainability include youth migration, inadequate government support, and decreased stakeholder engagement if youth commitment decrease. Among youth at risk, the project implemented both behavioural and life skills components, which had a positive effect on youth empowerment and skill development. Participants gained confidence and trust in their abilities, which proved valuable in various aspects of their lives. However, it is important to note that these gains were undermined when other project aspects experienced delays. This led to a renewed focus on instilling virtues like patience among participants.

1. The project made some contributions to environmental sustainability through its implementation of climate-smart interventions. These interventions play a crucial role in protecting the environment and mitigating climate change effects. By integrating climate-smart practices, the project demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that not only addresses immediate agricultural needs but also aligns with long-term priorities for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The project also stands out for its commitment to responsible management of land, crops, livestock, aquaculture, and capture fisheries. This approach balances short-term food security and livelihood needs with the imperative to safeguard natural resources for future generations. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices and resource conservation, the project helps prevent resource depletion and habitat disruption.
2. The project made significant progress in fostering positive social change within the community. One notable achievement is the reduction in crime and violence. Participants in criminal activities have been targeted for intervention, and this targeted approach has resulted in a decrease in criminal incidents. Moreover, the youth who have not been part of the programme view the participants more favourably, indicating improved community perceptions. Thus, a fundamental outcome of the project has been the increase in trust between the youth participants and the broader community. This enhanced trust has contributed to greater community stability, as evidenced by peaceful voting campaigns in areas like Maburaka Town, which were led by youth participants.

**Finding 24: Despite the progress made, key factors that could affect the sustainability of project benefits exist. Although some were mitigated during implementation, most are worth considering and mitigating.**

1. **A no-cost extension and bridging funds are being implemented as measures that have been identified or applied to prevent or mitigate some of the risks identified above and to address the** challenges and concerns emerged that could impact the sustainability of the project. FAO has allocated USD 200,000, through a one-year Technical Cooperation Programme aiming to consolidate and cascade achievements for the project with an emphasis on livelihood activities. The bridging phase will focus on the following: consolidating livelihood component and agri-business activities; expanding livelihood activities to additional youths; engaging beneficiaries as peer educators and facilitating outreach sessions to other youth groups in original target communities; continuing support for social cohesion activities and joint community project utilisation; and enhancing support and mentorship for females through targeted sensitisation and outreach.
2. Other sustainability issues include some community members becoming overly reliant on the project, affecting their ability to carry out independent agricultural activities. This over-reliance raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of the project's impact. The failure to hand over structures (development structures), equipment (bikes), and materials (fridges, solar) has frustrated beneficiaries and other community members. The lack of reasons for these delays raises questions about project management and transparency. Completion of livelihood infrastructure is a prerequisite for the handover of key livelihood supplies. Until these are completed, the supplies will not be handed over.
3. There have been issues related to insufficient communication about the end of the project. Many beneficiaries are unaware of what comes next after the project concludes. Clear communication and a well-defined exit strategy are essential to avoid leaving beneficiaries in uncertainty. The absence of a clear exit plan for the project poses a challenge to sustainability. The community lacks clarity on how the project will be monitored and maintained in the future. The involvement of external bodies for oversight may be essential for long-term sustainability. Of particular importance is continued oversight of the implementation of the livelihood component of the project, which for youth at risk is especially crucial for sustainable outcomes. However, livelihood interventions experienced delays which could lead to frustration and the potential relapse of beneficiaries into their previous situations.
4. As well, ensuring the project's sustainability requires addressing issues related to mobility and capacity at the district and field levels. Supervision and monitoring are vital, and staff mobility is essential for effective project implementation and sustainability. Adequate budget allocation for project-related activities in the district plans is crucial for sustainability. While some budget allocation exists, there is a need for further funding to support the continuation of project activities beyond the project's conclusion. What is more, improved communication is identified as a critical factor in sustainability. For example, the evaluation team's visit was not effectively communicated, highlighting the need for better information dissemination. Additionally, establishing linkages with other initiatives can help strengthen sustainability efforts.

## Cross-cutting issues

Finding 25: The project included environmental safeguards and gender equality and women's empowerment in the design and implementation of the project in a number of areas.

1. While the environmental sustainability was not a central focus of the project, the project can be said to contributes to the objectives of the *National Climate Change Policy* through reduction of climate-related loss and damage across all productive sectors; protection of livelihoods, food security and standard of living; and sustainable use and conservation of Sierra Leone’s natural capital (GoSL 2021). To this end, FAO and its partners provided technical expertise to beneficiaries of the project, particularly in the areas of sustainable agricultural livelihoods, working to promote youth economic empowerment, food and nutrition security for all in such a way that the economic, social, and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised. Most notably, under Activity 3.2.3, the intervention trained beneficiaries on climate smart agriculture, as part an agricultural training package that also included good agronomic practices, agricultural machine operation, agribusiness development and post-harvest management, etc. Also, in order to help manage, how climate variations negatively impact on agricultural activities under Outcome 3, FAO worked closely to assess available meteorological data and liaise with community members and youth at risk to ensure agricultural activities are aligned with changing seasonality.
2. Project contributions to environmental sustainability played a role in protecting the environment and helping mitigate climate change effects. By integrating climate-smart practices, the project demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that not only addresses immediate agricultural needs but also aligns with long-term priorities for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The project also stands out for its commitment to responsible management of land, crops, livestock, aquaculture, and capture fisheries. This approach balances short-term food security and livelihood needs with the imperative to safeguard natural resources for future generations. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices and resource conservation, the project helps prevent resource depletion and habitat disruption.
3. In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, this topic was adequately covered in the analysis presented above in the effectiveness and progress to impact section.

