



Final Evaluation of the Peacebuilding (PBF) Project: Promote the creation of an enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and the strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
and
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of UNDP or UNICEF.

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Project And Evaluation Information Details

Project Information		
Project Title	Promote the creation of enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone	
Department/Unit	Democratic Governance	
Country	Sierra Leone	
Region	Africa	
Project ID	00132863 (Quantum ID: 00133246)	
Contributing outcome and output	Building on the national priorities set by the Government of Sierra Leone in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (M-TNDP, 2019-2023) and the Government's Roadmap "Walking out of fragility" (2019) as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to which Sierra Leone is a signatory; the Project aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020- 2024 Outcome 2 (Transformational Governance) UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2020-2024 Outcome 2: (Protection and Empowerment of the most Vulnerable) - CPD Output 2.1: Capacities of targeted oversight and accountability institutions (Parliament, HRC, NEC, ACC and IPCB) strengthened to perform their mandates; and CPD Output 2.3: Gender-responsive institutional frameworks strengthened for peace, citizen's voice and participation for social cohesion. UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2020-2023) Outcome 4: (By 2023, fewer children experience physical and sexual violence, abuse and exploitation) - Outputs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 on building an enabling environment through legal and policy reform and information management and evidence base strengthening, increasing access to gender responsive and child-friendly protection services within the social welfare and justice sectors at national and decentralized levels and contributing through behavior change programming to prevent and respond to violence and harmful practices especially towards adolescents and youth.	
Project dates	Start	End
	11 August 2022	30 April 2025
Project planned Budget	USD \$3,000,000	
Project Expenditure	USD \$ 2,961,701(May 2025)	
Funding sources	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund	
Implementing Partners	Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs (MPAPA), Office of National Security (ONS), Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Family Support Unit – Sierra Leone Police, West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), SLAJ, IRN, BBCMA, LAB SL, Restless Development, Defence for Children International (DCI), Focus 1000.	
Supervisor	Chief Technical Advisor, Elections Project, UNDP	

Evaluation information		
Evaluation Type	Project	
Final/midterm review/ other	Final Evaluation	
Period Under Evaluation	Start	End
	11 August 2022	30 April 2025
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ABBREVIATIONS

APPWA	All Political Parties Women's Association
APPYA	All Political Parties Youth Association
APC	All People's Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCI	Defense for Children International
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSU	Family Support Unit
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GRES	Gender Result Effectiveness Scale
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ECSL	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
IRN	Independent Radio Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAB SL	Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone
MoGCA	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
MPAPA	Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs
M-TNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NERG	National Election Response Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office of National Security
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PPRC	Political Parties Regulation Commission
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLAJ	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Context

Since the end of civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has made progress in democratic governance, though elections remain vulnerable to ethnic and political tensions. In support of peaceful 2023 elections, UNDP and UNICEF implemented a UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)-funded project aimed at promoting social cohesion and reducing electoral violence. Running from August 2022 to April 2025, with a budget of USD 3 million, the Project supported early warning systems, civic education, inter-party dialogue, and inclusion of women and youth.

Evaluation Objective, Purpose, and Scope

The evaluation assessed the Project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, focusing on its contribution to peaceful elections and alignment with national and UN frameworks. It covered interventions in key electoral hotspots and examined coordination, resource use, and integration of cross-cutting themes such as gender and youth.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques as well as a theory-based process. Data was collected through endline perception survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. Data collection was conducted in six target districts, including electoral violence hotspots and areas with significant youth and community engagement.

The methodology ensured gender-responsiveness, inclusion of marginalized groups, and human rights-based participation. Local enumerators were trained and deployed to ensure cultural sensitivity and access to hard-to-reach communities.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel, with descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to assess trends, demographic distributions, and changes in perceptions from baseline to endline. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analyzed thematically using NVivo software. The analysis triangulated data sources to validate findings and capture diverse stakeholder perspectives.

Demographics: The evaluation reached 2,547 survey respondents and 31 key informants and 6 focus group discussions across the six (6) target districts. The majority of respondents were women (58.7%), with significant youth representation, particularly those aged 18-35 years. The evaluation successfully engaged economically active groups, students, farmers, and small business owners, though participation by persons with disabilities was limited.

The evaluation faced limitations, including gaps in baseline and endline alignment for some indicators and limited disaggregated data for persons with disabilities. Access to some rural communities was constrained due to logistical challenges. The evaluation also faced potential non-response bias, which was mitigated through repeated follow-ups and the use of local partners.

The evaluation adhered to international ethical standards for research, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the "Do No Harm" principle. All data collection activities were conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of participants. Throughout the process, the evaluation team adhered to UNEG ethical standards, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Ethical protocols aligned with those of UNDP and UNICEF were also observed, particularly in protecting vulnerable groups and ensuring data integrity.

The methodological approach adopted for the evaluation involved a multi-tiered team structure, combining international expertise with national implementation expertise. An international lead evaluator

oversaw the overall design, analytical rigor, and quality assurance, while national data collectors and field supervisors conducted in-country data collection activities. This collaborative model ensured contextual relevance and technical robustness. The approach was further strengthened through logistical and operational support provided by UNDP and UNICEF, which facilitated access to key documents, stakeholder coordination, and field deployment. Resources were strategically allocated to support comprehensive fieldwork, efficient data processing, and timely reporting, ensuring adherence to quality standards throughout the evaluation process.

Findings

Relevance: The Project was highly relevant to Sierra Leone's peacebuilding context, addressing critical drivers of electoral violence and social division. It aligned well with national development plans, UN strategies, and community needs. Beneficiaries reported that the Project interventions addressed real concerns, such as misinformation, political intolerance, and the exclusion of women and youth from peace processes.

Coherence: The Project demonstrated strong internal coherence between UNDP and UNICEF components, as well as effective coordination with national stakeholders, international electoral missions, and civil society actors. Partnerships with the European Union, Carter Center, ECOWAS, UN Women, and UNFPA enhanced complementarity and expanded the Project's reach and impact.

Efficiency: The Project was efficiently delivered within its timeframe and budget. Joint planning and implementation by UNDP and UNICEF minimized duplication and improved resource utilization. Local facilitators, community-based partners, and digital platforms enabled cost-effective outreach, though targeted resource allocation for persons with disabilities remained limited. This is partly because the project's design did not explicitly require this, focusing instead on gender allocations in more general terms.

Effectiveness: The Project effectively achieved its planned outputs and outcomes. Early warning and response mechanisms were strengthened, public confidence in election security improved, civic education reached over 200,000 students, and women's participation in political processes increased. Legal aid and GBV services were expanded, and youth engagement through peace clubs and U-Report was significantly enhanced. However, data gaps and limited follow-up mechanisms for marginalized groups were noted. While the Project prioritized vulnerable groups, it lacked disaggregated data and follow-up mechanisms to track and address the needs of persons with disabilities, gaps that could have been mitigated if tackled at the inception stage.

Sustainability: The Project established sustainable structures such as the GBVIMS, early warning systems, and community peace platforms that have the potential to endure beyond the Project's closure. National and local ownership was fostered, though some community-driven initiatives may require additional capacity building and long-term funding to sustain momentum.

Human Rights, Gender Equality, Youth, and Disability Inclusion: The Project made significant contributions to gender equality, youth empowerment, and human rights by expanding participation and improving protection mechanisms. Women and youth were empowered as peace agents, but the Project's disability inclusion (an issue better addressed at the inception/formulation stage of the Project) remained limited and unintentional, signaling an area for improvement in future programming.

Conflict Sensitivity: Conflict-sensitive approaches were embedded throughout the Project, including the dual-track early warning systems, community mediation initiatives, and strategic communication to mitigate electoral tensions.

Catalytic Effect: The Project catalyzed additional investments in peacebuilding and electoral support, stimulated national dialogue, and provided a replicable model for conflict-sensitive electoral interventions in fragile contexts.

Localization: National and local stakeholders were meaningfully engaged throughout the Project cycle, contributing to local ownership and the sustainability of peacebuilding results. Community leaders, youth groups, and civil society organizations played key roles in sustaining project initiatives.

Time-Sensitivity: The Project was well-timed to address electoral risks and capitalize on political windows of opportunity. It provided timely interventions during critical phases of the electoral process, enhancing its overall impact.

Risk Management: The Project demonstrated flexibility and innovation in using digital platforms for civic education, conflict monitoring, and misinformation management. Its adaptive approach allowed it to navigate high-risk electoral environments effectively.

Good Practices

1. Integration of Dual Early Warning and Response Systems
2. Use of the iVerify Digital Fact-Checking Platform
3. Institutionalization of Inter-Party Dialogue Platforms
4. Community-Driven Civic Engagement and Youth Mobilization

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the PBF Project was timely, relevant, and highly effective in supporting peaceful elections and strengthening social cohesion in Sierra Leone. It achieved its intended objectives and demonstrated strong alignment with national and UN peacebuilding priorities. Coordination, efficiency, and cross-sectoral partnerships were key drivers of success. Areas for improvement include disability inclusion, disaggregated data collection, and sustainability planning for community-driven initiatives.

Recommendations

1. Institutionalize Peace and Civic Education within the National Curriculum
2. Develop Structured Pathways for Youth and Women into Formal Governance Systems
3. Institutionalize and Expand the Dual-Track Early Warning and Response Model Beyond Elections
4. Mainstream Disability-Inclusive Civic and Electoral Programming
5. Link Community-Based Peace Structures with Local Government Development Plans
6. Design Exit and Sustainability Strategies at Project Inception
7. Translate, Localize, and Archive Peacebuilding Tools for National Ownership
8. Address Digital Inequity to Expand the Reach of Peacebuilding Tools
9. Strengthen Long-Term Capacity and Financing for Local Civil Society Partners
10. Enhance Coordination and Role Clarity Among Peace Actors

Lessons Learned

1. Digital Tools Enhance Peacebuilding but Require National Ownership
2. Conflict-Sensitive Programming Must Extend to Post-Election Period
3. Women's Nomination Alone Does Not Guarantee Meaningful Participation
4. Local Structures Need Stronger Capacity to Sustain Peace Efforts
5. Flexibility and Timely Resource Allocation Are Essential in Fragile Contexts.

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This evaluation was conducted to assess the performance, relevance, and sustainability of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)-funded project titled *“Promote the Creation of an Enabling Environment for the Conduct of Peaceful Elections and Strengthening of Social Cohesion in Sierra Leone.”* Conducted towards the end of the Project lifecycle, the evaluation provides a summative reflection on the outcomes achieved, the extent to which project activities contributed to peaceful elections in 2023, and how these results align with broader development and peacebuilding priorities of Sierra Leone.

The timing of the evaluation, after the June 2023 general elections and before the official project closure in April 2025, offered an opportunity to analyze the implementation trajectory, measure progress against key indicators, and document lessons learned. The evaluation focused on the effectiveness of electoral conflict prevention strategies, civic education, inter-party dialogue promotion, protection of victims, and the participation of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth.

The primary audience of this evaluation includes the implementing UN agencies (UNDP and UNICEF), RCO, the Government of Sierra Leone, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and local implementing partners. These stakeholders sought to understand what worked, what did not, and why—so as to improve the design, scalability, and sustainability of future peacebuilding interventions, both in Sierra Leone and in similar fragile contexts.

The intervention being evaluated was the peacebuilding component of the UN electoral support framework, which was implemented by UNDP and UNICEF with the goal of fostering peaceful elections through strengthened early warning systems, victim support mechanisms, and inclusive civic engagement.

This report is organized into the following sections: methodology, findings, conclusions, good practices, and recommendations. It provides evidence-based analysis aimed at informing policy decisions, programmatic design, and peacebuilding strategies. Each section is tailored to respond to the evaluation's purpose and questions, while addressing the information needs of UN implementing partners, government actors, and donor agencies.

1.2 Elections in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's electoral and political context in the run-up to and during the 2023 general elections was marked by both progress and persistent fragility. Since emerging from its civil war in 2002, the country has held six post-war elections, gradually consolidating democratic governance. Gains include constitutional adherence, peaceful transfers of power such as the 2018 change from APC to SLPP, and growing national electoral capacities. Yet, these achievements coexist with deep-seated structural challenges. Politics remains polarized along ethnic lines, primarily between the Temne-dominated north (APC) and the Mende-dominated south and east (SLPP), which continues to fuel mistrust and tensions during electoral cycles.

The June 2023 elections took place against a backdrop of economic hardship, youth unemployment, and allegations of corruption and human rights violations. While reforms, including a new Public Elections Act (2022) and gender quotas, were intended to strengthen credibility, electoral processes were undermined by a lack of transparency in tabulation, statistical inconsistencies in results, and heavy-handed responses to dissent. Opposition rejection of results and subsequent boycotts of Parliament and local councils revealed the fragility of democratic institutions. International observers, including the EU, noted

improvements such as inclusive candidate registration and strong citizen participation, but also raised concerns about shrinking civic space, abuse of incumbency, and intimidation of observer groups.

Despite the vulnerabilities, Sierra Leone demonstrated resilience through high voter turnout, active youth and women's participation, and innovations like digital fact-checking platforms (e.g., iVerify) that countered misinformation. However, persistent issues, ethno-regional divides, weak trust in institutions, economic discontent, and limited inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly persons with disabilities, underscore that elections remain high-stakes moments where peace gains can be easily reversed without continued reforms and inclusive peacebuilding measures.

The Republic of Sierra Leone has therefore enjoyed some semblance of peace, stability, and democratization since it emerged from the decade-long civil war in 2002. Despite considerable gains in democratic governance, such as adherence to the constitution, participatory governance and holding of regular elections, certain challenges, such as allegations of human rights violations, corruption, unclear roles in local governance and ethno-politicization, impede effective democratic consolidation. The post-independence politics, which polarized the country along ethnic lines, particularly between the two (2) dominant political parties, the All-People's Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) still impacts the electioneering process, creates tensions and violence. Since 2002, the country has conducted six (6) elections, including the recent 24 June 2023 multitier elections. The 2018 polls, which were the first post-war elections held without the direct support of a UN mission with an electoral mandate, resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from the APC to SLPP. Although considerable achievements have been made in building national electoral capacities, the political and electoral landscape in Sierra Leone remains fragile.

1.3 Description of the Intervention

In line with the Government of Sierra Leone's request to the UNSG for support to the 2023 electoral cycle and the subsequent Needs Assessment Mission recommendations, UNDP in consultation with state institutions, CSOs and development partners developed the Elections Project documents "Fostering Peaceful, Credible and Inclusive Elections in Sierra Leone 2022-2023", and "Promote the creation of an enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone". The latter project, which served as the peacebuilding component, accompanying the broader elections project was supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF) and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF. UNDP led the implementation of Outcome 1 and outputs 2.1 and 2.4 under Outcome 2, focusing on electoral conflict prevention strategies, civic education, and inter-party dialogue promotion. UNICEF, on the other hand, implemented a component of output 1.2 under Outcome 1, outputs 2.2 and 2.3 under Outcome 2, and Outcome 3, with emphasis on the protection of victims and the participation of marginalized groups (see Key Achievements section below for details). The Project aimed to contribute to the promotion of a peaceful environment in Sierra Leone before, during and after the June 2023 elections. It sought to support national stakeholders to strengthen their early warning and response systems to prevent and mitigate electoral related violence, reinforce the protection of victims of violence and provide indigent perpetrators with legal assistance. The intervention also aimed at reinforcing the capacity of political parties for mediation and dialogue; supporting the adaptation of their internal codes to the new electoral legal system and regulatory mechanisms of the Political Party Regulation Commission; promoting women and youth participation in political and electoral processes; supporting awareness raising on peaceful elections and against hate speech, particularly through social media, and engaging young women and men in peaceful communication and violence prevention in schools and communities. The Project was articulated around the three outcome areas derived from SDG16 and related SDGs in

particular SDGs 5 and 10. Both the overall elections and the peacebuilding projects are managed and coordinated by the UNDP Elections Project.

Theory of Change.

The theory of change underpinning the project is built on the assumptions that: firstly, investing in institutional mechanisms and legal framework for violence prevention and security institutions' peaceful response capacity allow for potentially violent situations to be de-escalated and reduce the chance that violence spreads from one locality to another, further reducing the potential benefit of violence to political spoilers; secondly, to build inclusive and peaceful societies, men and women, female and male youth, should be able to contribute on an equal foot to the electoral processes and be empowered to do so; thirdly, both state and non-state mechanisms, systems and processes offer positive potential to prevent electoral and political-related tensions as they affect how tensions are managed and mitigated and can constitute a building block of relationship between communities and the state, at different levels. The TOC is presented below.

If early warning and early response inclusive mechanisms, at national and sub-national levels, including state and CSO-led. are operational, and collaboration and coordination are facilitated between security institutions and CSOs to detect and prevent tensions before, during and after the elections;

If youth are aware of their rights as citizens of Sierra Leone and understand the importance of peaceful elections and their active participation in it;

If political parties are better prepared to address their differences through dialogue and negotiation and commit to non-violence and legal instruments are strengthened to increase political parties' accountability.

If youth and sexual gender-based violence is addressed by the appropriate state and CSOs mechanisms supported also by this project during the electoral cycle;

If misinformation, disinformation and hate speech is tackled, enhancing capacity of national stakeholders to mitigate threats to information integrity around the elections.

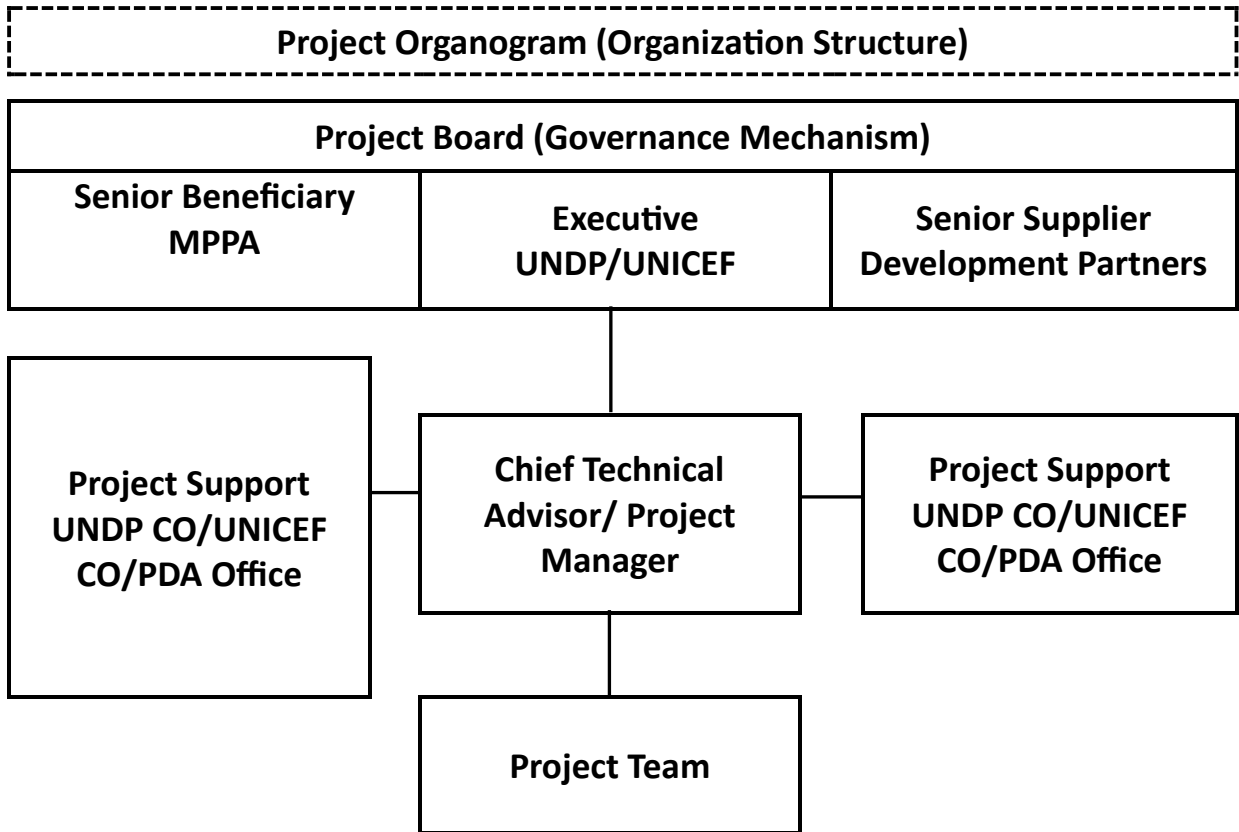
If peace messaging, including on inter-ethnic collaboration, is enhanced and promoted at higher levels, mid-range and grassroots levels during the increasingly volatile electoral period;

***Then** responses by state actors, CSOs and political parties are enhanced for prevention of violence, mitigation and mediation of electoral-related conflicts; understanding and trust in the electoral process will increase at national, regional and district level; peaceful and inclusive discourses during the electoral cycle are fostered, mostly by political parties (including its youth and women wings); triggers to electoral tensions will decrease, and if conflicts arise national authorities will be better prepared to tackle them respecting the Rule of Law and human rights; women and youth will be empowered to participate in the electoral cycle and political processes in general;*

***Because** integrated and interconnected approaches are more inclusive and promote the participation of all, the new regulatory framework of political parties disincentivizes the use of violence and unlawful behaviour by unscrupulous politicians, and many of the key drivers of election-related violence including misinformation, hate speech, violation of rights, particularly women's and girls' rights, manipulation of youth by political actors - are mitigated, while capacities for peace are boosted, and the potential benefit of supporting/committing political violence will be reduced.*

Project Organogram.

The project was implemented under a joint UN framework, with UNDP serving as the lead implementing agency in collaboration with UN Women and UNESCO. Oversight was provided through a Project Steering Committee, chaired by the Government (Ministry of Political and Public Affairs) and including representatives from the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), Electoral Commission, and civil society. At the operational level, project management teams coordinated day-to-day activities, while technical working groups engaged stakeholders on elections, peacebuilding, and inclusion.



Project Stakeholders and Roles

The project drew upon a wide coalition of stakeholders to ensure broad ownership and sustainability. Government institutions, such as the Electoral Commission and relevant ministries, provided leadership and policy alignment, while political parties and parliamentarians engaged in dialogue and capacity-strengthening initiatives. Civil society and community-based organizations contributed by mobilizing grassroots participation, monitoring electoral processes, and delivering civic education. Women’s and youth networks played a critical role in promoting inclusive political leadership, and media partners, supported by UNESCO, advanced peace messaging and efforts to counter hate speech. Development partners and donors offered financial and technical support, while the UN agencies provided coordination, technical expertise, and accountability mechanisms. Collectively, this multi-stakeholder engagement shaped both the design and implementation of the project, ensuring relevance, inclusivity, and stronger pathways to sustainable peace.

The Project commenced on 11 August 2022 and concluded on 10 April 2025, with a planned budget of USD \$3,000,000. As of November 2024, the Project has expended USD \$2,544,808.59. Funding is provided by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The Project is implemented in collaboration with a wide range of partners, including the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs (MPAPA in its role of the Project coordination), Office of National Security (ONS), Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs (MGCA), Family Support Unit – Sierra Leone Police, as well as civil society organizations such as the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), SLAJ, IRN, BBC Media Action, Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone (LAB SL), Restless Development, Defence for Children International (DCI), Focus 1000, Clingendael Institute and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC). The Project is supervised by the Chief Technical Advisor for the Elections Project at UNDP.

2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The evaluation comprised an endline assessment of the Project's deliverables and indicators and focused on assessing the achievements of the various components within the PBF Project as implemented by the convening agencies, UNDP and UNICEF, following the OECD DAC evaluation criteria. The endline survey included a full-scale assessment of the perception indicators. The Project was implemented nationwide, with particular emphasis on areas identified as being at the highest risk of electoral-related violence, as determined by the ONS' election threat assessment. These hotspot areas included Kono, Port Loko, Kenema, Bombali, Western Area Urban and Western Area Rural Districts. The evaluation adopted an inclusive approach to ensure that geographically diverse locations were selected for data collection. It focused on assessing the contribution of the Project's interventions in Sierra Leone from August 2022 to April 2025, specifically examining the Project's role in promoting peaceful general elections in 2023.

2.1 Specific objectives of the evaluation

- Review the performance of the Project interventions in achieving the results stated in the Project document and their contributions to the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Programme Document (CPD), UNICEF CPD and the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) Sierra Leone outcomes.
- An assessment of the Project's flexibility to respond to changes during the implementation/context, etc.
- An assessment of how the Project was able to manage risks (financial, strategic, technical, reputational, etc.)
- Review of the Project approach and coherence in delivering project results.
- Assessment of the factors that have influenced national ownership of project results and its sustainability.
- Assessing the knowledge, visibility and communication employed by both the Project and government counterparts around the Project results.
- Assessing the appropriateness of the Project strategy, validity of the underlying assumptions for the TOC implementation approach, and project institutional/management arrangements.
- Document the key outcomes and shortcomings, if any, of the Project interventions
- Document good practices and lessons learned from the Project to inform future programming.
- Provide concrete recommendations that may be required for enhancing the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of a future programme, including the aspect of timing in an electoral cycle perspective and the specific context of Sierra Leone.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

The evaluation followed the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s evaluation criteria, i.e., relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Digitalization, partnership, gender empowerment and social inclusion (GESI) and human rights were added as cross-cutting criteria (Annex 11.2). The guiding questions outlined below were agreed upon with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG) before the commencement of the evaluation.

1. *Relevance*

- To what extent did the Project align with national priorities, UN strategies, and the SDGs?
- How relevant were interventions in addressing peacebuilding needs, including conflict drivers and marginalized groups?

2. *Coherence*

- How coherent was the Project's design and coordination among UN agencies and components?
- To what extent did the Project leverage synergies with other interventions and stakeholders?

3. *Conflict-Sensitivity*

- Did the Project adopt and sustain a conflict-sensitive approach throughout its implementation?
- Were there any unintended negative impacts, and how were they managed?

4. *Efficiency*

- Were resources (financial, human, and time) used efficiently to achieve results?
- How effective were coordination and accountability mechanisms across agencies and partners?

5. *Effectiveness*

- To what extent were intended objectives and results achieved, including gender- and youth-responsive peacebuilding?
- What were the key enabling or constraining factors influencing performance?

6. *Sustainability*

- What measures were put in place to ensure sustainability, including exit strategies and national ownership including commitment of government and stakeholders to continue supporting results?

7. *Human Rights, Gender Equality, Youth, and Disability Inclusion*

- To what extent did the Project promote inclusion and benefit marginalized groups?
- How effectively was a Human Rights-Based Approach and gender equality integrated into design and implementation?

8. *Catalytic*

- Was the Project financially or programmatically catalytic, mobilizing additional resources or influence?

9. *Localization*

- Were national and local stakeholders meaningfully consulted and involved?
- How did the Project strengthen their capacities and ownership?

10. *Time-Sensitivity*

- Was the Project well-timed to seize opportunities or address conflict factors?

11. *Risk-Tolerance and Innovation*

- How well did the Project manage risks, and to what extent did it introduce innovative approaches?

4. EVALUABILITY ANALYSIS

The Project demonstrated strong evaluability based on both formal (designed with the necessary documentation and structure, such as a theory of change, results matrix, and indicators, that make it technically feasible to measure progress and assess results) and substantive criteria. Formally, the Project presented clearly defined outcomes, outputs, and indicators across its three core result areas: early warning and response mechanisms; inclusive civic space and communication; and women's protection and participation in political processes. Several baseline data points were established, such as perception surveys (e.g., U-Report polls), and routine progress reports document quantitative achievements (e.g., number of trained personnel, peace messages disseminated, GBV cases handled). Tools like the GBVIMS+ system, MoUs with traditional leaders, and media outreach metrics provide additional measurable data for analysis. The budget and total expenditure are clearly presented in the final financial report; therefore, the analysis should not be constrained. In other words, while the data is available, the evaluation found insufficient synthesis or analysis that would allow for a clear understanding of how funds were allocated, utilized, and adjusted in relation to evolving project needs or outcomes.

Substantively, the Project is grounded in a well-articulated theory of change that links activities to broader peacebuilding goals. Theory of Change assumes that if inclusive participation is strengthened, institutional capacities are built, and trust among political actors is fostered, then the structural drivers of conflict will be reduced, political tensions will ease, and marginalized groups such as women and youth will be empowered. If dialogue platforms are enhanced and institutions become more responsive and accountable, then the electoral process will be more peaceful and credible. Ultimately, these interconnected changes are expected to contribute to greater social cohesion and sustained peace. It identifies the key problems it addresses, political violence, misinformation, exclusion of women and youth, and outlines assumptions and pathways to reduce electoral tensions and strengthen cohesion. This theory is supported by a results framework and aligns with national priorities (e.g., Medium-Term National Development Plan), the UNSDCF, UNICEF CPD and UNDP Country Programme Document outcomes. The Project also integrates gender equality, human rights, and inclusion throughout its design and implementation.

The strong alignment of the Project with formal planning frameworks (structured, officially approved documents and tools that guide the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a project) and the availability of monitoring data supported a mixed-methods evaluation approach. Quantitative data from reports (implementing partner progress updates, financial and field monitoring reports, training statistics, justice sector data, and perception surveys), digital monitoring systems, and the baseline survey supported the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency. The existing theory of change guided the evaluative framework. The Project was therefore highly evaluable with adequate documentation and contextual clarity.

5. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Approach

Stakeholders, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups, were actively engaged to ensure their perspectives were reflected in the findings. A "do no harm" lens was applied throughout to safeguard participants' dignity and well-being, promoting equity and enhancing the credibility of the results.

The evaluation used a combination of mixed methods, theory-based and process evaluation approaches. The theory-based evaluation analyzed the Project's Theory of Change (ToC) through contribution analysis to assess the Project's influence on observed changes. This included a critical review of project assumptions, alignment with UNDP, UNICEF, and national strategies, and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluator assessed whether project activities aligned with national priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

The process evaluation examined project delivery by comparing targeted and achieved results using project documents, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. It also assessed the quality of outcomes and the factors that enabled or hindered results. The efficiency review focused on value for money, assessing whether project resources were used cost-effectively, and included efficiency and sustainability metrics. The evaluation further analyzed the Project's long-term sustainability by assessing the likelihood of maintaining project benefits after closure and whether sufficient local capacity had been built to sustain results independently.

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholders played a central and collaborative role throughout the evaluation process, ensuring its relevance, credibility, and utility. Their involvement began at the design stage, where key stakeholders, including program implementers, beneficiaries, government representatives, donors, and community leaders, helped shape the evaluation questions, identify priority areas, and validate the evaluation framework. During data collection, stakeholders facilitated access to information, supported participant mobilization, and provided contextual insights that enhanced the accuracy and interpretation of findings. Their engagement continued into the analysis and validation phases through participatory approaches such as stakeholder workshops and feedback sessions, which allowed for the review of preliminary findings, the incorporation of diverse perspectives, and the promotion of shared understanding. This inclusive approach strengthened the evaluation's legitimacy, fostered ownership and accountability, and supported sustained action based on its outcomes.

Cross-cutting Issues

The evaluation addressed various cross-cutting issues in the design and implementation of the Project, including gender equality, youth engagement, disability inclusion, human rights, digitalization, and the principle of "Leave No One Behind". The evaluation assessed the Project's outcomes on women, youth, and persons with disabilities, using data from surveys and qualitative insights. It also assessed the Project's accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Human rights considerations were integrated into the analysis, focusing on democratic participation, electoral justice, and addressing vulnerabilities among marginalized populations. Digitalization was assessed through the lens of implementation efficiency and equity, examining the use of digital platforms for data collection, public awareness, and service delivery. The "Leave No One Behind" principle guided the evaluation, ensuring the voices and experiences of the most disadvantaged groups were captured and reflected. The report provided actionable recommendations to enhance inclusivity and equity in future programming.

All data collected were disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant socio-demographic variables to allow for a nuanced understanding of the Project's reach and impact.

The evaluation employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to capture diverse perspectives. This included ensuring that women and youth were adequately represented in surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Special attention was given to engaging vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups by using accessible formats and channels, including local languages, and through collaboration with community-based organizations and local partners. The evaluation also examined the extent to which gender equality and social inclusion were mainstreamed in project design, implementation, and outcomes, particularly in relation to the participation of women and youth in political processes, the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, and the accessibility of legal and support services.

