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Organization of the
United Nations

Evaluation of the project
“Sustaining peace and
improving social cohesion
through the promotion
of rural employment”



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**Evaluation of the project “Sustaining
peace and improving social cohesion
through the promotion of rural
employment”**

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Abstract

This is the final evaluation of the project “Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas in Liberia, which was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), with USD 1 500 000 from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The evaluation supports both accountability and learning by providing an independent assessment of the extent to which planned collective objectives have been met, as well as the project’s contribution to its intended peacebuilding objectives. It also aims at drawing lessons and recommendations to inform future projects. The evaluation used a consultative and participatory approach involving all project stakeholders throughout the process. Mixed methods, such as a desk review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and field observations were used to collect information in Bong and Lofa counties.

Overall, with specific drawbacks as detailed in the report, it was found that this PBF project was relevant to national and international peacebuilding policies and that it also reached significant targets for most of its performance indicators at outcome and output levels. It created the intended positive change, such as peacebuilding among women and men, livelihood development to provide alternative income generation, and greater participation in the peacebuilding process. It was efficient in achieving its expected results, and its sustainability and exit strategy were helpful in promoting local ownership on behalf of the group beneficiaries, such as young women’s and men’s organizations. Emphasis was placed on job creation through the development of strong capacity building and the achievement of livelihood components. However, the synergies and complementarity among agencies and the government were limited to design, implementation and field-level coordination not to internal agency not even between agencies. An explicit multisectoral, inclusive approach to conflict sensitivity was adopted by engaging young women and men as agents of change in conflict prevention and resolution.



Source: WorldAtlas. 2021. *Maps of Liberia*. www.worldatlas.com/maps/liberia. Map conforms to UN Geospatial. 2014. *Map of Liberia*. New York, United States of America. www.un.org/geospatial/content/liberia

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations and acronyms	viii
Executive summary	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose of the evaluation	1
1.2 Intended users	1
1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation	2
1.4 Methodology.....	2
1.5 Challenges and mitigation measures	4
2. Background and context of the evaluation	7
2.1 Context of the project.....	7
2.2 Theory of change.....	10
3. Findings	13
3.1 Relevance	13
3.2 Effectiveness.....	18
3.3 Efficiency.....	26
3.4 Sustainability and ownership	29
3.5 Coherence.....	33
3.6 Conflict sensitivity.....	35
4. Conclusions and recommendations	37
4.1 Conclusions	37
4.2 Recommendations	38
5. Lessons learned	41
Bibliography	42
Appendix 1. People interviewed	45
Appendix 2. Conceptualized TOC for the PBF project	49
Appendix 3. Stakeholder mapping	50
Appendix 4. Evaluation matrix	51
Appendix 5. Explanation of sampling strategy	55
Appendix 6. Description of the evaluation methods	56
Appendix 7. Actual figures for the KIIs and the FGDs	60
Appendix 8. Evaluation management	61
Appendix 9. Project evaluation data collection schedule	63
Appendix 10. Data collection protocols and tools	64
Appendix 11. Profile of the evaluation team	69
Annexes	71

Boxes, figures and tables

Box 1. Key findings: Relevance.....	13
Box 2. Testimony by an FGD participant from the Salala District, Lofa County.....	16
Box 3. Key findings: Effectiveness.....	18
Box 4. Testimony from an FGD participant in Lofa County.....	26
Box 5. Key findings: Efficiency.....	26
Box 6. Key findings: Sustainability and ownership.....	29
Box 7. Testimony from a KII member in the Salala District, Bong County.....	31
Box 8. Key findings: Coherence.....	33
Box 9. Key findings: Conflict sensitivity.....	35
Box 10. Testimony from an FGD participant in Bong County.....	36
Figure 1. Simplified TOC representation.....	17
Figure 2. An FAO-supported poultry house in the Salala District.....	27
Figure 3. Women participating in an FGD in the Totota District.....	30
Figure 4. Male entrepreneurs participating in an FGD in the Salala District.....	32
Figure 5. A view of the FAO-built warehouse, which still lacks equipment.....	32
Appendix Figure 1. Evaluation workplan strategy.....	56
Table 1. Main audience and intended use of the evaluation.....	1
Table 2. Risks and mitigating measures.....	5
Table 3. Results framework with corresponding SDGs.....	10
Table 4. PBF alignment to the national framework.....	14
Table 5. Alignment to the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs.....	15
Table 6. Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 1 and its related output indicators.....	20
Table 7. Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 2 and its related outputs.....	22
Appendix Table 1. Actual number of KIIs.....	60
Appendix Table 2. Actual number of FGDs.....	60
Appendix Table 3. The evaluation team.....	61
Appendix Table 4. Timelines and structure of the evaluation report.....	62

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Evaluation team

Serge Eric Yakeu Dijam, Team Leader, International Consultant

Laura Golakeh, National Consultant

Oliver Sonah, Research Field Assistant

Evaluation management

Anne-Clémence Owen, Evaluation Manager

Jerry Soni, Regional Evaluation Specialist

The information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the views and position of FAO RAF. The responsibility for the opinions expressed, as well as the errors of fact or judgement, remains that of the consultants.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CSO	civil society organizations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	focus group discussion
HDP nexus	humanitarian–development–peace nexus
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	key informant interview
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organization
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
RAF	FAO Regional Office for Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TOC	theory of change
TOR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Introduction

1. The “Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment” project (UNDP, 2022b) was implemented by a consortium of United Nations (UN) agencies. It involved the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), with USD 1 500 000 from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).
2. The evaluation covers the entire implementation period of the project from February 2019 to August 2021 with all project activities in Bong and Lofa Counties. The final evaluation also considers the preconditions and arrangements that either contributed to or hindered the adequate implementation of the planned activities. This includes linkages and partnerships between the project and other major country initiatives. Key criteria assessed in terms of the disbursed funding include: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; sustainability and ownership; coherence; and conflict sensitivity. Special attention was paid to human rights and gender equality. The key evaluation questions addressed the evaluation’s purpose and objectives. Regarding the targeted audience for this evaluation, the following are key: the government institutions from the Republic of Liberia; country-level and regional representation from FAO, the ILO and the WFP; women’s groups, youth groups and civil society organizations (CSOs); the PBF Peacebuilding Support Office; donor organizations; and institutions.
3. The evaluation has the dual purpose of supporting both accountability and learning by providing an independent assessment of the extent to which the planned collective objectives have been met, as well as the project’s contribution to its intended peacebuilding objectives. It also aims to draw lessons and recommendations that could inform future projects. Its specific objectives are to: i) assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project in terms of addressing key drivers of conflict and the most relevant peacebuilding issues and the degree to which the project addressed cross-cutting issues, such as conflict and gender sensitivity in the Republic of Liberia; ii) assess the effectiveness of the project based on achievement level and quality of the outcomes and outputs, and collect qualitative and quantitative evidence on the results of project activities with any positive or negative changes and change pathways linked to them; iii) assess the project’s efficiency, including its implementation strategy and institutional arrangements, as well as its management and operational systems, and investment potential; iv) document good practices, innovations and lessons emerging from the project; and v) provide actionable recommendations for future programming.
4. The evaluation used a consultative and participatory approach involving all stakeholders throughout the process. Mixed methods, such as a desk review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and field observations were used to collect information in Bong and Lofa from 13 to 28 February 2022. Twenty key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with 55 percent male and 45 percent female participants, and eight FGDs were conducted with 42.5 percent female and 57.2 percent male participants. The evidence gathered was triangulated to ensure its validity.