**Finding 26: The project included conflict-sensitivity in a number of areas of its implementation and project design, though feedback and communication from beneficiaries could have been improved.**

1. At the baseline stage of the project, with the support of a consultant and the Peace and Development Advisor, detailed conflict and Do No Harm analyses were carried out in the selected areas. As well, the selection criteria for beneficiaries of livelihoods support were developed through a participatory approach, which directly contributed toward fostering long-term ownership of initiatives implemented, and which followed principles of Do No Harm. In addition, the coordination role of the Project Manager included ensuring a peacebuilding and Do No Harm approach to project implementation. While there were instances where frustrations over slow project delivery created frustrations among project beneficiaries, which threatened to undermine the principles of Do No Harm, the Project Manager and partners were instrumental in resolving these frustrations and tensions. Further, while beneficiaries and other project stakeholders were also provided with a mechanism to give feedback on the project and/or to report any abuse or malpractice. Though many beneficiaries did not know how to contact project stakeholders after problems and during delays with completion of structures for community use and for the support of youth at risk agricultural activities, there were also no reports of project beneficiaries being under physical threat or being subjected to intimidation, harassment, sexual abuse, or psychological harm.

# Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. The project’s approach, including the overall design of its objectives and strategy, was well aligned with the strategic peacebuilding priorities of the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone, and has targeted coherently the priority needs for sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion in Sierra Leone and particularly those related to youth at risk.**

1. The project was largely relevant to the institutional and socio-economic country context it was implemented in. It was aligned with key United Nations and Government priorities and policies promoting youth empowerment, improving responsiveness of local institutions, and furthering social cohesion and economic development as a route towards building peace in project chiefdoms. The project is also relevant to the global development efforts set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the corresponding UNSDCF in Sierra Leone. The intervention is also coherent and compatible with other interventions being undertaken by WFP, UNDP, and UNFPA.
2. The strategy of strengthening the capacities of stakeholders and beneficiaries at different levels was adequate to propose options to support the awareness and sustainable empowerment of the final beneficiaries namely youth (men and women) and in particular youth at risk and their communities in Sierra Leone. In terms of design, the project's outputs were intricately interrelated, creating a holistic and synergistic approach and the project established coordination structures to guide implementation.

**Conclusion 2.** **The project achieved a number of key successes in terms of effectiveness and made significant progress towards impact, which demonstrate that a judicious and timely combination and coordination of capacity building actions in three dimensions (individual, organisational, enabling environment); by its end, the project managed to generate changes and effects and significant progress towards sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion for the benefit of youth at risk and their communities in Sierra Leone. Key achievements include economic and social empowerment among youth at risk, and greater trust between youth and communities in intervention areas.**

1. Thanks to the project, violence and crime in project communities have decreased, and clique and gang activity has almost vanished, despite considerable frustrations caused among youth at risk because of project challenges in delivering promised community and livelihood infrastructure, as well as the agricultural equipment.
2. As a testament to the peacebuilding effects of the project, there were no incidents of electoral violence among project communities during the 2023 presidential elections. Further, the majority of project beneficiaries – most of whom were previously living on the margins of their communities and risky circumstances – have now been reintegrated into their communities and families. Thus, the theory of change (which integrates institutional support of the security and correctional service, greater awareness of gender, institutional support for district and chiefdom youth structures, and livelihood and socioeconomic support) was largely effective and impactful. That these impacts were achieved despite considerable project delays that resulted in unfinished activities (at the time of the evaluation) is even more impressive. In addition, the impacts of counselling provided on substance abuse could have been greater if this project component had been started earlier in the project, and if had been complemented by MHPSS activities. Overall, the project could have benefited from better data Collection as part of project monitoring – for instance, in regards to measuring agricultural yields and savings of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA).

**Conclusion 3. Despite its duration considered short given the nature of the planned activities and expected results, and a late start in a changing socio-economic context also marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has somehow managed to adapt its strategy and coordinate its interventions, which made it possible to carry out most of the activities, even if some were still not completed at the time of the evaluation.**

1. In terms of efficiency, resources were used appropriately for planned activities in the project document. The efficient use of resources includes the absence of duplications of initiatives achieved through complementarities and coherence with ongoing interventions within the UN and other agencies, and based on lessons from the experiences of FAO, UNDP and UNFPA in working on similar interventions. However, one overarching issue affecting cost efficiency was the occurrence of delays in payment and construction activities, owning partly to the inefficiencies in existing procurement systems that do not adequately encourage local contracting. These delays caused activities to fall behind schedule, and in some cases, the prices of planned activities escalated before they even commenced. The project's ambitious two-year timeframe for engaging with youth at risk was deemed short, necessitating a six-month no-cost extension. However, since the project itself began six months late, the extension had limited impact on addressing delays, requiring bridging funding for some project activities.

**Conclusion 4. The project strengthened capacities and coordination among key beneficiaries and stakeholders to continue generating effects and progress towards impact post-project, provided that certain factors identified as potential threats to the sustainability of project outcomes are managed.**

1. The project design was characterised by extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders that strengthened ownership of the project and increased the likelihood of sustainability. The project made significant strides in fostering positive social change within the community, and all project participants – including at-risk youth – expressed a willingness to carry forward the impacts of the project. Despite these achievements, several challenges and concerns emerged that could impact the sustainability of the project. Most notably, the failure to finish and hand over youth livelihood infrastructure, equipment, and other project materials has caused considerable frustration among community members. Unfortunately, project beneficiaries have not been systematically informed about these delays, and have expressed concerns about when – or even whether – project activities will be completed. The absence of clear communication and a well-defined exit strategy to exit the project poses a challenge to sustainability.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1 (to all project stakeholders).**  **FAO, UNDP and UNFPA, the Government of Sierra Leone and relevant project subcontractors must complete all project activities and FAO should initiate an exit plan that will ensure the consolidation of project benefits and sustain the project’s progress towards impact.**