Inclusive indicators and participatory approaches were used to assess the effectiveness and equity of the interventions. The evaluation findings and recommendations reflected these cross-cutting issues, ensuring that lessons learned and future programming suggestions promoted inclusive and equitable development outcomes.

The Evaluation Process

The overall evaluation process began with a comprehensive desk review, which involved the analysis of project documents, progress reports, and related literature to understand the Project's scope and operational context. Baseline data were reviewed and compared with end-line survey results to assess progress throughout the Project's lifecycle. A suitable sampling methodology was applied to conduct an end-line survey, which measured perception indicators and compared them against baseline data to provide objective assessments of the Project's outcomes. The data collection process utilized Kobo Collect, a digital platform selected for its efficiency, reduced error rate, cost-effectiveness, GPS functionality, and real-time data quality monitoring, which ensured the accuracy of field data collected by research assistants.

In addition to the survey, the evaluation included key informant interviews (KIIs) with government officials, UNDP, UNICEF, and implementing partners to assess the Project's relevance, coherence, and implementation quality. To ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with women, youth, and marginalized groups in hotspot districts, offering rich qualitative insights.

The Evaluation Phases

The evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Elections Project was implemented in four interlinked phases to ensure a participatory and methodologically sound process.

The Inception Phase focused on aligning expectations and clarifying the scope and methodology. During this stage, the evaluator conducted a detailed desk review and stakeholder consultations to develop an Inception Report. This report outlined the evaluation design, key questions, data sources, tools, and a detailed work plan. The Inception Phase served to build consensus and ensure the evaluation responded effectively to information needs.

The Data Collection Phase followed, involving field visits to the project's target districts. The evaluation team conducted key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and reviewed project documentation. This phase ensured direct engagement with beneficiaries, implementing partners, and local stakeholders to gather primary and secondary data. The involvement of national enumerators and local partners helped to contextualize findings and enhance data reliability.

Next was the **Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings Phase**, where the evaluation team triangulated qualitative and quantitative data to identify emerging patterns and assess progress against intended outcomes. Preliminary findings were synthesized and shared in a debriefing session with stakeholders, enabling early validation and refinement of insights.

Finally, the **Reporting and Validation Phase** involved drafting the evaluation report, incorporating stakeholder feedback from a validation workshop, and finalizing the document. The final report presents a comprehensive assessment of the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, while offering lessons learned and actionable recommendations for future programming.

Sampling

The evaluation engaged a total of 31 institutional stakeholders (12 female) through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 58 (23 female) community members through six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Among the institutional participants, nine were drawn from government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs, the Office of National Security (ONS), the Sierra Leone Police – the Family Support Unit (FSU), and the Legal Aid Board (LAB). Civil society organizations and implementing partners contributed the largest share, with 20 participants representing entities such as WANEP, National Elections Watch (NEW), Focus 1000, Defence for Children International, Restless Development, Inter-Religious Council (IRC), SLAJ, IRN, and BBC Media Action. Political institutions and party representatives accounted for six participants, including officials from the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC). The United Nations was represented by six individuals from UNDP, UNICEF, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, and the Peacebuilding Fund. In addition, four participants were drawn from local government and traditional authority structures, including chiefs.

In terms of gender representation within the KIIs, the majority were male, with an estimated 21 male participants and 10 female participants, reflecting the male-dominated nature of institutional leadership. In contrast, the FGDs were designed to ensure gender balance and inclusiveness. Across all FGDs, 28 participants were female and 30 were male. This composition ensured that diverse perspectives, particularly from women, youth, and vulnerable groups in conflict-prone communities, were well represented in the evaluation process.

A stratified purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure a balanced representation of different stakeholder categories and geographical areas. Participants were selected purposefully to include those who had direct experience with or were significantly affected by the Project. This approach prioritized districts identified as electoral violence hotspots while also including national-level actors from Freetown. The sampling frame was developed in collaboration with the Evaluation Reference Group the Project to ensure alignment with the evaluation's objectives.

The evaluation applied a complex sampling approach to ensure that the selected respondents were representative of the population across the six target districts: Bombali, Kenema, Kono, Port Loko, Western Rural (Waterloo), and Western Urban (Freetown). A stratified multistage cluster sampling method was used, taking into account the demographic and geographic diversity of each district. Each district was first stratified by administrative boundaries, while community selection was purposive. The project communities were distributed across six districts as follows: in Kenema, the communities included Torkpombu, Joru, Serabu, Baoma, and Largor; in Western Area Rural, the sites included Tombo, Newton, Benguima, Goderich, and Baw Baw; Bombali district featured Rogbuya, Robat, Magbokani, Konsho, and Binkolo; in Western Area Urban, the communities were Kroobay, Susan's Bay, Congo Water, Callaba Town, and Old Wharf; Port Loko District included Masoila (Lungi), Port Loko Town, Mangay Bureh, Lunsar, and

Masiaka; and in Kono, the project worked in Bumpeh, Kania, Sinnah Town, Sewafeh, and Koquoma. From the identified project communities across the six districts, the evaluation successfully reached a total of 18 communities. In Kenema, Torkpombu, Joru, and Serabu were covered. Western Rural saw engagements in Tombo, Newton, and Benguima. In Bombali, data collection was conducted in Rogbuya, Robat, and Magbokani. For Western Area Urban, the evaluation team visited Kroobay, Susan's Bay, and Congo Water. Port Loko District was represented by Masoila (Lungi), Port Loko Town, and Mangay Bureh. Lastly, in Kono, the evaluation reached Bumpeh, Kania, and Sinnah Town.

Table 1 Community Level reach

District	Project communities	Communities reached
Kenema	Torkpombu, Joru, Serabu, Baoma, Largor	Torkpombu, Joru, Serabu
Western Area Rural (Waterloo)	Tombo, Newton, Benguima, Goderich, Baw Baw	Tombo, Newton, Benguima
Bombali	Rogbuya, Robat, Magbokani, Konsho, Binkolo	Rogbuya, Robat, Magbokani
Western Area Urban (Freetown)	Kroobay, Susan's Bay, Congo Water, Callaba Town, Old Wharf	Kroobay, Susan's Bay, Congo Water
Port Loko	Masoila (Lungi), Port Loko Town, Mangay Bureh, Lunsar, Masiaka	Masoila (Lungi), Port Loko Town, Mangay Bureh
Kono	Bumpeh, Kania, Sinnah Town, Sewafeh, Koquoma	Bumpeh, Kania, Sinnah Town

These communities were purposefully selected due to their relevance to the peacebuilding objectives, population dynamics, and exposure to electoral tensions, ensuring representation across both rural and urban settings within hotspot districts.

Participants were selected from project communities within each district, and the evaluation reached a total sample size of 2,547 respondents with the survey, which included youth, persons with disabilities, conflict monitoring and security actors, political associations, and other citizens.

Given that district population sizes varied, weighting was applied to correct for selection imbalances, ensuring that each respondent's contribution accurately reflected their district's population size. This process allowed larger districts to contribute proportionally more to national-level estimates, while smaller districts contributed less, aligning the results with real population distributions. Sampling weights were used to adjust for differences in selection probability and cluster design. The evaluation relied on the most recent census and administrative data, specifically referencing approximate population figures from the 2021 mid-term census.

Table 2 Quantitative Sampling Plan by District

District	Population (2021)			Target No. of Samples			Respondents Reached		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bombali	186,824	200,412	387,236	125	134	259	121	142	263
Kenema	374,183	398,289	772,472	251	267	518	227	314	541
Kono	311,832	308,871	620,703	209	207	416	170	277	447
Port Loko	253,790	274,248	528,038	170	184	354	179	189	368
Western Area Rural (Waterloo)	331,334	330,722	662,056	222	223	445	123	337	460
Western Area Urban (Freetown)	289,938	316,763	606,701	195	213	408	228	240	468
Total	1,747,901	1,829,305	3,577,206	1,172	1,227	2,400	1048	1499	2547

Participants were mobilized directly at the community level, with surveys held in accessible venues such as schools, churches, or community halls to minimize travel burdens and encourage broad participation. Each community recruited the required number of participants per day, ensuring orderly and inclusive coverage across six districts. Alongside the surveys, recruitment also targeted specific groups for focus group discussions of 8–10 participants, such as women leaders, youth, or vulnerable populations, and key informant interviews with local chiefs or officials, making the process both representative and contextually grounded.

While the evaluation initially targeted a total of 2,400 respondents across six districts, comprising 1,173 males and 1,227 females, total of 2,547 respondents were reached across the six project districts, comprising 1,499 females and 1,048 males as shown in the above table. In Bombali, 263 individuals participated in the evaluation, with 121 males and 142 females. In Kono, 447 respondents were engaged, including 170 males and 277 females. Port Loko recorded 368 respondents, made up of 179 males and 189 females. Western Area Rural had 460 participants, with a significantly higher number of females (337) compared to males (123). Finally, Western Area Urban contributed 468 respondents, with 228 males and 240 females.

Qualitative Component- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

A total of 31 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders. These included 12 from government ministries and institutions, 10 from civil society organizations (CSOs), 5 from UN agencies, 3 from political and electoral actors, and 4 from local authorities and community representatives. This mix ensured comprehensive insights spanning strategic, technical, and grassroots levels.

Table 3 Qualitative Component - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Category	Stakeholders	Number Targeted	Number Reached
UN Agencies	UNDP/UNICEF project focal points and RCO/PBF Coordinator	4	4
Coordinating Ministry	Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs	4	3
Security Agencies	Office of National Security (ONS) / Integrated Election Security Planning Committee (IESPC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP)/Family Support Unit (FSU)	4	4
Ministry	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	1	1
Political Institutions	Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC)	2	2
CSOs Implementing Partners	UNICEF CSOs: Legal Aid Board, Focus 1000, DCI and Restless International	5	14
	UNDP CSOs: WANEP, SLAJ, IRN and BBC Media Action	7	6

<i>Local Government & Traditional Authorities</i>	Paramount Chiefs and local government officials from the hotspot districts	6	5
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Qualitative Component – Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of 6 Focus Group Discussions were conducted across the six evaluation districts. The FGDs engaged key population groups relevant to the Project’s objectives; 19 men, 24 women, 3 women leaders, 23 youth, and marginalized and vulnerable populations, including 3 persons with disabilities. Each FGD consisted of 8–13 participants (a total of 72 participants) and were held within the selected districts.

Table 4 Qualitative Component - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Group	District	Number of FGDs Targeted	Number of FGDs Reached
<i>Mixed</i>	Kenema	1	1
<i>Mixed</i>	Port Loko	1	1
<i>Mixed</i>	Bombali	1	1
<i>Mixed</i>	Western Area Rural	1	1
<i>Mixed</i>	Western Area Urban	1	1
<i>Mixed</i>	Kono	1	1
Total		6 FGDs	6 FGDs

The focus group discussions (FGDs) were strategically distributed across the six selected districts to ensure diverse and inclusive representation, targeting women leaders, youth, marginalized groups, and persons with disabilities. Special attention was given to including voices from socioeconomically disadvantaged urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, particularly in electoral conflict hotspots identified by the Office of National Security. This approach provided context-specific insights into peace, participation, and inclusion. The sampling frame was developed in collaboration with the Project the project implementation partners, using their beneficiary lists, meeting records, and institutional contact lists to select participants directly involved in the Project.

Field Data Collection

The fieldwork for the evaluation was supported by a national enumerator firm - Livelihood Development for Human Rights Promotion (LIDFOHRP) engaged by UNDP and UNICEF to work closely with the independent evaluator in collecting relevant indicator data. This was specifically for the survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) carried out in the field across project communities. Although the Project was implemented nationwide, data collection focused specifically on districts identified as electoral violence hotspots by the Office of National Security (ONS). The national firm provided logistical and ICT support for training enumerators, coordinated with the evaluator, UNDP and UNICEF facilitated fieldwork, and ensured timely data submission. The evaluator was responsible for training enumerators on ethical considerations and the use of data collection tools, followed by field drills. The entire data collection process was completed within 12 working days. Surveys were administered face-to-face to stratified samples of community members, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities across the six districts. KIIs provided in-depth insights from key stakeholders, FGDs captured group experiences and perceptions, and case studies documented tangible examples of project impact.

Data Collection Methods/Approaches

The evaluation employed multiple data collection methods to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings.

Literature and document review was conducted throughout the evaluation, starting at the inception stage, to gather background information and contextual evidence. This review covered a wide range of materials, including the Project document, theory of change, baseline and progress reports, training manuals, communication materials, U-Report findings, and reports from UNDP, UNICEF, and civil society partners. It also included national policy documents and UNSDCF to assess the Project’s alignment with broader

development and peacebuilding goals. The review helped refine evaluation questions, develop the evaluation matrix (Annex 11.2), and identify key themes for deeper analysis.

A *structured survey* was used to capture quantitative, perception-based data to measure outcome-level indicators, particularly on changes in attitudes, behaviors, and awareness among community members. The survey targeted a sample of women, youth, and persons with disabilities across six evaluation districts and was administered face-to-face using Kobo Collect for efficient, GPS-enabled data collection.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provided rich, community-level perspectives, particularly from women leaders, youth, and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. FGDs, comprising 8–10 participants per session, were conducted in local languages where necessary and were held in safe, neutral venues to ensure gender-sensitive and confidential participation.

Data analysis

The evaluation applied both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods to assess the Project's performance. Quantitative data collected through the structured survey were exported from Kobo Collect into the statistical software SPSS, excel and NVivo for analysis. The dataset was first cleaned and validated to ensure accuracy and reliability. The data analysis is disaggregated by sex and location. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were computed, with cross-tabulations used to explore relationships between demographics and key variables. Comparative analysis between baseline and endline data was also conducted, with results presented through clear visualizations like charts and tables.

In assessing effectiveness, outcomes and outputs were rated as *exceeded*, *met*, *not met* or not applicable using clear criteria as shown in the Project Results Framework (Annex 11.5). Outputs were judged against whether planned deliverables were fully delivered, partially delivered with gaps, or not delivered at all, while outcomes were assessed based on evidence of measurable change in attitudes, behaviors, systems, or capacities.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, drawing from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. Interviews and discussions were transcribed, coded using NVivo and SPSS, and organised under key themes. Both deductive and inductive coding approaches were used to capture pre-identified and emerging issues. Special attention was given to gender including analysis on GRES, youth, disability, and social cohesion. Cross-cutting dimensions, such as gender responsiveness, youth participation, disability inclusion, and conflict sensitivity, were factored into the analysis to determine whether marginalized groups experienced meaningful benefits. This structured rating system, informed by triangulated evidence from surveys, KIIs, FGDs, and monitoring reports, provided a transparent basis for the assessment of the Project's effectiveness. Triangulation across data sources thus enhanced the credibility of findings.

Limitations

Limited Availability of Key Informants; Key stakeholders were sometimes difficult to reach due to time constraints, competing responsibilities, or remote locations. The evaluator conducted early outreach, offered flexible interview schedules, and used phone and online interviews to accommodate respondents who were busy or in hard-to-reach areas.

Non-Responsiveness or Reluctance to Participate; Some stakeholders and beneficiaries were hesitant to engage because of confidentiality concerns or evaluation fatigue. To mitigate this, the evaluator ensured anonymity and confidentiality, clearly communicated the purpose and benefits of the evaluation, and collaborated with local partners and trusted intermediaries to encourage participation.

Logistical and Geographical Constraints; Physical access to some locations was limited by poor infrastructure, adverse weather, or safety concerns. Because the data collection was planned in the monsoon, the road was not good. The evaluator used virtual data collection tools, engaged local enumerators familiar with the areas, and adjusted fieldwork plans in response to real-time conditions and security risks.

Limitations in Baseline-Endline Comparability; Some of the baseline indicators were not collected at endline using the same methodologies of baseline, which limited direct comparison of certain results. The limitation stemmed primarily from methodological differences between the baseline and endline assessments, which necessitated the use of proxy indicators to enable meaningful comparisons and assess project outcomes. Specifically, the tools and sampling strategies used at endline did not fully align with those applied at baseline, which limited direct comparability of certain indicators. The evaluation relied on proxy indicators that provided alternative but relevant measures to assess changes over time and draw reasonable conclusions about the Project's outcomes. For instance, the indicator on *awareness of the roles of state institutions and civic responsibilities* was collected at baseline but not at endline due to methodological differences in tools and sampling. This limited direct comparison, despite its inclusion in the ToR as a key area for assessing change.

Ethical Considerations

This evaluation strictly adhered to the ethical standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), as well as the specific ethical guidance provided in the ToR, including UNDP and UNICEF protocols on safeguarding and informed consent. Specifically, these included UNDP Data Principles' and UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis. The evaluation ensured that the principles of do no harm, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for all participants—particularly women, youth, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups, were fully upheld throughout the process.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with explanations provided about the purpose, potential risks, and intended use of the information gathered (Annex 11.9). Consent was documented both verbally and digitally, with participants given the freedom to decline or withdraw at any point without consequence. The evaluation team, including national enumerators, were trained on safeguarding principles and ethical conduct in line with UNDP and UNICEF standards. No interviews were conducted with children. Local permissions were obtained from relevant district and community-level authorities, and culturally appropriate protocols were followed. All collected data were securely stored, anonymized, and treated as confidential. The team ensured data security through password-protected systems and restricted access, maintaining alignment with both international norms and country-specific legal frameworks, as required by the evaluation ToR.

6. FINDINGS

6.1 Relevance

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Project in Sierra Leone demonstrates high relevance in terms of alignment with the strategic priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), the UN Country Team, and global development frameworks.

Alignment with GoSL Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019–2023 and 2024 - 2030

The PBF Project responds directly to Pillar 1 and Pillar 4 of the MTNDP, Human Capital Development and Governance and Accountability, respectively. The Project supported peaceful electoral processes, youth and women's civic engagement, and gender-based violence prevention, all of which address key governance and human development priorities outlined in the MTNDP. The integration of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) into government-led structures before the 2023 elections is a notable example of institutional strengthening in line with MTNDP goals. The PBF Project also remains well-aligned with the emerging priorities of the MTNDP 2024–2030, which continues to emphasize inclusive governance, civic participation, youth empowerment, gender equality, and resilience-building. The project's focus on peaceful electoral processes, prevention of political violence, and institutional capacity strengthening lays a foundational contribution toward the next phase of national development, especially in fostering accountable institutions and social cohesion, pillars anticipated to feature prominently in the 2024–2030 framework.

Alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024

The PBF Project also made significant contributions to priorities outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It directly supported the promotion of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies by facilitating national dialogue processes, establishing intergenerational peace platforms, and leveraging digital tools such as U-Report to actively engage youth in peacebuilding and civic participation. The Project also advanced gender equality and protection priorities through the integration and operationalization of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), as well as through strengthening Family Support Units and providing legal aid to women and youth involved in electoral-related violence. These interventions reinforced the UNSDCF's commitment to inclusive, accountable, and gender-responsive development outcomes in Sierra Leone.

Alignment with UNDP and UNICEF Country Programme Documents (CPDs) 2020–2024

The Project was well aligned with both UNDP and UNICEF Country Programme Documents (CPDs), advancing key priorities for each agency. In support of UNDP's outcome areas, the Project contributed to democratic governance, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of inclusive institutions. This was achieved through the training of political party actors, the establishment of election early warning and response systems of the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP, and direct support to the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) to promote peaceful political engagement. At the same time, the Project was aligned with UNICEF's CPD objectives by focusing on child and adolescent development, protection, and empowerment. This was delivered through a wide range of activities, including life skills training, positive parenting programmes, gender-based violence prevention initiatives, and civic education campaigns, in schools and communities across the country. Under UNDP's Outcome 2: "Strengthened, inclusive and accountable governance and access to justice", the Project contributed specifically to Output 2.1, by strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention and management through the operationalization of early warning and response systems in partnership with the Office of National

Security (ONS) and WANEP. It also supported Output 2.3, by enhancing democratic processes and civic engagement through training political party actors, supporting inter-party dialogue, and providing technical and operational assistance to the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) for conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities.

On the UNICEF side, the Project contributed to Outcome 2: "By 2024, girls and boys, especially the most disadvantaged and those in humanitarian situations, benefit from equitable access to child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response services". This was achieved through GBV prevention campaigns, the roll-out of positive parenting programs, and life skills training for adolescents, particularly in electoral hotspot communities. Additionally, the Project advanced civic education initiatives in schools, promoting peace, tolerance, and child participation—thereby reinforcing protective environments and empowering young people as active citizens.

Alignment with the UN Peacebuilding Fund Strategy

The Project demonstrated strong alignment with the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Strategic Plan 2020–2024, particularly under Priority Area 2: Strengthening national and local capacities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and Priority Area 3: Promoting inclusion of women and youth in peace processes.

Under Priority Area 2, the Project supported the development and operationalization of dual-track early warning and response systems, implemented through both government structures (Office of National Security - ONS) and civil society mechanisms (WANEP). This approach not only enhanced coordination between state and non-state actors but also improved the country's conflict prevention architecture in the lead-up to and aftermath of the 2023 elections.

For Priority Area 3, the Project advanced inclusive peace processes by facilitating women's and youth participation in political dialogue, civic education, and electoral processes. It funded life skills and leadership training for youth, gender-based violence prevention, and positive parenting initiatives, thereby contributing to the empowerment of women and young people as peacebuilders and active citizens.

Through these efforts, the Project contributed to the PBF's core objective of building state-citizen trust by promoting accountable institutions, enhancing civic engagement, and fostering social cohesion in fragile electoral contexts.

Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Project made meaningful contributions to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It directly supported SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by promoting electoral peacebuilding, enhancing the capacity of key actors, and facilitating community-based conflict resolution mechanisms. The Project also advanced SDG 5: Gender Equality through comprehensive gender-based violence prevention initiatives, support services for survivors, the active promotion of women's participation in political dialogue, and the provision of legal protections for women and youth. Additionally, the Project contributed to SDG 4: Quality Education by delivering civic and electoral education to over 200,000 students, fostering a more informed and engaged youth population. Furthermore, the Project addressed SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities by strengthening the inclusion of youth, women, and marginalized groups in electoral processes, ensuring that traditionally excluded voices were represented and empowered throughout the electoral cycle.

Relevance of the Intervention in Leveraging Support for Peaceful Elections and Social Cohesion

The PBF Project intervention has proven highly relevant in leveraging support for peaceful elections and fostering social cohesion in Sierra Leone. This relevance is evidenced through coordinated actions with national institutions, targeted outreach to youth and women, and the establishment of effective early warning and response mechanisms.

PPRC-Facilitated Peace Dialogues: One of the most impactful interventions was the support provided to the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) in organizing regional dialogues and peace pacts. As noted by one key informant from the PPRC:

“The Commission was able to conduct two peace dialogues... which culminated in a national peace dialogue in Freetown”.

These efforts not only brought political parties together but also built trust among actors who had historically viewed each other with suspicion.

The collaboration with the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP to operationalize dual-track early warning and response systems also ensured the anticipation and prevention of violence through deployment of NERG/DERG members or ONS interventions. The establishment of the National Situation Room and the deployment of ONS representatives in all districts provided institutional readiness, while WANEP’s community monitors enabled grassroots vigilance.

Civic Education and Inclusive Community Engagement: Social cohesion was enhanced through broad-based civic education and inclusive community engagement strategies. The use of community platforms, such as peace clubs in schools and radio programs in local dialects, ensured that messages of peace reached diverse audiences, including rural populations with limited access to formal media. The integration of GBV prevention and response mechanisms, such as legal aid and Family Support Units, also supported women’s safe participation in electoral and civic spaces. The Legal Aid Board (LAB), for instance, helped address structural barriers to justice by targeting populations who are often excluded, particularly women, youth, and survivors of electoral or gender-based violence. Its community mediation functions also complemented the Project’s emphasis on local-level conflict prevention and restorative dialogue.

Community Ownership in Peacebuilding: The community ownership of peacebuilding outcomes further highlights the Project’s relevance. A local leader shared during an interview:

“This is the first time we feel our role in keeping the peace was officially recognized... even the police listened to our reports.”

This reflects how the Project empowered non-state actors to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding, thus reinforcing trust between citizens and the state.

Relevance to Beneficiary Needs and Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

The Project interventions largely met the practical and strategic needs of key institutions, communities, and diverse beneficiary groups, including women, youth, children and persons with disabilities. The design was responsive to the differentiated needs across gender, age, and ability, ensuring targeted support such as women’s political empowerment, youth leadership development, and civic education.

The Project met the institutional needs of bodies like the Office of National Security (ONS), the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), and the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs by enhancing early warning systems, promoting inter-party dialogue, and embedding gender-based violence (GBV) monitoring mechanisms. For example, ONS was capacitated to collect and analyze early warning data through the establishment of a National Situation Room, which informed their timely responses to electoral threats, while the PPRC benefited from regional and national peace dialogues to promote inter-party trust.

At the community level, the Project conducted civic education, peace messaging, and conflict mitigation training. It reached students in schools, while radio programming in local languages helped reach people with limited formal education or literacy skills. These interventions addressed the practical need for knowledge and the strategic goal of promoting democratic participation. The project also worked with Paramount Chiefs who played a pivotal role in community-level conflict prevention by mediating disputes,

reinforcing peace messages, and feeding local intelligence into the early warning system. Their authority and legitimacy enhanced dialogue processes, reduced tensions in electoral hotspots, and strengthened the overall effectiveness of community-based peace interventions.

The Project paid deliberate attention to women's safety, voice, and leadership, responding to both practical needs (such as access to legal aid and Family Support Units) and strategic goals (such as promoting female leadership). It supported the GBVIMS rollout, legal assistance to survivors, and women-led civic forums. One community member said during an FGD;

"For the first time, we were included in decision-making, not just called to dance"

This signifies the shift from tokenism to real inclusion.

Youth, often perceived as drivers or victims of conflict, were a major focus of the Project. Through platforms like U-Report, peace clubs, and community dialogues, the Project addressed their practical need for participation and their strategic role in long-term peacebuilding. The Project also trained youth leaders in conflict sensitivity and advocacy, directly empowering them to act as change agents.

Inclusivity was promoted through universal radio messaging, accessible civic content, and community-level engagement strategies. There was a clear intent to reach diverse and marginalised voices, including rural women, youth in mining areas, and persons affected by electoral violence, addressing both their immediate protection needs and their long-term inclusion in governance processes.

The Project used intergenerational dialogues and targeted youth and adults differently, ensuring that children received civic education in schools, while older populations engaged through radio, community meetings, and religious institutions. In addition to civic education in schools, intergenerational dialogues brought together young people and traditional leaders—such as paramount chiefs, community leaders, religious leaders, and women's groups, for community discussions. This inclusive approach is why we refer to it as "intergenerational dialogue."

Relevance in Addressing Conflict Drivers and Peace Factors

The Project was highly relevant in addressing the key conflict drivers and peace factors identified in the initial conflict analysis. The Project's design directly targeted critical risks such as electoral violence, political intolerance, misinformation, exclusion of women and youth, and the lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. By focusing on early warning and response systems, inter-party dialogue platforms, civic and voter education, and digital fact-checking, the Project strategically aligned its interventions to mitigate the most pressing triggers of electoral conflict.

The conflict analysis highlighted the central role of misinformation in fueling tensions, and the Project's investment in the iVerify platform effectively addressed this challenge by enabling rapid, coordinated responses to false information. Similarly, the dual-track early warning and response system that linked community monitors with national security bodies directly tackled the need for timely conflict prevention at both local and national levels.

6.2 Coherence

The PBF Project exhibited a high degree of internal coherence within its design, particularly in terms of alignment between the two implementing UN agencies, UNDP and UNICEF, and in the integration of its multi-component approach.

Coherence Between UNDP and UNICEF

The two agencies coordinated effectively to ensure division of roles that was complementary and synergistic. UNDP focused on electoral preparedness, institutional strengthening, and conflict prevention and management, while UNICEF led on youth engagement, civic education, and GBV prevention. This

thematic clarity prevented duplication and reinforced strategic complementarity. For example, while UNDP supported the ONS-led national early warning system, UNICEF simultaneously worked with communities to address women's GBV issues, showing a clear horizontal coherence between institutional and grassroots peace mechanisms. The project utilized the UNDP's portfolio approach, which is a strategic programming method that integrates multiple interrelated interventions under a common framework to enhance coordination, scalability, and development outcomes and impact. The portfolio approach under the PBF Elections Project in Sierra Leone aimed to deliver integrated and conflict-sensitive peacebuilding interventions by clustering related components, within a unified framework aligned with national priorities. This approach enhanced coordination and cumulative impact by leveraging partnerships among UN agencies, government, and civil society. It also complemented the Basket Fund Election Project¹, which focused on technical and institutional election support. While the Basket Fund strengthened electoral systems, the PBF portfolio addressed the social and political foundations for peaceful elections, ensuring both credible processes and societal acceptance.

Coherence Among Project Components

The Project's components, peace infrastructure, political dialogue, electoral peacebuilding, civic education, and gender-based violence (GBV) response, were logically sequenced and effectively reinforced one another. The early warning systems, aligned with Outcome Area 1 on conflict prevention, provided critical information that supported the activation of community response platforms and informed training initiatives. Civic education and peace messaging, central to Outcome Area 2 on inclusive civic engagement, laid the groundwork for community mobilization, tolerance, and peaceful participation. Gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response mechanisms contributed to Outcome Area 3, promoting inclusive political processes by ensuring that electoral participation was safe and accessible, particularly for women and girls. Together, these components formed a cohesive, multi-dimensional prevention strategy that holistically supported peaceful elections and strengthened social cohesion.

Joint Governance and Coordination

The establishment of a joint project coordination team, regular inter-agency review meetings, and unified reporting mechanisms significantly strengthened the coherence and operational alignment of the Project. The joint coordination team served as a central platform that facilitated seamless collaboration between UNDP and UNICEF, enabling both agencies to work in a harmonized and complementary manner. Regular inter-agency review meetings provided structured opportunities to assess progress, address emerging challenges, and adjust strategies in real time. These meetings created an open space for sharing insights, cross-learning, and integrating feedback from the field, which promoted consistent alignment across the different components of the Project. The unified reporting mechanisms ensured that data collection, analysis, and results tracking were systematically consolidated, which reduced duplication and enhanced accountability. Collectively, these structures supported adaptive management, enabling the Project to remain responsive to evolving contexts and emerging risks while promoting the timely integration of lessons learned across thematic areas and between the two implementing agencies.

Synergies and Interlinkages with Other UN Interventions

The PBF Project effectively leveraged synergies and interlinkages with broader interventions implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, and other UN agencies in Sierra Leone, enhancing its reach, relevance, and sustainability.

¹ The Basket Fund Election Project was a UN Peacebuilding Fund-financed, multi-partner initiative in Sierra Leone that complemented technical electoral support by pooling donor resources to promote peaceful, inclusive, and gender-responsive elections through dialogue, justice, civic education, and violence prevention.

The Project strategically built upon UNDP's governance and institutional development portfolio, particularly its work with the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and the Office of National Security (ONS). For example, PBF-funded early warning mechanisms complemented UNDP's pre-existing efforts to improve state responsiveness and public sector accountability. Joint scenario planning and training exercises involving ONS personnel reflected an intentional continuity from UNDP's earlier security governance programs. Similarly, UNICEF's Adolescent and Youth Empowerment initiatives were reinforced through PBF-supported civic education, peace clubs, and U-Report deployment. The PBF project extended UNICEF's life skills training by integrating civic responsibilities and electoral tolerance messaging in both formal and non-formal community-based education platforms. This built directly on UNICEF's ongoing support to the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) programs and National Secretariat for Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage (NSRTP) as the community-based curriculum was developed in collaboration with NSRTP and MBSSE.

The Project complemented the UN's conflict prevention strategy and drew upon existing UN Women and UNFPA GBV programming, particularly in the rollout of GBVIMS and support for Family Support Units. The GBV response mechanisms built by the PBF project benefited from technical inputs and partnerships with other agencies' legal aid and health service delivery arms.

By addressing youth, gender, and governance issues across multiple sectors, the PBF project aligned with and reinforced key priorities in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024. These interlinkages enabled cohesive UN messaging, joint advocacy, and unified community outreach approaches, thereby reducing fragmentation and maximizing impact.

Coordination with Government and Other Development Partners in Electoral and Peacebuilding Support

The PBF Project demonstrated strong coordination with relevant electoral and peacebuilding stakeholders from both the Government of Sierra Leone and international development partners. This coordination significantly amplified its impact, ensured local ownership, and minimized duplication of efforts.