Main findings

5. The PBF project was relevant to national and international peacebuilding policies, such as the national strategic documents mentioned in the *Pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development* (Republic of Liberia, 2018). It aligns well with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) through its contribution to the implementation of six of them. The project was relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups, and it adopted an explicit theory of change (TOC) to produce the desired change.
6. The PBF project reached significant targets for most of its performance indicators at outcome and output levels. It created the intended positive change, such as peacebuilding among women and men, livelihood development to provide alternative income generation, and greater participation in the peacebuilding process. Furthermore, the project provided access to local conflict resolution mechanisms through the participatory engagement of both women and men on the conflict resolution committees of each county. Community members participated in peacebuilding dialogues and worked towards their community-based planning processes. Factors that facilitated these results include the promotion of peace dialogues with community and religious leaders, and partnership among the consortium team on shared roles and resources. However, setbacks in installing the irrigation systems; delays due to FAO management processes; male-dominated traditions and local norms; weak coordination at the implementation stage; the absence of joint monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for field activities; and the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the project's performance. Gender-responsible peacebuilding with equal participation of women, men and youth was covered in the design and implementation phases.
7. The PBF project was efficient in achieving its expected results. This held true despite delays in the completion of project activities and the absence of systematic data collection – particularly disaggregated data, which was unavailable. Indeed, this led to no significant impact on the achieved results. The project was a good investment due to its strategic approach in efficiently using the available resources. Nevertheless, further effectiveness through joint activities, common operations and joint procurement, the sharing of information and responsibilities, and pursuing collective outcomes could have enhanced the project's management and deliveries with little additional cost.
8. The project's sustainability and exit strategies were helpful in promoting local ownership on behalf of the group beneficiaries, such as young women's and men's organizations. Emphasis was placed on job creation through the development of strong capacity building and the achievement of livelihood components. This aimed to provide opportunities and strengthen youth employment in agriculture. Notwithstanding, ownership of the project's livelihood elements was uneven and severely limited in certain localities due to lack of water for crop irrigation and a lack of equipment in the warehouse that had been built. In fact, these were key assets for livelihood development. Furthermore, the project was unable to bring in other partners, such as a financial institution, into its exit strategy. Government ownership has been too weak to ensure continuity of the achieved results.
9. The synergies and complementarity among agencies and the government were limited to design, implementation and field-level coordination. No evidence was found on how the PBF project had ensured synergies and complementarity within the different programmes of FAO, the ILO and the WFP or any other implementing organizations, including other

donors in the same portfolio. The project design failed to adopt a humanitarian–development–peace nexus (HDP nexus) or triple nexus approach, as defined in the *Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus 2014–2020*¹ to cover the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace objectives.

10. This was mainly due to the short-term period of the project and the absence of critical conditions for running a nexus approach in the project design. This would have involved strong government leadership, as well as specific laws to deal with protracted humanitarian crises and conflict drivers in national development or peace planning and analysis.
11. An explicit multisectoral, inclusive approach to conflict sensitivity was adopted by engaging young women and men as agents of change in conflict prevention and resolution. The project involved large awareness meetings and scaling up strong participation by calling on religious and community leaders to work with youth on conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding for multilevel decision-making. However, the project was ineffective in supporting further partnerships. This aspect might have been helpful in increasing political, financial, technical and logistical support for the young peacebuilders. Unintended impacts were anticipated by a needs assessment. This was completed in the beginning to identify conflict drivers.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The PBF project aligned with national policy documents and targeted SDGs. It met peacebuilding and livelihood efforts of the selected communities. Its ambitions were curtailed by a short implementation period for a vast implementation area. This factor was compounded by budget and time constraints, which further limited the project’s actual scope and coverage.

Conclusion 2. The project’s effectiveness is reflected in its achievement of most outputs and outcomes from the target indicators, despite negative factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic that had hindered most of its field activities just a year after the project began.

Conclusion 3. The project’s efficiency is reflected in its ability to develop strong coordination among agencies. This made it a good investment. However, most data were not disaggregated by gender, beneficiary group or location due to the lack of a systematic data collection system that could have provided information on progress achieved and identified existing gaps. Globally, the project did not provide an opportunity for the adoption of corrective measures, such as a mid-term evaluation.

Conclusion 4. The sustainability and exit strategies were useful in promoting local ownership and positive change in peacebuilding and livelihood development at the local level. However, ownership at the national level has remained very weak since the government lacks the adequate resources to ensure continuity of the achieved results. The sustainability strategy was also built on job creation and the establishment of a peace committee to manage conflict resolution. This proved to be successful and sustainable.

Conclusion 5. The project generated synergies and complementarity among agencies and the government. However, it was less effective in promoting synergies and complementarity among various FAO, ILO and WFP programmes, and other organizations and donors working on the same

¹ “The HDP or triple nexus is not a new area of work or a particular type of programme, but instead it is a mindset, a systemic way of thinking, and a new way of working. Its main features are about joined-up, multi-partner, flexible and adaptive programming across the three HDP pillars that is anchored in context analysis and evidence and is people-centred and inclusive” (FAO, 2021, p. ix). Project documentation does not provide evidence of this approach.

portfolio. Furthermore, the project was unable to effectively apply an HDP nexus approach because the conditions had not been met.

Conclusion 6. The project created a conflict-sensitive nature through the adoption of an inclusive, multisectoral approach. The project's ability to build new partnerships was weak. However, the project was able to avoid any unintended negative impact.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Through an inclusive and participatory approach, the consortium team should engage target stakeholders in all steps of the design phase of future PBF projects. This should be included in the identification of additional livelihood sources to cope with the beneficiaries' needs. Sufficient funds should be allocated under a suitable timeframe.

Recommendation 2. The PBF project should seek further support through technical cooperation funding that is specific to peacebuilding and livelihood development. For example, the comparative advantage of the consortium team could be useful in seeking a substantial contribution from the PBF, as well as other country donors to further support such initiatives.

Recommendation 3. The consortium team should further contribute to the harmonization of data collection tools and the monitoring process among agencies through a joint M&E framework to strengthen their respective decision-making processes.

Recommendation 4. The consortium team should reinforce partnership development with national and local organizations by inviting other UN agencies and development entities during joint meetings.

Recommendation 5. Although the project has ended, the consortium team should complete the sustainability strategy by considering a second project phase to sustain the achieved results.

Recommendation 6. Coordination with the government should be strengthened at the national level to better engage and ensure its ownership of the achieved results. To do so, a possible avenue could be to change the leadership of the steering committee and institute a rotating chairperson. This would ensure at least periodic ownership and responsibility. Another option would require strengthening such a link through either the incentive or the required validation of outputs and reports.

Recommendation 7. The consortium team should reinforce synergies and complementarity by adopting an HDP nexus approach in the design stage. This can be done under governmental leadership, starting with the inception phase of any future project. Such an effort would support and strengthen the interlinkages among the humanitarian, development and peace sectors.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. Based on the terms of reference (TOR) (FAO RAF, 2021), this evaluation aims to support both accountability and learning. It provides an independent assessment of the extent to which planned collective objectives have been met, and the project's contribution to its intended peacebuilding objectives. It provides lessons and recommendations that can inform future projects. The specific objectives of this evaluation are as follows:
 - i. Assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project in terms of addressing key drivers of conflict and the most relevant peacebuilding issues. This includes the degree to which the project addressed cross-cutting issues, such as conflict and gender sensitivity in the Republic of Liberia.
 - ii. Assess the effectiveness of the project, including the level of achievement and the quality of the project outcomes and outputs. Collect qualitative and quantitative evidence on the results of the project activities, and any positive or negative changes and change pathways linked to them.
 - iii. Assess the project's efficiency, including its implementation strategy and institutional arrangements, as well as its management, operational systems and investment potential.
 - iv. Document good practices, innovations and lessons that have emerged.
 - v. Provide actionable recommendations for future programming.

1.2 Intended users

2. Table 1 provides a brief description of the main audience and intended use of the evaluation.

Table 1. Main audience and intended use of the evaluation

Main audience/intended users	Use of the evaluation
Liberian government institutions (e.g. the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Agriculture; the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; and the Ministry of Internal Affairs).	Findings and conclusions for future advocacy, policy making, planning and investment decisions.
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in-country representation and their regional offices.	Findings and lessons learned to enhance the sustainability of results achieved through various opportunities. Improve the formulation and implementation of similar projects.
Peacebuilding Support Office and the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) country office.	Findings to inform strategic investment decisions in the future.
Donors, organizations and institutions.	Others interested in supporting or implementing similar projects..
Women's and youth groups, and other interested civil society organizations (CSOs).	Findings for advocacy, planning and improving day-to-day practices

Source: Adapted from FAO RAF. 2021. "Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment" – Terms of reference. Accra. Internal document..