1. There is considerable frustration among beneficiaries currently about unfinished project activities. In particular, the unfinished community infrastructure (community *barrays*, youth centres, market structure, and community rice mills). and unfinished youth livelihood infrastructure (poultry houses, cassava processing, and others) threaten the sustainable livelihoods of project beneficiaries, as well as their commitment to sustaining project successes. Frustrations stemming from not receiving promised project benefits have already been apparent during the project and could very well spill over to drive youth at risk “back to their previous lives”, as many have already threatened to do if the project is not completed in a satisfactory manner. As well, discussions with the beneficiaries in both project chiefdoms also confirmed the need to pay more attention to the project exit plan. Project stakeholders generally understood that the project was ending, but not how or when indicates insufficient attention to the implementation of an exit strategy and/or sustainability plan. Therefore, all participating agencies, implementing partners, and government stakeholders must work together to design and implement an exit/sustainability plan that transitions from the completion of the final activities toward sustainability. Where this has not happened, it should include: linking youth at risk to existing government structures and opportunities, getting government to take on responsibility and make tangible commitments to supporting these groups, and where possible connecting beneficiaries to other work being done by the participating agencies and implementing partners in the area. A first step towards completing the project is to communicate to youth at risk the reasons for delays so far, ensuring that each group is directly engaged in a discussion about what has occurred, why, and what next steps to expect. Communication to throughout the project has been inconsistent, and often relied indirectly on Youth Officers, DYCs, CYCs, or other stakeholders. As a result, key information – especially about the project delays and closure – has not been adequately communicated.

**Recommendation 2 (to FAO). FAO must streamline procurement mechanisms and processes to better meet the specific needs of projects like this, which must be implemented within short time frames in unstable environments and with vulnerable populations where delays could create frustrations and even lead to conflicts.**

1. Activities under Output Indicator 3.1.1 aimed at promoting social cohesion, community reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence – namely community structures and infrastructure aimed at supporting youth livelihood – faced considerable difficulties in terms of procurement. For the Convening agency of such a project, especially, it is important to have systems that allow for speedy payments. In the current economic environment, where prices of materials and supplies are fluctuating greatly, working through procurement processes that release funds quickly is necessary to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of programming. A separate assessment should be held to see if procurement systems at FAO are sufficiently streamlined, adaptable, and localisable to be able to lead a project with a short timeframe, which also works in volatile environments – and with vulnerable populations – where delays contribute to frustration – and even lead to conflict.

**Recommendation 3 (to FAO). In short term, FAO must implement systems that encourage local entrepreneurs and strengthen their capacities in order to guarantee the quality of services and products expected of them.**

1. Although online bidding systems create opportunities for automation of the tender process, it also potentially excludes local contractors who may not have the technical capacities to submit an online bid, but who could deliver quality services. Including local contractors has the added benefit of supporting local economies – materials, skills, labour, etc. Local contractors that are located closer to the communities they are working will also be more efficient, in that they will be able to cut down on transport costs. Their proximity to beneficiary communities will also enhance accountability, as beneficiaries will be better able to access such contractors, which is not the case for contractors in Freetown.

**Recommendation 4 (to UNDP). UNDP must learn lessons from this project to improve the prioritisation and planning over time of its counselling and capacity building activities for the benefit of vulnerable people. More concretely for future similar projects, it must consider that counselling on drug and alcohol prevention and cessation has more impact at the start of the project.**

1. The involvement of the cliques and gangs in violent crimes is frequently associated with using intoxicants such as drugs and alcohol. Alcohol, especially, is also used – along with money and food – to get clique and gang members to participate in political rallies that can result in collective violence. Of the many beneficiaries that directly attended the counselling on the risks of drug use, most made a commitment to quit drugs. Qualitative research verified that most had subsequently managed to stay sober. Thus, this element of the project was an important one. However, counselling on substance abuse did not commence until December 2022. Providing drug and alcohol counselling services earlier may have accelerated desistence from alcohol and drugs during the project. Especially impactful was counselling that communicated the economic impacts of drug abuse and sensitisation related to the health-related effects of persistent alcohol and drug use. Further, given that many youth at risk were still using as project activities commenced, doing so could help encourage greater beneficiary engagement in other aspects of the project and maximise project impacts. This could also accelerate the total time it takes for youth to quit substances, which would further increase the impacts of programming. Follow-up medical screening should be done to confirm whether youth had quit and stayed off drugs, and additional counselling should be provided to those that are struggling to do so.

**Recommendation 5 (to UNDP and UNFPA). UNDP and UNFPA in their future interventions must also consider integrating evidence-based mental health and psychological actions that have been used elsewhere Sierra Leone and in West Africa when supporting youth dealing with the after-effects of violence. They must also strengthen the capacities of farmers-based organisations and of women’s groups as well as other peer support structures that can help creating awareness among youth at risks and survivors of GBV and provide concrete and useful advice.**

1. Given the dearth of MHPSS services in Sierra Leone, integrating counselling aimed at providing MPHSS support could provide a great benefit to youth struggling with long-term traumas associated with drugs, violence, and especially GBV. Future interventions may also consider integrating evidence-based mental health interventions that have been used elsewhere Sierra Leone and in West Africa when supporting youth dealing with the after-effects of violence (Betancourt 2018). Given that the project already supported youth at risk by forming FBOs that created cohesion among the youth, further projects could also consider building the capacities of these groups to provide peer support. Because there are not enough MHPSS services available at health facilities currently, peer support groups can serve as community-based MHPSS that help respond to the needs of communities. Participation in support groups can be led by service-users and supported by health staff at nearby facilities. Such groups must receive the requisite training and resources to provide peer-to-peer MHPSS for common mental health issues such as stress and anxiety, which are common throughout project communities. The support they give might have a thematic composition of topics that varies depending on the needs and preferences of participants. Discussions might range from the sharing of mental health experiences among youth, discussing effects, coping mechanisms, peer education, and support and encouragement for service usage. Developing and strengthening innovative responses should focus on youth groups and networks that provide peer support for alternative forms of MHPSS can also create greater awareness around mental health at the community level. Given that most cases of GBV are addressed informally, there exists an opportunity to promote help-seeking support at a community level through women’s groups. In particular, peer support structures can also be trained on the referral pathway, to help create awareness among survivors of GBV about available services and to better educate them about how to seek out such support. In this way, more serious cases, such as those dealing with the interconnected web of physical, social, and emotional traumas resulting from GBV, can be increasingly referred to more specialised service providers like NGOs, INGOs, health facilities, or One Stop Centres (where these exist).