The Project collaborated closely with national bodies such as the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), the Office of National Security (ONS), and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. The PPRC was a strategic partner in facilitating regional and national peace dialogues including the electoral peace pledge and in rolling out the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, which helped curb hate speech and inflammatory campaigning during the 2023 elections.

The ONS, supported by the Project, played a key role in operationalizing a government-led early warning system, which was linked with WANEP's civil society-driven community monitoring, analysis and response mechanisms. This dual-track approach bridged national and grassroots capacities and demonstrated an integrated crisis prevention architecture.

The PBF Project effectively complemented and collaborated with other key electoral support actors, creating synergies that strengthened the overall electoral and peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. The Project worked alongside the European Union, which supported electoral observer missions, providing valuable oversight that complemented the PBF's focus on peaceful electoral processes. It also engaged with The Carter Centre, African Union (AU) and ECOWAS, whose technical election observation findings were shared with PBF-supported platforms, enhancing the Project's situational awareness and response capacity. Additionally, the Project aligned closely with UN Women and UNFPA, particularly in the area of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response. Their interventions complemented the PBF's work in rolling out the GBVIMS system, expanding access to legal aid, and creating safe spaces for women and girls, thereby reinforcing a coordinated and multi-agency approach to protecting and empowering vulnerable groups during the electoral process.

Joint briefings and coordination forums were held with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, ensuring alignment with the broader UN conflict prevention strategy. This contributed to a shared peace messaging framework and synchronized community-level engagement.

The Project also worked with local civil society organizations, community leaders, teachers, and radio stations to deliver civic education and community peace messages. This bottom-up coordination ensured that interventions were context-sensitive and responsive to evolving needs on the ground.

6.3 Efficiency

Timeliness and Cost Efficiency of Project Implementation

The PBF Project has largely been implemented within its stated timeframe and budget envelope, though with some modest delays and reallocations, particularly linked to evolving electoral dynamics and contextual challenges in Sierra Leone.

According to the Project reports, while there were minor delays in field activities, especially around community-level engagements and some data collection exercises, the overall implementation remained within the originally approved timeframe, particularly after the no-cost extension granted to allow for post-election consolidation activities.

The project demonstrated a very high level of efficiency in the use of its financial resources. The total approved budget for the project was USD 3,000,000, of which the entire allocation was transferred to the two implementing agencies. UNDP received USD 1,799,638, fully transferred, and had spent or committed USD 1,763,038. UNICEF received USD 1,200,362, also fully transferred, and had spent or committed USD 1,198,663. Taken together, this represents a combined expenditure of USD 2,961,701 against the total budget of USD 3,000,000, translating into an implementation rate of 98.72%. This exceptionally high absorption rate indicates strong financial management, prudent planning, and timely disbursement of resources. Expenditures were closely aligned with the scope of activities, ensuring that resources were efficiently converted into deliverables. The joint programming approach adopted by UNDP and UNICEF further enhanced cost-effectiveness by reducing duplication and leveraging synergies across activities. The near-complete budget execution provides clear evidence of value for money, with resources deployed strategically to support project outcomes and minimal underspending observed.

The Project experienced some reallocation of funds, approved by PBF leadership, between outputs but remained within the overall budget. There were no reported cases of significant over-expenditure. Some components, such as peace messaging and legal aid support, were scaled up using available balances from underspent lines like travel and venue rental, due to more efficient logistics and strong local partnerships.

UNDP and UNICEF both adhered to the PBF's financial reporting standards, and regular reviews ensured that expenditures matched outputs, with documentation indicating that disbursements were in line with project delivery targets

Efficiency of Human and Financial Resource Allocation

The PBF Project allocated its human and financial resources efficiently to achieve its objectives, demonstrating prudent resource use, adaptive planning, and optimal personnel deployment across implementation components.

The Project reports reflect that financial resources were managed with cost-efficiency in mind, ensuring value for money across interventions. For example, funds originally allocated for travel and venue hire were redirected to scale up community sensitization campaigns and peace messaging, as more cost-efficient local venues and digital tools became available.

Joint budgeting mechanisms between UNDP and UNICEF also prevented duplication and ensured that complementary outputs (such as national-level dialogues and school-based civic education) were covered without overlap, thus maximising use of the combined budget envelope.

Human resources were strategically mobilized. National staff, local facilitators, youth leaders, and gender advocates were engaged to deliver interventions in schools, communities, and political platforms. The use of local animators, radio hosts, and peace ambassadors ensured cultural and linguistic relevance, reducing the need for expensive international consultants.

Coordination between the two agencies, including shared training for field teams and harmonized deployment of enumerators, further contributed to the efficient use of human capital. The deployment of technical advisors to ONS to manage government-led early warning and response system is an example of targeted capacity investment yielding high operational returns.

Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Resource Allocation

The PBF Project demonstrated a clear intention to allocate resources in ways that supported gender equality and youth inclusion, although attention to persons with disabilities (PWDs), while not a planned intervention, was comparatively limited and presents a noted weakness.

The Project deliberately invested in gender-targeted interventions to promote the safety, inclusion, and empowerment of women and girls. Notably, it supported the rollout of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) across multiple districts, strengthening the national capacity to document, manage, and respond to cases of gender-based violence. The Project also provided legal aid services and operational support to Family Support Units, which significantly improved survivors' access to justice and protection. Women-led (All Political Parties Women Association – APPWA) trainings on leadership, consensus-building, dialogue as well as community dialogues and civic education forums were funded, particularly in the lead-up to the elections, to amplify women's voices and encourage their political participation. These efforts reflected a clear gender-responsive budgeting approach, with resources aligned to meet both the practical needs of women, such as safety and service access, and their strategic interests, such as leadership and civic engagement.

The Project also prioritized youth engagement through significant resource allocation. It established peace clubs in schools and reached students through targeted civic and electoral education initiatives. The U-Report platform was deployed as a youth-friendly space to collect feedback, monitor electoral tensions, and encourage youth-led reporting. The Project trained youth leaders in conflict resolution, tolerance, and positive political participation, equipping them with the skills to contribute constructively to peaceful elections. This demonstrated a deliberate strategy to place young people at the center of peacebuilding and civic education efforts, ensuring their meaningful participation and leadership in the electoral process.

While the Project documents mention marginalized and vulnerable groups, there is little concrete evidence of targeted programming or resourcing specifically for PWDs. No specific activities, accessibility audits, or adaptations (e.g., materials in braille, sign language interpretation, accessible venues) were planned. Even as it was important to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the peacebuilding project implementation, the broader electoral project had a more dedicated and structured focus on promoting PWD participation in electoral processes. Nonetheless, the peacebuilding initiative's inclusivity framework could have been more robust, representing a missed opportunity to align more closely with the comprehensive accessibility goals of the wider electoral support framework.

Synergies and Cost-Saving Opportunities Across Project and Related Interventions

Project partners operated with a notable degree of efficiency, effectively working within their respective mandates while leveraging existing institutional infrastructure, local networks, and community trust to

deliver project interventions. This approach not only facilitated smooth coordination but also contributed to cost-efficiency by minimizing the need for new, parallel systems. For instance, the Legal Aid Board (LAB) played a critical role in responding to electoral offences outside the formal court system. By utilizing community-based dispute electoral offence resolution mechanisms, LAB helped to ease the caseload burden on the already stretched judicial institutions while providing quicker, more accessible, and culturally appropriate avenues for justice. This method not only resonated with local populations but also contributed to timely electoral offence resolution during sensitive electoral periods. The ability of partners to draw on established community entry points and institutional relationships significantly reduced operational costs while supporting the achievement of project results.

Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures for Accountability

UNDP and UNICEF applied standard monitoring and evaluation (M&E) procedures throughout the Project, which included joint progress review meetings, regular field monitoring visits, and structured partner reporting mechanisms. They also utilized the PBF Results Framework to track deliverables and measure progress against planned outputs. These efforts helped to ensure a basic level of accountability and performance tracking across implementing agencies and partners. However, the M&E processes tended to remain largely output-focused, concentrating on activity completion and quantitative deliverables, rather than providing real-time tracking of outcome-level changes or the depth of impact. A significant limitation was the insufficient collection and analysis of disaggregated data, particularly regarding marginalized groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This gap made it difficult to fully assess whether the Project was equitably reaching all intended beneficiaries.

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Partnerships in Project Implementation

The PBF Project's partnerships were both efficient and effective, contributing significantly to the success of implementation. Resources were pooled and coordinated effectively, with shared platforms for training, joint monitoring visits, and harmonized logistics. Government institutions such as the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) were brought into the Project early, which enhanced legitimacy, improved access to field data, and facilitated seamless coordination. For instance, ONS officers were embedded at district levels to triangulate data and support early warning interventions, while PPRC played a key role in organizing peace dialogues and political party engagements.

In terms of effectiveness, partnerships enabled tangible results at both institutional and community levels. Through collaboration with PPRC, political parties adopted and upheld codes of conduct and peace pledges that supported a peaceful electoral process. WANEP, a civil society partner, led community-based early warning and response interventions, trained peace monitors, and eminent persons, thereby strengthening local capacities for conflict prevention. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) worked with the Project to incorporate civic education into school curricula, reaching several students and embedding values of tolerance and electoral participation. Family Support Units, legal aid providers, and women-led organizations partnered to expand GBV prevention and response services, ensuring legal protection and psychosocial support for women and girls.

Efficiency of the Project's Coordination Structure

The coordination structure of the PBF project was generally effective and played a crucial role in ensuring successful implementation, though it was not without some operational challenges. The Project was anchored by a strong multi-agency collaboration, bringing together UNDP and UNICEF as lead coordinators alongside key national institutions such as the Office of National Security (ONS), the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), civil society organizations, and the Inter-Religious Council. This inclusive and participatory coordination approach ensured that all critical stakeholders were consistently engaged throughout the Project's lifecycle.

The Project established efficient coordination platforms at both national and district levels. Periodic coordination meetings between UNDP and UNICEF, and the Project's technical committee meetings provided regular spaces for joint planning, sharing of emerging issues, and collaborative development of community action plans. These structures were further supported by WANEP's establishment of District Election Response Groups and the National Election Response Group, which provided timely mediation and response to potential election-related tensions. Community-level coordination was a notable success, with effective linkages between civil society, traditional authorities, and state agencies ensuring localized ownership and quick responses to emerging threats.

A key success of the coordination structure was its flexibility and responsiveness. The Project demonstrated the ability to adapt swiftly to electoral hotspots and reallocate resources based on real-time intelligence. Additionally, data harmonization between civil society actors, the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC), and ONS significantly reduced duplication and promoted a more coherent, unified response to early warning signs. The coordination of the hate speech monitoring platform (iVerify) by UNDP also enhanced real-time verification and dissemination of accurate information, which was crucial for managing misinformation and promoting peace narratives.

Inter-agency synergy further strengthened coordination. UNICEF effectively partnered with youth-focused CSOs, the Legal Aid Board, and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to deliver life skills, civic education, and gender-based violence reporting systems at community and school levels. The coordination of these diverse actors allowed the Project to reach a wide demographic and integrate peacebuilding into community development efforts.

Despite these successes, the coordination structure faced some challenges. The Project's wide geographical coverage and the involvement of many actors occasionally strained coordination logistics, especially during peak electoral periods. Additionally, some civil society partners noted that coordination was more intense during the pre-election phase, with limited post-election follow-up, which affected the sustained delivery of some interventions. Moreover, there were concerns about the heavy reliance on specific CSOs and media houses for key coordination hubs like fact-checking and civic education, raising questions about the sustainability of these mechanisms beyond the Project's life span.

6.4 Effectiveness

Achievement of Project Results and Key Enabling or Impeding Factors

The PBF Project in Sierra Leone has largely met its expected quantitative and qualitative indicators, particularly in fostering peaceful elections and enhancing social cohesion. Results from both UNDP and UNICEF components demonstrate significant achievements, driven by strategic partnerships, community-based approaches, and targeted civic engagement.

Citizens were reached through civic education and voter information sessions, and several young people benefited from school-based civic and peace education initiatives. Inter-Party Dialogue Committees were operationalized, and hate speech monitoring mechanisms (iVerify) were successfully institutionalized. Training programs for political parties, media actors, youth, and women leaders were rolled out extensively. These achievements were complemented by infrastructure upgrades in Family Support Units and increased case management capacities for GBV response.

Qualitatively, interviews and discussions underscore a clear positive shift in civic behavior, youth agency, and peaceful dialogue. For instance, a representative from Defence for Children International highlighted that the life skills and positive parenting sessions “*aligned nicely and seamlessly with our goal... helping children to live a healthier, safer life and make positive decisions*”. Similarly, a representative from Restless Development noted, “*Most of [the youth ambassadors] would tell you, nobody ever considered me as somebody important in this community... now they see me as a big man or a big woman*”, indicating the

transformative nature of youth empowerment under the Project. LAB, for instance, contributed effectively to mitigating post-election disputes and supporting GBV survivors through legal advice and representation. LAB worked closely with Family Support Units and community-based structures to resolve electoral-related grievances, and land disputes. While the Legal Aid Board (LAB) provided legal support and referrals, the resolution of electoral-related grievances and intra-party conflicts primarily fell under the mandates of institutions such as the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and, where applicable, the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC).

As one CSO representative noted;

“LAB was one of the few institutions people trusted to resolve issues fairly without escalating tensions.”

This trust contributed to peaceful resolution of grievances and increased access to justice in the most contentious periods of the electoral cycle. However, effectiveness varied by district, with stronger performance in urban centers than in underserved rural communities, partly due to staff and resource limitations.

Outcome 1: Early warning and response mechanisms to electoral tensions and triggers of conflict reduce the potential and the intensity of election-related violence.

Indicator 1a: Perceptions of Security and Safety of Voters

The evaluation assessed the proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that sufficient measures were in place to ensure the security and safety of voters during the 2023 elections. The baseline figure stood at 71%, with a slight gender difference, 73.1% of men and 69.4% of women expressing confidence in election security. The Project targeted an improvement to 76.65% by endline, aiming for 78.91% among men and 74.91% among women.

The endline evaluation survey findings indicate strong public confidence in the security and fairness of the electoral process. Most (92.09%) respondents (64.88% - 1,650/2547 agreed and 27.21%, 692/2547 strongly agreed) believed that adequate measures were in place to ensure voter security, while 67.52% agreed and 20.41% strongly agreed that local authorities and security forces treated all political parties fairly. Additionally, 69.05% (1756/2547) agreed and 19.35% (492/2547) strongly agreed that political parties followed campaign rules. Across all areas, only a small minority expressed disagreement or neutrality, suggesting that most voters generally perceived the election environment as secure, fair, and well-managed. The high approval suggests that institutional frameworks (e.g., policing, electoral guidelines) were effective in ensuring a secure voting environment.

Table 5 Security and Safety of Voters

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
Measures were in place to ensure voter security.	27.21	64.88	3.58	2.83	1.3	0.2
Local authorities & security forces treat all parties fairly.	20.41	67.52	6.69	3.93	1.17	0.28
Political parties followed campaign rules.	19.35	69.05	7.5	4.1	0	0

The evaluation findings on perceptions of voter safety and fair treatment across districts reveal generally high levels of confidence in safe and secure electoral processes, though with some district-level variations. Kenema reported the highest trust, with nearly unanimous agreement (98.88%) that voters were safe and fairly treated, followed closely by Kono (96.64%) and Western Area Rural (95.07%), both showing strong confidence in the security and fairness of the elections. Bombali also showed substantial trust at 91.63%,

though with a slightly higher level of disagreement (6.08%). Port Loko recorded a lower agreement level of 84.07%, indicating some lingering concerns over electoral neutrality and fairness. Western Area Urban district exhibited the highest skepticism, with only 83.55% agreement and a notable 11.97% disagreement rate, suggesting significant reservations about voter safety and fairness in this more densely populated area. These findings suggest that while the majority of voters across districts felt safe and fairly treated, urban areas like Western Area Urban may require targeted interventions to build greater trust in the electoral process.

Table 6 Security and Safety of Voters by District

<i>Voters were safe and fairly treated</i>			
District	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Disagree + Strongly Disagree (%)	Key Observations
Bombali	91.63%	6.08%	High trust in security measures.
Kenema	98.88%	0.93%	Nearly unanimous agreement on safety.
Kono	96.64%	0.67%	Strong confidence in electoral security.
Port Loko	84.07%	5.22%	Some security concerns.
Western Rural	95.07%	1.07%	High approval, minimal dissent.
Western Urban	83.55%	11.97%	Notable scepticism (highest disagreement).

Indicator 1b: Trust Among Political Party Supporters

The evaluation also focused on the trust levels among supporters of political parties. At baseline, only 44.41% of people agreed that they could trust supporters from their affiliated political parties, with minimal gender variation (men: 44.11%, women: 45.12%). The Project aimed for a modest increase to 47.93% by the endline, with a slightly higher target among women (48.69%) compared to men (47.61%). This relatively conservative target reflects a recognition that political trust is deeply embedded in the broader socio-political culture and is unlikely to shift rapidly within a single project cycle.

The evaluation found that 61.4% (1,562 out of 2,547) of respondents, 554 strongly agreeing and 1,008 agreeing, that supporters of political parties they were not affiliated with could be trusted. However, 763 respondents (30.0%)—653 disagreeing and 110 strongly disagreeing, expressed distrust, while 209 were neutral and 13 preferred not to answer. This finding suggests a modest but notable level of inter-party trust among the electorate, indicating progress toward political tolerance and social cohesion. The project exceeded its target, with 61.4% of respondents (1,562 out of 2,547) expressing trust in supporters of other political parties, surpassing the 47.93% target.

Table 7 Trust Among Political Party Supporters

Supporters of political parties you are not affiliated with can be trusted.	frequency	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	554	21.79%
<i>Agree</i>	1008	39.60%
<i>Disagree</i>	653	25.64%
<i>Neutral</i>	209	8.18%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	13	0.47%
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	110	4.33%
<i>Total</i>	2547	

At the endline evaluation survey, up to 90.95% of the respondents acknowledged that people worked together across political and ethnic lines, suggesting meaningful collaboration, trust and reduced polarization among political party supporters.

Table 8 Trust Among Political Party Supporters

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
People work together across political/ ethnic lines.	26.5	64.45	4.29	3.78	0.7	0.28

Indicator 1c: Community Peace on Election Day

The evaluation assessed whether people perceived their communities as peaceful on election day. At baseline, 68% of respondents reported that their communities were largely peaceful, and the Project ambitiously targeted an improvement to 80% by project end. While security can be improved through visible, short-term interventions, trust-building is inherently gradual and deeply connected to historical grievances and systemic political behaviors.

The evaluation assessed whether people perceived their communities as peaceful on election day, and the findings indicate that a strong majority experienced a calm environment. 68.58% of respondents agreed and 20.57% strongly agreed (89.15%) that their communities were peaceful, reflecting an overwhelmingly positive perception among participants. However, a small minority (4.29% disagreed and 0.71% strongly disagreed) reported experiencing some level of tension or unrest. Most people, therefore, perceived their communities as peaceful on election day, though minor pockets of concern were noted.

Table 9 Community Peace on Election Day

Our community was peaceful on election day	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20.57%
Agree	68.58%
Disagree	4.29%
Neutral	5.66%
Strongly Disagree	0.71%
Prefer not to answer	0.20%

Output 1.1: National and sub-national Early Warning and Response Systems are enhanced

Indicator 1.1.1: Number of Conflicts Addressed through IESPC, Decentralized Committees, and WANEP Mediators

The evaluation sought to determine the number of election-related conflicts addressed through interventions by the Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee (IESPC), decentralized security structures and WANEP insider mediators, with records maintained by the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP situation rooms. At baseline, no conflicts had been addressed, and the Project's endline target was to address at least two conflicts. By the time of the evaluation, the Project had successfully addressed six conflicts, tripling the initial target. This was therefore achieved.

The shift from zero to six conflicts resolved represents significant overachievement, indicating that the Project not only established functional conflict resolution mechanisms but also actively utilized them in real-time electoral scenarios. The variance is positive, suggesting that the Project's mediation structures, early warning systems, and decentralized coordination mechanisms were both effective and responsive. The overperformance could be linked to a higher-than-anticipated number of electoral tensions or the proactive capacity of insider mediators and local security structures to address emerging issues quickly.

Indicator 1.1.2: Existence and Functionality of the National Situation Room and its Linkages to NERG

This aimed to ensure the establishment and operationalization of a National Situation Room, which would be linked to the National Elections Response Group (NERG). At the outset, such a system was either nonexistent or not functional. Over the course of the project, this gap was fully addressed, thus the target

was achieved. A functional situation room was established and effectively linked to NERG and other electoral actors, including ONS, WANEP, and the Electoral Commission. The Situation Room played a pivotal role in receiving, analysing, and disseminating early warning data and coordinating rapid responses to electoral tensions. It enabled a real-time flow of information between the field and national actors, improving evidence-based decision-making and early action on reported incidents. This institutional linkage strengthened the coherence of national and sub-national responses and anchored the project's early warning strategy in existing governance structures.

Indicator 1.1.3: Number of Security Personnel and Stakeholders Trained on Election Security

The evaluation also assessed the number of security personnel and other election stakeholders trained through "training of trainers" (ToT) sessions on election security, planning, and simulation exercises. At the start of the Project, there were no trained personnel involved in election security planning and simulation exercises. The Project aimed to train 500 personnel by the endline, setting this as a key capacity-building target to strengthen the preparedness and coordination of security stakeholders for the electoral process. At evaluation, 600 security personnel and stakeholders had been trained, including 128 women, reaching beyond the set target. This demonstrates not only the Project's successful capacity-building component but also an inclusive training approach, as indicated by the participation of women. The training covered critical election security planning and simulations, which contributed to the Project's effective conflict prevention and response capacity, as evidenced by the number of conflicts successfully addressed. The overachievement signals that the Project was well-received by security agencies and expanded beyond its initial scope to meet emerging operational needs.

Indicator 1.1.4: Number of Periodic Situation Analyses and Early Warning Updates Shared with Stakeholders

The evaluation also assessed the frequency and quality of analytical reports and early warning updates produced and shared with stakeholders during the electoral period. At project inception, there were no such reports available or shared regularly. The project set out to produce six updates, and this target was fully met. The situation analyses were based on aggregated data from WANEP's early warning mechanisms, U-Report feedback, community-level monitoring, and insights from insider mediators. These reports were crucial in informing the decisions of national coordination structures such as the NERG, IESPC, and relevant ministries. The dissemination of regular and reliable information enhanced stakeholder preparedness, contributed to risk mitigation, and served as a foundation for timely interventions in electoral hotspots.

Indicator 1.1.5: Number of U-Report Surveys Launched and Analyzed, with Recommendations Provided

The number of U-Report surveys conducted, analyzed, and used to generate actionable recommendations for the Ministry of Political and Public Affairs (MPAPA), ONS, and the IESPC was also assessed. At baseline, three U-Report surveys had been conducted before the start of the Project. The Project set an endline target of completing six surveys, aiming to generate timely data and community feedback to inform election security planning and decision-making throughout the Project period. By the end of the Project period, 5 surveys had been completed and analyzed. Although progress is substantial, the Project was slightly behind schedule in meeting the endline target. The slight shortfall suggests either time constraints, data collection challenges, or potential administrative delays in executing the final planned survey. The Project's systematic engagement of decentralized security actors, training of frontline personnel, and utilization of real-time public feedback through U-Report surveys collectively contributed to a well-coordinated, data-informed, and community-responsive electoral security framework.

Indicator 1.1.6: Degree to which Early Warning is Informed by Community-Level Inputs and Verified Reports

At the project's start, early warning systems were largely top-down and not systematically informed by community perspectives. The project set out to change this by building a bottom-up model that included

data from WANEP community monitors, traditional and religious leaders, insider mediators, and platforms like U-Report. By the end of the project, early warning systems had evolved to become community-informed, integrating locally verified reports into the national situation analysis. This participatory model enhanced the credibility, timeliness, and relevance of alerts, and contributed significantly to the project's overall responsiveness to electoral risks. It also improved local trust in national coordination mechanisms and gave citizens a more active role in safeguarding peace.

Output 1.2: Nationally-led initiatives to prevent electoral violence and promote dialogue are reinforced and scaled-up

Indicator 1.2.1: Number of Election-Related Conflicts Raised to NERG

At baseline, no election-related conflicts formally raised to the National Election Response Group (NERG), indicating the absence of established reporting channels or possibly low public awareness of the mechanisms for conflict reporting. The end-of-project target was set at five conflicts being reported, suggesting that the Project aimed to strengthen community engagement, conflict sensitivity, and the functionality of early warning structures.

By the end of the Project, six conflicts had already been raised, surpassing the initial target. This is a significant achievement, as it demonstrates not only improved community confidence in reporting mechanisms but also the operational effectiveness of NERG and related structures. The progress since the Project's start shows full achievement and slight over-performance.

The primary reason for this variance stems from the heightened electoral tensions between supporters of political parties during the campaign period. This tension appears to have provided both the catalyst for conflict and the opportunity for the system to demonstrate responsiveness. The NERG/DERG pre-election dialogues with traditional and community leaders in the districts played a key role in both conflict identification and resolution pathways. This proactive engagement at the grassroots level likely contributed to the increased reporting and rapid utilization of the National Election Response Group's (NERG) mechanisms.

Indicator 1.2.2: Situation Room Capacity for Election Response

The evaluation measured the capacity of the NERG and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)-led situation rooms to receive, analyze, and coordinate information and responses with the Office of National Security (ONS) and other actors. At baseline, there was one existing situation room, and the Project targeted establishing an additional one, bringing the total to two. By the end of the Project period, the target was fully achieved. There are now two operational situation rooms: one led by WANEP and the other by ONS. These rooms have been effectively linked to other relevant actors, enhancing coordination and real-time response capacity.

A comparative analysis between the baseline and endline shows that the Project successfully doubled the capacity for election monitoring and response, a critical infrastructure improvement for managing electoral risks. The fact that this target was met on time with no reported delays signals good planning and efficient execution. Establishing both the WANEP and ONS situation rooms reflects a multi-stakeholder approach that balances civil society and state-led mechanisms for election-related conflict management.

Indicator 1.2.3: CSO Collaboration on Election Activities

The evaluation also assessed the extent of collaboration by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of election-related activities. The baseline reference is the Standing Together CSOs Consortium's participation in the 2018 elections. The endline target was set to develop at least one formal recommendation or decision to guide CSO collaboration for the 2023 elections. By the end of the Project implementation, this target was fully met. An Action Plan was developed by the Ministry of Political and

Public Affairs (MoPAPA) in collaboration with 50 CSOs to strengthen information sharing and coordination ahead of the 2023 elections.

There was continuity and progressive institutionalization of CSO engagement in election processes. While the baseline referenced an informal CSO collaboration in the previous election cycle, the Project’s contribution was to formalize this collaboration through the development of an actionable coordination framework. This marked a qualitative step forward, as it moved from ad hoc coalitions to structured, state-supported partnerships. There are no reported delays or variances for this indicator, which suggests effective stakeholder engagement and timely delivery of outputs.

The increase in the number of election-related conflicts raised to NERG is attributable to proactive interventions that anticipated and responded to electoral risks. The Project’s planning, stakeholder coordination, and operational execution were largely effective. The Project has therefore made measurable progress from the baseline across all three outputs, delivering tangible improvements in conflict reporting, institutional coordination, and civil society engagement for peaceful electoral processes. The outputs collectively strengthen the national election response framework, positioning it as a more robust, inclusive, and responsive system than at project inception.

Outcome 2: An inclusive civic space is fostered and peaceful, accurate and timely communications for participatory and well-informed discourse are promoted

Indicator 2.1a: Perceptions of Peaceful and Respectful Political Campaigning

The evaluation also assessed the proportion of people who believe political parties campaigned peacefully and respectfully for the 2023 elections. At baseline, 55.1% of respondents held a positive perception, with men at 54.6% and women slightly higher at 56.6%. The endline target was set at 59.41% overall, with men expected to reach 58.94% and women 61.10%.

The endline evaluation survey findings indicate a generally positive perception of peaceful and respectful political campaigning within the communities surveyed. A significant majority, 89.15% of respondents, agreed or strongly agreed that people avoided violence during political arguments, reflecting a high level of restraint and tolerance during political engagements. Furthermore, 92.56% agreed that community peacebuilding efforts had improved relationships, highlighting the tangible impact of peace initiatives in fostering social cohesion. Neutral, and disagree rates across all statements remained minimal, further emphasizing the strong consensus around improved political conduct and inter-community harmony during the election period.

Table 10 Peaceful and Respectful Political Campaigning

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
People avoided violence in political arguments.	20.57	68.58	5.66	4.28	0.71	0.2
Community peacebuilding improved relationships.	23.55	69.01	7.44	0	0	0

The endline survey findings on peaceful, cohesive, and respectful political campaigning indicate generally strong perceptions of unity and non-violence across most districts, though with notable regional differences. Kenema reported the highest levels of cohesion among the districts, with 98.64% of respondents agreeing that political campaigning was peaceful and respectful, closely followed by Western Area Rural (96.63%) and Bombali (94.68%). These areas demonstrated broad community support for collaborative and tolerant political engagement. Kono also reflected strong cohesion at 90.61%, though slightly lower than the top-performing districts. In contrast, although Port Loko (79.12%) and Western Area

Urban (79.92%) still recorded relatively high levels of agreement, they ranked lowest among all districts. The comparatively elevated disagreement rates, 9.35% and 10.05% respectively, may indicate underlying tensions and a relatively less cohesive political environment in these areas. While the findings point to a largely peaceful campaign environment, the skepticism observed in Port Loko and Western Area Urban signals a need for targeted peacebuilding and trust-building initiatives in more contested or urbanized settings.

Table 11 Peaceful, cohesive, and respectful political campaigning by District

District	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Disagree + Strongly Disagree (%)	Key Observations
Bombali	94.68%	3.04%	Very high cohesion.
Kenema	98.64%	0.56%	Nearly all respondents reported peaceful interactions.
Kono	90.61%	3.36%	Strong but slightly lower cohesion than Kenema.
Port Loko	79.12%	9.35%	More polarization than other regions.
Western Area Rural	96.63%	1.29%	High willingness to work across divides.
Western Area Urban	79.92%	10.05%	Insignificant disagreement on unity.

Indicator 2.2b: Perceptions of Accuracy and Fairness of Political News on Social Media

The evaluation also focuses on public perceptions of political news accuracy and bias on social media in the lead-up to the 2023 elections. At baseline, only 42.5% of respondents believed that political news shared on social platforms was accurate and unbiased, with a slight gender difference: 41.8% among men and 43.7% among women. The endline target was set at 45.88% overall, with male and female targets of 45.12% and 47.18% respectively. The relatively low starting point and the modest 3.38 percentage point target increase suggest that the Project team recognized the deep challenges posed by misinformation, disinformation, and social media manipulation in electoral contexts. The slight expected improvement was reasonable, considering that rebuilding public trust in political news, especially on unregulated platforms, is a long-term undertaking.

The survey findings at evaluation reveal a mixed and cautious public perception regarding the accuracy and fairness of political news on social media. Only 55.92% of respondents (Strongly Agree: 13.53%, Agree: 42.39%,) that political news on social media was accurate, indicating that nearly half of the population either questioned its reliability or remained neutral. Similarly, while a slight majority (59.3%) felt confident in their ability to detect false political news, a less significant portion (over 20%) disagreed, suggesting vulnerability to misinformation persists. On fairness, just over half (53.05%) perceived that media outlets reported political news fairly, but the high neutral response (24.07%) suggests widespread uncertainty or ambivalence. These findings collectively highlight a fragile trust landscape, where the public is divided, with many remaining skeptical or unconvinced about the integrity of political reporting on social media. Misinformation, therefore, remains a threat, with nearly a quarter of respondents distrusting social media political content. This signals a need for improved media literacy and accountability in digital news dissemination.