1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation

3. The chronological scope of this evaluation covers the entire 32-month project implementation period from February 2019 to August 2021, with a no-cost extension until 31 October 2021. The geographical scope of the project, and thus of the evaluation, covers Bong and Lofa Counties. The final evaluation also considers the preconditions and arrangements that either contributed to or hindered the adequate implementation of the planned activities, including linkages and partnerships between the project and other major country initiatives.
4. This evaluation was summative in nature. It looked at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and ownership, coherence, and conflict sensitivity of the intervention by following the Development Assistance Criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Special attention was paid to human rights and gender equality. Per the TOR, these criteria will support greater learning about what works and what does not in the Liberian context.
5. The evaluation team revised both the criteria and the evaluation questions at the inception stage. For example, it was decided and approved that the catalytic effect would be considered part of the sustainability criteria. Key evaluation questions were organized around the evaluation criteria, and sub-evaluation questions were developed into an evaluation matrix indicating data collection methods (Appendix 4). In addition, the data collection instruments were developed by a category of actors, as shown in Appendix 9. Evidence was triangulated by employing mixed methods and multiple sources of information to answer each sub-question and gather testimonies from more than one source on each theme in addition to reviewing project documents.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Evaluation approach

6. A theory-based approach based on a reconstructed theory of change (TOC) to carefully analyse the expected results, activities and contextual factors, and their potential to achieve the desired effects, was applied to this evaluation. The approach was participatory and used a non-experimental research design.² The evaluators employed mixed methods, mostly qualitative for primary data collection and quantitative for analysing secondary data. They adopted a collaborative process with frequent communication and consultation with the consortium teams of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). This involved interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries to achieve a learning process and evaluation approach that was context-specific and culturally sensitive.
7. The evaluation was conducted in four phases: i) inception phase; ii) data collection; iii) data analysis and reporting; and iv) delivery of the final evaluation to the FAO Regional Office for Africa (FAO RAF). Data was collected to ensure equitable representation of women and men by purposively selecting participants for key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs according to gender. Quantitative data was generated from secondary sources. This

² The evaluation team cannot consider the evaluation design as experimental since there was no control group or random assignment of target beneficiaries.

included UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) documents, such as annual and monitoring reports, and primary data like the KIIs, the FGDs and site visits to Bong and Lofa Counties.

8. Cross-cutting themes such as human rights, gender equality and governance were considered through specific evaluation questions. Disaggregated data were generated at the different levels of data analysis. An evaluation matrix, structured around the six evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and ownership, coherence, and conflict sensitivity), was developed using the evaluation questions (Appendix 4) and detailing the sources, tools and approaches used to answer each evaluation question. The matrix helped to ensure that the methodology, from design to data collection and analysis, was consistent and rigorous with triangulation across different types of data (qualitative and quantitative) for each category and question. It supported robust comparative analysis across sites, outcomes and outputs. This involved distinctive stakeholders and addressed the full scope of the PBF project at the diverse levels in which it operated (individual, household, community, county or national).
9. The team leader was assisted by a national consultant and a field assistant who were recruited locally to help with interpretation, translation and the FGDs. Internationally recognized ethical standards for research and evaluation were applied. To this end, all interviews and discussions were carried out with free, prior and informed consent. The confidentiality of all participants was protected, unless their permission was expressly sought for sharing their name and insights in either the report or with other stakeholders.

1.4.2 Sampling sources and data collection methods

10. A summary of sampling and data collection methods is available in Appendix 5. The evaluation matrix summarizes the sources of data collection. These include: i) FAO and PBF documents and files from online searches (compiled in FAO SharePoint and Google Drive); ii) the KIIs; iii) the FGDs with women, men and youth beneficiaries;³ iv) field observations with site visits; and v) data from debriefing meetings and communication by email. Appendix 5 summarizes the sampling strategy for the desk review, interviews and discussions, as well as the data sources of this evaluation.
11. Both internal and external documents from FAO and the PBF were reviewed, as indicated in the scope of this evaluation and outlined in the TOR. The bibliography provides a list of documents reviewed. Additional documents collected during field missions were included for reference. Information from the desk review was organized based on the evaluation questions.
12. Per the approved workplan, the evaluators met with 20 key informants. This represents about 95 percent of expected individuals. These consisted of: eight representatives from the three United Nations (UN) agencies (62.5 percent male and 37.5 percent female); five government officials (40 percent male and 60 percent female); two representatives from PBF donors (50 percent male and 50 percent female); and five representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), including implementing partners and community leaders (60 percent male and 40 percent female). However, the evaluators did not meet with the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture nor the Administrative and Technical Assistant of the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, as these stakeholders were not available during the field mission. The distribution of most

³ A list of KII and FGD participants is in Appendix 1.

interviewees was 55 percent male and 45 percent female. About 85 percent of the interviews were done virtually. All FGDs were held face-to-face. Discussions with women were facilitated by the female national consultant, while discussions with men were facilitated by the field assistant. Individual women, men, girls or boys from each group were free to express their opinions. The eight group discussions (four in Bong and four in Lofa) included six mixed groups, plus one group of only men and boys, and one group of only women and girls. Females accounted for 57.5 percent (46/80) and males 42.5 percent (34/80). Appendix 7 provides the actual number of interviews and discussions completed in Bong and Lofa. Apart from Monrovia, where field meetings were only partially completed, the evaluators were able to conduct site visits after each group discussion, as expected, in the two counties.

1.4.3 Data analysis

13. Content analysis is an inductive analysis that involves discovering patterns, themes and categories in data (Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). All data collection tools were codified to ease the data analysis. All analyses considered gender. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic and content analysis. Responses from those interviewed were reviewed and coded by question and each of the evaluation criteria. The team designed an analysis rubric to analyse the data and capture the emerging themes based on pattern analysis (convergent/divergent) and county distribution. Qualitative responses were validated with quantitative information from the PBF reports, community site visits, and other available findings and data.
14. Quantitative data and statistics were analysed with a focus on descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution using Excel. An overall estimate of the PBF performance was estimated for both the output and outcome indicators since progress reports on the results achieved were inconsistent with the results framework. Therefore, the overall output and outcome results were obtained by cross-comparison and validation of each achieved indicator alongside of the results framework. This gave a view of the level of achievement compared to existing targets. Then, a 4-point Likert scale was adopted to provide an estimate of the performance level for the output and outcome indicators, such as: unsatisfactory (less than 25 percent); less than satisfactory (25–50 percent); satisfactory (50–75 percent); and very satisfactory (more than 75 percent). The evaluators cannot assure the reliability and validity of these findings since much of them were not disaggregated. Furthermore, the evaluators employed triangulation among sources, methods and field information to confirm or refute findings from primary and secondary data sources. The findings were triangulated to determine the extent to which they converge or diverge. Convergence allows for confidence in the findings.
15. The analysis sought to determine whether the PBF influenced or made important contributions to the observed results and through what drivers. On the management side, the analysis assessed whether the PBF project made a difference and what the preponderance of evidence says about how well the team made a difference. This also addressed the conditions that are needed to make this type of collaboration successful.

1.5 Challenges and mitigation measures

16. The evaluation workplan was followed as expected. The field mission was completed favourably. No significant limitations were encountered, except for a short delay in the beginning due to a logistical issue that had left no significant impact. However, the

following challenges, with limited overall incidence on the evaluation, were identified and are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Risks and mitigating measures

Key challenges	Measures to mitigate the challenges
Security issue	The evaluators relied on security briefs from UN partners, such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), for each target location. Fieldwork was guided by any available security information, including UN daily data.
Data availability and quality of data	Face-to-face/virtual meetings with key informants were prioritized as much as possible. Relevant official documents, data sets and information were used. Triangulation of data by source and by method was applied.
Staff turnover	The evaluators switched to interviews via Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or telephone to reach staff that no longer participated in the project.
Timing of the fieldwork	KIIs with secondary information on operations were carried out, particularly when said operations could not be observed directly. Available analysis tools, such as individual <i>ad hoc</i> assessments by implementing partners, were also used. When key informants were unavailable, interviews were conducted virtually or via telephone to ensure thorough data collection.
Lack of counterfactuals	With triangulation, the evaluation tapped into key informant perceptions on project implementation and its effects. This was combined with an overall judgment to assess the performance and level of outcome achievements.