**Recommendation 6 (to all project stakeholders). For similar projects, partners must, under the leadership of the lead agency, design and implement a functional monitoring-evaluation system capable of collecting and providing conclusive and relevant data to measure the achievements and progress of the project and inform decisions.**

1. The endline evaluation found in some instances shortfalls in data available to track the progress of key aspects of the project. This absence of comprehensive data – yield data, income statistics, savings – hampers the project's ability to assess its progress accurately and make informed decisions. This means that subsequent projects should ensure that sufficient data is collected as part of the project activities – especially those related to Outcome 3. In this regard, programming partners (like Caritas) or government partners (like MAFFS) could be engaged to systematically collect data on agricultural yields and incomes generated by livelihoods activities. As well, systematically collected data on VSLA savings, loans, etc. can track if these project components are being implemented successfully, and assess their performance between project communities.

**Recommendation 7 (to PBF, FAO, UNDP and UNFPA). The PBF as well as the United Nations Agencies and the Government institutions responsible for project execution, must consider in future similar interventions, a duration and timeline better adapted to the nature of the activities, and integrate into the theory of project change, concrete and appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate risks likely to affect the project implementation and performance.**

1. A two-year project will be very hard-pressed to enact the type of transformative social change required to resolve deeply embedded structural and behavioural issues. This is especially true when considering the fact that joint implementation is a process that requires considerable time to be spent on coordination, integration, communication, monitoring, etc., not to mention the inevitable likelihood of other programming obstacles and delays. As well, time and care must be taken to work with youth at risk in order to generate trust and cohesion among a marginal group that experiences considerable barriers in participating in Sierra Leonean society and economy. An extended programming period could be useful, for instance, to help bring youth into the project and work with them over a period of time that ensures that impacts are maximised and the gains the project makes are lasting in an inclusive peace that is built from the ground up. Both peacebuilding and development are processes that are long-term and emergent. Greater security and non-violence emerge endogenously over time through changing localised conditions as development is distributed, institutions are made more transparent and accountable, and trust and cohesion are built. Even high-profile interventions, which have been recognised as relatively successful in eliminating the sources of violence and insecurity, can have a short shelf life, with insecurity quickly returning to pre-reform levels as soon as projects conclude (Call 2022) . A longer-term approach to peacebuilding allows for more time to build a peace process that takes its time to become participatory and collaborative, each of which are much more likely to create long-term impacts.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

| **Last Name** | **First Name** | **Institution** | **Role** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ahmed | Sheke | CYC | CYC (Tonkolili) |
| Aruna | Andrew | Programme Manager | Caritas (Kenema) |
| Bangura | Gbrilla | CYC | CYC (Mile 91) |
| Bangura | Bintu | CYC | CYC (Kenema) |
| Battilo | Bockarie | MoYA | Project Focal Person |
| Bockarie | Anita | MoYA | Youth Officer (Kenema) |
| Bockarie | Victor | CYC | CYC (Kenema) |
| Bockarie | Brewa | Paramount Chief | Office of the Paramount Chief (Dama) |
| Conteh | Donald | MoHS | Consultant |
| Conteh | Isha | CYC | CYC (Tonkolili) |
| Conteh | Philip | DAO | District Agricultural Officer (Kenema) |
| Dakowa | Samuel | UNDP | National Youth Expert |
| Fomba | Augustine | ONS | ONS (Tonkolili) |
| Helms | Mathilde | FAO | Project Manager (former) |
| Johnny | Thomas | NaCCED | Director of Programmes and Research |
| Kamara | Yusuf | NAYCOM | Monitoring and Evaluation Manager |
| Kamara | Osman | SLP | Local Unit Commander (Tonkolili) |
| Kanu | Mohamed | MAFFS | Livestock Officer (Tonkolili) |
| Kanu | Mohamed | MoYA | Youth Officer (Tonkolili) |
| Kargbo | Mohamed | SLCS | Officer in Charge (Kenema Correctional Facility) |
| Koroma | Dorcus | UNFPA | Youth and Gender Analyst |
| Koroma | Andrew | Caritas | Director (Makeni) |
| Koroma | Alaska | MAFFS | Crop Officer (Mile 91) |
| Koroma | Sebatu | MoYA | Council Representative (Kenema) |
| Macavorey | Alex | Director | Caritas (Bo) |
| Mansaray | Alhaji | DYC | DYC (Kenema) |
| Marrah | Emmanuel | MAFFS | District Agricultural Officer (Tonkolili) |
| Moinina | Charles | MoYA | Director of Youth Affaires |
| Ngaugah | Micheal | MAFFS | Crop Officer (Kenema) |
| Ngegba | Patrick | MAFFS | Livestock Officer (Kenema) |
| Norman | Isha |  | CYC (Kenema) |
| Senessie | JJ | SLCS | Officer in Charge (Mafanta Correctional Facility) |
| Sesay | Rashid | MAFFS | Project Focal Person |
| Sesay | Mohamed | NAYCOM | Director (Kenema) |
| Soko Musa | Amara | Paramount Chief | Office of the Paramount Chief (Nongowa) |
| Sowa | Ibrahim Allen |  | Council Representative (Tonkolili) |
| Tarawalie | ASP | SLP | Local Unit Commander (Kenema) |
| Thomas | Ruth | PPRC | Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) Representative (Kenema) |
| Wuyango | Harding | FAO | Assistant FAO Representative (Programme) |
| Yellah | Sheku | MoYA | Director of Youth Affairs |

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

The evaluation design matrix is a centrepiece of the evaluation and plays a critical role at all the steps of the evaluation process. For a breakdown of the criteria, key questions, indicators of success, and data sources related to this endline evaluation, see the evaluation design matrix below. All questions and sub-questions are a high-level guide that provides a general frame for evaluation, and questions aimed at individual key informants will be tailored to those stakeholder groups based on those questions that are outlined below.