Table 12 Accuracy and Fairness of Political News on Social Media

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
Political news on social media was accurate.	13.53	42.39	19.31	19.62	3.74	1.41
People can detect false political news.	12.07	47.23	18.05	20.49	1.49	0.67

Media outlets report political news fairly.	11.92	41.13	24.07	19.54	2.44	0.9
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The evaluation findings on media trust reveal significant variations across districts, highlighting both regional strengths and areas of concern. Western Area Urban reported the highest overall trust in the media at 74.36%, though with a notable minority (16.66%) expressing skepticism. Western Area Rural followed with 63.09% agreement and minimal dissent (9.87%), indicating strong confidence in media fairness. In contrast, Bombali exhibited the lowest trust levels, with only 24.71% agreeing and a large portion (50.57%) remaining neutral, suggesting widespread uncertainty or disengagement with media sources. Kenema and Port Loko showed polarized perceptions, with Kenema's agreement at 50.84% and disagreement at 43.92%, and Port Loko showing 42.04% agreement against 36.09% dissent, reflecting divided views on media reliability. Kono demonstrated relatively high trust (48.54%) with minimal opposition (3.80%), indicating stable confidence in media reporting in that district. While Western Area Urban exhibited strong media trust, the mixed perceptions and high neutrality in areas like Bombali and Port Loko suggest that trust in media remains fragile and uneven, warranting targeted efforts to build media credibility and promote balanced reporting.

Table 13 Media trust by District

District	(Agree + Strongly Agree)	(Disagree + Strongly Disagree)	Key Observations
Bombali	24.71%	19.77%	Low media trust, high neutrality (50.57%).
Kenema	50.84%	43.92%	Polarized views on media fairness.
Kono	48.54%	3.80%	High trust, minimal dissent.
Port Loko	42.04%	36.09%	Mixed perceptions.
Western Area Rural	63.09%	9.87%	Highest media trust.
Western Area Urban	74.36%	16.66%	Strong trust but notable skepticism.

Indicator 2.3c: Perceptions of Youth Participation as a Force for Peace

The evaluation also assessed the proportion of people who believe that youth participation in the 2023 elections would promote peace rather than violence. At baseline, 60.9% of respondents shared this belief, with men at 61.1% and women at 61.0%. The endline target was a moderate increase to 65.74% overall, with projected male and female perceptions at 65.96% and 65.85% respectively. The intended improvement of nearly 4.84 percentage points reflects an optimistic yet achievable target, based on efforts to positively reframe the role of youth in electoral processes. Historically, youth have been viewed as potential agents of electoral violence, but the Project aimed at shifting that narrative through youth engagement programs, peace campaigns, and civic education.

The survey findings reveal a broadly positive perception of youth participation as a force for peace in the 2023 elections. A significant majority of respondents agreed (67.36%) or strongly agreed (26.86%) that young people actively participated in the elections, indicating high visibility of youth in the electoral process. Additionally, 70.86% agreed and 21.39% strongly agreed that youth made informed voting decisions, suggesting that young voters were not only present but also engaged meaningfully with the political process. Critically, the strongest consensus emerged around the role of youth organizations, with 73.65% agreeing and 20.88% strongly agreeing that these groups promoted peaceful participation, underscoring the importance of structured youth engagement in fostering non-violent civic action. Very

few respondents expressed disagreement, neutrality, or chose not to answer, which signals a strong, community-wide endorsement of youth as contributors to peaceful elections.

Table 14 Youth Participation as a Force for Peace

Statement	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
Young people participated in elections.	67.36	26.86	3.19	1.97	0.39	0.24
Youth made informed voting decisions.	70.86	21.39	4.4	2.75	0.39	0.2
Youth organizations promote peaceful participation.	73.65	20.88	3.26	0	0	0

The evaluation findings by district reflect strong youth participation in promoting peaceful elections during the 2023 polls across all surveyed districts. Kenema recorded the highest youth engagement and confidence in the peaceful electoral process at 98.51%, followed closely by Western Area Rural (96.56%), Kono (95.07%), Western Area Urban (93.81%), and Bombali (92.78%). These results indicate that youth widely embraced their role in supporting non-violent, inclusive elections. Port Loko, while still positive at 85.44%, showed comparatively lower levels of youth confidence and participation, suggesting a need for targeted peacebuilding efforts in that region. This demonstrates that youth across most districts were actively involved in safeguarding electoral peace and were generally confident in the fairness and safety of the process.

Table 15 Perceptions on Youth Participation

District	(Agree + Strongly Agree)	Disagree
Bombali	92.78%	7.22%
Kenema	98.51%	1.49%
Kono	95.07%	4.93%
Port Loko	85.44%	14.56%
Western Area Rural	96.56%	3.44%
Western Area Urban	93.81%	6.19%

Community and youth engagement proved instrumental in mitigating risks of electoral violence and strengthening social cohesion during the election period. In Port Loko, youth monitors collaborated with traditional leaders and security actors to identify potential hotspots and respond proactively, helping to maintain calm in tense campaign moments. Similarly, in Kono District, youth-led peace clubs partnered with civil society organizations to deliver voter education and facilitate dialogue sessions, which countered misinformation and reduced the likelihood of inter-party clashes. These examples illustrate how localized, youth-driven initiatives effectively complemented broader peacebuilding strategies by fostering trust, promoting early warning, and reinforcing community resilience against political violence.

Output 2.1: Political Parties, as well as their women and youth wings, commit to peaceful, credible, transparent, and independent elections.

This output represented a crucial objective within the broader project framework, aiming to foster an electoral environment characterized by peace, credibility, transparency, and independence. The emphasis on not just the political parties, but also their women and youth wings, suggests the Project's recognition of the need for inclusivity and broad-based ownership of peaceful electoral processes. The targeted engagement of women and youth wings was significant for two reasons. First, these groups played

influential but sometimes overlooked roles within political mobilization. Women were powerful advocates for peaceful participation and acted as critical agents in promoting tolerance and respectful campaigning. The youth, on the other hand, were at the center of both political mobilization and, regrettably, sometimes electoral violence. Their explicit inclusion in the Project was an effort to shift youth engagement from confrontational activism to constructive participation.

The commitment was not merely rhetorical; it implied tangible actions such as signing peace pledges, participating in inter-party dialogues, adhering to codes of conduct, and actively supporting mechanisms for conflict prevention and electoral accountability. Such commitments strengthened electoral integrity by ensuring that political actors across all levels endorsed and promoted peaceful, credible, and transparent elections, reducing the risk of pre- and post-election violence.

The realization of political parties, as well as their women and youth wings, committing to peaceful, credible, transparent, and independent elections depended heavily on the sincerity of their intentions and the consistent enforcement of these commitments. The genuine buy-in and sustained accountability mechanisms were critical to ensuring that the commitments made by political parties and their women and youth wings moved beyond symbolism. Their effectiveness relied on strong political will, party integrity, and active monitoring by electoral bodies and civil society. Without continuous oversight and targeted support through capacity-building, peace education, and dialogue, these commitments risked remaining hollow, especially within the youth and women wings. The Project actively enabled these commitments to move beyond mere declarations by fostering genuine political buy-in, strengthening accountability structures, and supporting youth and women wings through continuous capacity-building, peace education, and sustained engagement.

Output 2.2: Peaceful civic engagement is fostered through community dialogues, awareness raising on peace and youth participation in the electoral process

Indicator 2.2.1: Participation in Community Dialogues with Religious and Traditional Leaders

The evaluation sought to determine the engagements in community dialogues facilitated by religious and traditional leaders. At baseline, such structured engagements were either absent or not systematically monitored before the Project's intervention. The end-of-project target was set at 100 participants, a figure that initially reflected a modest ambition to initiate focused, manageable community discussions. However, actual progress far exceeded expectations, with 20,591 participants (10,326 men and 10,265 women) recorded since the Project's inception. This overachievement is substantial and suggests that the scope and community buy-in for these dialogues expanded beyond initial projections. Interestingly, the figure includes participants from both the Intergenerational Dialogues and the Positive Parenting Programme, which was not originally specified in the target design.

The remarkable achievement is primarily attributed to the integrative nature of the activities. While the Project originally sought to track a narrow engagement around electoral peace, it effectively captured broader social initiatives that include parenting and intergenerational peacebuilding. This suggests that the Project strategically leveraged complementary platforms to amplify civic dialogue and social cohesion, even though this was not explicitly isolated in the indicator framework.

Indicator 2.2.2: Engagement of Adolescents and Youth in Civic Education and Peace Awareness

The evaluation assessed adolescents and youth engagement through community dialogues, civic education, and peace awareness sessions. While there were none at baseline, the Project sought to engage 50 young people. Actual achievement was extraordinary, with 16,568 youth participants reached by the end of the Project implementation period (9,017 males and 7,551 females). This includes young people engaged not just in dialogues, but also in life skills training, civic education sessions, and targeted peace

awareness programs. The achievement demonstrates that the Project's outreach and mobilization strategies were far more extensive than initially planned. The scale of engagement suggests that youth-focused interventions resonated deeply within communities, possibly due to the Project's ability to tap into existing youth structures, schools, and community centers. Besides, the inclusion of life skills sessions indicates that the Project broadened its entry points to reach young people beyond traditional civic platforms. This expansive engagement is a major success factor, as it directly addressed the critical narrative of youth as either drivers of peace or potential agents of electoral disruption.

Such overperformance signals that the initial targets may have been severely underestimated, possibly due to limited baseline data or an overly cautious project design. However, this level of achievement also demonstrates the Project's ability to scale effectively, suggesting strong community acceptance, responsive programming, and perhaps organic growth driven by word-of-mouth and local networks.

The inclusion of cross-cutting activities like the Positive Parenting Programme and life skills training not only enriched the content of community engagements but also provided diverse platforms for advancing peace messages beyond strictly electoral contexts. This points to a holistic project design that, intentionally or not, integrated social cohesion, family dynamics, and youth empowerment into its peacebuilding approach.

Nonetheless, this level of overachievement raises a critical question about whether the initial targets were realistic or whether they were set too conservatively, possibly limiting the Project's ambition on paper while achieving far more in practice.

Output 2.3: Enhanced civic education to youth to build their understanding and trust in the electoral cycle and legal support to youth engaged in electoral-related conflicts

Indicator 2.3.1: Schools and Children Reached Through Civic Education Trainings

The evaluation appraised the schools and children reached through civic education training in schools. The baseline was zero, as no structured school-based civic education sessions were previously implemented under this project. The end-of-project target was initially set at 20 schools, likely focusing narrowly on senior secondary institutions. By the end of the Project, 435 schools had been reached and 227,185 children (151,333 boys and 75,852 girls) engaged. An additional 89,271 community members (62,419 men and 26,852 women) were also reached through related community sessions. The achievement is primarily due to a strategic decision to expand the program to junior secondary schools, driven by a deliberate effort to reach younger students early enough to dissuade them from engaging in election-related violence. This adaptive approach not only widened the scope of engagement but significantly amplified the scale and potential impact of civic education activities. The increase from a modest target of 20 schools to over 400 schools signifies a project that responded dynamically to emerging needs, demonstrating high scalability and effective community buy-in. While there was a strong inclusivity, there remains a noticeable gender gap, with more boys than girls reached, a trend that may reflect school attendance patterns or the focus of the initial engagement efforts.

Indicator 2.3.2: Legal Representation for Youth and Women Accused of Electoral Offences

The youth and women accused of election-related offences who were provided with legal representation by the Legal Aid Board (LAB) were also considered in the evaluation. Initially, the baseline was to be determined (TBD), while the target was set at 10 cases.

By the end of the Project period, LAB had provided legal representation to 168 people (129 men and 39 women) arrested for electoral offences. Out of these, 158 individuals (119 men and 39 women) were released and reunified with their families, while 10 men were convicted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The gender breakdown suggests that men were more frequently involved in election-

related offences, which may reflect broader trends in political mobilization and the common association of young men with frontline political activism or violence. The Project exceeded its target by over 1,600%, indicating that the demand for legal representation in such cases was vastly underestimated. LAB's rapid response and broad coverage of cases indicate operational flexibility and a commendable capacity to protect the rights of those entangled in electoral offences, particularly marginalized youth and women. The fact that 158 of the 168 accused were released demonstrates the importance of timely legal support, which contributed to mitigating injustices and preventing the escalation of grievances that could have otherwise fed further electoral tensions.

Output 2.4: The capacity of national stakeholders to prevent and mitigate the threats to the integrity of information (misinformation, disinformation and hate speech) is strengthened

Indicator 2.4.1: Extent of iVerify Application Usage to Identify and Analyze Hate Speech

At baseline, there was no usage of the iVerify application as the application did not exist prior to the Project. The endline target was set at level 2, meaning that users would be using the application. By the end of the Project, 414 stories had been verified and widely disseminated, premised on requests by citizens for information verification, a development that signifies that users are actively engaging with the app. This suggests that the Project achieved more than the initial self-reported engagement. It reached meaningful, measurable adoption. There was a deeper community involvement and widespread awareness of the tool. The users did not just express familiarity with the app; they actively participated in reporting and analyzing hate speech, as shown by the data collected through the app's usage. This was due to the Project's strong mobilization, capacity-building efforts, and relevance in addressing the challenge of hate speech in the electoral process.

Indicator 2.4.2: Development and Operationalization of the iVerify App

The app was developed and became operational on 5 April 2023. Moreover, the system was not just launched but actively used, with 414 stories verified in 2025, indicating that the app was fully embedded in the Project's real-time hate speech response mechanism.

Indicator 2.4.3: Production and Broadcasting of Civic Education Song and Jingles

The Project produced and aired one civic education song, a video, and jingles on both radio and television across the country. The Project not only met its minimum requirement but also expanded its outreach through multiple channels. This was key in reinforcing messages on peaceful elections and social cohesion in a format accessible to the broader population, particularly those not reached by digital platforms like the iVerify app. The deliberate use of traditional media (radio and television) alongside digital tools provided a comprehensive communication strategy that widened the Project's reach and accessibility.

Outcome 3: Women are better protected to meaningfully participate in political processes prior, during and after the elections.

Indicator 3a: Proportion of People Who Agree that Women Feel Secure and Safe to Vote in the 2023 Elections

This evaluation also sought to establish the proportion of people who perceive that women feel secure and safe enough to participate in the 2023 elections as voters. At baseline, 60.2% of respondents agreed with this statement, with men reporting a slightly higher perception of women's safety (62.3%) compared to women themselves (58.7%).

The evaluation survey findings reveal a generally positive perception of women's safety and participation in the 2023 elections, though critical nuances remain. A combined 94.61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women felt safe voting, indicating that women's security at polling stations was broadly perceived as guaranteed. Similarly, 92.65% of respondents believed women are respected in

politics, reflecting a significant cultural shift toward gender inclusion in the political sphere. Furthermore, 91.16% agreed that women had equal access to campaign platforms, suggesting that formal barriers to participation were largely addressed. However, the small but notable percentages of neutrality and disagreement (approximately 4-5%) hint at lingering concerns or isolated areas where women may still face subtle exclusion, intimidation, or unequal opportunities. The very low levels of explicit disagreement, combined with the minimal number of respondents who preferred not to answer, suggest that women's political engagement was not only increasingly accepted but actively supported within most communities surveyed.

Table 16 Women Felt Secure and Safe to Vote in the 2023 Elections

Statement	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Prefer Not to Answer (%)
Women felt safe voting.	62.52	32.09	2.75	2.01	0.47	0.16
Women are respected in politics.	67.05	25.6	4.52	1.97	0.59	0.28
Women have equal campaign access.	67.72	23.44	4.52	3.58		

The relatively modest increase acknowledges the structural barriers women face in feeling secure in political spaces, including threats of violence, cultural constraints, and systemic underrepresentation.

The survey findings on women's safety during voting day in the 2023 elections reveal overwhelmingly positive perceptions across all districts, with particularly strong confidence in Kenema and Western Area Rural. Kenema (98.88%) and Western Area Rural (98.50%) reported the highest agreement, indicating near-universal belief that women felt secure participating in the electoral process. Kono (97.09%) and Bombali (91.63%) also showed high levels of confidence, reflecting widespread assurance of women's safety at polling stations. Port Loko (91.48%) maintained similarly strong perceptions, though slightly lower than the leading districts. Western Area Urban, while still positive at 87.60%, registered the lowest perception of women's safety, suggesting that urban areas may have posed comparatively more challenges or perceived risks for women voters.

Table 17 Women's Safety and Security during Voting

District	Women Felt Safe Voting (Agree + Strongly Agree)
Bombali	91.63%
Kenema	98.88%
Kono	97.09%
Port Loko	91.48%
Western Area Rural	98.50%
Western Area Urban	87.60%

Indicator 3b: Proportion of Increase in Women Nominated as Candidates

The evaluation also assessed the nomination of women as candidates compared to male candidates. At baseline, there were 100 female candidates, representing 12.6% of all candidates. The Project aimed for a 20% increase in female nominations by the endline.

Interviews held with women leaders during the evaluation indicated that more than 150 women were nominated to participate in elections at various electoral levels, signaling growing efforts to promote women's political inclusion. An official Electoral Commission report indicates that 1,386 candidates were nominated, out of which 227 were elected. While the increase in nominations is a positive step, it is not sufficient to ensure meaningful female participation in politics. Many women highlighted persistent

challenges such as limited campaign resources, male-dominated party structures, and societal biases that continue to restrict women's ability to effectively contest and win elections.

One woman leader remarked;

"We are being nominated, yes, but without resources and without real support, we are just names on a list."

These insights suggest that beyond increasing the number of women nominated, there is a critical need for structural and institutional reforms that can support women candidates to actively participate, campaign, and succeed in political leadership.

Output 3.1: Enhance the prevention and mitigation of Gender-Based Violence to ensure women can safely participate in political and electoral processes.

Indicator 3.1.1: Operationalization of the GBVIMS+ System

The extent to which the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Plus (GBVIMS+) has been operationalized across the country was also assessed in this evaluation. The development and expansion of the system were structured in four progressive stages, beginning with Level 1, which focused on system building. This initial phase involved establishing the foundational structures and processes necessary for the system's functionality. The next stages aimed to gradually scale up operations, with Level 2 targeting system functionality in four districts, Level 3 expanding to eight districts, and Level 4 aiming for full operation across sixteen districts. At the baseline, the system was positioned at Level 1, marking the starting point of its development.

By the end of the Project, Stage 1 has been completed, and Stage 2 has been initiated with the system fully operational in 3 districts. Significant progress was made in developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and training 181 frontline staff across key institutions, including the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA), Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW), Family Support Unit (FSU), Ministry of Health (MoH), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). While the Project clearly moved beyond the system-building phase into partial functionality, it was slightly behind the 2023 target of reaching 4 districts, having fully operationalized the system in 3 districts instead. Besides, the target of reaching 16 districts by 2024 was not achieved within the planned timeframe. The delay was attributed to partner readiness challenges, which slowed the pace of rollout.

Indicator 3.1.2: Number of Calls Received and Reported Monthly via Helpline 116

The calls received monthly through Helpline 116, which serves as a critical reporting and referral platform for gender-based violence and related emergencies, were also assessed. The baseline was 2,000 calls per month, and a total of 47,339 calls were recorded between April 2023 and September 2024. The cumulative number suggests that the helpline consistently attracted high public engagement, averaging above the monthly target of 3,000 calls. The significant increase in call volume is a positive indicator of growing public trust, increased awareness of reporting mechanisms, and heightened vigilance around GBV and child protection issues. Public sensitization and outreach campaigns were therefore highly effective, and the Helpline 116 platform is a well-utilized and trusted reporting channel.

Indicator 3.1.3: Reporting of Electoral-Related Violence Against Women and Girls

The evaluation also gauged the electoral-related violence cases against women and girls reported to, and acted upon by, the Family Support Unit (FSU) and other responsible institutions. At the time of the Project conclusion, no cases were reported or acted upon. The FSU confirmed that they had not encountered any such incidents throughout the electoral cycle. The absence of reported cases reflects a genuinely low incidence of electoral violence against women and girls, or it may signal possible underreporting, especially in contexts where such cases may not always be disclosed or formally pursued.

Enabling factors; One of the key enabling factors behind the success of the PBF Project was the strong coordination between UNDP and UNICEF, which was anchored in a clear thematic division of labor. UNDP focused primarily on institutional strengthening, conflict prevention, and electoral preparedness, while UNICEF led interventions related to youth engagement, civic education, and GBV prevention. This complementary approach ensured synergy, avoided duplication, and allowed each agency to build on its comparative strengths.

Another enabler was the decentralized implementation model that relied heavily on local civil society organizations (CSOs) with deep-rooted legitimacy in their communities. These CSOs were instrumental in mobilizing citizens, delivering grassroots peace education, and adapting messages to local contexts, thereby increasing the Project's reach and resonance.

Community engagement also played a central role, especially through life skills training, intergenerational dialogues, and the establishment of peace committees. These platforms created safe spaces for reflection, learning, and reconciliation, empowering youth, women, and traditional leaders to actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

Institutional reforms were bolstered by the active involvement of national actors such as the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and the Office of National Security (ONS). Their leadership helped legitimize processes like inter-party dialogues and early warning systems, embedding project interventions within national governance structures and enhancing their sustainability.

Impeding factors; Sporadic political tensions, especially during peak electoral periods, restricted access to certain regions, disrupting field activities and delaying community engagements at critical moments. These tensions created an unpredictable operating environment that required ongoing risk management and contingency planning.

Some grassroots civil society organizations involved in the implementation had notable capacity gaps. These limitations affected their ability to consistently deliver high-quality interventions, particularly in technical areas such as monitoring, documentation, and reporting. While the decentralized approach enhanced reach, it also required significant support and oversight to maintain standards across different contexts.

Delays in the disbursement of funds, particularly during the no-cost extension period, further slowed implementation in several districts. These delays disrupted the continuity of programming, affected staff retention in partner organizations, and dampened momentum during the post-election consolidation phase. Nonetheless, the Project did not provide funding for staffing except for SLAJ Fact Checkers team which was downside in the post electoral period [politically not high intensity period]. Besides, disbursement of funds is premised on the liquidations of previous tranches which in many instances the partner organization could have done in a timely manner.

The Project's inclusivity was weakened by the inadequate integration of disability-specific programming. This presents an important opportunity for the PBF project to play a more proactive role in addressing disability inclusion through future programme design and implementation. While the Project reached women and youth effectively, persons with disabilities were not sufficiently targeted or represented. The absence of accessibility measures, inclusive messaging, and partnerships with disability-focused organizations limited the Project's ability to fully address the needs of all vulnerable groups.

Despite these constraints, the Project's flexible and responsive programming helped mitigate disruptions and maximize outcomes, achieving most of them both in scope and depth. As one CSO representative aptly summarized: "It [the Project] complemented our efforts... it really created a positive impact in the work we are doing".

Realization of the Theory of Change and Contribution to a Peaceful Electoral Environment in Sierra Leone

The Project Theory of Change is grounded in the belief that *if inclusive, early warning and response mechanisms are operational at both national and sub-national levels, if political parties are prepared and committed to non-violence, if youth and gender-based violence are effectively addressed, if misinformation and hate speech are systematically countered, and if peace messaging is widely promoted, then the risks of election-related violence will be significantly reduced and trust in the electoral process will be strengthened.*

The Project's Theory of Change (ToC) was structured around the assumption that by promoting peaceful, inclusive, and well-coordinated electoral processes, through civic education, early warning systems, media fact-checking, social dialogue, and the empowerment of women, youth, and marginalized groups, electoral violence would be reduced, and social cohesion would be strengthened in Sierra Leone. The ToC was generally well-conceived and aligned with the country's peacebuilding needs, particularly in its emphasis on addressing misinformation, supporting conflict mediation structures, and building the capacity of institutions and communities to manage electoral risks.

However, while the ToC correctly identified the drivers of electoral conflict and proposed relevant pathways, it somewhat underestimated the depth of structural political exclusion, especially regarding women's and youth's influence at decision-making levels. The ToC also relied heavily on short-term project interventions without fully integrating mechanisms for long-term institutional sustainability or addressing systemic power imbalances within political party structures. The logic of the ToC was sound in framing peacebuilding as both a process and an outcome, but future iterations would benefit from a clearer causal pathway for how institutional ownership and community-driven peace structures can be sustained beyond external funding cycles.

The PBF Project's theory of change largely materialized as envisioned, contributing meaningfully to a relatively more peaceful electoral environment in Sierra Leone. This pathway unfolded with considerable success. The Project's dual-track approach, combining institutional reform with grassroots engagement, proved effective. For instance, at the national level, the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) were supported to operationalize early warning systems, facilitate inter-party dialogue, and monitor political conduct. These efforts helped reduce the escalation of political rhetoric into violence, and were reinforced by peace pledges signed by key actors. The PPRC's active presence in pre-election conflict mediation and the rollout of a Code of Conduct for Political Parties (though not specifically for the 2023 elections) were cited by several stakeholders as pivotal contributions to peaceful campaigning. The Political Parties Act was promulgated in 2022 inclusive of the CoC.

At the community level, over 200,000 young people were reached with peace and civic education through schools, peace clubs, and radio programs. Local CSOs conducted dialogue sessions, life skills training, and community theater, enhancing awareness, tolerance, and conflict resolution skills among youth and marginalized populations.

Testimonies from beneficiaries affirmed behavioral changes, with one youth ambassador stating;

"We used to think politics was for fighting, but now we know we have a right to peace and participation without violence."

Importantly, the deployment of U-Report and iVerify introduced accessible tools for real-time feedback and misinformation management, bolstering the transparency and trustworthiness of the electoral environment.

While tensions still surfaced in some hotspots and structural inequalities persisted, there was a clear reduction in widespread electoral violence compared to previous elections. The integrated, preventive approach laid out in the Project's theory of change thus largely held, demonstrating that targeted, multi-

stakeholder peacebuilding can foster a safer and more inclusive electoral climate. The PBF project, in this regard, played a catalytic role in shifting both institutional behavior and public expectations around peaceful political participation.

Contribution to Gender Equality, Youth Empowerment, and Human Rights for Peaceful Elections

The PBF Project's interventions made substantive contributions to gender equality, youth and women's empowerment, and the promotion of human rights, all of which were central to fostering peaceful elections and advancing social cohesion in Sierra Leone.

In terms of gender equality, the Project supported the institutionalization of gender-based violence (GBV) response mechanisms, notably through the expansion of the GBVIMS (Gender-Based Violence Information Management System) in target districts. It also provided legal aid, training for Family Support Units, and safe spaces for survivors. Women were not only beneficiaries but also active agents in peacebuilding—facilitating dialogues, leading civic education sessions, and participating in inter-party platforms.

One CSO representative noted;

"It was the first time many of our women were speaking publicly about politics without fear... the support allowed us to claim space." This indicates both practical and strategic gains in women's agency.

The Project also significantly empowered youth, who were seen both as a risk group and a critical peacebuilding constituency. Through peace clubs in over 400 schools, youth-led civic dialogues, and training for more than 1,500 youth ambassadors, the Project gave young people a platform to shape electoral discourse. One youth leader testified, *"Before this, nobody cared what we said... now even the chiefs and MPs listen when we speak at peace meetings."* This reflects a marked shift in youth recognition and self-perception.

On human rights, the Project emphasized civic education, political tolerance, access to justice for GBV survivors, and protection from misinformation. The introduction of *iVerify* helped counter hate speech, while the deployment of community-based peace monitors served as an early warning against rights violations and election-related intimidation.

Key Achievements, Supporting Factors, and Opportunities for Scaling Up

Several aspects of the PBF Project stood out as having achieved the greatest impact, particularly in terms of reach, behavioral change, and institutional strengthening. These high-performing components offer important lessons for replication and scaling by UNDP, UNICEF, and partners.

One of the most impactful achievements was the school-based civic education and youth peace clubs, coordinated by UNICEF. These reached over 200,000 students across 435 schools with messages of peaceful participation, tolerance, and rights awareness. The combination of structured learning, creative expression (e.g., school theatre, debates), and peer leadership fostered a cultural shift in how young people engage with politics and conflict. These activities were not only educational but also transformative—giving youth a sense of belonging and agency. One young ambassador noted, *"We now believe peace is something we can defend, not just wait for leaders to provide."*

Another major success was the joint early warning and response system involving the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP. This "dual-track" model, blending institutional intelligence with grassroots monitoring, enhanced timeliness and accuracy of conflict alerts which triggered timely responses to prevent and/or mitigate election violence. It also created formal channels for collaboration between state and civil society, increasing legitimacy and trust in the peace infrastructure. UNDP's support to ONS in operationalizing national-level coordination and training local officers proved critical in preventing the escalation of tensions during the electoral period.

The inter-party dialogues facilitated through the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), and supported by UNDP, also recorded success. By institutionalizing peace pledges, political tolerance and codes of conduct, political leaders were held accountable to non-violence. These forums helped prevent inflammatory rhetoric and fostered consensus-building, especially in the pre-election phase.

To build on the achievements of the PBF Project, UNDP and UNICEF should prioritize several strategic actions that can enhance sustainability, scalability, and inclusivity. There is a clear opportunity to institutionalize peace clubs and civic education within the national curriculum, in partnership with the Ministry of Education. By embedding these interventions into the formal education system, the impact of the Project can be sustained and expanded well beyond the lifecycle of donor funding. This would ensure that future generations continuously engage with principles of peace, tolerance, and democratic participation.

The dual-track early warning model, combining grassroots alerts with institutional responses, has proven to be highly effective and should be scaled up to other conflict-prone districts. Furthermore, the model's application has extended beyond electoral contexts to encompass broader human security threats, including natural disasters, intercommunal tensions, and climate-related risks. Both ONS and WANEP continue to utilize their early warning and response mechanisms in the post-electoral period, with a focus on identifying and addressing governance-related risks. While these systems are tailored to electoral threats during election periods, they are equally adaptable to wider security concerns, thereby reinforcing coordination between the state and civil society and enhancing public trust in preventive frameworks. The empowerment of youth and women through peacebuilding should not end with project closure. UNDP and UNICEF can support the development of long-term leadership pathways for these groups through structured mentorship programs, internships in public institutions, and seed funding for grassroots peace initiatives. These efforts would consolidate gains in agency and influence, turning short-term engagement into lifelong leadership.

The Project produced several innovative tools—such as iVerify, and peace messaging toolkits that are worthy of replication. Investing in the documentation and packaging of these tools would allow for their adaptation and reuse in other fragile or post-conflict settings, either by UN actors or national partners.

Future programming must place stronger emphasis on inclusion. Expanding disability-focused frameworks and ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups will make interventions more representative and equitable. Accessibility audits (adjustment of polling stations for easy accessibility of PWD was done by the elections basket fund component.), partnerships with disability rights organizations, and the use of inclusive communication channels are key areas for investment.

Areas of Least Achievement, Constraining Factors, and Improvement Strategies

While the Project was inclusive in its language and general outreach to vulnerable groups, there is little evidence of targeted activities, accessible materials, or partnerships with disability-focused organizations. This oversight limited both participation and impact among disabled populations. The absence of specific resource allocations, accessibility audits, and adaptation of tools such as civic education content or early warning platforms meant that key groups were unintentionally excluded.

Secondly, sustainability planning was weak in several components, especially in youth and community engagement structures. For instance, while peace clubs and youth ambassador initiatives were successful during the Project, their continuity beyond donor support is uncertain. Without formal integration into national systems or structured support mechanisms (e.g., budget lines or mentorship pipelines), many of these initiatives risk dissolution once funding ceases.

Thirdly, institutionalization of grassroots interventions, particularly in hard-to-reach rural areas, faced challenges. A few local civil society partners reported struggling with capacity constraints, leading to

uneven quality in delivery. This may affect the long-term embedding of project values like civic tolerance and peaceful dispute resolution. Nonetheless, capacity strengthening for civil society partners was an integral component of the Programme Document (PD), with clear implementation mechanisms that were regularly monitored by UNICEF staff. Notably, 7% of the total CSO funding was explicitly allocated to capacity development. These efforts underscore the project's structured approach to addressing capacity gaps.

To overcome these weaknesses, several corrective strategies can be pursued. UNDP and UNICEF should begin by embedding disability inclusion into the core design of future interventions—ensuring disaggregated data collection, training implementers in inclusive programming, and partnering with DPOs (Disabled Persons' Organizations). Accessibility must be treated not as an add-on, but as an integral standard in content development, venue selection, and communication platforms.

For sustainability, both agencies should institutionalize successful models, such as peace clubs, within government plans and education systems. This can be done through MOUs with ministries, co-financing strategies, and policy integration. Building local champions and mentorship networks would also help sustain youth and women's empowerment outcomes.