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

2. Background and context of the evaluation

2.1 Context of the project

2.1.1 National context

17. The Republic of Liberia is Africa's oldest independent republic. It has remained in transitory status from dictatorship and civil war to democracy. After more than a decade of crisis from 1989 to 2003, the country held elections in 2006. This ushered in Africa's first democratically elected woman to the presidency. After 12 years in power, former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was succeeded in 2017 by the former football star, George Weah. The Republic of Liberia has an estimated population of over 4.6 million people. Over 70 percent of its population falls below the age of 35, which is the cut-off age for youth (Nasser, 2012). With nearly 53 percent of the population between the ages of 15 and 64, the share of the working age population is slightly larger than the non-working age population (0 to 14; 65 and older). Another 44.5 percent of the population is below the age of 14 – the clear majority of whom will enter the labour force over the next decade (Republic of Liberia, 2018).
18. Considered a state with features of fragility, conflict and violence, as defined by the World Bank, the Republic of Liberia has high levels of poverty and underemployment. This is compounded with low human capital development, which has led to significant challenges in the country (World Bank, 2022a). In 14 out of 15 counties, absolute poverty levels had started to decline by the end of the conflict in 2005. However, after the Ebola virus outbreak, absolute poverty has been on the rise since 2014 (Republic of Liberia, 2018). Approximately 670 000 people live in extreme poverty. Furthermore, the country is a net importer of food, which has led to food insecurity among much of its population. Extreme poverty, inequality and widespread deprivation are some of the greatest restraints to sustaining peace. These challenges have hindered growth and sustainable development in the country.
19. The World Bank estimated that the Republic of Liberia's economy has been rebounding after a contraction of two consecutive years. Real gross domestic product growth was projected at 3.6 percent in 2021. This has allowed per capita gross domestic product to increase for the first time since 2016. Notwithstanding, the rebound in economic activity has lowered inflationary pressures. The rate of inflation had slowed steadily to 7.1 percent by July 2021 due to a decline in food prices and the Liberian Central Bank's cautious monetary stance. The country's economy is projected to expand by an average of 4.9 percent in 2022/23. Growth will be driven mainly by the mining sector and external demand. Structural reforms are expected to increase activity in mining, agriculture and construction. Per capita gross domestic product is expected to return to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2023 (World Bank, 2022b).
20. Poverty is higher in rural areas (71.8 percent) than in urban settings (31.5 percent). This is due to the lack of income generation opportunities. Only 18.1 percent of the workforce in paid employment and the informal sector account for 85 percent of all employment in the country (UNDP, 2022a). The nation's young people, especially those in rural areas, face many barriers and obstacles in finding productive employment and establishing sustainable livelihoods. The civil wars exposed Liberians – especially youth – to traumatic experiences that have had immense social, political and humanitarian implications. In fact, these aspects have led to low levels of education and a lack of skills. High poverty and

unemployment rates continue to rise among the country's youth, who feel excluded and marginalized the most. The World Bank noted that 85 percent of young people, who make up two-thirds of the country's population, are unemployed. Many youths are engaged in low-skilled jobs. Oftentimes, such work is in the informal sector or the gig economy. This further exposes them to vulnerability. The *2017 Mapping of opportunities for the consolidation of peace in Liberia*, carried out by the Liberia Peacebuilding Office in 2017, had identified land and property disputes and youth unemployment as key aspects of conflict and fragility in the Republic of Liberia (Mulbah and Dennis, 2017).

21. Land disputes are common in the country. Over the past few years, such disputes have become a major driver of fragility. This is a consequence of wartime displacement and resettlement patterns, as well as persistent ambiguities between customary and formal property rights. Having been particularly hard hit by the civil war and following massive, conflict-induced displacement, land disputes became particularly concentrated in Bong and Lofa. These two neighbouring counties in the country's northwest – where a palpable risk of resurgence remains – are the project sites. Many Liberians live in rural communities and depend on access to land and agricultural resources for sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, gender inequalities have marginalized many women from employment opportunities, and they continue to face barriers in acquiring the skills necessary to enter the labour force.

22. Despite challenges in accessing court-based dispute resolutions due to scarce resources in the judicial system and crowded dockets, the Government of the Republic of Liberia and its partners have developed numerous alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to address land disputes. The Ministry of Justice, with support from partners, including FAO, UNMIL and the United Nations Development Programme, has developed a conflict resolution programme to address and settle a range of disputes and complaints (Ministry of Justice of the Government of Liberia, 2016). There are also existing strategies and frameworks to address conflict in the country. The government and UNMIL also developed the *Liberia peacebuilding plan* (UNMIL and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Liberia, 2017) to ensure continuous peace and security in the country. The plan provides guidance to achieve a peaceful, just and inclusive society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights (UNDP, 2018).

2.1.2 Project description

23. Based on the project document, "Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment" (UNDP, 2022b) aimed to support peace by strengthening peacebuilding structures and selected value chains that create decent jobs for its vulnerable youth beneficiaries. It also fostered entrepreneurial skill development among youth and women to enhance employability, bolster self-employment and support the transition of young people in the labour market. Linked to greater access for beneficiaries in terms of land-related issues and economic decision-making, the project sought to address the socioeconomic needs of youth. It also aimed to create decent farm and non-farm jobs for women and youth who risk being marginalized and disadvantaged. To address the issues related to youth, gender and conflict, this project provided conflict resolution training to women and youth champions in the targeted counties. The project sought to address two interlinked root causes of grievances and conflict in the country, namely the insufficient participation of youth in local dispute resolutions and the lack of employment and livelihood opportunities for young people (UNDP, 2022b).

24. The project was implemented in Bong and Lofa Counties, which were severely affected by the civil war. These counties were selected due to their high level of conflict risk that is linked to the concentration of land disputes in the region and the intense challenge of poverty, food insecurity and lack of educational attainment (UNDP, 2018). Bong County was the rebel base of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the faction accounted for 63 843 (39 percent) of all human rights violations committed in the country (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009). Two of the major warring factions, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Kromah and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, were both from Lofa County and accounted for 24 876 (16 percent) of all human rights violations. Furthermore, 71.3 percent of Bong County’s population lives in absolute poverty, with 55.9 percent in food poverty. This is similar to Lofa County, with 68.7 percent in absolute poverty and 55 percent in food poverty. Moreover, there is a severe lack of education. Bong County has the highest and Lofa County the third-highest population share with no education whatsoever (68 percent for women and 50 percent for men, and 65 percent for women and 41 percent for men, respectively) (UNDP, 2018). Many young people who had joined these warring factions still lack the income and employment opportunities for a viable future. Such a situation does not help in curbing potential violent tendencies.
25. The goal of the project was to contribute to sustained peace and improved social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment. It aimed to sustain peace by addressing the two interlinked root causes of conflict in the country: insufficient participation in local dispute resolution processes, and the lack of employment and livelihood opportunities. The project had two main outcomes and six outputs: two for Outcome 1 and four for Outcome 2 (Table 3). With PBF support, the project lasted 30 months. It started in February 2019 and officially ended in August 2021. The total budget for the project was USD 1 500 000 with USD 760 042 for FAO, USD 405 700 for the ILO and USD 334 334 for the WFP. Of this amount, about 50 percent was allocated to activities in direct pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment. This is consistent with the project design and the enrolment of 55 percent of women beneficiaries in all project activities. Overall, a total of USD 261 747.60 was expended under Outcome 1, while USD 724 058.24 was expended under Outcome 2. A budget absorption of 65.7 percent for both outcomes was recorded in July 2022.

Table 3. Results framework with corresponding SDGs

Outcome 1 – Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace Corresponding UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 5 (Gender equality); 10 (Reduced inequalities); and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)	
Outputs	<p><i>1.1. Land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflict mapped and documented.</i></p> <p><i>1.2. Young women and men, and their communities, have enhanced peacebuilding and conflict resolution capacities.</i></p>
Outcome 2 – Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict Corresponding SDGs: 2 (Zero hunger); 8 (Decent work and economic growth); and 17 (Partnerships for the goals)	
Outputs	<p><i>2.1. Young women and men have enhanced access to market-based entrepreneurial skill trainings and business development services.</i></p> <p><i>2.2. Young farmers have enhanced capacity to manage their agricultural cooperatives effectively.</i></p> <p><i>2.3. Sixty ha of integrated community lowland for rice and vegetable production rehabilitated and developed through employment-intensive techniques.</i></p> <p><i>2.4. Poultry production and productivity improved.</i></p>

Source: The PBF project document.

26. The project provided conflict resolution training to women and youth champions in the conflict-prone communities and districts of Bong and Lofa Counties. The trainings included lessons on cultural tolerance and promoting dialogue, as well as the need to reduce violence and realize improved social cohesion. The project created decent farm and non-farm jobs for women and youth who had been at risk of being marginalized and disadvantaged. It also provided technical and vocational capacity building, entrepreneurship skills and income generation activities. Certain services were made available; however, these were tied to participation in the trainings on conflict mitigation. This further strengthened the link between business development and peacebuilding efforts. Business development services, such as access to finance, infrastructure, technology and networks, were provided to add value to existing products and grow businesses (UNDP, 2018).
27. The evaluation team conducted the KIIs and the FGDs with beneficiaries and key project stakeholders. Key stakeholders included project funders, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Liberia, implementers, participating organizations and conveners (Appendix 3). Initially, the project targeted 1 200 young women and men as direct beneficiaries (50 percent male and 50 percent female) and 5 000 indirect beneficiaries in Bong and Lofa Counties. The selection of beneficiaries was focused on underemployed female and male youth between 18 and 29 years old living in the rural communities of Bong and Lofa. To ensure conflict sensitivity and promote contact between communities, the project included members of different ethnic and religious communities so that the overall population share of the two counties could be reflected.