Table 12: Evaluation Design Matrix

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria and Key Questions** | **Indicators of Success** | **Means of Verification** |
| *Relevance:* | | |
| * To what extent was the project design aligned with the strategic peacebuilding priorities of Sierra Leone Government, and UN recipient's organisations? * To what extent were the project objectives relevant to the needs of the beneficiary communities, including youth at risk and broader communities with regards to community resilience and social cohesion? * Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? * To what extent has the project responded to identified capacity needs across the three capacity development dimensions[[20]](#footnote-21), and how have they capitalised on existing capacities? * Was the project design and implementation strategy sufficiently informed by stakeholder consultations? * How has the project adapted to changes in context, emerging challenges, and needs of local communities during its implementation? * To what extent were good practices and lessons learned from other similar PBF projects considered in the project design? * Were the project's ToC and assumptions underlying the project at its inception appropriate and realistic and did they remain relevant during project implementation? * Have any changes been made since project design, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that have necessitated a reorientation of project objectives and goals? | * Project design is aligned with key national strategies/policies * Project design addresses key needs expressed by youth at risk and other community stakeholders | * Secondary sources: *Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019 -2023, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Sierra Leone - 2020-2023*, etc. * KIIs: FAO, UNDP, UNDFP, PBO/RCO, and GoSL * FGDs: stakeholders, youth at risk, general youth, and community stakeholders |
| *Coherence:* | | |
| * To what extent has the project implemented means to optimise coordination between agencies and with other stakeholders and created catalytic effects and synergies with other projects implemented by FAO, UNDP, and UNFPA and/or funded by the PBF or by other donors in the same geographic areas? * What are the main features of the collaboration between FAO and its partners resulting from the project agreement? * How did the project monitor its progress and use the monitoring data to direct implementation? | * Project implemented based on comparative advantages of agencies * Project aligned with other key peacebuilding initiatives | * KIIs: FAO, UNDP, UNDFP, PBO/RCO, GoSL, and implementing partners |
| *Effectiveness and impact:* | | |
| * Was the project ToC and design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? * To what extent have project objectives been achieved, and were there any unintended results? * To what extent youth at risk (women and men) have been empowered and included in decision-making processes in their communities in the target districts? * To what extent have national and local institutions improved their response to the needs of young people at risk? * To what extent social cohesion has been strengthened and youth at risk socially and economically empowered to meaningfully reintegrate into their families and communities? * What were the main interventions and strategies that have contributed to achievement of outputs and outcomes? * Was the project a financial and/or programmatic catalyst? * Has PBF funding been used to leverage political opportunities for engagement? * Did the project's intended ToC work in practice? * Were there any particularly high-risk interventions or approaches that should be highlighted and did they prove to be effective? * How effective was the project targeting? * To what extent has the project achieved its objectives in a gender sensitive way? * What was the overall peacebuilding effects and potential impacts of the project? | * Project outputs/objectives have been achieved according to the project IRF * Positive change in project indicators based baseline/endline surveys * Youth at risk expressed perceptions of empowered, more responsive institutions, strengthened social cohesion, etc., especially the most at-risk/vulnerable | * Secondary sources: ToC, IRF, monitoring reports, M&E data, etc. * Baseline/endline survey * Key informant interviews include: DYCs, CYCs, NYCOM, SLP, LPPB, ONS * FGDs: stakeholders, youth at risk, general youth, and community stakeholders |
| *Efficiency:* | | |
| * To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation? * Were the project resources (financial, human, time, and expertise) sufficient, available and appropriate to implement planned activities efficiently and effectively? * Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve project outcomes? * Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects? * Was the project implemented in a timely manner to address a conflict driver or capitalise on a specific window of opportunity? * To what extent the project management structure and coordination mechanisms were effective in generating expected results? * How did the project management and coordination effectively adapt to changing conditions and gaps and challenges to improve the effectiveness of implementation? | * Project implemented in a timely way and within budget * Programming produced synergies * Project deemed cost-effective relative to other similar interventions | * Secondary sources: project budget, monitoring reports, etc. * KIIs: FAO, UNDP, UNDFP, PBO/RCO, GoSL, and implementing partners |
| *Sustainability:* | | |
| * To what extent has the project built local capacity at community and institutional level, which will remain after the project end? * To what extent is the coordination established among beneficiaries and stakeholders, including ministries, likely to continue after the end of the project. * How strong is the commitment of government and other stakeholders to sustain the results of PBF support and ongoing initiatives, (particularly the participation of youth at risk in decision-making processes) supported under the project PBF? * What is the likelihood that the results of the project will continue to be useful or remain after the project has ended? * What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project benefits? * To what extent relevant/appropriate measures have been identified or applied to prevent or mitigate them? | * Capacity has been created among national partners (GoSL and implementing partners) * Key national partners have committed to continuing project activities (and made tangible, especially budgetary, commitments to this end) * Sustainability risks appropriately considered and addressed | * KIIs: FAO, UNDP, UNDFP, PBO/RCO, GoSL, and implementing partners |
| *Cross-cutting issues:* | | |
| * To what extent have environmental safeguard and gender equality and women's empowerment considerations been included in the design and implementation of the project? * Did the PBF project apply an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity – such as the ‘do no harm approach’? | * Proper plans in place (and executed in practice) to safeguard gender equality and women's empowerment * Conflict sensitivity built into the programming model, and implemented so that project ‘did no harm’ | * KIIs: FAO, UNDP, UNDFP, PBO/RCO, GoSL, and implementing partners * FGDs: stakeholders, youth at risk, general youth, and community stakeholders |