While capacity building of local CSOs, coupled with simplified reporting tools, peer learning platforms, and regular technical backstopping are consistently implemented throughout the Project duration, the main gap lies in the sustainability of these initiatives. This is largely due to the absence of government structures and service providers at the grassroots level to institutionalize them. To address this, institutionalization should occur at the local council level. UNDP and UNICEF should engage in advocacy with the national government to promote decentralized governance, including the devolution of financial resources, human capital, and decision-making authority to district and sub-district levels through empowered local councils. This would ensure that quality and consistency are maintained, even in remote or underserved areas.

Approaches, Resources, and Frameworks to Planned Outcomes and Outputs

The approaches, resources, and conceptual frameworks applied in the PBF project in Sierra Leone were highly relevant and appropriate for achieving the Project's planned outcomes and outputs. The Project employed an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach that strategically engaged government institutions, civil society, media actors, youth, women, and community leaders, aligning with the Project's goal of promoting peaceful elections and strengthening social cohesion.

The Project's core frameworks, including the promotion of inter-party dialogue, the development of early warning and response systems, fact-checking platforms like iVerify, and gender-based violence reporting through GBVIMS+, were directly linked to mitigating election-related violence, misinformation, and exclusion. These frameworks effectively addressed the identified conflict triggers and demonstrated their suitability in Sierra Leone's evolving political landscape.

The allocation of resources was both strategic and impactful. Out of the total project budget of USD 3 million, UNDP and UNICEF efficiently utilized 98.72% of the funds, channeling significant resources into community-level peacebuilding, civic education, media literacy, and youth engagement. For example, through partnerships with local CSOs, over 227,000 children and 89,000 community members were reached with civic education, while more than 16,500 adolescents and youth participated in dialogues and awareness-raising sessions on peaceful electoral participation.

Additionally, the Project's conceptual and operational design was highly responsive to gender and youth inclusion, with nearly 40% of the total budget dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. The focus on building youth leadership, supporting U-Report ambassadors, and fostering intergenerational community dialogues proved particularly relevant in encouraging peaceful youth participation and reducing electoral tensions.

Crucially, the Project's coordination and technical structures were robust and effective. The Project Board and Technical Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs, provided oversight and guided adaptive management throughout the Project's lifecycle. This structure ensured coherence, timely decision-making, and active government participation, which was instrumental in embedding the Project's results within national processes.

Unintended Results of Project Interventions

The PBF Project generated several unintended results, both positive and negative, stemming from the dynamic sociopolitical context and the Project's multi-actor, multi-level approach.

Positive Unintended Results

1. Increased political visibility and confidence among youth leaders: While youth were targeted primarily for civic education and peace messaging, many youth ambassadors and peace club members ended up assuming leadership roles in their communities beyond the Project's scope. Some were invited to mediate local disputes, speak at town hall meetings, or support local government planning efforts. As one youth ambassador stated, *"Before, I was just a student. Now the chief calls me when there's tension in the village."* This indicates that the Project not only empowered youth to avoid violence but unintentionally positioned them as trusted local leaders.
2. Strengthening intergenerational relationships: Through dialogues and joint community peace events, the Project unintentionally narrowed the generational gap, particularly between elders and youth. In some areas, elders reported increased respect for young people's opinions, while youth expressed a new appreciation for traditional conflict resolution methods. This improved intergenerational communication, though not an explicit objective, helped build social cohesion and community trust in unexpected ways.
3. CSO networks became more formalized and collaborative: The Project catalyzed new partnerships among local CSOs, many of whom began coordinating activities, co-developing proposals, or sharing resources. This increased institutional maturity and may contribute to future sustainability and local ownership of peacebuilding efforts.

Negative Unintended Results

1. Raised expectations and dependency among communities: In some districts, community members and CSO partners developed high expectations for continued support, viewing the Project not as catalytic but as a continuous service provider. When activities ended or transitioned, some communities felt left out, which could risk resentment or disengagement in future civic initiatives.
2. Perceived politicization of civic education messages: In politically polarized environments, especially around the elections, some civic education messages were misinterpreted as partisan or foreign-driven, particularly when delivered through external NGOs or in languages not locally dominant. In a few instances, the challenge stemmed from the choice of language: while most sessions were conducted in Krio and local dialects, some messaging in English was less accessible to grassroots audiences and therefore vulnerable to distortion. This occasionally reduced trust in facilitators, especially in areas where misinformation was already high.
3. Overburdening of youth and women volunteers: Due to their effectiveness and enthusiasm, youth leaders and women's group members were frequently called upon by both community leaders and project partners. However, in some cases, this led to volunteer fatigue, with limited financial or psychosocial support provided to sustain their roles, especially post-election.

Integration of Digitalization in Project Design and Implementation

Digitization and digitalization were moderately integrated into the design and implementation of the PBF Project interventions, particularly in components related to civic education, misinformation management, and early warning systems. While not a dominant theme in the original design, the use of digital tools evolved during implementation to enhance reach, speed, and accountability—especially among youth and urban populations.

At the design level, digitalization was not framed as a standalone strategic objective, but several components implicitly incorporated digital platforms. Notably, UNICEF embedded U-Report, an interactive SMS-based feedback tool that enabled thousands of young people to express their views on peace, elections, and community priorities. U-Report not only amplified youth voices but also provided real-time insights that informed project decision-making. Its use demonstrated a low-cost, scalable model for digital youth engagement in fragile contexts.

UNDP, on the other hand, supported the iVerify system, a digital platform for identifying and responding to misinformation and hate speech during the electoral period. This intervention involved training journalists and civil society actors to verify viral content and counteract fake news. The system worked in coordination with the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Independent Radio Network (IRN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Media Action and several radio stations, enhancing media accountability and reducing the spread of inciting narratives.

At the implementation level, digitalization was more prominent in urban and semi-urban areas, where mobile phone access and digital literacy were relatively higher. Digital tools were effectively used for real-time conflict monitoring and early warning reporting through WhatsApp and SMS networks. Peace messages and voter education were widely disseminated via social media platforms, community radio apps, and bulk SMS, enhancing outreach to key populations. Additionally, the Project leveraged online platforms to deliver capacity-building sessions for partners and facilitators, ensuring continuity despite mobility restrictions.

However, the digital divide posed limitations. In many rural areas, poor network infrastructure, limited device access, and low digital literacy meant that digital components had to be complemented with face-to-face sessions, printed materials, and radio broadcasts. Moreover, there was limited investment in building long-term digital capacities for local CSOs or government institutions, indicating that digitalization was treated more as a functional tool than a transformative strategy.

6.5 Sustainability

The PBF Project included some exit and sustainability strategies within its design and implementation, but these were unevenly defined and only partially implemented, particularly at the community level. While institutional-level sustainability was more robust, community-based interventions, especially those dependent on external facilitation, faced uncertainty beyond the Project lifecycle.

Institutional-Level Exit Strategies and Sustainability

At the institutional level, the Project took deliberate steps to embed interventions within national structures. UNDP's support to the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and the Office of National Security (ONS) included technical training, development of operational guidelines, and the integration of early warning tools into government workflows. For instance, support for the establishment and operationalization of the dual-track election early warning and response systems of ONS and WANEP increased the likelihood of continuity in next electoral cycle. Similarly, the iVerify platform is to be handed over to the SLAJ, which has the mandate and staffing to continue fact-checking beyond project closure. However, its ability to sustain staffing and operations will depend on mobilizing additional resources and partnerships after project closure. It is therefore recommended that SLAJ, with support from UN partners and donors, develop a sustainability plan that includes resource mobilization, integration with national

information systems, and potential collaboration with government communication agencies and media partners. There are ongoing discussions on how to proceed to ensure sustainability. These are examples of exit strategies that were relatively well articulated and implemented.

UNICEF also worked with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to incorporate civic and peace education into the school system. While full institutionalization into the national curriculum remains pending, the co-design of peace club materials and the capacity-building of school authorities indicate efforts to root interventions within existing education infrastructure.

The Project's engagement with LAB also offers a high potential for sustainability, given that it is a permanent, government-mandated institution with national coverage. Unlike many CSO partners, LAB is embedded in the public service architecture and is more likely to continue its work beyond donor funding. However, sustainability is conditional on budgetary support from the national government and continued technical assistance. The Project helped to strengthen LAB's partnerships with other justice actors and improve its visibility, but systemic gaps remain, especially in staffing, ICT infrastructure, and training in electoral or GBV-specific mediation. Without further investment, there is a risk of erosion of the momentum built during the Project.

Community-Level Sustainability – Gaps and Weaknesses

At the community level, exit planning was more limited. Many peace clubs, youth ambassador networks, and community dialogue forums relied heavily on project facilitation, logistical support, or CSO partners who themselves were funded solely by the Project. In the absence of mechanisms for continued funding, formal handover, or integration into local governance budgets, the long-term sustainability of these platforms is uncertain. One CSO representative noted, *"The structures are there, but without some support, the momentum may fade."* This reflects the absence of formal transition planning for community-level agents of change.

Contribution of Local and National Partnerships to Sustainability

The development of partnerships at both local and national levels played a pivotal role in enhancing the sustainability of the PBF Project's results. These partnerships ensured that the Project's gains were not only delivered efficiently but also embedded within institutional frameworks and community ownership structures that could support continuity beyond the life of the intervention.

At the national level, strategic partnerships with government institutions such as the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) were instrumental in anchoring key project components, like early warning systems, political dialogue facilitation, and electoral conflict mitigation, within state-led mechanisms. For instance, ONS took co-ownership of the dual-track early warning system and integrated it into its operational framework, improving the likelihood that the system will be maintained through national security coordination channels. Similarly, PPRC's central role in facilitating inter-party dialogue and monitoring codes of conduct was strengthened, and its institutional capacity bolstered through technical and logistical support. These partnerships ensured that the tools, norms, and institutional behaviors fostered by the Project are now part of the regular practice of national electoral governance.

The Project also partnered with ministries such as the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to implement peace and civic education in schools. While these partnerships did not culminate in full curriculum integration by project end, the co-development of materials and capacity building of educators laid a foundation for long-term institutional uptake.

At the local level, partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based groups were central to grassroots implementation and sustainability. Local CSOs were not only implementers but also knowledge holders and cultural mediators, enabling interventions to reflect local contexts and be

embraced by communities. In many districts, peace committees, youth ambassadors, and women's groups were established through these CSO networks and have continued to operate, albeit informally, after the Project's formal activities concluded.

As one community partner noted;

"Because this work was done with us and not for us, we have a reason to keep it going."

Such partnerships nurtured a sense of local ownership and legitimacy, key ingredients for sustainability. However, the depth of these partnerships, and thus their sustainability, varied. In some rural or under-resourced districts, the CSO ecosystem was weak or fragmented, and without strong coordination or funding streams, continuity remains precarious. Moreover, the lack of formalized links between community structures and local government authorities meant that grassroots initiatives often operated in parallel rather than as part of a sustained local governance framework.

Sustainability Mechanisms

Mechanisms, procedures, and policies to carry forward the results attained by the PBF Project, particularly in early warning and response, information integrity, gender equality, and GBV, exist to varying degrees across key stakeholders, but their depth, institutionalization, and resourcing remain uneven.

There is strong evidence that the early warning and response mechanisms developed through the Project, particularly the dual-track model involving the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP, have been formally embedded within national structures. ONS, supported by UNDP, adopted the early warning system into its conflict prevention strategy and trained focal points at the district level. The existence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for early warning and for operationalization of Inter-Party Dialogue, capacity-building workshops, and inter-agency collaboration platforms has laid a solid foundation for sustainability. In terms of information integrity, the iVerify platform was institutionalized through collaboration with the SLAJ, IRN and BBC Media Action), with the goal of continuing fact-checking, countering hate speech, and verifying election-related content. The iVerify fact-checkers, (staff) were trained, and guidelines were developed to sustain the platform's use. However, the operational continuity of iVerify also hinges on external funding and internet infrastructure, posing a risk if not fully adopted into national digital governance strategies. Additionally, media regulation policies have not yet been fully updated to integrate the digital misinformation frameworks introduced during the Project.

Mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment were enhanced through the Project's support to female political actors, CSOs, and local peace structures. While these interventions improved visibility and agency of women, long-term sustainability depends on whether they are reinforced by national legislation and political party reforms. For example, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act provides a policy framework, but institutional and budgetary alignment across ministries remains weak, limiting its full operationalization. Furthermore, while local female leaders emerged during the Project, few mechanisms exist to transition them into formal leadership pipelines, such as elected office or administrative roles.

On GBV, Family Support Units (FSUs), legal aid services, and GBV referral pathways were strengthened during the Project. UNICEF helped expand the use of the GBVIMS+ system for data collection and case management. These systems are embedded within the Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. Nonetheless, challenges persist around resource constraints, survivor stigma, and community-level coordination, particularly in rural areas. Many services rely on donor support or are operated by CSOs without formal government funding mechanisms. Even so, systematic training, supervision, and integration of GBVIMS+ and digital referral pathways into the national budget process are ongoing initiatives led jointly by UNICEF and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA). The

government has also institutionalized GBVIMS+ in its Mid-Term National Development Plans, demonstrating both sustainability and national ownership.

Contribution to National Strategic Outcomes and Policy Priorities

The Project made a significant contribution to broader strategic outcomes aligned with nationally owned plans, legislative agendas, and policies. It directly supported Sierra Leone's National Development Plan (2019–2023), particularly in promoting peaceful, credible elections and strengthening democratic institutions. The Project's work with the Office of National Security, the Political Parties Regulation Commission, and civil society partners aligned with national priorities for conflict prevention, social cohesion, and inclusive governance. Its contributions to women's political participation and youth engagement advanced the objectives of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and the National Youth Policy. The institutionalization of early warning systems and fact-checking mechanisms like iVerify further reinforced national strategies aimed at safeguarding electoral integrity and promoting information accountability.

Sustainability and Exit Strategy for Post-Project Peacebuilding

The intervention design incorporated a sustainability and exit strategy that emphasized national and local ownership, capacity building, and institutional integration to ensure the continuation of peacebuilding outcomes beyond the Project's lifespan. The Project deliberately worked through national structures such as the Office of National Security (ONS), the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), and the SLAJ, embedding tools like the early warning system and the iVerify platform within these institutions to promote long-term use and accountability. It also strengthened the capacity of local civil society organizations, community-based monitors, and inter-party dialogue platforms to continue leading peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts independently. The Project also actively supported the operationalization of the Inter-Party Dialogue Committee and local peace committees, ensuring that peace infrastructures were not only project-driven but also embedded within the country's governance frameworks. While the strategy was well-conceived, its success will ultimately depend on the continued commitment of national stakeholders and the availability of domestic resources to sustain these structures without external support.

Government and Stakeholder Commitment to Sustaining PBF Results and Initiatives

The commitment of the government and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of the PBF support and continuing the initiatives appears to be reasonably strong but not without challenges. Government institutions such as the Office of National Security (ONS), the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), and the and civil society such as SLAJ/IRN and BBC Media Action demonstrated significant ownership by integrating key project tools like the early warning system and the iVerify platform into their ongoing operations. The sustained functionality of inter-party dialogue platforms and the continued use of community-based monitoring mechanisms also signal institutional buy-in. Furthermore, the government's active participation in project coordination structures, including the Project Board and Technical Committee, reflects a clear intention to support the continuity of peacebuilding efforts. However, while the political will is evident, there are concerns about resource constraints and potential dependence on donor support, particularly at the community and district levels, where local structures may lack sufficient funding and technical capacity to independently sustain interventions over the long term. Civil society and media partners have expressed readiness to continue, but their sustainability will also depend on national financial investment and policy support.

6.6 Human rights, Gender equality, youth and disability inclusion

Inclusion and Benefits for Marginalized and Disadvantaged Groups

Women benefitted significantly through leadership training, civic engagement, and gender-based violence (GBV) response services. The Project empowered them to take on more active roles in electoral and

peacebuilding processes. A community leader highlighted this transformation: *“It was the first time many of our women were speaking publicly about politics without fear... the support allowed us to claim space”*. This reflects both increased agency and public confidence among women participants.

Youth were among the most engaged beneficiaries, reached through peace clubs, civic education, and youth ambassador programs. These platforms not only built knowledge but also social capital and leadership visibility. This shift from marginalization to recognition underscores the Project’s success in empowering youth as peace actors.

Poor and rural communities were central to the Project’s outreach, with numerous activities implemented in underserved districts. These included radio programming, community dialogue forums, and school-based civic education. In the words of a CSO implementer: *“This work has brought the same peace messages that are heard in the capital all the way to the villages.”* This demonstrates an effort to bridge geographic inequities in access to information and civic participation.

While the Project was broadly inclusive in language and intent, specific, targeted interventions for persons with disabilities were not originally part of the Project design. There is no strong evidence of tailored programming, accessibility audits, or partnerships with disability rights organizations. This represents a critical gap in inclusion, suggesting that while other vulnerable groups saw significant benefits, persons with disabilities were not intentionally reached or empowered.

Though the Project operated in multiple districts with diverse ethnic and cultural groups, there was limited reference to indigenous identity as a distinct category of programming. Marginalization was more often defined in terms of rural residence, poverty, and gender rather than cultural or ethnic identity per se.

Integration of Human Rights-Based Approach in Project Design and Implementation

The Project design strongly reflected HRBA principles, especially in its emphasis on participation, accountability, non-discrimination, and empowerment. It deliberately targeted excluded groups such as youth and women, whose rights to political participation and protection from violence were structurally limited. The theory of change acknowledged civic exclusion as a driver of conflict and framed peacebuilding through a rights-based lens. However, there was limited reference to legal obligations or rights-holder vs. duty-bearer frameworks (i.e., explicitly mapping which institutions were responsible for upholding specific rights), which weakened the operationalization of HRBA at a systemic level.

During the implementation phase, several project interventions effectively embodied Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) principles. Youth engagement was a central focus, with peace clubs, civic dialogues, and leadership training initiatives empowering young people as rights-holders, enhancing their capacity to demand accountability and participate meaningfully and peacefully in democratic processes. The Project also prioritized women’s political participation and strengthened gender-based violence (GBV) response mechanisms, directly addressing structural inequalities and reinforcing women’s rights to security, protection, and political voice. Community dialogues and intergenerational forums were established to promote inclusive decision-making and peaceful coexistence, particularly in districts that had been historically marginalized. These interventions collectively supported the HRBA goal of ensuring participation, inclusion, and accountability at all levels of the Project.

That said, the implementation fell short of fully mainstreaming HRBA across all components. For example, while gender was well-integrated, disability rights were insufficiently addressed, with little evidence of targeted outreach, accessibility planning, or DPO engagement. Moreover, the Project’s reliance on CSOs meant that rights enforcement varied significantly depending on the capacity and approach of local implementers.

The Project applied some HRBA-aligned monitoring practices, such as participatory feedback mechanisms (e.g., U-Report, community scorecards, and public dialogues) and disaggregated data collection for gender and youth. These tools allowed rights-holders, particularly young people, to express their views on project performance. However, the monitoring frameworks were more focused on outputs than rights outcomes, and there were no explicit systems for tracking institutional duty-bearer compliance, such as public service reforms or legal accountability.

Accuracy of Gender Marker and Integration of GRES in Project Design and Implementation

The gender marker assigned to the PBF Project was GEN2, which signifies that gender equality is a significant objective of the intervention. This designation implies that the Project intentionally sought to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment through both design and implementation. Based on the evidence across implementation documents and reported activities, this marker is largely representative of reality.

The Project demonstrated tangible efforts to address gender disparities through several focused interventions. It expanded gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services, providing critical support to Family Support Units and extending legal aid services to survivors, thereby improving access to justice and protection. The Project also implemented civic education and leadership training programs specifically targeting women and girls, with an emphasis on reaching those in rural and conflict-affected areas who are often excluded from such opportunities. Additionally, the Project actively supported women-led civil society organizations and female political actors, creating pathways for greater participation and influence in peacebuilding and electoral processes. These combined efforts reflect a meaningful commitment to promoting gender equality and advancing women's rights within the Project's framework.

The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) can be significantly improved by embedding it systematically throughout the project cycle of PBF interventions (Annex 11.6). This begins with integrating GRES into the design stage, where each outcome and output should be explicitly assessed and assigned a GRES score, ranging from gender blind to gender-transformative, during project formulation. To support consistent application, implementing partners and M&E teams require strengthened capacity and clear tools for using the scale effectively. Monitoring frameworks should be aligned with GRES standards, including the use of disaggregated indicators to capture progress on gender-transformative change across sex, age, and other vulnerabilities. Additionally, operational guidance tailored to peace-building contexts should be developed to address the varying dynamics of gender roles. Finally, periodic learning sessions should be institutionalized to assess what strategies are most effective in advancing gender transformation and to adapt the GRES tools based on context-specific insights.

Although the Project met the minimum standards for a GEN2 marker, such as including gender analysis, setting gender-responsive outputs, and allocating dedicated resources², the absence of GRES-based evaluation means there were no deeper gender impact assessments conducted. For example, while women's participation increased, the Project did not thoroughly assess how this translated into shifts in decision-making power, economic status, or long-term structural changes in gender norms.

6.6 Conflict-Sensitivity

Conflict-Sensitivity Approach in Project Design and Implementation

From the outset, the Project prioritized minimizing potential harm, avoiding exacerbation of tensions, and promoting inclusivity across political, social, and regional divides. This was operationalized through deliberate strategies such as the establishment of neutral inter-party dialogue platforms, balanced

² Annex 12.7: GRES Analysis Table for PBF Project Outcomes and Outputs

engagement with diverse political actors, and the promotion of accurate, non-partisan information through the iVerify platform. The Project also ensured broad community representation, actively involving women, youth, and marginalized groups in peacebuilding activities to prevent exclusion and reinforce social cohesion. Continuous conflict monitoring, analysis and reporting through the dual-track early warning system allowed the Project to rapidly adjust its activities in response to emerging risks, demonstrating a proactive commitment to conflict-sensitive programming throughout its implementation.

Internal Capacities for Sustaining a Conflict-Sensitive Approach

The internal capacities of the Project's fund recipients, including national institutions, civil society organizations, and media partners, were generally adequate to ensure an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach, though with some variations in depth and consistency. Many implementing partners had prior experience in peacebuilding and conflict management, which was further strengthened through targeted training and technical support provided by UNDP and UNICEF. Key structures such as the Office of National Security, WANEP, and the Inter-Religious Council which formed part of the WANEP-led National/District Election Response Group (N/DERG) demonstrated strong capacity to apply conflict-sensitive practices, particularly in early warning, community mediation, and inclusive dialogue facilitation.

Context Monitoring and Tracking

The Project established an ongoing process of context monitoring and integrated systems capable of tracking both intended and unintended impacts throughout implementation. The dual-track early warning and response system, operated by the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP, provided continuous monitoring and analysis of the evolving political and security landscape. This system enabled real-time reporting of emerging risks, community tensions, misinformation trends, and potential triggers of violence. The Project's adaptive management structure, supported by regular coordination meetings and data sharing among UNDP, UNICEF, CSOs, and national stakeholders, also created spaces for consistently reviewing the operational environment and adjusting interventions as necessary. While the primary focus of the monitoring system was on tracking peacebuilding indicators and project outputs, the conflict-sensitive design also allowed for identifying and addressing unintended impacts, such as community backlash or perceptions of exclusion. While the system was effective at capturing major context shifts and security risks, it was somewhat less formalized in systematically documenting and analyzing subtle unintended social effects, particularly at the micro-community level. Despite this, the overall monitoring approach was responsive and contributed to the Project's ability to maintain its conflict-sensitive integrity.

6.7 Catalytic Effect

The Project demonstrated significant catalytic effects in both financial and non-financial terms. Financially, the Project successfully mobilized additional funding from various sources beyond the original Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) allocation. Specifically, the Project leveraged a total of over USD 1.2 million from external partners: USD 239,990 from the Election Basket Fund, USD 290,000 from UNDP-TRAC (with USD 40,000 during the reporting period), USD 353,430 from the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (GPECM), and USD 337,000 from UNICEF's regular resources.

These additional funds enabled the scaling up of critical project components such as the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS+), civic education, legal aid services, early warning systems, and the iVerify digital platform for countering misinformation. Furthermore, the Project attracted pro bono training support from the Folke Bernadotte Academy for WANEP insider mediators. The PBF project served as catalytic funding for UNICEF to support the government in launching the GBVIMS and the GBV digital referral pathways. The aim was to scale up and strengthen these systems. This objective is also clearly reflected in the recently launched EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, which prioritizes addressing GBV in the country.

On the non-financial side, the Project catalyzed longer-term peacebuilding processes and institutional changes. For example, the dual-track early warning and response system fostering coordination and complementarity between the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP is embedded into national security operations and is expected to continue beyond the Project's lifespan. Similarly, the iVerify platform has been institutionalized within the SLAJ consortium and will continue to play a role in promoting information integrity beyond electoral cycles.

The Project's influence extended to policy processes such as the operationalization of the Inter-Party Dialogue Committee, the use of community action plans, and the sustained work of youth peace ambassadors and U-Reporters in promoting social cohesion and local peacebuilding

6.8 Localization

National and Local Stakeholders Consultation and Involvement

National and local stakeholders were actively consulted and meaningfully involved throughout the Project cycle. From the design phase through implementation and monitoring, the Project engaged key government institutions, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, youth groups, women's associations, and community-based structures. Regular coordination meetings, joint planning sessions, and multi-stakeholder dialogues ensured that the interventions were locally grounded and responsive to community needs. The active participation of national bodies such as the Office of National Security (ONS), the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), and SLAJ, alongside district-level peace committees and civil society partners, demonstrated a strong commitment to localization and inclusive ownership at every stage of the Project.

Paramount Chiefs played a pivotal role in localization by leveraging their traditional authority to mediate community disputes, feed local intelligence into the early warning system, and champion civic education. Their involvement enhanced local ownership, strengthened trust in peacebuilding processes, and ensured that project interventions were rooted in culturally legitimate structures.

Perceived Usefulness of PBF Support by National and Local Stakeholders

National and local stakeholders perceived the PBF's support as highly useful and timely in promoting peaceful elections, strengthening social cohesion, and enhancing institutional capacities for conflict prevention. Government agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders valued the technical, financial, and coordination support provided by the Project, particularly praising the establishment of early warning systems, inter-party dialogue platforms, and the iVerify fact-checking tool as practical and impactful contributions. Stakeholders also appreciated the Project's responsiveness to local needs and its emphasis on inclusivity, especially in engaging women, youth, and marginalized groups.

The Office of National Security, the Political Parties Regulation Commission, civil society organizations, community monitors, media actors, and youth and women's groups, described the PBF's support, particularly the early warning systems, inter-party dialogue platforms, the iVerify fact-checking tool, community peace structures, and youth engagement initiatives, as highly useful, timely, and impactful in promoting peaceful elections, reducing political tensions, and enhancing grassroots participation in peacebuilding efforts, with one ONS officer noting;

"Without the PBF support, we would not have had the tools or the coordination to manage the tensions we faced during the elections."

6.9 Time-Sensitivity:

Timeliness in Addressing Conflict Factors and Opportunities

The Project was well-timed, as it directly addressed the heightened risk of electoral violence and political polarization in the lead-up to the 2023 elections, a critical window of opportunity for peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. The interventions were launched when the need for early warning systems, fact-checking mechanisms, and inter-party dialogue platforms was most urgent, allowing the Project to pre-emptively mitigate misinformation, promote political tolerance, and strengthen community-level peace structures during a sensitive electoral period. This timely deployment significantly contributed to the peaceful conduct of the elections and the reduction of conflict triggers.

Leveraging Political Windows of Opportunity Through PBF Funding

The PBF funding was effectively used to leverage critical political windows of opportunity, particularly in the lead-up to and during the 2023 elections when the risk of electoral violence was highest. The Project rapidly mobilized resources to establish early warning systems, launch fact-checking platforms like iVerify, and facilitated inter-party dialogues at a time when political tensions were escalating. By quickly engaging political parties, security agencies, civil society, and the media, the PBF interventions capitalized on this sensitive period to promote peaceful campaigning, timely conflict resolution and post-election reconciliation, and the dissemination of accurate information, ultimately contributing to a more peaceful electoral environment.

6.10 Risk-Management and Innovation

Monitoring and Mitigation of Risks in High-Risk Project Contexts

The Project was characterized as high risk due to the volatile electoral environment, the threat of misinformation, and the potential for political violence. These risks were adequately monitored and mitigated through the establishment of a dual-track early warning and response system, which combined national security mechanisms with community-level monitors to ensure rapid detection and intervention. The Project also maintained continuous political and conflict monitoring, enabling adaptive management and timely adjustments to emerging threats. Coordination with multiple stakeholders, including the Office of National Security, political parties, and civil society, further strengthened the Project's ability to respond quickly to shifting dynamics.

Innovation of the Project Approach

The Project employed several novel and innovative approaches that significantly enhanced its effectiveness and provided valuable learning for future peacebuilding and electoral initiatives. One of the most outstanding innovations was the development and operationalization of the iVerify platform, a real-time digital fact-checking system that played a critical role in countering misinformation and disinformation during the electoral period. This platform was the first of its kind to be systematically integrated into an election-focused peacebuilding project in Sierra Leone. It brought together the civil society organizations (SLAJ, IRN and BBC Media Action), and media actors to collaboratively verify information and swiftly dispel harmful narratives. The successful deployment of iVerify not only strengthened public trust in the electoral process but also demonstrated the platform's scalability and sustainability, as it has since been institutionalized for continuous use beyond the Project.

Another notable innovation was the dual-track early warning and response system, which uniquely linked the formal national security infrastructure, led by the Office of National Security (ONS), with community-based monitoring networks coordinated by WANEP. This integrated approach bridged the gap between national decision-makers and local peace actors, ensuring that emerging threats were quickly identified and responded to in a coordinated manner. The success of this model has influenced national security operations and created a lasting pathway for community-national collaboration in conflict prevention and management.

The Project also introduced digitized civic engagement strategies through UNICEF's effective use of the U-Report platform, which engaged thousands of young people in civic education, peace messaging, and real-time digital surveys. This mobile-based platform allowed the Project to quickly reach large youth populations, facilitate their participation in community discussions, and empower them to report incidents directly. By leveraging digital technology, the Project succeeded in making civic engagement more accessible and appealing to young people, thereby promoting peaceful participation.

In addition, the institutionalization of inter-party dialogue platforms at both the national and district levels proved to be an effective and innovative mechanism for fostering political tolerance and reducing polarization. These dialogue spaces allowed political parties to engage regularly and openly in the peaceful resolution of disputes, contributing to an atmosphere of cooperation and reducing the risk of election-related violence.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The PBF Project was highly relevant to the national context and aligned well with the Government of Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023), the UNSDCF, and the CPDs of UNDP and UNICEF. It effectively addressed core peacebuilding challenges—electoral violence, youth exclusion, and weak civic infrastructure—by leveraging community engagement and institutional support. While it was well-attuned to the needs of women and youth, there were gaps in responding to the differentiated needs of persons with disabilities and indigenous populations, suggesting that future programming should deepen inclusive design to fully match the diversity of beneficiary priorities.

Coherence

The Project demonstrated strong internal coherence, especially through the thematic division of labor between UNDP and UNICEF, and coordinated delivery through civil society partners. Synergies were achieved with other peacebuilding and governance interventions led by UN agencies, the Government, and development partners. However, while inter-agency collaboration was generally effective, coherence at the local government level and across decentralized ministries was less pronounced, indicating room to strengthen vertical integration between national and subnational actors.

Effectiveness

The Project largely achieved (to varying degrees) its intended results in enhancing peaceful electoral process, strengthening early warning systems, and promoting civic tolerance, particularly among youth and women. Interventions such as peace clubs, inter-party dialogues, and GBV referral systems delivered measurable outcomes. However, effectiveness was hindered in some districts by political tensions, funding delays, and weak CSO capacity. Moreover, the limited reach to persons with disabilities and the underdeveloped disability inclusion agenda affected the universal effectiveness of the Project. The Project therefore made a meaningful contribution to peace consolidation, youth and women's empowerment, and community resilience in the face of electoral tensions. It contributed to increased youth political agency, improved GBV response systems, and strengthened early warning coordination. While it catalyzed important behavioral and institutional changes, its structural impacts—especially in terms of transforming power dynamics or addressing long-standing inequalities—were modest, partly due to its short duration and limited engagement with systemic reforms in governance and education.