2.2 Theory of change

28. As part of the assessment, the evaluation team reviewed the existing TOC based on findings from secondary sources. Several mechanisms leading to changes in the PBF project

priorities in Liberia were the basis of this TOC (Appendix 2). These were implemented in cooperation and collaboration with other UN agencies, such as the ILO and the WFP. The project's TOC focused on the following assumption: *"IF young women and men have more conflict resolution skills and better access to local (land) conflict resolution mechanisms and to sustainable rural employment and livelihood opportunities; THEN youth will be able to act as active agents and messengers of peace and be less likely to be affected by drivers of violence; BECAUSE the intervention addresses existing constraints for youth to participate in local conflict resolution, notably access to grievance mechanisms and to increased economic opportunities, as well as lessened grievances over young people's exclusion in the economic sphere"* (FAO RAF, 2021, p. 4).

29. A structural analysis of the project document reveals that the project management was guided by a results-based management process using a concise results and resources framework.⁴ Its implementation was done through a number of activities organized around specific outputs related to two collective outcomes. Outcome 1 aimed to increase access of young women and men to local conflict resolution mechanisms. It focused on land disputes and becoming active agents of peace. In the absence of a baseline for its two indicators, there is no evidence to inform how the project management would have achieved its targets: i) a 20 percent increase in perception change among youth, women and local leaders on their own ability to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote peace; and ii) a 25 percent reduction in land-related disputes and conflict in the project areas. Outcome 2 aimed to provide young women and men in rural areas with access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods by addressing key conflict drivers. Although a baseline study was conducted for Outcome 2 in 2020, it only provides a guideline for comparison of the achieved results of its two performance indicators, as well as the four output indicators. The evaluators found these targets to be reasonable given the limited financial capacity and the concentration of project activities in both Bong and Lofa Counties.
30. The project implementation strategy was led by FAO with the participation of the ILO and the WFP. Each agency shared the implementation modalities through their decentralized offices in Bong and Lofa. They also collaborated with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs that had proven experience in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution. These organizations served as implementing partners in providing technical inputs. Key partners such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection were involved in providing decentralized services at county and district levels. The procurement of assets and the selection of implementing partners and activities were conducted according to individual agency rules and regulations that aligned with the PBF requirements.
31. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the communications and visibility strategy were designed to be jointly managed by agencies. This would ensure timely and informative communications for all project beneficiaries and stakeholders, including public and private development partners within the Republic of Liberia. As an exit strategy, the project prioritized commitment from the national government, support from a strong coalition of stakeholders, and strong PBF and key partner involvement at all stages. The project also envisaged a collaboration with international financing institutions, such as the World Bank and others operating in Liberia, as well as the private sector.

⁴ The results and resources framework are in Annex 2.

32. Major risks and assumptions that may have hindered the intervention include: i) the security situation as it compromises action plans and activities; ii) difficulties in maintaining acquired knowledge due to potential disruptions; iii) the lack of a multisector coordination mechanism among FAO, the ILO and the WFP; iv) the absence of an existing legal framework to ensure better representation of women, girls and boys; v) sociocultural norms; and vi) weak motivation and commitment among civil society leaders and religious advocates on the participation of women and young girls in the process of national reconciliation.

3. Findings

33. The findings are based on the evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions.

3.1 Relevance

Box 1. Key findings: Relevance

The PBF project design aligned with national strategic documents, such as the *Pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development (PAPD)*, in terms of peace, security, gender equality, agriculture, and livelihood and sustainable development. The project also aligned with the SDGs through its contribution to the implementation of six SDGs. Furthermore, the project was relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups in terms of peacebuilding, livelihoods and sustaining peace. Its approach was strategically articulated to produce the desired change using an explicit TOC.

3.1.1 Strategic alignment to peacebuilding goals and challenges during project design

34. According to the project's vision, the key informants agreed that the PBF had aimed to support war-torn or conflict-prone countries in promoting peace and transition from an emergency situation to one of development. The PBF project design explicitly aligned with the country's peacebuilding goals and challenges, most of which are expressed in national strategic documents on peace, security, gender equality, agriculture, and livelihood and sustainable development. Special attention was placed on project alignment with the National Development Agenda for 2018–2024, which links peacebuilding priorities to the achievements of the SDGs, the *Pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development (PAPD)* 2018–2023 (Republic of Liberia, 2018) and the *Agenda for transformation 2012–2017* (Republic of Liberia, 2013) (Table 4). The project emphasized the youth as potential actors of peace. It did so through agriculture and services construction to support peacebuilding at the community level.

Table 4. PBF alignment to the national framework

Sector/project outcomes	National document focus areas
Outcome 1 – Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace	<p>Pillar I Peace, security and rule of law (Sections 8.2 Peace and reconciliation, and 8.3 Justice and rule of law) aligns with the project in its attempt to adopt a multifaceted approach throughout all elements of society. This must grow organically over time to palliate the inadequate capacity and inefficiency in laws, practices and procedures that inhibit the proper and prompt functioning of the justice sector.</p> <p>Pillar IV Governance and public institutions (Section 11.1 Political governance) aligns with the project in its attempt to engage target groups and community members by ensuring equitable, peaceful, transparent, and inclusive peacebuilding structures and enhanced political governance at the local level.</p> <p>Pillar V Cross-cutting issues (Sections 12.1 Gender equality, 12.3 Persons with disabilities, 12.4 Youth empowerment, 12.6 HIV/AIDs and 12.7 Human rights) aligns with the project in its attempt to promote equity, gender equality and youth empowerment, reduce gender-based violence and advance human rights.</p>
Outcome 2 – Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict	<p>Pillar II Economic transformation (Sections 9.1 Private sector development, 9.3 Infrastructure, 9.4 Agriculture and food security, and 9.7 Capacity development needs and opportunity for economic transformation sectors) aligns with the project in its attempt to support sustainable small-scale business development.</p> <p>Pillar III Human development (Section 10.3 Social protection) aligns with the project in its attempt to build social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable households and groups that suffer from poverty and hunger by enhancing resilience to risks and shocks.</p>

Source: Adapted from Republic of Liberia, 2018, *Pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development (PAPD): A five-year national development plan towards accelerated, inclusive, and sustainable development (July 2018–June 2023)* and Republic of Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 2013, *Agenda for transformation: Steps towards Liberia Rising 2030. Liberia's medium term economic growth and development strategy (2012–2017)*, Monrovia.

35. Furthermore, the project aligned with existing strategies and frameworks for peacebuilding, such as the *Liberia peacebuilding plan* (UNMIL and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Liberia, 2017, Phase II), which aims to address poverty and support sustainable livelihoods and development opportunities with a focus on women's economic empowerment and youth employment. According to the consortium team, specific orientations from a rapid conflict analysis guided the selection of the two counties. This involved a history of conflict related to land management, religion, intermarriages and the lack of employment opportunities for youth – many of whom had been either orphaned or left alone and jobless in the rural areas. The two targeted counties are the country's most fragile. Both face peacebuilding challenges, and this agricultural project was positioned as a strategy to mitigate conflict. Bringing in people from different backgrounds to collaborate on providing livelihood opportunities that address peacebuilding at its root was indeed underscored. Moreover, the project targeted the country's most violent communities and aimed to prevent conflict and build peace among different ethnic groups, specifically Mandingo and Loma, which had been in conflict for decades.

3.1.2 Relevance of the project to the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs, especially SDG 16

36. The desk review and the KII evidence asserts that the PBF project was relevant to and aligned with both the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs, especially SDG 16. Its expected outcomes complemented the UN priorities on peacebuilding, as shown in Table 5. The project emphasized the promotion of peaceful and inclusive communities, as well as

support for resilience skills and capacities of targeted beneficiaries in Bong and Lofa. It involved marginalized and vulnerable groups, and sought to empower them in bringing peace to the area. The UN supports the government's efforts to promote sustained peace, and to facilitate transitional action plans and their implementation. This involves peaceful elections and governance mechanisms. The UN also supports the government in ensuring that its land tenure system and land rights are implemented. The UN team has worked to help Liberians gain access to justice, and support young people in livelihood activities and business development.

37. Outcome 1 aligns with SDGs 5, 10 and 16, whereas Outcome 2 aligns with SDGs 2, 8 and 17. Special attention was placed on women and youth as key target beneficiaries, as dictated by the Liberian development context. The project sought to address barriers to employment opportunities and community livelihoods by using agricultural activities for income generation and conflict mitigation.

Table 5. Alignment to the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs

Sector/project outcomes	UN peacebuilding mandate	Corresponding SDGs
1 – Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth political engagement - Justice and human rights - Peaceful management of concession-related conflict 	5 – Gender equality 10 – Reduced inequalities 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions
2 – Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's empowerment 	2 – Zero hunger 8 – Decent work and economic growth 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Source: PBF desk review.