Appendix 3. Project result framework after baseline survey exercise

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|  | **Indicator (ProDoc)** | **Milestone** | **Verification** |
| **OUTCOME 1: Youth at risk (women and men) are empowered and included in decision-making processes in their communities in the target districts** | **Outcome Indicator 1a:** % of youth at risk targeted by the project who believe that their voice is heard and they feel more respected in their communities  **Baseline:** **55% (F:** 49%; M: 58%)  **Target estimate**: 70% (F: 60%; M: 70%) | 55% | Evaluation/Perception Survey report |
| **Outcome Indicator 1b:** number of youth at risk targeted by the project included in decision-making mechanisms at local level  **Baseline:** 34% (F: 17%; M: 45%) **Target:** estimate 50% out of 100% of youth targeted by the project (F:35%; M:50%)  \*referring to percentage of subgroups who participate sometimes or often in meetings and consultations with stakeholders - might be a more realistic reflection than participation in a formal mechanism | 40% | Final project report; NaYCOM/MoYA Reports on DYCs and CYCs including membership lists lists of participants in meetings |
| **Output 1.1:  Civic education and counselling are promoted to enable the reintegration of youth at risk into families and communities and their participation in decision-making processes.** | **Output Indicator 1.1.1:** % of youth at risk who believe that use of violence is never justified to resolve conflicts and achieve political objectives.  **Baseline**: 13% (F: 10%; M: 15%) **Target**: **estimate** 80% (F: 80%; M: 70%) | 40% | Project reports/SLP reports/SLCS reports  Survey with project participants |
| **Output Indicator 1.1.2**: Number of youth at risk who undergo counselling and recover from substance abuse habits.  **Baseline**: 0 (39% have been sensitized on the risks of drug abuse)  **Target**: estimate 70% (F: 70%; M: 50%) | 40% | Project implementation reports (Report from MOHS Field monitoring/attendance lists |
| **Output 1.2:  Capacity of District and Chiefdom Youth Councils (DYC and CYC) and local youth groups in the targeted districts strengthened to promote youth leadership and influence district and local decision-making processes that affect youth at risk** | **Output Indicator 1.2.1:** Number of youth at risk who become members of local youth groups and participate in DYC and CYC activities  **Baseline**: 42% of youth at risk participate in DYC/CYC activities; 2 individuals are members of DYC/CYC  **Target**: 70% | 20% | Field Monitoring reports Attendance lists Youth Council Reports |
| **Output Indicator 1.2.2:** Dialogue forums discuss and address risk analysis with the participation of youth at risk  **Baseline**: 0  **Target**: 4 (one in each chiefdom) | 4 | Field Monitoring reports Attendance lists Minutes of meetings Agreements |
| **Output Indicator 1.2.3:** % of youth at risk who believe that structural barriers to their reintegration are removed and feel safe to participate in communities’ mechanisms and activities  **Baseline**: 59% (F: 61%; M: 58%) **Target**: 80% | 60% | Perception Survey report |
| **Output 1.3:  Increased awareness among key stakeholders and youth at risk in targeted communities on women and girls’ rights, with increased male involvement to reduce GBV** | **Output Indicator 1.3.1:** % of youth (male and female) involved in male youth clubs who state that GBV in all its forms (physical, economic, psychological and sexual) is unacceptable/ a violation of human rights Reformulation: % of youth (male and female) involved in youth clubs who state that GBV in all its forms (physical, economic, psychological and sexual) is unacceptable/ a violation of human rights  **Baseline**: 25% (F: 17%; M: 25%) **Target**: 70% | 50% total 30% female 45% male | Survey with project participants Field reports |
| **Output Indicator 1.3.2:** % increased knowledge among MAPEs on GBV and SRH  Reformulation: % increased knowledge among beneficiaries on GBV and SRH  **Baseline:** 67% (F: 34%; M: 84%) have ever received information on GBV/SRH  **Target:** 40% (F: 40%; M: 40%) | 40% total (F: 10%; M: 30%) | Survey with project participants Field reports |
| **Output Indicator 1.3.3:** % improved perception and attitudes towards Gender and GBV Reformulation: % improved perception and attitudes among beneficiaries towards Gender and GBV  **Baseline:** n/a  **Target:** 40% (F: 40%; M: 40%) | 30% (F: 30%; M: 30%) | Survey with project participants Field reports |
| **OUTCOME 2: National and local institutions improve their response to the needs of youth at risk** | **Outcome Indicator 2.a:** # of targeted local institutions (SLCSSLP, LPPBs, Paramount Chief Councils) that adopt improved procedures to ensure youth responsive approaches to detention, reintegration, and rehabilitation  **Baseline:** 0 (2)  **Target:** All institutions involved in the project (correctional centers, LPPBs, FSUs, SLP, etc.) | 3 | Survey with project  participants Field reports  Project documents |
|  | **Outcome Indicator 2.b:** % of youth at risk who believe that their rights are respected  **Baseline**: 26% (F: 32%; M: 15%) **Target**: 55% (F/M) | 50% | Survey report, SLP/FSU report; Human Rights Commission Report |