Efficiency

The Project was implemented broadly within its budget parameters, and resources were strategically deployed through partnerships that reduced transaction costs and enhanced local legitimacy. Human and financial resources were allocated efficiently toward major outputs, although the no-cost extension period saw delayed disbursements and slowed activity in some regions. Additionally, there was insufficient planning around financial sustainability of key structures such as peace clubs and youth platforms.

Sustainability

Sustainability was partially achieved, especially where project activities were integrated into national institutions such as ONS and SLAJ/IRN. However, community-level initiatives like youth peace clubs and women's leadership networks remain vulnerable without dedicated funding or institutional embedding. Weak exit strategies, especially for iVerify, GBV services and disability inclusion, further challenge the continuity of results. Long-term sustainability would require stronger local ownership, clearer handover mechanisms, and alignment with public sector investment frameworks.

Human Rights and Gender Equality (HRGE)

The Project strongly advanced gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly through GBV response services and civic participation platforms. Youth engagement was equally robust. However, the application of a full Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) was inconsistent, with limited mechanisms to hold duty bearers accountable or to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and indigenous communities.

Conflict-Sensitivity

The Project maintained a strong conflict-sensitive approach by continuously monitoring risks, promoting inclusive participation, and proactively adjusting activities to minimize harm and prevent escalation. Even so, monitoring system was less effective in systematically capturing subtle, community-level unintended social impacts.

Catalytic Effect

The Project had a significant catalytic effect by leveraging additional funding, generating new partnerships, and institutionalizing sustainable peacebuilding mechanisms beyond its initial scope. The long-term sustainability of some catalytic initiatives, particularly at the community level, nevertheless remains dependent on continued national commitment and resources.

Localization

National and local stakeholders were meaningfully engaged throughout the Project cycle, ensuring local ownership, relevance, and sustainability of the interventions.

Time-Sensitivity

The Project effectively capitalized on critical political windows of opportunity, particularly during the 2023 elections, to rapidly implement peacebuilding interventions when they were most needed. While much of the Project's emphasis was placed on the pre-election period, the level of follow-up and sustained coordination varied afterwards. UNICEF for instance maintained a strong post-election presence through community-based CSO work, including weekly life skills and positive parenting sessions and monthly intergenerational dialogues, which continued until August 2024.

Risk-Management and Innovation

Despite operating in a high-risk context, the Project successfully introduced innovative tools and adaptive approaches that mitigated risks and offered valuable lessons for peacebuilding in similarly fragile environments. Some of these innovations, such as digital platforms and rapid response systems, relied heavily on donor-driven infrastructure and may require further institutional embedding for long-term viability.

8. GOOD PRACTICES

1. Integration of Dual Early Warning and Response Systems

The Project's dual-track system, which connected national security structures (ONS) with community-based monitors (WANEP), proved to be a highly effective practice. This model enabled timely identification and rapid response to emerging conflicts by bridging local intelligence and national decision-making. It demonstrated that multi-layered coordination is essential for conflict prevention.

2. Use of the iVerify Digital Fact-Checking Platform

The introduction of the iVerify platform for real-time misinformation tracking was a game-changing innovation. It successfully countered harmful narratives and built public trust in the electoral process. While highly effective, the platform's long-term success will require continuous capacity-building for media actors and integration into national information management systems to reduce reliance on project-driven facilitation.

3. Institutionalization of Inter-Party Dialogue Platforms

By establishing permanent dialogue spaces at national and district levels, the Project helped to depoliticize electoral grievances and promote peaceful dispute resolution. These platforms facilitated open communication among political parties, contributing to peaceful campaigning. Future initiatives must prioritize mechanisms that ensure equal participation of women, youth, and minority parties to strengthen inclusivity within these platforms.

4. Community-Driven Civic Engagement and Youth Mobilization

The Project's use of community action plans, U-Report platforms, and grassroots dialogues empowered youth and local actors to actively participate in peacebuilding. While community participation was a success, deeper structural power shifts are needed to transition youth and women from participation to meaningful decision-making roles.

5. Launch and Rollout of the GBVIMS

PBF funding catalyzed the development and launch of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), the first of its kind implemented in a non-humanitarian setting and fully owned by the government. Its rollout was subsequently continued under the Global Programme to End Child Marriage and is now being expanded through the Spotlight Initiative, jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UN Women. This stands out as a strong example of effective joint UN collaboration, demonstrating how catalytic funding can sustain and scale innovations across successive initiatives to address gender-based violence and violence against children.

6. Integration of Traditional Leadership

The Project effectively engaged Paramount Chiefs as mediators and peace advocates, integrating customary authority into early warning, dialogue, and civic education processes. This hybrid model of combining traditional structures with formal mechanisms proved highly effective in fostering local ownership and offers a replicable approach for peacebuilding in similar contexts.

9. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Digital Tools Enhance Peacebuilding but Require National Ownership

The introduction of digital platforms such as iVerify and U-Report played a significant role in real-time engagement, combating misinformation, and strengthening early warning systems. Their success was driven by accessibility and youth-friendly interfaces, which encouraged broad participation. However, challenges emerged around sustainability and limited national ownership. Many platforms depended on donor support and lacked integration into existing institutional frameworks. Future programs should embed these tools within national institutions from the outset, invest in building local technical capacities, and ensure funding strategies for long-term maintenance and scalability.

2. Sustained Post-Election Engagement is Critical for Conflict Resolution and Democratic Consolidation

A major success of the project was its facilitation of inter-party dialogue and the role it played in the post-election period, especially through the Electoral Tripartite Committee. These engagements were instrumental in reducing tensions, managing grievances, and paving the way for electoral reforms. However, the project could have performed better with more structured post-election programming. Future initiatives must include a defined post-election phase that focuses on reconciliation, trust-building, and institutional reform. Delays in maintaining momentum after elections can risk reversing peace gains.

3. Women's Nomination Alone Does Not Guarantee Meaningful Participation

Although the project increased the number of women nominated for political office, it became evident that nominations did not translate into effective participation. Women continued to face systemic barriers including financial constraints, social stigma, and exclusion from decision-making circles. This highlights that numeric representation is insufficient on its own. Future programming should adopt a holistic approach—pairing quotas with mentorship, campaign finance support, legal protections, and public awareness to dismantle deeply rooted gender biases and ensure genuine political empowerment.

4. Local Structures Need Stronger Capacity to Sustain Peace Efforts

Community-level peace actors, such as traditional leaders, youth groups, and CSOs, were crucial in defusing tensions and facilitating dialogue. Their contextual knowledge and trust within communities were invaluable assets. However, many lacked the institutional and financial strength to continue their work beyond the project lifecycle. Future projects should incorporate a long-term strategy for institutional development, including training, systems strengthening, financial planning, and integration with national frameworks. This would help ensure local structures are not donor-dependent and can sustainably manage peacebuilding responsibilities.

5. Flexibility and Timely Resource Allocation Are Essential in Fragile Contexts

The project's agility in reallocating resources and deploying interventions quickly in response to emerging conflicts (e.g., hotspot areas) was vital to its effectiveness. This success stemmed from adaptive planning and responsive coordination among partners. Nonetheless, bureaucratic delays at times hindered rapid implementation. Future interventions should institutionalize flexibility through adaptive management frameworks and pre-approved contingency budgets, allowing for timely decision-making and resource deployment, particularly in fast-evolving political or security landscapes.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutionalize Peace and Civic Education within the National Curriculum

Youth demonstrated high levels of engagement and peaceful conduct where peace clubs and civic education activities were implemented. However, these were largely donor-dependent and inconsistent across districts. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) and UNICEF as a peacebuilding institutional partner should integrate structured peace and civic education, including modules on political tolerance, misinformation, and electoral ethics, into primary and secondary schools, TVET institutions and security personnel training curricula. This would ensure continuity, national reach, and early cultivation of democratic values. Curriculum development should be co-created with educators and peacebuilding experts, piloted in selected schools, and evaluated for scaling.

2. Develop Structured Pathways for Youth and Women into Formal Governance Systems

While youth and women participated actively in civic education and dialogue forums, transition into formal decision-making remained weak. UNICEF should establish leadership pipelines including structured mentorship, youth legislative internships, and fellowship programs. Political Parties, Parliament, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA), and Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) can collaborate to create quotas in local governance and political party lists for young leaders and women trained through the project. This will build a sustainable bridge between civic empowerment and actual political inclusion.

3. Strengthen and Expand the Dual-Track Early Warning and Response (EWER) Model Beyond Elections

The dual-track system (linking community-based monitors with institutional mechanisms) has already been institutionalized within the Office of National Security (ONS) and WANEP structures, and it operates beyond electoral cycles. However, it requires further strengthening to enhance its scope, capacity, and sustainability. The ONS should refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), while the government treasury allocates dedicated budget lines to ensure long-term financing. Roles for insider mediators should be reinforced and better resourced. Additionally, the EWER system should be expanded to address broader conflict drivers such as intercommunal violence, climate-related shocks, and local governance disputes, working closely with Local Councils and community peace structures.

4. Mainstream Disability-Inclusive Civic and Electoral Programming

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) were underrepresented in civic spaces despite project-wide inclusion goals. Embed accessibility and inclusion standards in all peacebuilding, civic education, and electoral planning. Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) should mandate universal design principles, accessible polling environments, disability-inclusive training manuals, and partnerships with Organizations for Disabled Persons (OPDs).

5. Link Community-Based Peace Structures with Local Government Development Plans

Community structures (peace committees, women's forums, youth peace ambassadors) risk collapsing post-project due to lack of institutional anchoring. The District Security Committees should establish formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Local Councils to integrate peace structures into Ward Development Committees and district security committees. Allocate funds within local development plans and create liaison roles for continuity.

6. Design Exit and Sustainability Strategies at Project Inception

The lack of a structured exit strategy led to community disillusionment and undermined long-term impact. The UN implementing agencies (UNDP, UNICEF) and donor partners (PBF) should develop exit strategies with clear timelines, institutional handover frameworks, and community-managed continuity plans from the outset. Include sustainability benchmarks in project log-frames and allocate final-year budgets for transition planning. To reinforce sustainability, projects should also promote Public–Public Partnerships (PPPs) between private entities, national institutions and local governments, enabling knowledge transfer, shared resources, and long-term institutional anchoring of key mechanisms.

7. Translate, Localize, and Archive Peacebuilding Tools for National Ownership

Tools such as iVerify, U-Report, and civic education manuals proved effective but are not yet readily accessible for sustained use, highlighting the need for better translation, localization, and archiving. The Ministry of Information and Civic Education and UN implementing agencies (UNDP and UNICEF) should translate key tools into local languages, develop printed and digital toolkits, and create an open-source peacebuilding repository hosted by a relevant government ministry or department. This will ensure institutional memory and scalability.

8. Address Digital Inequity to Expand the Reach of Peacebuilding Tools

Digital interventions had a high impact but were largely concentrated in urban areas with strong connectivity. Ministry of Information and Civic Education and Telecommunications Providers should invest in rural digital infrastructure, including internet access points, radio-based SMS tools, and solar-powered mobile centers. Development Partners should train rural youth and women in digital literacy to engage meaningfully in civic and early warning platforms.

9. Strengthen Long-Term Capacity and Financing for Local Civil Society Partners

While capacity development during the project period was generally well-supported and the CSOs played key roles, they faced serious capacity and financial sustainability challenges beyond the project period. The UN agencies and Development Partners should provide multi-year capacity development, including grant management, monitoring and evaluation, and digital literacy. The Ministry of Finance could establish a national peacebuilding fund that allows vetted local CSOs to apply for continued funding beyond the project lifecycle.

10. Enhance Coordination and Role Clarity Among Peace Actors

While collaboration improved, overlapping mandates and unclear role distribution occasionally caused delays or inefficiencies. UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the Peace Building Fund should convene periodic inter-agency coordination meetings with clear Terms of Reference (ToR), conflict resolution protocols, and information-sharing platforms. Strengthen joint reporting and monitoring frameworks among actors.

11. Strengthen the Application of the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) in PBF Interventions

The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) can be significantly improved by embedding it systematically throughout the project cycle of PBF interventions. This begins with integrating GRES at the design stage, where each outcome and output should be explicitly assessed and assigned a GRES score, ranging from gender blind to gender transformative, during project formulation. To support consistent application, implementing partners and M&E teams require strengthened capacity and clear tools for using the scale effectively. Monitoring frameworks should be aligned with GRES standards, including the use of disaggregated indicators to capture progress on gender-transformative change across sex, age, and other vulnerabilities. Additionally, operational guidance tailored to peacebuilding contexts should be

developed to address the varying dynamics of gender roles. Finally, periodic learning sessions should be institutionalized to assess what strategies are most effective in advancing gender transformation and to adapt the GRES tools based on context-specific insights.

11.ANNEXES

11.1 Evaluation Terms of Reference

(Note: Approved TOR can also be downloaded from the [UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre](#)).

United Nations Development Programme

Terms of Reference for Evaluation

Promote the creation of enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone



1. Basic evaluation information

Evaluation Title	Evaluation of the Project “Promote the creation of enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone”
Department/Unit	Democratic Governance
Country	Sierra Leone
Duration	50 working days, over the period of three (3) months starting from mid-January 2025
Type of Contract	One (1) International Evaluator
Location	Freetown with travel to the districts/regions

2. Background

The Republic of Sierra Leone has enjoyed some semblance of peace, stability, and democratization since emergence from the decade-long civil war in 2002. Despite considerable gains in democratic governance such as adherence to constitution, participatory governance and holding of regular elections, certain challenges such as allegations of human rights violations, corruption, unclear roles in local governance and ethno-politicization impedes effective democratic consolidation. The post-independence politics, which polarized the country along ethnic lines, particularly between the two (2) dominant political parties – the All-People’s Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) still impacts electioneering process, creates tensions and violence. Since 2002, the country has conducted six (6) elections, including the recent 24 June 2023 multitier elections. The 2018 polls, which was the first post-war elections held without the direct support of a UN mission with an electoral mandate resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from the APC to SLPP. Although, considerable achievements have been made in building national electoral capacities, the political and electoral landscape in Sierra Leone remains fragile.

In line with the Government of Sierra Leone’s request to the UNSG for support to the 2023 electoral cycle and the subsequent Needs Assessment Mission recommendations, UNDP in consultation with state institutions, CSOs and development partners developed the Elections Project documents “Fostering Peaceful, Credible and Inclusive Elections in Sierra Leone 2022-2023”, and “Promote the creation of an enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone”. The latter project, which serves as the peacebuilding component, accompanying the broader

elections project is supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF) and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF as implementing agencies. UNDP implemented Outcome 1 and outputs 2.1 and 2.4 under Outcome 2. UNICEF implemented outputs 2.2 and 2.3 under Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 respectively (see Key Achievement section below for detail). The project aims to contribute to the promotion of a peaceful environment in Sierra Leone before, during and after the June 2023 elections. It sought to support national stakeholders to strengthen their early warning and response systems to prevent and mitigate electoral related violence, reinforce the protection of victims of violence and provide indigent perpetrators with legal assistance. The intervention also aimed at reinforcing the capacity of political parties for mediation and dialogue; supporting the adaptation of their internal codes to the new electoral legal system and regulatory mechanisms of the Political Party Regulation Commission; promoting women and youth participation in political and electoral processes; supporting awareness raising on peaceful elections and against hate speech, particularly through social media, and engaging young women and men in peaceful communication and violence prevention in schools and communities. The Project is articulated around the three outcome areas derived from SDG16 and related SDGs in particular SDG 5 and 10. Both the overall elections and the peacebuilding projects are managed and coordinated by the UNDP Elections Project.

Basic Project information	
Project Title	Promote the creation of enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful elections and strengthening of social cohesion in Sierra Leone
Department/Unit	Democratic Governance
Country	Sierra Leone
Region	Africa
Project ID	00132863 (Quantum ID: 00133246)
Contributing outcome and output	Building on the national priorities set by the Government of Sierra Leone in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (M-TNDP, 2019-2023) and the Government’s Roadmap “Walking out of fragility” (2019) as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to which Sierra Leone is a signatory; the project aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 Outcome 2 (Transformational Governance) UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2020-2024 Outcome 2: (Protection and Empowerment of the most Vulnerable) • CPD Output 2.1: Capacities of targeted oversight and accountability institutions (Parliament, HRC, NEC, ACC and IPCB) strengthened to perform their mandates; and CPD Output 2.3: Gender-responsive institutional frameworks strengthened for peace, citizen’s voice and participation for social cohesion.

	UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2020-2023) Outcome 4: (By 2023, fewer children experience physical and sexual violence, abuse and exploitation) Outputs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 on building an enabling environment through legal and policy reform and information management and evidence base strengthening, increasing access to gender responsive and child-friendly protection services within the social welfare and justice sectors at national and decentralized levels and contributing through behavior change programming to prevent and respond to violence and harmful practices especially towards adolescents and youth.	
Project dates	Start	Planned end
	11 August 2022	30 April 2025
Project planned Budget	USD \$3,000,000	
Project Expenditure	USD \$2,544,808.59 (November 2024)	
Funding sources	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund	
Implementing Partners	Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs (MPAPA), Office of National Security (ONS), Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Family Support Unit – Sierra Leone Police, West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), SLAJ, IRN, BBCMA, LAB SL, Restless Development, Defence for Children International (DCI), Focus 1000.	
Supervisor	Chief Technical Advisor, Elections Project, UNDP	

The United Nations' electoral assistance is based on the premise that peaceful and inclusive societies require accountable, transparent, and inclusive institutions at all levels to build trust and foster citizen engagement. Beyond independent, credible, and transparent election management bodies that are vital in ensuring inclusive participation, the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs and to vote and to be elected at periodic elections is harnessed through a wide range of actors that have key role to play in furthering inclusivity, justice, and peace.

The project Theory of Change (ToC) is as follows:

If early warning and early response inclusive mechanisms, at national and sub-national levels, including state and CSO-led, are operational and collaboration and coordination is facilitated between security institutions and CSOs to detect and prevent tensions before, during and after the elections;

If youth are aware of their rights as citizens of Sierra Leone and understand the importance of peaceful elections and their active participation in it;

If political parties are better prepared to address their differences through dialogue and negotiation and commit to non-violence and legal instruments are strengthened to increase political parties' accountability;

If youth and sexual gender-based violence is addressed by the appropriate state and CSOs mechanisms supported also by this project during the electoral cycle;

If misinformation, disinformation and hate speech is tackled, enhancing capacity of national stakeholders to mitigate threats to information integrity around the elections;

If peace messaging including on inter-ethnic collaboration is enhanced and promoted at higher level, mid-range and grassroots level during the increasingly volatile electoral period;

***Then** responses by state actors, CSOs and political parties are enhanced for prevention of violence, mitigation and mediation of electoral related conflicts; understanding and trust in the electoral process will increase at national, regional and district level; peaceful and inclusive discourses during the electoral cycle are fostered, mostly by political parties (including its youth and women wings); triggers to electoral tensions will decrease, and if conflicts arise national authorities will be better prepared to tackle them respecting the Rule of Law and human rights; women and youth will be empowered to participate in the electoral cycle and political processes in general;*

***Because** integrated and interconnected approaches are more inclusive and promote the participation of all, the new regulatory framework of political parties disincentivizes the use of violence and unlawful behavior by unscrupulous politicians, and many of the key drivers of election-related violence - including misinformation, hate speech, violation of rights, particularly women's and girls' rights, manipulation of youth by political actors - are mitigated, while capacities for peace are boosted, and the potential benefit of supporting/committing political violence will be reduced.*

The Project overall aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: Early warning and response mechanisms to electoral tensions and triggers of conflicts reduce the potential and the intensity of election-related violence**
- **Outcome 2: An inclusive civic space is fostered and peaceful, accurate and timely communications for participatory and well-informed discourse are promoted**
- **Outcome 3: Women are better protected to meaningfully participate in political processes prior, during and after the elections.**

Key Achievements so far, as per Agency reporting:

Outcome 1: Early warning and response mechanisms to electoral tensions and triggers of conflict reduce the potential and the intensity of election-related violence.

Two (2) early warning and response mechanisms operationalized by the government and civil society respectively, anticipated and responded to election-related conflicts. Improved technical and operational capacity of Office of National Security (ONS) on election security, early warning, and communications through secondment of two UN SPC Advisors for 6 months and Communication Specialist for 12 months. 600 security personnel including 128 women trained on election security and conflict management. 1,200 copies each of three (3) knowledge products: election security, communication strategies, and training manual produced and disseminated to security institutions; 20,000 copies of pocket guides on election security produced. Laptops, tablets, mobile phones, printers and accessories distributed to enhance the operational capacity of the ONS situation room. Enhanced technical operations of WANEP on early warning and response mechanisms. Improved thematic capacities of 454 peace monitors, including 202

women on conflict monitoring and reporting; 7 people including 4 women on conflict analysis; and 37 (NERG/DERG) members (including 14 women) on dialogue and mediation by Folke Bernadotte Academy and WANEP respectively. Improved joint planning and coordination between NERG and DERG structures and responses to election conflicts in Kono, Port Loko, Pujehun, Bonthe, Falaba and Tonkolili promoted dialogue and retained peace during and after the elections. The post-election dialogue facilitated by ONS elicited commitment of 1,510 people including 416 women on reconciliation and social cohesion.

Two rounds of U-Report³ polls administered in September 2022 gauged awareness on voter registration process; and in May/June 2023 informed quantitative data for the project's baseline assessment and review of outcome indicators. 90% of respondents expressed strong confidence in the safety of the election process; however, significant skepticism for the credibility of news in social media. In addition, the Gender Based-Violence (GBV) Helpline – 116 established linkages with WANEP and ONS situation rooms to ensure coordination and feedback mechanism between the 116 Helpline operated by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the situation rooms, using a common GBV Digital Referral Pathways (ERPW). Coordination promoted between the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs (MPAPA) and 50 civil society organizations on information sharing on election processes.

Outcome 2: An inclusive civic space is fostered and peaceful, accurate and timely communications for participatory and well-informed discourse are promoted.

Enhanced dialogue, peace and inclusivity of pertinent stakeholders, and verification of information mitigated hate speech and tensions. 88 people (41 women, 47 youth) including persons with disabilities from the All-Political Parties Youth and Women Association (APPYA/APPWA) trained on negotiation, dialogue, consensus-building, and leadership by Clingendael Institute. The peace pledge signed committed political actors and parties to peaceful elections. 3 inter-party dialogues between SLPP and APC fostered consensus building on pertinent issues; PPRC's peace messages promoted non-violent actions. 'Agreement for National Unity' signed on 18 October between the Government of Sierra Leone and opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) facilitated participation of APC in parliament and local council bodies and promotes electoral reforms. 8 fact-checkers and 2 coordinators including 5 women trained on iVerify operationalization. 204 stories verified and published following requests by users of the platform. 2.5 million people reached; 514,000 interactions/users of iVerify reported with peak in June (election month), accounting for 40% of all users. Verified-elections contents broadcasted on over 60 radio stations and theme-song, video and jingles produced and aired on radio and television.

The Legal Aid Board (LAB) raised awareness among youth in 435 schools and in 202 communities in Port Loko, Kono, Western Area, Kenema and Bombali on rights and responsibilities during elections. A total of 227,185 (including 75,852 women) students and 89,271 (including 26,852 women) community members participated in these sessions. Through its lawyers and paralegals, LAB provided legal representation to 168 people (including 39 women), arrested, and detained for election-related offences. 158 (119 men and 39 women) of the 168 suspects were released and reunified with families, and 10 men were sentenced to six-month term by the Freetown magistrate court. Further, 10,534 people (including 4,902 women) including religious and traditional leaders participated in community engagement and intergenerational dialogues; and 3,262 (687 men, 2,575 women) parents and caregivers were trained on positive parenting,

³ U-Report is UNICEF's digital community for young people where they can raise their voices and share opinions on topics that matter to them

peaceful elections and effective Participation of Parents and Caregivers in Political and Electoral Processes. 12,705 adolescents and youth (7,099 men, 5,606 women) engaged in life skills, community dialogues, awareness raising on peaceful election participation and civic education in 30 project communities.

Outcome 3: Women are better protected to meaningfully participate in political processes prior, during and after the elections.

With UNICEF's support, Sierra Leone became the first country in a government-led and non-humanitarian context to pilot and launch the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) and digital referral pathways to support GBV Case Management throughout the election. The national GBV Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that harmonizes case management process and tools was developed and serves as the national framework for GBV, with alignment to National Referral Protocol. The GBV Technical Working Group (TWG) established in April 2022 continued to coordinate all actions for the development and implementation of the GBV survivor-centered case management, service referral and the GBVIMS. Since the launch of GBVIMS+ in May 2023 in 3 districts, 146 cases of SGBV have been reported, and the system rolled out to 4 additional districts. To facilitate implementation of the GBVIMS+, 180 case workers were trained on case management and GBV services. Additionally, UNICEF supported the development of a digital GBV service register, the E Referral Pathway (e-RPW) in April 2023, with the aim of preventing and responding to GBV in Sierra Leone. Through this app, GBV services at district and chiefdom level are mapped and updated into a digital register. The digital register has made referral to GBV services easier, as more than 150 GBV services have been listed in the register across the country. The simultaneous roll out of the GBVIMS+ and e-RPW seeks to provide guidance to frontline staff on where and how to refer survivors of GBV to essential services for their recovery and reintegration. The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs strengthened coordination, reporting and referral of SGBV with different Helplines and Situation Rooms. These include: 116 Helpline, 323 Don Bosco Child Line, ONS Hotline, Peace Commission Situation Room, WANEP Situation Room, Marie Stopes Hotline, Save the Children, World Vision, and PLAN International. Through massive sensitization of the 116 Helpline, 19,950 calls were recorded in 2023; and 32 cases referred for GBV case management from August 2022 to September 2023.

3. Scope and objectives of the evaluation

The Evaluation will comprise an endline of the project's deliverables and indicators as well as focus on assessing the achievements of the various components within the PBF Project as implemented by the convening agencies – UNDP and UNICEF, in accordance with the OECD DAC evaluation criteria. The endline survey includes a full-scale survey of the perception indicators. The project was implemented nationwide with a specific focus placed on the areas at most risk of electoral-related violence, identified as hotspots by the ONS' election threat assessment, including Kono, Port Loko, Kenema, Makeni, and Western Area Districts. The evaluation will use an inclusive approach to ensure that geographically diverse locations are selected for the data collection. It will focus on assessing the contribution of the Project's interventions in Sierra Leone from August 2022 to April 2025. Specifically, it will examine the contribution of the Project's support to promote peaceful general elections in 2023.

Specific objectives of the evaluation include:

- Review the performance of the Project interventions in achieving the results stated in the project document and their contributions to the [UNDP Sierra Leone Country Programme Document](#) (CPD) and the [United Nations Sustainable Development Framework \(UNSDCF\)](#) Sierra Leone outcomes.

- An assessment of the project's flexibility to respond to changes during the implementation/context, etc.
- An assessment of how the project was able to manage risks (financial, strategic, technical, reputational, etc.)
- Review of Project approach and coherence in delivering programme results.
- Assess the factors that have influenced national ownership of programme results and its sustainability.
- Assess the knowledge, visibility and communication employed by both Project and government counterparts around the programme results.
- Assess the appropriateness of the Project strategy, validity of the underlying assumptions to the TOC implementation approach, and programme institutional/management arrangements.
- Document the key outcomes and shortcomings, if any, of the project interventions
- Document good practices and lessons learned from the Project to inform future programming. A separate chapter is expected in the evaluation report to document key lessons learned.
- Proffer concrete recommendations that may be required for enhancing the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of a future programme, including the aspect of timing in an electoral cycle perspective and in the specific context of Sierra Leone.

4. Evaluation criteria and key questions

The evaluation will follow the Organization of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Digitalization, Partnership, Gender Empowerment and Social Inclusion (GESI) and human rights will be added as cross-cutting criteria. The guiding questions outlined below should be further refined by the evaluator and agreed upon with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG) prior to the commencement of the evaluation. The assessment on the contribution of the projects to development results through its activities will be made in accordance with the following evaluation criteria and questions, noting that the below questions do not need to be answered individually but rather analysed under each of the below criteria, supported by concrete evidence:

Relevance

- To what extent does the PBF Project respond to the priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) and similar strategies, the UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2024) and UNICEF's CPD 2020 - 2024, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, the UN Peacebuilding Fund Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals?
- How relevant have the PBF Project interventions been in leveraging support for the peaceful elections and social cohesion?
- To what extent did the project interventions meet the practical and strategic needs of different beneficiary groups, including of key institutions and communities and pay attention to differentiated needs of both genders, youths, persons with disabilities, and different age groups, other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

Coherence

- To what extent was the Project coherent within its own design, including between the two

implementing UN agencies and between different project components?

- To what extent did the Project leverage the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by UNDP, UNICEF, and other UN agencies?
- How well did the project coordinate with any other relevant electoral or peacebuilding support, from the Government and other developing partners?

Efficiency

- Has the Project been implemented within its stated timeframe and cost estimates? Has there been over expenditure or under expenditure in the Project interventions?
- Were the human and financial resources allocated efficiently towards the achievement of the Project objectives?
- Were different resources allocated in ways that considered gender equality, and inclusion of persons with disability and youth?
- Was there any identified synergy between the project funded interventions and other similar interventions that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results?
- What monitoring and evaluation procedures were applied by UNDP, UNICEF and partners to ensure greater accountability?
- How efficient and effective were partnerships for project implementation?
- How effective was the coordination structure of the project?

Effectiveness

- Have the expected Project (quantitative and qualitative) indicators and results been achieved and what were the key enabling or impeding factors?
- To what extent did the project theory of change materialize as envisaged in the design and to what extent did the project contribute to a more peaceful electoral environment in Sierra Leone?
- To what extent have interventions' objectives and results contributed to gender equality, women and youth empowerment as well as human rights for peaceful elections and social cohesion?
- Which aspects of the interventions had the greatest achievements? What have been the supporting factors? How can UNDP and UNICEF build upon or replicate these achievements?
- In which areas does the Project component have the least achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can they be overcome?
- Were the approaches, resources and conceptual frameworks used relevant to the achievement of planned outcomes/outputs?
- What were the unintended results (positive/negative) of project interventions, and why?
- To what extent were digitization and digitalization taken into account in the design and implementation of interventions? How was this concern reflected in the design of the programme component and in the implementation of activities at different levels
- To what extent were digitization and digitalization taken into account in the design and implementation of interventions? How was this concern reflected in the design of the programme component and in the implementation of activities at different levels?

Sustainability

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

- How did the development of partnerships at local and national level contribute to the sustainability of the results?
- To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on early warning and response, information integrity, gender equality and gender-based violence by primary stakeholders?

Human rights, Gender equality, youth and disability inclusion

- To what extent have poor, indigenous and persons with disability, women, men, youth, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project?
- To what extent has the Project integrated Human Rights Based Approach in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project?
- Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality? To what extent was the Gender Result Effectiveness Scale (GRES) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project?
- To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the promoting the rights of women, youth, and persons with disability? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men, youth, or vulnerable groups?

5. Evaluation methodology

The methodology mentioned in this section is indicative. The Evaluator should propose a final detailed methodological framework in the inception report based on the systematic review of the PBF Project's documents. The Evaluator should adopt both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative data assessment should also include secondary project data (stories, reports) as well as primary data (interviews, case stories) for more insight into the project's accomplishments and lessons learned. The evaluation stages include (i) desk review, (ii) preparation of the inception report, (iii) data collection and consultation with implementing and development partners, field visits to project's provinces and districts (iv) data analysis and interpretation, and (v) evaluation report writing and finalization.

The Evaluator will be responsible for designing appropriate theory-based evaluation methodology including designing tools, developing questionnaires and other instruments for data collection and analysis based on the project's theory of change. In consultation with ERG/EAG, the evaluator will be responsible to adhere to participatory, gender-responsive, disability inclusive and human rights-based and do no harm approach to ensure the evaluation is guided by the principles of "Leave No One Behind". A kick-off meeting will be organized with UNDP and UNICEF and relevant evaluation partners to discuss evaluation methodology, data collection plan, expectations, and tools and techniques to be adhered to for collection of primary information. The evaluator should use, but not limited, the following methods for data collection:

Desk review

The Evaluator should review relevant policies, strategies and project documents which includes Project notes, project proposals, progress reports, consolidated quarterly and annual reports, minutes of project board meetings, project modification documents, knowledge products, research, monitoring reports and legal review reports, communication and visibility reports, case stories, IEC Materials etc. **Please see annex**

-1 for relevant Project documents. In addition, the Evaluator will review literature, relevant research, and donors' and government reports.