38. The project was highly relevant since it sought to facilitate peace among communities and build capacity among young people so that they could sustain their families. Many young people united under one message for peace. The project targeted both the neediest and the most likely to benefit from its actions.

3.1.3 Relevance of the project to the needs and priorities of the target groups and beneficiaries

39. Evidence from annual reports and the FGDs indicate that the PBF project was highly relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups in terms of peacebuilding, livelihood activities and sustaining peace. The project provided a resilience mechanism for communities by targeting women and youth in Bong and Lofa Counties so that they could obtain sources of incomes.
40. Peacebuilding and local governance were emphasized by empowering young people under the Ministry of Youth and Sports through peace and livelihood opportunities. The objective aimed to ensure peace and social cohesion, and to strengthen the role of young women and men in peacebuilding. Overall, this gathered target beneficiaries under an awareness campaign for peace. The project supported and strengthened entrepreneurship skills and practices of beneficiaries in order to provide sustainable livelihoods through youth business programmes in the two counties. Even though the project was relevant to the needs of the target groups, most of the target beneficiaries were not consulted at the

design stage. This was corroborated through discussions with stakeholders and reports on the design stage. Furthermore, certain key project elements had mixed results, particularly when it came to livelihood activities like cropping and vegetable production. Indeed, while cropping and vegetable production took place in each project community,⁵ rarely did more than one production cycle take place at the time of evaluation. This limited the possible assessment of the endeavour's effectiveness or sustainability, and its potential impact on livelihoods.⁶

Box 2. Testimony by an FGD participant from the Salala District, Lofa County

"I believe the project was necessary in every way because it brought unity among young people. The project also taught people how to work together to achieve one goal. Before the launching of the project, young people usually got involved in violent activities. Since the start of the project, we have seen a massive reduction in violent activities in the communities because young people are involved in meaningful activities. Thanks to the partners who made it possible."

An FGD participant in the Salala District, Lofa County

Source: Collected by the evaluation team, Lofa County, Republic of Liberia.

3.1.4 Extent to which the TOC clearly articulated assumptions on why its approach would lead to the desired change

41. Evidence from the desk review, especially the PBF document framework and the annual reports, supports that the project approach was strategically articulated to produce the desired change. The TOC was built on the following assumption: *"IF young women and men have more conflict resolution skills and better access to local (land) conflict resolution mechanisms and to sustainable rural employment and livelihood opportunities; THEN youth will be able to act as active agents and messengers of peace and be less likely to be affected by drivers of violence; BECAUSE the intervention addresses existing constraints for youth to participate in local conflict resolution, notably access to grievance mechanisms and to increased economic opportunities, as well as lessened grievances over young people's exclusion in the economic sphere"* (FAO RAF, 2021, p. 4). To achieve its goal towards this assumption, the TOC was explicit in the two project outcomes that had been designed as a collective goal for the consortium team (Figure 1). In fact and as expected, the mobilization of youth to engage in peacebuilding and to develop non-violent means of expressing grievances on land conflict provided the foundation for not only long-term peace but also livelihood opportunities.

⁵ Bong County: Salala – rice; Totota – maize; and Tumutu – cucumber, sweet pepper, onions and cabbage. Lofa County: Salayea – hot pepper, sweet pepper and cucumber; and Zorzor – rice. For poultry, the first production cycle had commenced by the end of funding, despite a delay in supply input.

⁶ Irrigation support was not optimal at the vegetable producing sites. This was the case for the largest of the three sites, Totota, which was integrated with poultry as a model garden. The issue was largely due to the economic effects of COVID-19, such as supply chain disruptions, the increased cost of goods and services, and containment measures, as well as double-digit inflation.

Figure 1. Simplified TOC representation

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on the project document and concept note.

42. The articulation of how to bring about change and realize the project goal is outlined in the following components, as expressed by the consortium team and the PBF:
- i. Key activities. i) Outcome 1 (map and document land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflict, and enhance the capacities of young women and men, and their communities, for peacebuilding and conflict resolution); ii) Outcome 2 (enhance access for young women and men to participate in market-based entrepreneurial skill trainings and business development services; enhance the capacities of youth farmers to manage their agricultural cooperative effectively; rehabilitate and develop 30 ha of integrated community lowland for rice and vegetable production through employment-intensive techniques; and improve poultry production and productivity).
 - ii. Expertise. This was to be provided by the consortium team of both national and international specialists and capable field specialists. Each of the three agencies committed to signing a letter of agreement with local NGOs and CSOs that had proven experience in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution. They were to serve as implementing partners in providing technical inputs.
 - iii. Partnership. The project was to be implemented in partnership with the decentralized services of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection at county and district levels.
 - iv. Targeted location and beneficiaries. This project focused on two target groups living in the rural communities of Bong and Lofa Counties. It included members of different ethnic and religious communities and their ability mitigate conflict sensitivity. It targeted 50 percent women and 50 percent men to ensure that female

and male participants had equal opportunities in accessing the technologies introduced by the project.

43. The evaluators found that the above components were logical, relevant and valid for the realities on the ground. Key activities directly responded to the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries, as expressed in the FGDs. However, the plan of simultaneously working on all of these components within the limited project period coordinated by three agencies was ambitious, especially in the county's existing security and political context. In effect, the project had delays in finalizing the agriculture component when it came to poultry. Indeed, there were delays in the construction of poultry infrastructure and equipment, such as housing, incubators, feeders, water pots, a heater, fencing, flooring, and coops and cages. There were also delays in delivering capacity. This negatively impacted the achievement of the intermediary results since the economic aspect started later than planned. These were compounded by a domino effect: a delay in the delivery of construction facilities⁷ subsequently delayed both training and the finalization of supply inputs, given the facility's failure to host said inputs.

3.2 Effectiveness

Box 3. Key findings: Effectiveness

The PBF project reached significant targets for most of its performance indicators at outcome and output levels. The project created the intended positive change in peacebuilding among women and men, livelihood development for alternative income sources and food security. In addition, the project provided access to local conflict resolution mechanisms through the participatory engagement of both women and men on the conflict resolution committees in each county. They participated in peacebuilding dialogues and worked towards their community-based planning processes. Factors that facilitated these results include: the promotion of peace through the involvement of community and religious leaders as catalytic agents in gathering community members; partnership among the consortium team to share roles and resources; the equal inclusion of both women and men; and the targeting of young people who are prone to violence.

However, negative factors included delays in the installation of the irrigation systems; delays in acquiring and acting upon received feedback; traditions and local norms; weak coordination at the implementation stage; the absence of a joint M&E system for field activities and reporting; and the COVID-19 pandemic. The project supported gender-responsive peacebuilding with equal participation of women, men and youth in the design and implementation phases. As a gender-sensitive project, it provided economic empowerment opportunities for both women and men.

3.2.1 Extent to which the project achieved its intended objectives and contributed to the country's strategic plans, legislative agendas and policies

44. To frame the investigation process and assess progress made towards PBF outcomes, outputs and results, the evaluators conducted a desk review in which they focused on outcome and output indicators. The result of this analysis is that, overall, the intended output and outcome indicators can be considered specific, measurable, achievable,

⁷ The initial delay led to a contract cancellation and the reassignment to two new contractors to complete the poultry houses. Arrow Group completed them in Gangloata, and IDEAL Contractors delivered them in Totota. Both contractors took this over from Concrete Menders after almost a year of delay.

relevant and time-bound. The evaluators surmise that this should have eased the measurement and reporting processes. However, as confirmed by the desk review and the KIs – and despite the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound nature of the output and outcome indicators as conceived – the reporting process did not follow the reporting scheme because not all indicators were distinctively linked or aligned to the results framework. The evaluators found no evidence of control nor verification means for the achieved indicators by each member of the consortium team, that is, FAO, the ILO and the WFP.

45. Furthermore, in contrast to the intended outcome and output indicators, the rationale behind these realized in the results framework is not explicit. This, in turn, makes the link between the outcome indicator and the result tenuous. One such example is the link between Outcome 1: “Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace” and the intended project result of “Increased access of youth to economic opportunities and their empowerment to participate in conflict resolution.” This link appears in the TOC and is theoretically sound and appropriate. However, in reality, the lack of a baseline, plus no perception survey with an implicit, unverifiable link, renders the adequate conceptual connection weak in practice. Similarly, Outcome 2: “Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict” had the intended project result of “Increased access of youth to economic opportunities and their empowerment to participate in conflict resolution.” Here, there is a strong conceptual and logical link, but it could not be verified in practice. Nevertheless, the consortium team made significant efforts to achieve most of the target indicators as reported for each outcome and output (Tables 6 and 7). The project largely achieved its intended outcomes and output indicators with some variations, per the addressed activities and counties.