| **Output 2.1:  Capacity of local institutions, Correctional Services, Family Support Unit (FSUs) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), and Local Police Partnership Boards (LPPBs), is enhanced in human rights, rule of law, negotiation and youth-sensitive approaches to improve their engagement with youth at risk.** | **Output Indicator 2.1.1:** Targeted correctional centers implement the Earning Scheme Policy  **Baseline:** 2  **Target:** 3 correctional centers | 2 | Field monitoring reports Institutional record Survey with participants |
| **Output Indicator 2.1.2:** Number of youth at risk deprived of liberty with improved life skills  **Baseline:** 55 (Male: 55; Female:5) **Target:** 90 (Male: 80; Female:10) | 50 | Field monitoring reports Institutional record Survey with participants |
| **Output 2.2:  SLP, Magistrate Courts and Correctional Services in project targeted areas have strengthened capacities and youth responsive legal frameworks to monitor detention conditions and support decongestion of overcrowded facilities.** | **Output Indicator 2.2.1:** % of the trained junior ranking officers who implement the Mandela Rules in the treatment of youth at risk deprived of liberty.  **Baseline:** 2  **Target**: 30 (M:25; F:5) | 20 | SLCS Reports Field monitoring reports |
| **Output Indicator 2.2.2:** Number of prison courts (virtual courts) held in project areas  **Baseline:** 80 cases heard during 2 prison court sessions in 2019  **Target:** 10 (5 each per project district) | 6 (2 each per project district) | CSO monitoring report  SLCS reports  Project report Legal documents |
| **Output Indicator 2.2.3:** Number of cases resolved by the prison courts (virtual courts) in the project areas  **Baseline:** 32 cases resolved in 2019 in Kenema CC (M involved: 91%; F involved 9%)  **Target:** 250 cases with 65% case conclusions (M involved: 80%; F involved 20%) | 200 cases with 50% conclusions | CSO monitoring report  SLCS reports  Project report Legal documents |
| **Output Indicator 2.2.4:** Amended Correctional Act 2014 and Criminal Procedure Act  **Baseline:** CPA and Correctional Acts are currently being reviewed  **Target:** Amended Acts ready to be submitted to Attorney General and Parliament  Submission of both draft Acts to Parliament by December 2021/Early 2022. 2 legislations enacted in Parliament |  | CSO monitoring report  SLCS reports  Project report Legal documents |
| **OUTCOME 3: Social cohesion strengthened and youth at risk socially and economically empowered to meaningfully reintegrate into their families and communities.** | **Outcome Indicator 3a:** % of youth who report increased self-esteem and enhanced self-reliance outside of crime activities Reformulation: % of youth who consider engaging in crime activities for economic purposes  **Baseline**: 84% (F: 87%; M: 83%) **Target**: 40% (F/M) | 65% | Progress report Project evaluation reports Final project report |
|  | **Outcome Indicator 3b:** % of community and family members who believe that youth at risk contribute to productive life of their communities and families through the livelihood assistance provided  **Baseline**: 47% **Target**: 80% | 65% | Progress report Project evaluation reports Final project report |
|  | **Outcome Indicator 3c:** % of community and family members who believe that levels of violence committed by gangs/cliques in the project zones has decreased  **Baseline**: 45% **Target**: 65% | 55% | Progress report Project evaluation reports Final project report |
| **Output 3.1:  Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence promoted by supporting joint socio-economic initiatives that involve youth at risk and community members** | **Output Indicator 3.1.1** Number of joint socio economic initiatives promoted for social cohesion, community reconciliation and peaceful coexistence  **Baseline**: 2 **Target**: 10 | 5 | Monitoring reports CSO reporting Participants and community members surveys |
| **Output Indicator 3.1.2** % of youth at risk who feel a sense of belonging to their communities  **Baseline**: 80% (F: 79%; M: 80%) **Target**: 100% | 90% | Monitoring reports CSO reporting Participants and community members surveys |
| **Output 3.2:  Youth at risk have increased capacity and are empowered to generate their livelihoods.** | **Output Indicator 3.2.1** Number of youth at risk trained in innovative practices, Good Agronomic practices (GAP), technologies for Climate Smart Resilience farming and enterprise development  **Baseline:** 0 **Target:** 300 (M: 250; F:50) | 300 trained on parts of the topics | Monitoring reports Post distribution Monitoring report Participants surveys |
| **Output Indicator 3.2.2** Number of youth at risk groups and Juinior Farmer Filed Schools (JFFS) established, and attached to existing Farmer Base Organizations (FBO) for mentorship.  **Baseline:** 0 (18 youth at risk belong to existing farm groups)  **Target:** 4 youth groups (30% female participation) | 2 | Field reports Group documentation (names, bylaws, etc.) |
| **Output Indicator 3.2.3** Number of Farmer Base Organizations (FBO) and Junior Field Schools formalized into Youth Agri-Enterprises  **Baseline:** 0  **Target:** 4 FBO (30% female participation) | 0 | Registration documents |
| **Output Indicator 3.2.4** % of youths at risk who believe they will continue to use the newly acquired skills to make a living  **Baseline**: n/a (post hoc verification) **Target**: 70% | 35% | Monitoring reports |