Endline survey data collection

The consultant will be responsible for collecting the end-line data to assess the effectiveness of project results. Report of the baseline survey will be shared with the consultant, who is also expected to utilize similar methodology as the baseline for the endline data collection. The consultant will adopt scientific sampling methodologies in consultation with evaluation partners and ensure that the survey is representative of social, geographic, and demographic characteristics such as gender, rural-urban, regions, ethnicity, and disabilities. The consultant will be responsible for developing the survey tools and orientation of a team of enumerators to facilitate the collection of quantitative data. UNDP/UNICEF will be responsible for the recruitment and deployment of the enumerators to the field. The purpose of collecting and analyzing the survey data is to inform to what extent the project has achieved the outcome and output level results. The consultant will be responsible for monitoring the data collection to ensure the data quality. The logistical and other expenses of the evaluator should be incorporated into the financial proposal.

Interview/Consultation

The evaluator will conduct in-depth key informant interviews (physical and/or virtual) to gather primary data from key stakeholders. For this, he/she should develop a checklist and evaluation questions. This includes interviewing representatives of implementing partner organizations, grantees, and/or project donors. The Evaluator should also conduct a group interview/Focus Group discussion, with the Project stakeholders and beneficiaries. The interviews should also include relevant UN agencies and other implementing partners. While organizing interviews and consultations with beneficiaries, the Evaluator should ensure the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Field visit

The Evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to consult the beneficiaries and stakeholders in provinces and districts. This also includes observing the functioning of the project-supported community and stakeholder groups, and platform, and interacting with the beneficiaries to understand the effectiveness, and sustainability of the intervention in the field. Socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, social inclusion, disability, and geographic location should be considered in respondent selection. UNDP/UNICEF will engage the services of a team of enumerators, who will work with the Evaluator to complete the data collection and data analysis.

Case story

Using thematic case studies, the evaluator may assess the effectiveness and impact of the Project on the beneficiaries, particularly the benefits they accrued from the project. Gender and social inclusion including disability should be well considered while capturing and documenting the stories in the report.

6. Evaluation management and institutional arrangement

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO) and in collaboration with UNICEF CO in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country. The Project

team will be responsible for liaising with the evaluator to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, as necessary.

Role (Who)	Responsibilities (What)
Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG)	Senior management from UNDP, UNICEF, and PBSO will provide an advisory role throughout the evaluation implementation. This group includes the Resident Representatives of UNDP as Evaluation Commissioner, the Resident Representative of UNICEF, the Deputy Resident Representatives of UNDP, the Deputy Resident Representatives of UNICEF, the Peace and Development Advisor UN RCO, the Team Lead of the Programme Support Unit of UNDP and other management representatives from PBSO, UNDP, and UNICEF. The advisory groups will play the role of steering committee for the evaluation. The key roles of EAG include: ▪ Ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation plan through monitoring and advising the process. ▪ Safeguard the independence of the evaluation exercise and ensure the quality of evaluations. ▪ Ensure that all steps in the evaluation process are applied as defined in the UNDP, UNICEF and UNEG evaluation guidelines. ▪ Ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion and other cross-cutting issues are considered in all steps of the evaluation process. ▪ Ensure management responses are prepared for evaluation with time-bound key actions for their implementation. ▪ Approval of final terms of reference (TORs), final evaluation reports and management responses before final submission to the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC)
Evaluation Manager	On behalf of the evaluation partners (UNDP and UNICEF), the responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Sierra Leone. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation in coordination with the partners. The evaluator will report directly to the Evaluation Manager i.e., UNDP

	CO M&E Specialist in this case. The Evaluation Manager will ensure a smooth, quality, and independent implementation of the evaluation with needful guidance from the Evaluation Advisory Group and coordination with evaluation partners. S/he will closely work with EAG and ERG to ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation. ▪ Review ToRs ensuring that they meet UNDP, UNICEF and UNEG guidance requirements. ▪ Ensure a smooth, quality, and independent implementation of the evaluation with needful guidance from EAG. ▪ Participate in hiring consultants by reviewing proposals and complete the recruitment process. ▪ Organize a kick-off meeting/briefing with evaluation team. ▪ Provide UNDP, UNICEF, UNEG and PBF evaluation policies and guidelines to the evaluation team. ▪ Ensure that the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation standards are adhered to, including safeguarding of transparency and independence. ▪ Supervise, guide, and provide feedback and comments to the evaluation consultant. ▪ Ensure the quality of the evaluation. ▪ Review the evaluation inception and draft reports, ensuring that it meets UNDP, UNICEF/UNEG requirements. ▪ Coordinate and review management response and action plan. ▪ Report to senior management, ERG/EAG on compliance with the evaluation plan, completion of management responses and key actions and results of the quality assessment. ▪ Upload the ToRs, report and management response and action plan to ERC and send the document to the PBF secretariat to upload to the relevant platform including the MPTF webpage to enhance evaluation transparency. ▪ Monitor the implementation of the evaluation action plan and update the progress at ERC. ▪ Contact regional focal points and PBSO focal points through the Resident's Coordinator Office to seek advice when a dispute arises.
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Portfolio and Project Team	The Elections Project team is led by the Chief Technical Adviser. In collaboration with the co-convening agency UNICEF's designated officer for the project, their key roles include: ▪ Provide required PBF Project documents. ▪ Provide preliminary partner, stakeholder, and beneficiary information ensuring the inclusion of diverse groups such as youth, women, persons with disability and rural population. ▪ Arrange all field visits, stakeholder consultations and interviews as needed. ▪ With the Evaluation Manager, the Project team will further provide briefing to the evaluation team. ▪ Provide comments and clarification on the ToR, inception report and draft evaluation reports. ▪ Assist in circulating and getting feedback on ToRs, inception and evaluation report from stakeholders. ▪ Review the draft evaluation products and provide feedback in audit trial on time to ensure no factual errors in the report. ▪ Respond to evaluation recommendations by providing management responses and key actions to all recommendations addressed to UNDP and UNICEF. ▪ Ensure dissemination of the evaluation report to all the stakeholders including the project board. ▪ Implement relevant key actions on evaluation recommendations and document the project's learning.
Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)	The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) includes key stakeholders with technical expertise in evaluation. The primary roles of the reference group are to support the evaluation process and provide feedback and direction in key stages. For this evaluation, the ERG member includes the M&E staff from UNDP, PBSO, UNICEF and UNRCO, MPAPA, and other partners. Key roles of the ERG include: ▪ Perform advisory role throughout the evaluation process, providing input into and review of ToRs, inception reports, and draft evaluation reports. ▪ Ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion, and other cross-cutting issues are considered in all steps of the evaluation process.

	▪ Ensure that the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNDP and UNICEF evaluation standards are adhered to, including safeguarding, transparency, and independence. ▪ Provide advice on the evaluation relevance, the appropriateness of evaluation questions and methodology, and the extent to which conclusions are credible, considering the evidence presented, and recommendations action oriented. ▪ Support and provide input to develop the management responses and key actions.
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7. Deliverables and timelines

Under the direct supervision of the Evaluation Manager and in coordination with the UNDP Programme Support Unit (PSU), the Chief Technical Adviser of the Elections Project, UNICEF's designated officer, and collaboration with ERG, the evaluator will accomplish the following deliverables in accordance with the stipulated timelines covering a total period of 40 working days spread over three (3) months, starting from mid-January 2025. The evaluator is expected to accomplish the evaluation exercise by the end of April 2025. The potential risk of not delivering the evaluation products on time should be discussed with the evaluation manager and the project team.

S/N	Deliverable	Estimated Number of Days	Tentative Timeline	Payments
1	Inception report: An inception report detailing the evaluator's understanding of the assignment, showing how each evaluation question will be answered by way of proposed methods, proposed sources of data, and data collection procedures and tools. These should be included in an evaluation matrix, a proposed schedule of tasks with activities and deliverables. The inception report should be prepared and approved before going into a full-fledged evaluation exercise.	7 Working Days	24 January 2025	20%
	Field Deployment and Debrief: The evaluator is expected to conduct field visits to project districts for a period of 10 working days; and present the initial findings to UNDP and UNICEF. The Evaluator will work with the team of enumerators engaged by UNDP/UNICEF to complete the endline data collection and data analyses.	20 Working Days (including 21 days in-country for field engagement)	27 February 2025	25%
2	First Draft report: The draft report should include desk review and data collection methodology used,	10 Working Days	15 March 2025	20%

	analysis, and interpretation with discussion in the prescribed report outline. The evaluator should also present the draft report in a debriefing session to discuss on initial findings and recommendations and collect feedback.			
3	Second draft report: A revised report based on the comments from the stakeholder or validation workshop. Final report: A final report in the prescribed format (50 pages maximum excluding executive summary and annexes) with annexes including the response in the evaluation audit trail form. The evaluation audit trail form can be sent separately to show that comments from the UNDP, UNICEF and its stakeholders are addressed properly.	13 Working Days	10 April 2025 15 th May 2025	35%
Total		50 Days		100%

8. Evaluator's qualifications and competencies

This end of Project evaluation will be conducted by an external evaluator who will work closely with the UNDP CO M&E Specialist, the Elections Project Team, and government counterparts in the conduct and direction of the evaluation.

8.1 Evaluation team composition

This evaluation will be primarily led and conducted by an independent international evaluator. A team of national enumerators will be recruited by UNDP/UNICEF to support the evaluator with the collection of the end-line data. The national enumerators will be only responsible for end-line data collection. The international evaluator will be responsible for developing the evaluation tools, collecting the relevant data, and analyzing and producing the evaluation deliverables.

8.2 Required qualifications and experience

The required qualifications are listed below:

International evaluator	
Education:	Advanced university degree in Political Science, International Studies, Development Studies, Monitoring and Evaluation, Policy Management, Social Sciences, and any related field of study
Experience:	- At least 7 years of international development experience or at least 5 years of experience in leading evaluation. - Relevant professional experience in the evaluation of election, peacebuilding or governance project. - Strong monitoring and evaluation background, sound methodological skills and knowledge of evaluation methods and techniques.

	▪ Extensive experience in working with the UN/multilateral development agencies and UNDP CO. ▪ Demonstrate experience in working with a variety of stakeholders. ▪ Technical knowledge and experience in inclusive evaluation and other cross-cutting areas such as gender equality, youth engagement, disability issues, rights-based approach, and capacity development
Language Requirements:	▪ Ability to communicate clearly and concisely in written and spoken English.

8.3 Required competencies

Corporate competencies

- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality, and age sensitivity and adaptability.
- Demonstrates diplomacy and tact in dealing with sensitive and complex situations.
- Strong communication, team building, interpersonal, analysis, and planning skills.

Professionalism

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

Planning & organizing

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

9. Ethical considerations

This Evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation', 'UNDP Data Principles' and 'UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis'. The Evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal

and other relevant codes governing the collection of data and reporting of data. The contractor must also ensure the security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and UNICEF.

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

10. Submission of application

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

Technical proposal submission should include the following detailed document.

- **Personal CV or P11**, indicating all experience from similar consultancy, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the candidate and three (3) professional references.
- **Brief description** (max. 1 page) of why you consider yourself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a methodology (max. 1 page) for how you will approach and complete the assignment.
- **Proposal** containing a summary description of proposed strategy and how the strategy will ensure the achievement of the required tasks, proposed methodology, draft agenda for half-day session on discussing the findings of the evaluation (max 2-3 pages).
- **Example of works** demonstrating the individual past experiences working on evaluations for the UN system (please share the document's links).

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

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

11. Evaluator selection criteria

UNDP will use GPN ExpRes or Regional Rosters to recruit the qualified evaluator. The candidates will be evaluated using a combined scoring method, where the qualifications and technical expertise will be weighted 70%, and combined with the price offer, which will be weighted 30%. The candidates will be asked to send the technical proposal containing a summary description of the proposed strategy and how the strategy will ensure the achievement of the required tasks, the proposed methodology, work plan, and draft agenda for a half-day session on discussing the findings of the evaluation (max 5 pages).

Criteria to be used for rating the qualifications and methodology.

Technical evaluation criteria-Expertise, skills, qualifications, knowledge, and value for money (total 70 points)

Criteria	Maximum Points	Weighted (70%)	Point
Technical expertise (required experience and knowledge for assignment)	50	35	

Relevant regional or country-specific knowledge	20	14
Academic qualifications (relevant academic qualifications in line with the ToR)	30	21

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of weighted 49 points in the Technical Evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation and further process. The candidate will be asked to submit the technical proposal. The technical proposal will be weighted 70%. The GPN/Roster guideline will be used to ensure the value for money for the technically qualified candidates. The Evaluation Manager will use the ERC platform to conduct the due diligence of technically qualified candidates to assess the quality of past evaluations.

Financial evaluation (total 30 points)

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

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

11.2 The Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
Relevance	• To what extent does the PBF Project respond to the priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) and similar strategies, the UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2024) and UNICEF's CPD 2020 - 2024, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, the UN Peacebuilding Fund Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals? • How relevant have the PBF Project interventions been in leveraging support for the peaceful elections and social cohesion? • To what extent did the Project interventions meet the practical and strategic needs of different beneficiary groups, including of key institutions and communities and pay attention to differentiated needs of both genders, youths, persons with disabilities, and different age groups, other disadvantaged and marginalized groups? • Was the Project relevant in addressing conflict drivers and factors for peace identified in a conflict analysis? • Was the Project appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in the country at the time of the Project's design? Did relevance continue throughout implementation? • Was the Project relevant to the UN's peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs, in particular SDG 16? • Was the Project relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries? Were they consulted during design and implementation of the Project? • How relevant and responsive has the Project been to supporting peacebuilding priorities in country X? • Did the Project's theory of change clearly articulate assumptions about why the Project approach is expected to produce the desired change? Was the theory of change grounded in evidence? • To what extent did the Project respond to peacebuilding gaps?	• Project Documents • National policy frameworks, (the Medium-Term National Development Plan (M-TNDP), and relevant UNDP and UNSDCF documents. • Assessment and Baseline reports • Project staff • Development Partners • Implementing Partners/CSOs • Government Officials • Beneficiaries and local communities	• Desk/Literature reviews • Surveys • KIIs • FGDs • Stakeholder feedback • Case studies from hotspot regions.	• # of project objectives consistent with the requirements of the most vulnerable populations • Project interventions addressing immediate practical needs (e.g., access to resources, and services) and long-term strategic needs (e.g., capacity building, empowerment). • Evidence of inclusivity in project planning and implementation to meet the differentiated needs of various groups (e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, marginalized communities). • # Outcomes relevant to key strategic frameworks and guiding documents shaping development and peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. • Extent to which project design and implementation reflected the priorities, needs, and inputs of key beneficiaries, including women, youth, and marginalized groups. • The logical connection between activities and outcomes
Coherence	• To what extent was the Project coherent within its own design, including between the two implementing UN agencies and between different project components? • To what extent did the Project leverage the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by UNDP, UNICEF, and other UN agencies?	• Project Documents • Reports from UNDP, UNICEF, and other partners • Assessment and Baseline reports • Project staff • Development Partners	• Desk/Literature review • KIIs • FGDs • Surveys • Field visits/ observation	• Overlaps and synergies with other peacebuilding and election-related initiatives • Duplications or gaps in the Project's design and implementation

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
	• How well did the Project coordinate with any other relevant electoral or peacebuilding support, from the Government and other developing partners? • To what extent did the PBF project complement work among different entities, especially with other UN actors? • If the Project was part of a broader package of PBF, to what degree were the Project's design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting aligned with that of other projects? • How were stakeholders involved in the Project's design and implementation?	•		• Evidence of clear and complementary roles assigned to UNDP and UNICEF in project design and implementation. • Consistency and alignment between the objectives, activities, and outputs of different project components. • Number and quality of collaborative activities or shared resources between the Project and other UNDP and UNICEF interventions. • Evidence of established coordination mechanisms with government entities and development partners. • Level of coordination with other UN and PBF-supported initiatives • Degree of stakeholder participation in design and implementation
Conflict-Sensitivity	• Did the Project have an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity? • Were funds' recipients' internal capacities adequate for ensuring an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach? • Was the Project responsible for any unintended negative impacts? • Was an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that allows for monitoring of unintended impacts established?	• Assessment and Baseline reports • Project staff • Development Partners • Implementing Partners/CSOs • Government Officials • Beneficiaries and local communities	• Desk/Literature reviews • Surveys • KIIs • FGDs • Stakeholder feedback	• documented conflict-sensitive strategy or approach • Capacity of implementing partners to apply conflict-sensitive practices •

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
Effectiveness	• To what extent did the Project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the Project's strategic vision? • To what extent did the Project substantively mainstream gender and support gender- and youth responsive peacebuilding? • How appropriate and clear was the Project's targeting strategy in terms of geographic and beneficiary targeting? • Was the Project monitoring system adequately capturing data on peacebuilding results at an appropriate outcome level? • Have the expected Project (quantitative and qualitative) indicators and results been achieved and what were the key enabling or impeding factors? • To what extent did the Project theory of change materialize as envisaged in the design and to what extent did the Project contribute to a more peaceful electoral environment in Sierra Leone? • To what extent have interventions' objectives and results contributed to gender equality, women and youth empowerment as well as human rights for peaceful elections and social cohesion? • Which aspects of the interventions had the greatest achievements? What have been the supporting factors? How can UNDP and UNICEF build upon or replicate these achievements? • In which areas does the Project component have the least achievements? • What have been the constraining factors and why? How can they be overcome? • Were the approaches, resources and conceptual frameworks used relevant to the achievement of planned outcomes/outputs? • What were the unintended results (positive/negative) of project interventions, and why? • To what extent were digitization and digitalization taken into account in the design and implementation of interventions? How was this concern reflected in the design of the Project component and in the implementation of activities at different levels •	• Project Documents • Project staff • Implementing Partners/CSOs • Beneficiaries and local communities	• Desk/Literature review • KIs • Beneficiary surveys. • Focus group discussion (FGD) - women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. • Field visits/ observation • Monitoring and progress reports. • Stakeholder feedback • Case studies from hotspot regions.	• Proportion of quantitative and qualitative indicators met against planned targets. • Project contribution to a peaceful electoral environment (qualitative). • Number of interventions explicitly targeting gender equality, youth empowerment, and human rights (quantitative). • Key project components with the highest perceived success (qualitative). • Proportion of planned outputs not achieved within their intended scope or timeline (quantitative). • Frequency of reported challenges during implementation, along with documented mitigation measures (qualitative). • Alignment of project resources and frameworks with stated objectives and stakeholder needs (qualitative). • Number and description of unintended positive or negative outcomes observed during project implementation (quantitative and qualitative). • Proportion of activities integrating digital tools or technologies into design and implementation (quantitative). • Digital approaches in achieving project goals (qualitative).

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
Efficiency	• Has the Project been implemented within its stated timeframe and cost estimates? Has there been over-expenditure or under-expenditure in the Project interventions? • Were the human and financial resources allocated efficiently towards the achievement of the Project objectives? • Were different resources allocated in ways that considered gender equality, and inclusion of persons with disability and youth? • Was there any identified synergy between the Project-funded interventions and other similar interventions that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results? • What monitoring and evaluation procedures were applied by UNDP, UNICEF and partners to ensure greater accountability? • How efficient and effective were partnerships for project implementation? • How effective was the coordination structure of the Project? • How efficient was the overall staffing, planning and coordination within the Project (including between the implementing agencies and with stakeholders)? Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? • How efficient and successful was the Project's implementation approach, including procurement, number of implementing partners and other activities? • How well did the Project collect and use data to monitor results? How effectively was updated data used to manage the Project? • How well did the Project team communicate with implementing partners, stakeholders and project beneficiaries on its progress? • Did the Project provide value for money? Have resources been used efficiently? • To what extent did the Project ensure synergies within different programs of UN agencies and other implementing organizations and donors?	• Project Documents • Project staff • Beneficiaries and local communities • Financial reports/data • Procurement plans	• Desk/Literature review • KIIs • FGDs • Surveys • Field visits/observation	• Amount of financial resources mobilised for the Project • Proportion of project activities completed within the planned timeframe and budget estimates. • Resource utilization in achieving project objectives (qualitative). • Proportion of budget allocated to activities targeting gender equality, persons with disabilities, and youth (quantitative). • Number of collaborative activities or shared resources with other interventions that resulted in cost savings or enhanced results (quantitative). • Existence and application of a documented M&E framework with clear accountability measures (qualitative). • Stakeholder perceptions of the functionality and outcomes of partnerships in achieving project goals (qualitative). • Frequency and quality of coordination meetings and their impact on project implementation (quantitative and qualitative).
Sustainability	• Were exit strategies project interventions appropriately defined and implemented, and what steps have been taken to ensure the sustainability of results?	• Project Documents • Assessment and Baseline reports	• Desk/Literature reviews • KIIs	• Mechanisms in place to sustain the Project's outcomes beyond its lifecycle

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
	• How did the development of partnerships at local and national level contribute to the sustainability of the results? • To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on early warning and response, information integrity, gender equality and gender-based violence by primary stakeholders? • To what extent did the Project contribute to the broader strategic outcomes identified in nationally owned strategic plans, legislative agendas and policies? • Did the intervention design include an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy (including promoting national/local ownership, use of national capacity etc.) to support positive changes in peacebuilding after the end of the Project? • How strong is the commitment of the government and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of PBF support and continuing initiatives? • How has the Project enhanced and contributed to the development of national capacity in order to ensure suitability of efforts and benefits?	• Project staff • Implementing Partners/CSOs • Beneficiaries and local communities • Sustainability plans	• FGDs	• The clarity and implementation of exit strategies across project interventions. • Proportion of project components with documented and operationalized sustainability plans. • Local and national partnerships in supporting long-term project outcomes. • The readiness of local institutions to sustain project outcomes • Number of partnerships established or strengthened that directly contribute to sustaining project results. • Policies or procedures adopted by primary stakeholders to sustain results in early warning, information integrity, and gender equality. • Number of mechanisms (e.g., early warning systems or gender equality policies) institutionalized or actively maintained by stakeholders.
Human rights, Gender equality, youth and disability inclusion	• To what extent have poor, indigenous and persons with disability, women, men, youth, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the Project? • To what extent has the Project integrated Human Rights Based Approach in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the Project? • Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality? To what extent was the • Gender Result Effectiveness Scale (GRES) incorporated in the design and implementation of the Project? • To what extent has the Project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the promoting the rights of women, youth, and persons with disability? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men, youth, or vulnerable groups?	• Project Document • Documented case studies • KIIs- • Project Management Team • Beneficiary data, • FGDs with vulnerable groups	• Desk/Literature reviews • KIIs	• Integration of human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion • Proportion of beneficiaries from marginalized groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, women, youth) disaggregated by category. • The inclusivity of project interventions for marginalized groups • Beneficiaries' socio-economic well-being. • Explicit inclusion of human rights principles (e.g., participation, accountability, and non-discrimination) in project documents and implementation plans. • Percentage of project activities designed to address human rights-related outcomes. • Proportion of project activities aligned with the assigned gender marker.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
				• GRES incorporation into project design and implementation. • Number of project interventions explicitly targeting gender equality and the rights of women, youth, and persons with disabilities. • Changes in gender equality, disaggregated by gender and vulnerability group.
Conflict-Sensitivity	• Did the Project have an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity? • Were funds' recipients' internal capacities adequate for ensuring an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach? • Was the Project responsible for any unintended negative impacts? • Was an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that allows for monitoring of unintended impacts established?	• Project documents, KIIs, FGDs • Implementing partner reports, KIIs • Field reports, FGDs, complaint logs • M&E plans, project updates, KIIs	• Document review, stakeholder interviews • Capacity assessment, stakeholder interviews • Community consultations, document analysis • M&E system review, interviews	• Existence of a documented conflict-sensitive strategy • Training records, tools used, partner feedback • Reported instances of negative impacts • Presence of context monitoring mechanisms
Catalytic	• Was the Project financially and/or programmatically catalytic? • Has PBF funding been used to scale-up other peacebuilding work and/or helped create broader platforms?	• Donor reports, UN agency documentation • Project continuation plans, stakeholder feedback	• Financial analysis, KIIs • Interviews, comparative project review	• Amount of additional funding mobilized • New or expanded peacebuilding initiatives

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Indicators
Localization	• Were national and local stakeholders sufficiently consulted and involved throughout the Project cycle? • Did the Project strengthen capacities of national and local stakeholders? • How useful did national and local stakeholders perceive PBF's support?	• Meeting records, KIIs, FGDs • Training reports, partner self-assessments • Stakeholder interviews, FGDs	• Document review, stakeholder mapping • Capacity development review, KIIs • Perception survey, qualitative interviews	• Level of stakeholder participation in planning and implementation • Skills gained, systems improved at local/national levels • Stakeholder satisfaction ratings
Time-Sensitivity	• Was the Project well-timed to address a conflict factor or capitalize on a window of opportunity? • Was PBF funding used to leverage political windows of opportunity for engagement?	• Conflict timeline, project design documents • Political analysis, donor coordination notes	• Timeline analysis, interviews • Policy review, KIIs	• Project launch alignment with conflict/political developments • Evidence of strategic use of timing for influence
Risk-Tolerance and Innovation	• If the Project was characterized as 'high risk', were risks adequately monitored and mitigated? • How novel or innovative was the Project approach? Can lessons be drawn?	• Risk registers, project reports • Project design notes, evaluations	• Risk review, interviews • Comparative analysis, documentation review	• Existence of risk mitigation strategies and response mechanisms • Innovative methods used and their effectiveness

11.3 List of stakeholders consulted

Agency types	Name of the Agencies	Number of people consulted
UN Agencies	UNDP/UNICEF project focal points and RCO/PBF Coordinator	4 (Male: 1, Female: 3)
	UNDP Resident Representative	1 (Male)
	UNICEF Resident Representative	1 (Male)
Coordinating Ministry	Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs	3
Security Agencies	Office of National Security (ONS) / Integrated Election Security Planning Committee (IESPC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP)/Family Support Unit (FSU)	4
Ministry	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	1
Political Institutions	Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC)	2
CSOs Implementing Partners	UNICEF CSOs: Legal Aid Board, Focus 1000, DCI and Restless International	14
	UNDP CSOs: WANEP, SLAJ, IRN and BBC Media Action	6
	NEW, IRC	4
	Clingendael (Virtual)	2
Local Government & Traditional Authorities	Paramount Chiefs and local government officials from the hotspot districts	5
Beneficiaries (Community People/Leaders)	Women leaders, youth, marginalized groups, and persons with disabilities from 6 districts (Bombali, Kenema, Kono, Port Loko, Western Area Rural (Waterloo) and Western Area Urban (Freetown))	72 (19 men and 24 women community members, 3 women leaders, 23 youth and 3 PWDs)
Beneficiaries	Survey participants from 6 districts (Bombali, Kenema, Kono, Port Loko, Western Area Rural (Waterloo) and Western Area Urban (Freetown))	2547 (1048 Male and 1499 Female)

11.4 Signed Code of Conduct for Evaluation



ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION



By signing this pledge, I hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviours.



INTEGRITY

I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- **Honest and truthful** in my communication and actions.
- **Professional**, engaging in credible and trustworthy behaviour, alongside competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- **Independent, impartial and incorruptible**.



ACCOUNTABILITY

I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- **Transparent** regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- **Responsive** as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- **Responsible** for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.



RESPECT

I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:

- **Access** to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether powerless or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- **Meaningful participation and equitable treatment** of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- **Fair representation** of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).



BENEFICENCE

I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- **Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits** from evaluation processes.
- **Maximum benefits** at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- **No harm**. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- **Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution** to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

I commit to playing my part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, I will report the situation to my supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

Dr Edwin Okul

29/03/2025

(Signature and Date)

11.5 Updated Result Framework with Data

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Outcome 1: Early warning and response mechanisms to electoral tensions and triggers of conflict reduce the potential and the intensity of election-related violence.				
Indicator 1a Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that measures are in place to ensure the security and safety of voters during the 2023 elections (sex-disaggregated)	71% (men -73.1%, women – 69.4%)	76.65 per cent (male:78.91 per cent, female: 74.91 per cent)	92.06% (Male: 88.99% female: 91.1%)	Exceeded
Indicator 1b Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that supporters of political parties you are affiliated with can be trusted (sex-disaggregated)	44.4% (men 44.1%; women 45.1%)	47.93 per cent (male: 47.61 per cent, female: 48.69 per cent)	61.39% (Male: 60.09%, female: 62.18%)	Exceeded
Indicator 1c Proportion of people that said their community was largely peaceful on the day of the election	68%	80%	89.15% (Male: 86.63%, female: 88.52%)	Exceeded
Output 1.1: National and sub-national Early Warning and Response Systems are enhanced				
Indicator 1.1.1 Number of conflicts addressed through the intervention of IESPC and decentralized committees (Prosec, Disec, Chisec, LPPBs) and WANEP insider mediators, as recorded by ONS and WANEP situation rooms.	0	2	6	Exceeded
Indicator 1.1.3 Number of security personnel and other stakeholders trained through training of trainers on elections security, planning and simulation exercises	0	500	600 (128 women) Training further cascaded to 12,400	Exceeded
Indicator 1.1.4 Security and communication strategies updated with the support of the UN Police Advisors, endorsed by the IESPC and implemented	2 strategies	4 strategies	4	Met
Indicator 1.1.5	3	6	5	Not Met

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Number of U-report surveys launched and analysed, and recommendations provided to MPAPA and ONS/IESPC				
Output 1.2: Nationally-led initiatives to prevent electoral violence and promote dialogue are reinforced and scaled-up.				
Indicator 1.2.1 Number of election related conflicts raised by the communities to the NERG.	0	5	6	Exceeded
Indicator 1.2.2 NERG and WANEP-led situation room's capacity to receive and analyse information and coordinate response with ONS and other actors is in place	1	2	2	Met
Indicator 1.2.3 Number of recommendations made/decisions taken that propose joint collaboration in the implementation of election related activities by CSOs	Recommendations on Standing together CSOs consortium in 2018 elections	1	1	Met
Outcome 2: An inclusive civic space is fostered and peaceful, accurate and timely communications for participatory and well-informed discourse are promoted.				
Indicator 2.1a Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that political parties are campaigning peacefully and respectfully for the 2023 elections (sex-disaggregated)	55.1 per cent (males: 54.6 per cent, and females: 56.6 per cent)	59.41 per cent (male: 58.94 per cent, female: 61.10 per cent)	89.15% (Male: 89.2%, female: 88.7%)	Exceeded
Indicator 2.2b Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that political news shared on social media in the lead up to the 2023 elections is accurate and not biased (sex-disaggregated)	42.5 per cent (males: 41.8 per cent, and females: 43.7 per cent)	45.88 per cent (male: 45.12 per cent, female: 47.18 per cent)	55.92% (Male: 54.54%, female: 56.96%)	Exceeded
Indicator 2.3c	60.9 per cent (males: 61.1 per cent, and females: 61 per cent)	65.74 per cent (male: 65.96 per cent, female: 65.85 per cent)	94.53% (Male: 92.44%, female: 94.21%)	Exceeded

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that youth participation in the 2023 elections will help bring about peace not violence (sex-disaggregated)				
Output 2.1: Political Parties as well as its women and youth wings commit to peaceful, credible, transparent, and independent elections.				
Indicator 2.1.1 Number of PPRC and political parties, including women and youth wings, provided with refresher training on mediation, dialogue and negotiation	0	40	88 (41 women and 47 youth including persons with disabilities trained on mediation, dialogue and negotiation)	Exceeded
Indicator 2.1.2 1 Regulatory framework and 17 updated codes of conduct in place	0	1	0 (due to political sensitivity during the polls and post-electoral period, following consultations with PPRC, the funds were reallocated to inter-party dialogue with the prodoc and budget amended)	Not applicable
Indicator 2.1.3: Number of awareness raising conducted for political parties including youth and women wings on the new PPRC Act ahead of political campaigns	0	16	16	Met
Indicator 2.1.4	0	0	0 (Funding reallocated)	Not Applicable

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Number of people reached through the dissemination of the political parties Regulation Act in printed and electronic media				
Indicator 2.1.5 Number of trainings to political on electoral laws and gender quota	0	0	0 (Funding reallocated)	Not Applicable
Indicator 2.1.6 Number of political parties that have participated in high-level inter-party dialogue and signed the Peace Pledge	1 peace pledge	2 (1 peace pledge, 1 Agreement for National Unity)	2 (1 peace pledge. 1 national unity agreement. 7 inter-party dialogues (including 4 in 2024). 1 ToR for Inter-Party Dialogue adopted)	Exceeded
Output 2.2: Peaceful civic engagement is fostered through community dialogues, awareness raising on peace and youth participation in the electoral process.				
Indicator 2.2.1 Number of participants in community dialogues with religious and traditional leaders	0	100	20,591 (10,326 men, 10,265 women)	Exceeded
Indicator 2.2.2 Number of adolescents and youth engaged through community dialogue, awareness raising on peaceful election participation, and civic education	0	50	16,568 (9,017 men, 7,551 women)	Exceeded

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Output 2.3: Enhanced civic education to youth to build their understanding and trust in the electoral cycle and legal support to youth engaged in electoral-related conflicts				
Indicator 2.3.1 Number of schools and children reached through training in schools on civic education	0	20	435 schools and a total of 227,185 (151,333 boys, 75,852 girls) children and 89,271(62,419 men, 26,852 women) community members	Exceeded
Indicator 2.3.2 Number of youth and women accused of having committed electoral offences represented in Court by LAB	0	10	168 (129 men and 39 women)	Exceeded
Output 2.4: The capacity of national stakeholders to prevent and mitigate the threats to the integrity of information (misinformation, disinformation and hate speech) is strengthened.				
Indicator 2.4.1 The extent people are using iVerify application to identify and analyze hate speech (1=not using, 2=stated using, 3= fully using) (disaggregated by age and sex)	0	2	3 (fully using) 414 (including over 49 in 2025)	Exceeded
Indicator 2.4.2 iVerify App developed, and working.	0	1 (App in place and working)	1 iVerify App developed and operationalized since 5 April 2023. 49 stories verified in 2025	Met

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
Indicator 2.4.3 1 song produced and played in main radio stations in the country	0	1	1 song and video; jingles produced and aired on radio/TV across the country	Met
Outcome 3: Women are better protected to meaningfully participate in political processes prior, during and after the elections.				
Indicator 3a Proportion of people who strongly agree or agree that women feel secure and safe enough to vote in the 2023 elections (sex-disaggregated)	60.2% (men 62.3%; women 58.7%)	64.99 per cent (male: 67.25 per cent, female: 63.37 per cent)	94.61% (Male: 94.11%, female: 93.98%)	Exceeded
Indicator 3b Proportion of increase of women nominated as candidates compared to male candidates	100 female candidates (12.6%)	(20% increase)	1373% increase (1,386 candidates were nominated, out of which 227 were elected)	Exceeded
Output 3.1: Enhance the prevention and mitigation of Gender-Based Violence to ensure women can safely participate in political and electoral processes.				
Indicator 3.1.1 Level of operationalization of the GBVIMS+ (1- system building, 2- system functioning in 4 districts, 3- system functioning in 8 districts, 4- system functioning in 16 districts)	Level 1	Target 2023, 4 districts – level 2 Target 2024: 16 districts – level 4	Stage 1 completed stage 2 (3 districts operational). This includes finalisation of SOP, training of 181 frontline staff on GBV case management, survivor-cantered	Not Met

Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	End of Project - Actual	Evaluator's Remarks on actuals
			case management, and GBVIMS+ in MGCA, MSW, FSU, MoH and CSOs	
Indicator 3.1.2 Number of calls received and reported monthly by Help Line-116	2,000	Target 2022: 2,000 calls per month Target 2023: 3,000 calls per month (increased response to increased knowledge of people on the existence of the reporting system)	47,339 (April 2023-Sep 2024)	Exceeded
Indicator 3.1.3 Number of cases of electoral-related violence against women and girls reported and acted upon by FSU and other institutions	0	0	0 (FSU has not come across any such cases.)	Not Applicable

11.6 GRES Analysis for Outcomes and Outputs

Result Level	Result Statement	GRES Rating	Justification
Outcome 1	Early warning and response mechanisms to electoral tensions and triggers of conflict reduce the potential and intensity of election-related violence	Gender Responsive	Gender was integrated through sex-disaggregated indicators on perceptions of safety and trust, and efforts were made to include women in security dialogues and early warning systems, though not sufficiently transformative.
Output 1.1	National and sub-national early warning and response systems are enhanced	Gender Sensitive	Training and conflict resolution efforts considered gender balance but were not explicitly designed to transform gender power relations.
Output 1.2	Nationally led initiatives to prevent electoral violence and promote dialogue are reinforced and scaled up	Gender Responsive	Initiatives such as dialogues and mediations included the participation of women's groups, though they remained largely additive rather than shifting gender norms.
Outcome 2	An inclusive civic space is fostered and peaceful, accurate, and timely communications for participatory and well-informed discourse are promoted	Gender Responsive	The project fostered inclusive civic engagement with deliberate targeting of women and youth in awareness and education campaigns, though it did not disrupt structural barriers.
Output 2.1	Political parties as well as their women and youth wings commit to peaceful, credible, transparent, and independent elections	Gender Responsive	Political parties' women and youth wings were actively engaged and trained, enhancing their voice in party structures. However, the effect on broader power shifts remains limited.
Output 2.2	Peaceful civic engagement is fostered through community dialogues, awareness raising on peace and youth participation in the electoral process	Gender Responsive	Gender inclusion was embedded in community dialogues and youth engagement efforts, with evidence of women's participation.
Output 2.3	Enhanced civic education to youth to build their understanding and trust in the electoral cycle and legal support to youth engaged in electoral-related conflicts	Gender Responsive	Civic education and legal support reached large numbers of girls and women, though it primarily emphasized participation rather than structural change.
Output 2.4	The capacity of national stakeholders to prevent and mitigate threats to the integrity of information (misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech) is strengthened	Gender Sensitive	While the messaging aimed to counter hate speech, there was limited gender-specific targeting or efforts to address online violence against women.
Outcome 3	Women are better protected to meaningfully participate in political processes prior, during, and after the elections	Gender Transformative	This outcome directly targeted structural barriers to women's participation and aimed to enhance protection, safety, and voice. Significant resources (\$1,204,052 contributed to gender equality or women's empowerment; and \$ 1,201,420 expended to date on efforts contributing to gender equality or women's empowerment) were devoted to GBV prevention and inclusive electoral participation.

Output 3.1	Enhance the prevention and mitigation of Gender-Based Violence to ensure women can safely participate in political and electoral processes	Gender Transformative	GBV mitigation and reporting mechanisms were strengthened, with explicit emphasis on survivor-centred approaches and system-wide protection for women, representing a shift toward addressing root causes of exclusion.
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11.7 Evaluation Timeline (Schedule of Key Milestones)

S/N	Deliverable ⁴	Activities	Tentative Timeline	
			Start date	End Date
1	Inception report: The inception report will outline the evaluator's understanding of the assignment, including proposed methods, data sources, and collection procedures. It will be included in an evaluation matrix, a schedule of tasks, and approved before commencing the full-fledged evaluation exercise. There will be a desk review of project documents and other relevant literature to guide the development of tools.	• Documents and Literature review • Development of an inception report • Development of data collection tools • Review and approval of the report by ERG members (UNDP/UNICEF etc.)	28 th March 2025	28 th April, 2025
2	Field Deployment and Debrief: The evaluator will conduct 10 working-day field visits to project districts, present initial findings to UNDP and UNICEF, and collaborate with enumerators to complete endline data collection and analysis.	• Enumerator training - 2 days • Quantitative data collection (survey) – 8 days • Qualitative data collection (KIIs, FGDs) – 10 days	12 th May 2025	13 th June, 2025
3	First Draft Report: The draft report will cover desk review, data collection methodology, analysis, interpretation, and discussion, with a prescribed report outline. The evaluator will present the report in a validation session to discuss initial findings, recommendations, and feedback.	• Draft report development • Presentation and Discussion of Evaluation Findings (Hybrid-Virtual & Physical) 9th May • Draft report review by UNDP and stakeholders	16 th June 2025	27 th June, 2025
4	Second draft report: A revised report based on the comments from the stakeholder or validation workshop.	• Revision of draft report • Review of second draft by UNDP et al	1 st July 2025	10 th July, 2025
5	Stakeholder Validation	• Present the report to stakeholders • Collect feedback	26 th August 2025	26 th August 2025
6	Final report: A final report, including annexes and responses from the evaluation audit trail form, should be submitted, ensuring proper handling of comments from UNDP, UNICEF, and stakeholders.	• Revision of 2nd draft report • Revision and finalization	23 rd July 2025	30 th August, 2025
7	Briefing to Senior Management	• Present the report to stakeholders • Collect feedback	1 st September 2025	1 st September 2025
	Total			

⁴⁴ All deliverables will be approved by ERG

11.8 Data Collection Instruments

11.8.1 Survey

(Community members/beneficiaries)

Introduction (may be read to the respondent):

Hello. My name is [Enumerator's Name], and I am working with an independent team conducting a national survey as part of the evaluation of a peacebuilding project supported by the United Nations. The Project aimed to promote peaceful elections, reduce violence, and strengthen social cohesion in Sierra Leone, especially around the 2023 elections.

We are asking for your views and experiences to help us understand how the Project worked in your community and what changes it may have made. This will help improve future peacebuilding and development efforts. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. You can skip any question or stop the interview at any time without any problem.

Consent Question:

Do you agree to participate in this survey, knowing that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research and learning purposes?

- ☐ Yes, I agree
- ☐ No, I do not agree (*End the interview politely*)

Respondent Demographics:

1. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 (*Terminate politely*)
- ☐ 18–24
- ☐ 25–35
- ☐ 36–50
- ☐ Above 50

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

4. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ No formal education
- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school
- ☐ Tertiary (College/University)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

5. What is your main occupation?

- ☐ Farmer
- ☐ Trader or businessperson
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Civil servant
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Instructions for Enumerator:

Read each statement aloud to the respondent. After each statement, read out the response options in this order:

Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

Mark the option that best reflects the respondent's view.

OUTCOME 1: Increased Security and Reduced Electoral Violence

1. Measures were in place to ensure the security and safety of voters during the 2023 elections.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
2. People avoided violence when having political arguments in the lead-up to the 2023 elections.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
3. Community structures such as Local Policing Partnership Boards and District Security Committees have helped reduce tensions during elections.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
4. Local authorities and security forces treat all political party supporters fairly and respectfully.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. There is less fear of political violence in your community compared to previous elections.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

OUTCOME 2: Strengthened Social Cohesion and Trust

6. Supporters of political parties you are not affiliated with can be trusted.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. People in your community are willing to work together across political, ethnic, and religious lines.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. You feel confident that political differences in your community can be resolved peacefully.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. You feel safe expressing your political views in public.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Community-based peacebuilding activities have improved relationships among different political groups.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

OUTCOME 3: Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Politics

11. Women felt secure and safe enough to vote in the 2023 elections.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. Women are treated with respect when they participate in political activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. Women have equal access to campaign and leadership opportunities in the 2023 election.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Political parties include women's views and concerns in their agenda and activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

OUTCOME 4: Respectful and Peaceful Political Participation

15. Political parties campaigned peacefully and respectfully for the 2023 elections.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. Political debates and dialogue events in your area respect different political views, parties, and identities without resorting to conflict, discrimination, or hostility.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. Community leaders discourage hate speech and violence during political activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. During election campaigns, political parties in your area follow the rules that promote peaceful behavior, respect, and fairness.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

OUTCOME 5: Accurate and Responsible Use of Information and Media

19. From what you saw or heard, the political news shared on social media during the 2023 elections was mostly accurate and fair? .

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. People in your community can tell when political news is not true..

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

21. Media outlets in your area report political news fairly..

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

22. You know where to report inflammatory political information online.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

OUTCOME 6: Youth Empowerment and Participation

23. In your area, young people who took part in the 2023 elections (as voters, volunteers, or campaigners) helped promote peace and avoid conflict..

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

24. Young people made their own informed decisions when participating in the 2023 elections.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

25. Young people communicate their priority issues through community platforms.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

26. Young people are given space and support to take leadership roles in election-related activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

27. Youth organizations in your area promote peaceful electoral participation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11.7.2 Key Informant Interview (KII) Guides

The following KII guides are structured according to stakeholder category and are aligned with the evaluation matrix, ensuring all evaluation criteria—relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and cross-cutting themes—are addressed.

Introduction:

Hello. My name is [Enumerator's Name], and I am working with an independent team evaluating a peacebuilding project supported by the United Nations. The Project aimed to promote peaceful elections, reduce violence, and strengthen social cohesion in Sierra Leone, especially around the 2023 elections.

We are asking for your views and experiences to help us understand how the Project worked in your community and what changes it may have made. This will help improve future peacebuilding and development efforts. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. You can skip any question or stop the interview at any time without any problem.

Consent Question:

Do you agree to participate in this survey, knowing that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research and learning purposes?

- ☐ Yes, I agree
- ☐ No, I do not agree (*End the interview politely*)

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. To ensure that I capture your responses accurately, I will be audio recording this interview and also taking notes as we talk. The recording will be used only for the purpose of this evaluation and will remain confidential. Your name will not be linked to anything you say, and you are free to stop the interview or skip any question at any time.

Do I have your permission to record and continue with the interview?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (*If no, continue without recording but take notes.*)

Respondent Demographics:

1. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 (*Terminate politely*)
- ☐ 18–24
- ☐ 25–35
- ☐ 36–50
- ☐ Above 50

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

4. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ No formal education
- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school
- ☐ Tertiary (College/University)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

5. What is your main occupation?

- ☐ Farmer
- ☐ Trader or businessperson
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Civil servant
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

1. UNDP AND UNICEF STAFF

Section A: Relevance

1. To what extent did the PBF project align with:
 - i. The Government of Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)?
 - ii. The UNDP Country Programme Document (2020–2024)?
 - iii. The UNICEF Country Programme Document (2020–2024)?
 - iv. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2020–2024)?
 - v. The UN Peacebuilding Fund Strategy and relevant SDGs?
2. In your view, how effectively did the Project contribute to peaceful elections and strengthen social cohesion?
3. Was the Project's approach, including its theory of change, informed by conflict analysis, evidence, and beneficiary consultation, and did it effectively address key peacebuilding gaps and conflict drivers in Sierra Leone?
4. How well did the Project respond to the needs of key beneficiaries and institutions, including:
 - i. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities?
 - ii. Disadvantaged or marginalized communities?
 - iii. Implementing government and civil society partners?

Section B: Coherence

6. How coherent was the Project design across UNDP /UNICEF components?
7. How did your agency collaborate internally (between UNDP and UNICEF) and externally with:
 - i. Other UN agencies?

- ii. National and local government entities?
 - iii. Donor and development partners?
8. If the Project was part of a broader package of PBF, to what degree were the Project's design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting aligned with that of other projects?
 9. Were there overlaps, synergies, or gaps between the PBF project and other ongoing peacebuilding or electoral initiatives?

Section C: Conflict-Sensitivity

10. Did the Project have an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity?
11. Were funds' recipients' internal capacities adequate for ensuring an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach?
12. Was the Project responsible for any unintended negative impacts?
13. Was an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that allows for monitoring of unintended impacts established?

Section D: Effectiveness

14. Can you briefly describe the activities that your organisation carried out as part of the PBF project?
 - i. Which activities have already been implemented? Have there been any challenges in implementation?
 - ii. For the activities that remain to be implemented, do you foresee any challenges to implementation in the future? If so, what are they?
 - iii. What aspects of the Project were most successful? What factors enabled this success?
10. Did the Project's theory of change materialize in practice? If not, why?
11. Which components had the least achievements? What were the challenges or limitations?
12. How did the Project contribute to the following:
 - i. Gender equality?
 - ii. Youth empowerment?
 - iii. Protection of human rights?
13. Were there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative)? If yes, what were they and how were they addressed?
14. How were digital tools or technologies integrated into project design and implementation (e.g., early warning systems, U-Report, iVerify)? Were they effective?
15. To what extent did the Project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the broader peacebuilding vision, including clarity and appropriateness of its targeting strategy?
16. How effectively did the Project integrate gender and youth considerations into peacebuilding efforts, and was its monitoring system adequate in capturing outcome-level results?

Section D: Efficiency

17. Was the Project implemented within its planned budget and timeframe?
18. Were financial and human resources efficiently allocated and utilized?
19. To what extent did the Project achieve cost-effectiveness through the following:
 - i. Joint programming or partnerships?
 - ii. Use of existing structures or local expertise?
20. What monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms were used to ensure accountability and adaptive management?
21. How would you rate the efficiency and functionality of the coordination and implementation structures used?
22. How efficient and successful was the Project's implementation approach, including procurement, number of implementing partners and other activities?
23. How well did the Project collect and use data to monitor results? How effectively was updated data used to manage the Project?
24. How well did the Project team communicate with implementing partners, stakeholders and project beneficiaries on its progress?

Section E: Sustainability

25. Were clear and realistic exit strategies defined and implemented during the Project?
23. What mechanisms or partnerships have been established to sustain the following:
 - i. Early warning and response systems?
 - ii. Information integrity measures?
 - iii. Gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence?
24. What is your assessment of national or local partners' readiness and capacity to continue project initiatives post-funding?
25. Did the intervention design include an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy (including promoting national/local ownership, use of national capacity etc.) to support positive changes in peacebuilding after the end of the Project?
26. How strong is the commitment of the government and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of PBF support and continuing initiatives?

Section F: Human Rights, Gender Equality, Youth and Disability Inclusion

27. To what extent did the Project explicitly integrate a Human Rights-Based Approach in its design, implementation, and monitoring?
28. How effectively did the Project promote the rights and inclusion of:
 - i. Women and girls?
 - ii. Youth and adolescents?
 - iii. Persons with disabilities?
 - iv. Indigenous and marginalized populations?

29. Was the Gender Marker assigned to the Project appropriate and reflective of actual implementation?
30. How was the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) applied in practice?
31. Did the Project lead to positive or negative changes in gender norms, youth participation, or inclusion of vulnerable populations? Please elaborate.

G. Conflict-Sensitivity

32. Did the Project have an explicit approach to conflict-sensitivity?
33. Were funds' recipients' internal capacities adequate for ensuring an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach?
34. Was the Project responsible for any unintended negative impacts?
35. Was an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that allows for monitoring of unintended impacts established?

H. Catalytic:

36. Was the Project financially and/or programmatically catalytic?⁵
 - What additional funding (if any) was mobilized directly as a result of the PBF-supported project (e.g., from government, donors, or private sector)?
 - Did the Project influence or encourage other organizations or donors to fund similar peacebuilding initiatives in the same region or sector?
37. Has PBF funding been used to scale-up other peacebuilding work and/or has it helped to create broader platforms for peacebuilding?
 - To what extent did PBF-supported results influence government peacebuilding priorities, national strategies, or donor programming?

I. Localization:

38. Were national and local stakeholders sufficiently consulted and involved throughout the Project cycle?
39. Did the Project strengthen capacities of national and local stakeholders (national and local governments and CSOs)?
40. How useful did national and local stakeholders perceive PBF's support?

J. Time-Sensitivity:

41. Was the Project well-timed to address a conflict factor or capitalize on a specific window of opportunity?

⁵ Catalytic function of the PBF can be understood as mobilising additional financial funds, and/or unblocking of political or peacebuilding related processes. For the first part of the definition (financial catalytic effect), two approaches are considered: 1) direct amounts mobilised, i.e., funds that have been catalysed to scale up or extend a specific PBF-funded project, and 2) indirect amounts mobilised, i.e., donors' contributions to the same sector, theme, or approach *after* the PBF-funded project.

42. Was PBF funding used to leverage political windows of opportunity for engagement?

K. Risk-Tolerance and Innovation:

43. If the Project was characterized as “high risk”, were risks adequately monitored and mitigated?

44. How novel or innovative was the Project approach? Can lessons be drawn to inform similar approaches elsewhere?

2. GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS

A. Relevance

1. How did the Project align with national policy priorities and frameworks (e.g., M-TNDP)?
2. Were the Project activities relevant to your ministry's mandates?

B. Coherence

3. How effective was coordination between your ministry, other government bodies, and UN agencies?
4. Were roles clearly defined in implementation?

C. Effectiveness

5. What specific changes or improvements resulted from the Project?
6. Were your institutional capacities strengthened?

D. Efficiency

7. Were there delays or budget issues that impacted implementation?
8. Were government resources used in synergy with project efforts?

E. Sustainability

9. How has your ministry supported sustainability of project outcomes?
10. Are any of the interventions integrated into ongoing policies or systems?

F. Cross-Cutting Themes

11. How did the Project address issues of gender equality and social inclusion in your sector?
12. Were vulnerable groups meaningfully involved?

3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

A. Relevance

1. How are civil society priorities defined?
2. How were civil society priorities integrated into project design and delivery?
3. Were local contexts and needs adequately addressed?

B. Coherence

4. Did the Project complement other peacebuilding or development work by your organization?
5. Were coordination mechanisms functional?

C. Effectiveness

6. What results were achieved at the community level?
7. What were some successful strategies used?

D. Efficiency

8. Was funding adequate and timely?
9. Were reporting and M&E responsibilities manageable?

E. Sustainability

10. Are there plans to continue activities or partnerships post-project?
11. What support is needed to sustain gains?

F. Cross-Cutting Themes

12. How were gender, youth, disability, and human rights mainstreamed?
13. Were there any unintended effects (positive or negative)?

4. ELECTORAL AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS

A. Relevance

1. How did the Project support your electoral/security mandate?
2. Were local security/electoral threats adequately addressed?

B. Coherence

3. Were coordination structures like the Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee (IESPC) effective?
4. How did you collaborate with UN and civil society actors?

C. Effectiveness

5. How did the Project contribute to peaceful elections?
6. Were early warning and response systems enhanced?

D. Efficiency

7. Were operational processes streamlined by the Project?
8. Were any cost-saving mechanisms introduced?

E. Sustainability

9. What systems or protocols will be retained post-project?
10. Has staff capacity improved to manage future elections?

F. Cross-Cutting Themes

11. Were gender and youth adequately included in electoral/security planning?
12. Did the Project help address election-related violence against women and youth?

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

A. Relevance

1. How relevant were project activities to the peace and governance needs of your district or chiefdom?
2. Did they address real community concerns?

B. Coherence

3. Were you consulted or involved in planning and implementation?
4. How did traditional governance structures collaborate with formal systems?

C. Effectiveness

5. Did the Project enhance community trust, cohesion, or electoral participation?
6. What community-level impacts did you observe?

D. Efficiency

7. Were resources well utilized locally?
8. Were project timelines and communications effective?

E. Sustainability

9. Are local governance structures ready to continue any initiatives?
10. What are the challenges to sustaining outcomes?

F. Cross-Cutting Themes

11. How were women, youth, and marginalized groups involved in community-level activities?
12. Did the Project affect community dynamics positively or negatively?

6. POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTATIVES (PARTY LEADERS)

A. Relevance

1. How did the Project support your role in promoting peaceful elections and inter-party dialogue?
2. Were party needs and priorities considered?

B. Coherence

3. How well did political parties engage with implementing partners and UN agencies?
4. Did the inter-party dialogue mechanism work effectively?

C. Effectiveness

5. Were tensions reduced as a result of the Project?
6. How has political participation, especially for youth and women, changed?

D. Efficiency

7. Were political actors adequately resourced or trained?
8. How effective were communication and conflict resolution mechanisms?

E. Sustainability

9. Will the dialogue platforms and codes of conduct continue post-project?
10. How committed are parties to sustaining peaceful political engagement?

F. Cross-Cutting Themes

11. How were women and youth wings involved?
12. Did the Project contribute to reducing hate speech, misinformation, or political violence?

11.8.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guides

1. FGD GUIDE FOR WOMEN LEADERS

Hello. My name is [Enumerator's Name], and I am working with an independent team evaluating a peacebuilding project supported by the United Nations. The Project aimed to promote peaceful elections, reduce violence, and strengthen social cohesion in Sierra Leone, especially around the 2023 elections.

We are asking for your views and experiences to help us understand how the Project worked in your community and what changes it may have made. This will help improve future peacebuilding and development efforts. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. You can skip any question or stop the interview at any time without any problem.

Consent Question:

To ensure that I capture your responses accurately, I will be audio recording this interview and also taking notes as we talk. The recording will be used only for this evaluation and will remain confidential. Your name will not be linked to anything you say, and you are free to stop the interview or skip any question at any time.

By show of hands, do you all agree to participate in this discussion, knowing that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research and learning purposes?

☐ Those who agree will stay for the discussions (Total number agreeing _____)

☐ Those who do not agree will quietly leave (Total number leaving _____)

Purpose: To gather insights from women leaders on the relevance, effectiveness, inclusiveness, and sustainability of the Project, and its impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key Topics and Sample Questions:

A. Relevance

1. How well do you think the Project addressed the practical and strategic needs of women in your community?
2. Were women adequately consulted during project planning and implementation?

B. Effectiveness

3. What changes have you seen in women's participation in leadership, electoral processes, or community dialogue as a result of the Project?
4. Have project interventions contributed to reducing violence or tensions affecting women?

C. Inclusiveness

5. Were women from different backgrounds (e.g., rural, urban, young, older, with disabilities) included fairly?
6. What were some challenges women faced in accessing project benefits or participating in activities?

D. Sustainability

7. Are there any mechanisms in place to continue supporting women's participation in governance or peacebuilding?

E. Human Rights and Gender Equality

- 8. Did the Project promote awareness and protection of women's rights?
- 9. Have you observed any unintended positive or negative effects on women?

F. Conflict Sensitivity

- 10. Did the Project try to avoid causing or worsening any conflict in your community?
- 11. Were there any problems or negative effects from the Project that you noticed?
- 12. Did the people running the Project understand your local situation and make changes when needed?

G. Catalytic Effects

- 13. Did this project help bring in more support or funding for peace efforts in your area?
- 14. Do you think the Project inspired other organizations or government to do similar work in your region?

H. Local Involvement (Localization)

- 15. Were local leaders, community groups, or government officials involved in planning and running the Project?
- 16. Did the Project help build skills or strengthen your community's ability to handle conflict or promote peace?
- 17. How helpful was the support given by the Project to your community?

I. Timing

- 18. Was the Project started at the right time to deal with urgent issues or make use of a good opportunity for peace?

J. Risk-Taking and Innovation

- 19. Did the Project try new or creative ways to solve problems in your community?
- 20. Are there useful lessons from this project that could help others in similar situations?

2. FGD GUIDE FOR YOUTH (MALE/FEMALE)

Hello. My name is [Enumerator's Name], and I am working with an independent team evaluating a peacebuilding project supported by the United Nations. The Project aimed to promote peaceful elections, reduce violence, and strengthen social cohesion in Sierra Leone, especially around the 2023 elections.

We are asking for your views and experiences to help us understand how the Project worked in your community and what changes it may have made. This will help improve future peacebuilding and development efforts. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. You can skip any question or stop the interview at any time without any problem.

Consent Question:

To ensure that I capture your responses accurately, I will be audio recording this interview and also taking notes as we talk. The recording will be used only for this evaluation and will remain confidential. Your name will not be linked to anything you say, and you are free to stop the interview or skip any question at any time.

By show of hands, do you all agree to participate in this discussion, knowing that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research and learning purposes?

☐ Those who agree will stay for the discussions (Total number agreeing _____)

☐ Those who do not agree will quietly leave (Total number leaving _____)

Purpose: To assess how youth experienced the Project, their role in peacebuilding, political participation, and the digital and social inclusion components.

Key Topics and Sample Questions:

A. Relevance

1. Did the Project reflect the interests, challenges, and priorities of young people in your community?
2. Were you aware of the Project before or during its implementation?

B. Effectiveness

3. Did the Project improve your understanding of peaceful political participation or reduce youth involvement in electoral violence?
4. Were youth leadership opportunities created or enhanced?

C. Inclusiveness

5. Did the Project reach out to diverse youth (e.g., male, female, rural, urban, differently-abled)?
6. Did it include those not affiliated with political parties?

D. Sustainability

7. What structures or platforms have remained to support youth engagement after the Project?
8. Are youth more confident in engaging with political institutions now?

E. Digitalization and Innovation

9. Did the Project provide digital tools or platforms that were useful to you (e.g., U-Report, social media monitoring)?

10. How would you like technology to be used in future projects?

F. Conflict Sensitivity

11. Did the Project try to avoid making any tensions or problems worse in your community?

12. Did you see or experience any problems that may have been caused by the Project?

13. Do you feel the people running the Project understood what's really going on in your community and responded well?

G. Catalytic Effects

14. Did this project help attract more support or attention to peacebuilding efforts in your area?

15. Do you think it motivated other groups—like the government or NGOs—to start similar peace activities?

H. Youth & Local Involvement

16. Were young people and local leaders involved in planning or making decisions about the Project?

17. Did the Project help you or other youth learn new skills or feel more ready to help solve community problems?

18. Was the support from the Project actually useful to you and your community?

I. Timing

19. Did the Project come at the right moment—when your community really needed it or when there was a good chance to make a difference?

J. Innovation & Risk-Taking

20. Did the Project try out fresh or creative ideas to help solve problems in your area?

21. What lessons from this project do you think could help other youth or communities facing similar issues?

3. FGD GUIDE FOR MARGINALIZED AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS (INCLUDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)

Purpose: To explore how inclusive and accessible the Project was for vulnerable and marginalized groups, and its contributions to social cohesion, safety, and empowerment.

Key Topics and Sample Questions:

A. Relevance

1. Did the Project identify and address your specific needs and concerns?
2. Were you involved in consultations or decision-making?

B. Effectiveness

3. Have you experienced any personal or community-level changes (e.g., reduced discrimination, improved safety, access to services)?
4. Did you feel represented in local leadership or project activities?

C. Accessibility and Participation

5. Were project materials, meetings, and activities accessible to persons with disabilities?
6. What barriers (physical, attitudinal, communication) did you face in participating?

D. Sustainability

7. Have local leaders or institutions continued to support your inclusion after the Project ended?
8. Are there community groups or services you can now rely on?

E. Rights and Empowerment

9. Did the Project help raise awareness about your rights?
10. Have attitudes toward people with disabilities or marginalized communities changed in your area?

F. Conflict Sensitivity

11. Did the Project try to make sure it didn't cause any tension or problems between different groups in your community, including those of us with special needs?

G. Catalytic Effects

12. Did this project help bring more attention, support, or funding to peace efforts that include everyone, especially marginalised groups?
13. Do you think the Project encouraged others—like the government or other organizations—to do similar work that includes people like you?

H. Local Involvement (Localization)

14. Were you or other people from your community, especially those with disabilities or often excluded, involved in planning or sharing your views about the Project?

15. How useful or meaningful was the support you received from the Project, especially for those who are often left behind?

I. Timing

16. Did the Project come at a time when your community really needed help or support, especially people who are vulnerable or facing discrimination?

J. Risk-Taking and Innovation

17. Did the Project try out new or different ways of solving problems that worked well for people with special needs or those usually left out?
18. Are there any lessons from this project that could help other people in similar situations, especially the marginalised or those living with disabilities?

11.9 Consent Form (KII, FGD, Survey)

Introduction:

Hello, my name is [Enumerator's Name], and I am part of the team conducting an evaluation of a peacebuilding project supported by the United Nations. The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how the Project contributed to promoting peaceful elections, preventing violence, and strengthening social cohesion in Sierra Leone.

Purpose of Participation:

You have been selected to share your views and experiences as a participant, stakeholder, or community member. The information you provide will help improve future peacebuilding efforts in the country. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation:

Your responses will remain confidential. No names will appear in any report, and there will be no way to identify you from the information you provide. You may choose not to answer any question and can stop the interview or discussion at any time without any consequences.

Recording and Data Use:

With your permission, we would like to record this interview or discussion for accuracy. The recording and notes will only be used for evaluation purposes and stored securely. Only the evaluation team will have access to this data.

Consent Question:

Do you understand the purpose of this interview/survey, and do you agree to participate?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(If no, thank the respondent and end the session.)*

Participant Name: _____

Signature/Thumbprint: _____

Date: _____