# Appendix 4. Status of completion of community infrastructure and livelihood infrastructure for youth groups

**Kenema**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Community** | **Community Infrastructure** | **Livelihood Infrastructure for Youth Groups** |
| *Court Barry* | The rice mill shelter and storage have been completed. (Completed) | Gari processing structure has been completed. (Completed) |
| *Makeni road* | The rice mill shelter, and storage have been completed. (Completed) | The bakery construction has yet to commence. (Not started) |
| *Manempeh* | The rehabilitation of the community Barry remains unfinished, with unresolved issues such as unfixed windows and doors. (Incomplete) | The livestock shelter has yet to commence. (Not started) |
| *Ropolon* | The construction of the community Barry remains unfinished; although the window frame has been installed, the glass has yet to be affixed to the frame. (Incomplete) | The poultry shelter has yet to commence. (Not started) |
| *Old Town* | Rice mills shelter and storage have been completed. (Completed) | The poultry shelter has yet to commence. (Not Started) |
| *Rowalla* | The construction of the community Barry has been finished. (Completed) | The structure for storing poultry feed is in place, but the doors and windows still need to be installed. Although the land for the poultry house has been cleared, the construction of the actual poultry house has not yet begun. (Store is Incomplete and the poultry house is not started). |
| *Mile 91* | The rice mill infrastructure for the community is at window height (Incomplete) | The poultry store for the youths is also at window height, and the construction of the poultry infrastructure has not yet started. (Store is incomplete and the poultry house is not started) |
| *Yoni* | The rehabilitation of the community Barry remains unfinished, with unresolved issues such as unfixed windows and doors. (Incomplete) | The shelter/storage facility for groundnut processing for the youth is incomplete. It lacks doors and windows, and while boards have been placed on the roof, it has not been fully roofed yet. (Incomplete) |
| *Mathibo* | The rice mill infrastructure for the community is at window height. (Incomplete) | The poultry store for the youths, as well as the poultry infrastructure, is currently at window height. (Store is incomplete and poultry house is incomplete). |

**Tonkolili**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Community** | **Community Infrastructure** | **Livelihood Infrastructure for Youth Groups** |
| *Talia* | The construction of the community Barry has been completed. (Completed). | The poultry store for the youths, as well as the poultry infrastructure, is currently at window height. (Store is Incomplete and poultry house is incomplete). |
| *Largo* | Rice mills shelter and storage have been completed, and the rice mill machine has been installed. (Completed). | The store for poultry feed has been completed, but the poultry structure is currently at wall height. (Store is completed and poultry house is incomplete). |
| *Giema* | The construction of the community Barry has been completed. (Completed). | Gari processing structure has been completed. (Completed). |
| *Simbeck* | The community Barry has been completed, but it has not been painted yet.  Incomplete | The construction of the livestock shelter has not started. (Not started) |
| *Gombu* | The community Barry has been completed. (Completed). | The bakery infrastructure is currently at window height. (Incomplete). |
| *Kojo* | Rice mills shelter and storage have been completed, and the rice mill machine has been installed. (Completed). | Gari processing structure has been completed. (Completed). |
| *Kpandebu* | The community market structure has been completed. (Completed). | The poultry structure is currently at wall height. (Incomplete). |
| *Loppa* | The community rice mills shelter and storage have been completed, and the rice mill machine has been installed. (Completed). | Engaged in rice production, they have been equipped with a mini tiller for ploughing.(N/A) |
| *Hangha* | The community infrastructure has been completed. (Completed). | The construction of the livestock shelter has not started. (Not started) |

Annexes

**Annex 1**. Terms of reference for the evaluation <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/>

1. This refers to complementarities, mission alignment, mutual tunes-up in capacities and operations; resource, information and responsibilities sharing, governance structure and efficiency, result oriented collaboration. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Youth will be defined by as those persons up to 35 years-of-age; as per Sierra Leone’s *National Youth Policy* and the *National Youth Commission Act 2010* youth are defined as those 15-35 years old. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. ‘General youth’ are also included in the sample in order to include different perspectives and compare whenever possible and to contextualise the perceptions and situation of ‘youth at risk’ in the general youth environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The expected sample for the endline was 288 youth at risk (50 per cent of the endline sample), 180 general youth (31.3 per cent of the endline sample), and 108 community stakeholders (18.8 per cent of the endline sample). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. 232 youth at risk (51.1 per cent of the baseline sample), 125 general youth (27.5 per cent of the baseline sample), and 98 community stakeholders (21.4 per cent of the baseline sample). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. This option was discussed and decided with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) and the Peace and Development Advisor (PDA) and included in the latest report to PBF (semi-annual report, June). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See: IESPC/ONS, 2023, *National Elections Threat Assessment / District Risk Mapping for The 2023 General Elections*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. World Bank, “Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate) - Sierra Leone”, World Bank Data (available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=SL) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Firstly, in promoting sustainable agriculture, food, and nutrition security the PBF project can help Sierra Leones benefit from more productive, commercialised and sustainable agriculture, and improved food and nutrition security. Secondly, supporting transformational governance can help create 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 the protection of boys and girls, women and men including those with disabilities. Finally, protecting and empowering of the most vulnerable – particularly women, youth, adolescents, and children, and persons with disabilities – benefits these groups by increasing their social and economic opportunities. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See: FAO, “About FAO”, <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/#:~:text=Our%20goal%20is%20to%20achieve,world%20without%20hunger%20and%20poverty> (3 Oct 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. See: UNDP, “UNDP Sierra Leone”, <https://www.undp.org/> (2 September 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See: Rainbo Intitative, “Our Strategy”, <https://rainboinitiative.org/r-strategy/> (9 October 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Nationally, a total of 918 cases were reviewed, including the project Districts. At the end of the exercise 177 inmates were discharged, 69 were convicted, and ninety inmates were granted bail nation-wide. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Target for resources assignment from the core (TRAC). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. In those cases where there were completed and incomplete projects in the same community, the overall community was designated as imcomplete. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. USD 1 = SLL 22692.48 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. See: UNDP, “Human Development Reports: Sierra Leone,” <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE> (2 September 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. See: IMF, “Sierra Leone: Datasets”, <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/SLE> (2 September 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The following the project expenditures according to the updated budget, date 10 December 2023: FAO spent USD 1,253,547.98 (72 per cent); UNDP spent USD 764,531.94 (90 per cent), and UNFPA spent USD 405,951.92 (101 per cent) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Enabling environment, organisations, and individuals. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)