3.2.2 Outcome 1: Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace

46. Progress reports, as well as the KIs and the FGDs, reveal that the project created access to local conflict resolution mechanisms under community-based monitoring structures that focused on land disputes. These mechanisms were for young women and men. Through these, they became active agents of peace. However, the perception survey could not assess, for lack of answers, the extent to which change occurred among youth, women and local leaders in their ability to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote peace. At the output level, the evaluators found that the consortium team made significant progress in the achievement of all target indicators, despite the limited availability of reliable and disaggregated data. Large contributions to peacebuilding were made by reducing conflict around land-related disputes in the project areas – all of which created social cohesion among members of the recipient communities. Furthermore, information from the desk review and the FGDs stressed that young women and men participated in all peacebuilding dialogues in the two counties following the establishment of community-based monitoring structures. Further, they were able to restart community-based participatory planning in both Salala and Totota (Bong County), as well as sociocultural activities, community mobilization and an awareness raising campaign for peace and development. The collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports helped

bring governmental support for the project's peacebuilding initiatives. This was useful in giving hope, building confidence and establishing trust among community members.

Table 6. Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 1 and its related output indicators

Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets	Rate (%)	Assessment based on reported ⁱ rate only
Outcome 1 – Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace				Partially achieved
1.1 – % change in perceptions among youth, women and local leaders on their own ability to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote peace	0	At least a 20 percent increase in perception change	N/A	Unsatisfactory (not achieved)
1.2 – % change in the number of land-related disputes and conflict in the project areas	0	At least a 25 percent reduction in land-related disputes and conflict	50	Satisfactory
Output 1.1 – Land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflict mapped and documented				Very satisfactory
1.1.1 – # of land-, youth- and gender-related conflict drivers mapped and documented	One report on the drivers of conflict	One report completed	100	Very satisfactory
1.1.2 – # of updated conflict profiles	Existing conflict profile	Conflict driver profile updated	100	Very satisfactory
Output 1.2 – Young women and men, and their communities, have enhanced peacebuilding and conflict resolution capacities				Very satisfactory
1.2.1 – # of community-based participatory planning sessions conducted	0	At least four community-based planning processes in Bong and Lofa Counties	100	Very satisfactory
1.2.2 – # of peacebuilding structures strengthened	0	At least one in each county, including the Liberia Land Authority	100	Very satisfactory
1.3 - # of sociocultural activities, community mobilization initiatives and awareness raising campaigns conducted	0	At least two in each county	100	Very satisfactory
1.4 – # of dialogues and capacity building modules for peacebuilding organized	0	Young women and men participating in at least four peacebuilding dialogues	100	Very satisfactory

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on analysis and progress reports.

Legend: less than 25 percent = very unsatisfactory; 25–50 percent = unsatisfactory; 50–75 percent = satisfactory; above 75 percent = very satisfactory

Note: ⁱ Achievement rates, as found in the project reports, are assessed here. The assessment does not reflect the evaluation team's opinion. Rather, it is a grading of the numerical percentage rate of achievement reached.

3.2.3 Outcome 2: Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict

47. The project provided the following: trainings and workshops; improved cultivation techniques and poultry productivity for livelihood development; specific tools and techniques; and market-oriented support. All of these components were helpful for young women and men in rural areas in accessing sustainable agricultural livelihoods and therefore addressing key drivers of conflict. The project completed significant progress towards achieving the outcome and outputs; however, some outputs remain unfinished and require additional efforts to get them fully completed.⁸
48. The project could have greatly benefited from carrying out a perception survey, such as a household survey to assess any change in the economic situation of the target beneficiaries at the outcome level. The evaluators, based on discussions with beneficiaries, noted that some youths (about 25 percent of the expected target) still do not have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods. However, a project-wide perception survey would have strengthened and validated this empirical assessment. The KIs and FGDs showed that many, if not most, beneficiaries felt demotivated after the livelihood component was delayed. This held especially true among the youth. As a result, the project saw a massive reduction in its workforce, which hindered productivity.
49. At the output level, most of the target indicators were achieved. However, the evaluators did not find evidence to properly rate progress towards the achievement of certain indicators, such as 2.1.5 (financial organizations receiving technical support) and 2.1.7 (market network established). In fact, site visits and FGDs showed that while market stalls were constructed in Bong and Lofa, the market network had yet to be established and made functional. Most of the irrigation systems that had been rehabilitated did not function during the dry season and require maintenance. Nevertheless, training through the Start and Improve Your Business methodology provided presentation skills, as well as business support services to entrepreneurs. The project sustainably supported youth and their involvement in cooperatives. In fact, it targeted individuals who trained beneficiaries so that the trainers could then educate others. The Start and Improve Your Business tool was largely distributed to all group members as guidance on doing business. The overall assessment of the progress towards achievement of Outcome 2 and its related outputs are summarized in Table 7. As mentioned (see paragraph 45), the outcome and output level indicators, irrespective of their achievements, do not necessarily translate into project results. These indicators are not always explicitly linked to the project's logical framework. One such example is that while irrigation systems were built and are considered positive achievements, they do not contribute to project results when they do not function. Nevertheless, project performance is based on the level of achievement of these target indicators, while project effectiveness is based on its results.

⁸ The evaluation team learned that as of July 2022, FAO, as the lead and technical agency, acknowledged this challenge and committed an additional USD 75 000 to support improved irrigation, value-added components and marketing for the Totota model garden. Procurement for a fully solar-powered irrigation system was to be concluded. It should be noted that this could not be verified by the evaluation team, but it does speak to the commitment of FAO to the project.

Table 7. Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 2 and its related outputs

Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets	Rate (%)	Assessment based on reported rate only
Outcome 2 – Young women and men in rural areas have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods, which address the key drivers of conflict				Satisfactory
2.1 – % of targeted youth with access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods	16	At least 50 percent of targeted youth (male 50 percent and female 50 percent)	75 (not disaggregated)	Very satisfactory
2.2 – % of participants who expect their future economic situation to be better than their present economic situation	0	At least 50 percent of targeted youth (male 50 percent and female 50 percent)	50 (not disaggregated)	Satisfactory
Output 2.1 – Young women and men have enhanced access to market-based entrepreneurial skill trainings and business development services				Satisfactory
2.1.1 – # of livelihood activities that youth engaged in for self-reliance	51.84 percent have at least two livelihoods	At least three livelihoods (rice, assorted vegetables and poultry products)	100	Very satisfactory
2.1.2 – # of training manuals adapted to the local context	0	At least two (Start and Improve Your Business and Farmer Field and Life Schools Facilitator's Guide)	100	Very satisfactory
2.1.3 – # of mentorship and business management trainings conducted	0	At least two in Nimba and Bong	100	Very satisfactory
Indicator 2.1.4 - # of capacity building trainings conducted	0	At least two in Bong and Lofa	100	Very satisfactory
2.1.5 – # of financial organizations receiving technical support	0	At least two financial organizations per county	N/A	Unsatisfactory (not achieved)
2.1.6 – # of products competitive on the market against imported products	0	At least three products (rice, assorted vegetables and poultry products)	33 ⁱ	Moderately unsatisfactory
2.1.7 – # of market networks established	0	At least one functional market network	50 (partially achieved)	Unsatisfactory (not achieved)
2.1.8 – # of agroprocessing centres established	0	One equipped centre available	50 (partially achieved)	Unsatisfactory (not achieved)
Output 2.2 – Youth farmers have enhanced capacity to manage their agricultural cooperative effectively				Satisfactory
2.2.1 – # of local partners engaged in developing and supporting youth agricultural cooperatives identified	1	At least two	50	Moderately satisfactory
2.2.2 – # of financial institutions identified and assessed	0	At least two in Bong and Lofa	50	Moderately satisfactory
2.2.3 – My.COOP training package adapted and available in the local language	0	My.COOP training package available in the two selected counties	100	Very satisfactory
2.2.4 – # of training of trainers workshops conducted	0	Two training of trainers workshops	100	Very satisfactory
2.2.5 – Number of youth groups trained in the formation of cooperatives using the My.COOP training package	0	Six youth and women's groups trained	100	Very satisfactory

Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets	Rate (%)	Assessment based on reported rate only
Output 2.3 – Thirty ha of integrated community lowland for rice and vegetable production rehabilitated and developed through employment-intensive techniques				Very satisfactory
2.3.1 – # of ha identified and selected	0	30 ha in Bong and Lofa	100	Very satisfactory
2.3.2 – % of participants who reported feeling comfortable working alongside a member of another social group	0	At least 50 percent of targeted beneficiaries (male 50 percent and female 50 percent)	100 (not disaggregated)	Very satisfactory
2.3.3 – # of farm implement sets, planting materials and agroprocessors distributed to beneficiaries	0	One assorted hand tool and rain boots	100	Very satisfactory
2.3.4 – # of irrigation systems rehabilitated and developed	0	Eight simple irrigation technology systems	62.5 (5)	Satisfactory
2.3.5 – # of post-harvest facilities constructed	0	Two in Bong and Lofa	100	Very satisfactory
2.3.5 – # of trainings conducted for rice and vegetables	0	Four in Bong and Lofa	100	Very satisfactory
2.3.6 – # of trainings conducted for asset creation on integrated lowland productivity and behavioural change communication to improve youth participation in agriculture	0	Six trainings (three in Bong and three in Lofa)	100	Very satisfactory
Output 2.4 – Poultry production and productivity improved				Very satisfactory
2.4.1 – # of sites identified for poultry production	0	Four sites in two counties	100	Very satisfactory
2.4.2 – # of raw materials identified locally	0	At least three local raw materials (maize, beans and supplements)	100	Very satisfactory
2.4.3 – # of birds and associated poultry materials distributed to beneficiaries	0	Day-old chicks: 5 000 Feed: 16.5 t	100	Very satisfactory
2.4.4 – # of trainings conducted	0	Four trainings in Bong and Lofa	100	Very satisfactory

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team based on analysis and progress reports.

Legend: less than 25 percent = Very unsatisfactory; 25–50 percent = Unsatisfactory; 50–75 percent = Satisfactory; above 75 percent = Very satisfactory

Note: ¹ Only poultry products (one out of three intended products) were targeted and became competitive.

3.2.4 Unintended positive and negative changes generated by the project

50. The desk review, the KIIs and the FGDs allowed the evaluators to see that the project coincided with a period of peace in both locations, and that perhaps it had contributed to it in a very short time. In fact, no additional attack nor ambush, and no hazardous, unsecure events were recorded in the two communities during the life of the project. FAO-supported trainings and income generation activities, especially for youth, offered engagement opportunities and motivation for other beneficiary groups. Young people learned from economic activities such as farming and poultry production. In addition, the project captured the attention of local authorities, especially the agriculture extension workers who had visited the group beneficiaries, even without the presence of any of the three agencies.

Finally, the storage or machine warehouses for rice helped avoid any shortage. Other community members benefited from these assets as they could process their own grains with the machine installed.

51. An unexpected water shortage occurred in Ganglota, independently of the irrigation systems built for the modern garden in Totota. Indeed, this irrigation system remained dysfunctional until the spring of 2022 after it had stopped working due to a mechanical failure that could not be attributed to a project shortcoming. Furthermore, FGD participants argued that the project had targeted only part of the community, leaving members behind. This is explained by a budget shortfall that led the ILO to stop offering incentives. COVID-19 also caused a delay of two to three months in the disbursement of funds. Finally, the country's history of war, traditions and norms that are largely tied to male dominance and gender inequality, the slow pace of UN agencies and the many breaks suffered by the project discouraged participation. This led to project beneficiary dropouts, particularly in the livelihood components.

3.2.5 Positive and negatives factors that affected project performance

3.2.5.1 Positive factors

52. The desk review, as well as the KIIs, the FGDs and site visits, helped identify positive and negative factors affecting project performance. Regarding positive factors, community and religious leadership helped support peacebuilding activities since they served as catalytic agents to gather the participation of community members. The consortium team brought key financial, technical and knowledge resources to the implementation process of the overall activities. The project's planning phase was greatly supported by joint planning between agencies and the participation of the government counterpart in coordinating the project. For example, FAO provided improved seeds and fertilizers, built a poultry house and delivered basic knowledge. The WFP supported the linkage of farmers to their native communities through social cohesion and peacebuilding actions, which were facilitated by the establishment of peacebuilding structures in the two counties. The ILO supported education and business trainings for farmers, which enabled them to join cooperatives and become potential entrepreneurs. Beneficiaries affirmed that the trainings improved project performance. This joint performance was strong during the planning phase but less so during the implementation and monitoring of the project.
53. Both women and men agreed that training and targeting young people who are prone to violence positively affected the project's performance. This included the involvement of different mitigation groups such as community and religious leaders in order to address the conflict drivers. Getting people to sit together and look at how they manage peace boosted project performance. Trainings on sustainable agriculture with the provision of materials, such as a training manual on lowland production so that they can train others, also contributed to this effect. Additionally, those interviewed stressed that the peace component greatly facilitated the implementation of livelihood activities as it allowed for security, confidence and trust in communities – especially among those working to achieve the same goal.

3.2.5.2 Negative factors

54. Notwithstanding, various negative factors hindered project performance. Delays in the installation of the irrigation system, which had never worked properly, created a shortage

of water during the dry season. The FAO management team was slow at providing feedback on the implementation process. Delays in providing inputs, such as seeds and poultry house construction, proved to be another challenge for the project's economic aspects. Furthermore, it took time for people to get used to working together. In fact, most of them had never worked in a group before this intervention. Particularly, getting farmers to work and collaborate through a common schedule was challenging. They also had high expectations about being provided everything they needed. In the end, the logistical issues had been resolved for the most part, yet the expectations were unmet.

55. Even though the consortium team worked together in the planning stage, the evaluators found that this collaboration was largely absent during implementation. One of the biggest challenges was related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which substantially hindered project performance. Most of the delays, as well as various breaks during the implementation phase, were due to government restrictions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The consortium team shifted to remote, online work to manage the planned activities. The pandemic led to changes in the timeline of field activities due to hurdles during implementation, such as: inaccessible farming supplies; increased commodity and transportation costs; and frequent meeting cancellations. Furthermore, people stated that the construction of the poultry house had been delayed. The COVID-19 pandemic also slowed down some of the project activities. There were delays in the disbursement of funds and contractors were unable to deliver on time.

3.2.6 Extent to which gender equality and women's empowerment were included in the design and implementation to support gender-responsible peacebuilding

56. Gender equality was a major aspect of the project. According to the PBF project document, the project design included women, men and youth (girls and boys) from the two counties. With the participation of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the project's scope was reviewed against existing gender inclusion policies during the planning stage. It ensured the equal participation of young women and men in decision-making and implementation of the project's activities. Every activity was gender-sensitive and youth inclusive. Young women and men were treated the same, and women were empowered through engagement in agriculture-based livelihoods like farming rice and vegetables or raising poultry. The adoption of a community action plan helped build the capacities of local groups on issues like domestic violence. This was done through community-based organizations.
57. The same balance of women, men and youth was adopted for trainings and capacity building activities of the selected target beneficiaries. Here, a gender matrix was used to ensure gender balance. Group leadership showed an overall gender balance. At some sites, like Salala, most of the participants were women. They were empowered through livelihood skill opportunities, such as entrepreneurship trainings.
58. Indeed, gender sensitivity was one of the most important benefits of the project. This aspect ensured equitable participation of both women and men in the trainings. Ultimately, this led to changes in the gender dynamics of the communities. Female participation was high. For example, there were more women than men trained in peacebuilding and agriculture. Women played major roles during implementation and were equally represented in trainings. There was no discrimination.

Box 4. Testimony from an FGD participant in Lofa County

“Women now have access to resources to help themselves. We have a source of livelihood. We know how to start a business and manage one. Our lives have been impacted positively. I am happy to say that women came out of the project empowered with skills that they can use to help themselves.”

A female participant during an FGD in Lofa County

Source: Collected by the evaluation team, Lofa County, Republic of Liberia.

3.3 Efficiency

Box 5. Key findings: Efficiency

The PBF project was efficient in achieving its expected results. The consortium team adopted a joint M&E framework at inception. It was, however, less effective during the implementation and monitoring stages. Funds were delivered on time. Despite delays in the completion of project activities, there was no significant impact on the achieved results. Most data were not disaggregated due to the absence of systematic data collection. The PBF project was a good investment since it had a strategic approach to the efficient use of available resources. Nevertheless, effective joint activities, common operations and joint procurement, as well as the sharing of information and responsibilities and the pursuit of collective outcomes could have enhanced project management and provided cost-efficient deliverables.

3.3.1 Project staffing, planning, procurement and coordination efficiency, and the delivery of project funds and activities

59. The project was efficient in achieving its expected results. The desk review of the progress reports and the KIs revealed that the consortium team adopted joint programming and joint planning with shared roles and responsibilities at the design stage. However, the expected synergies and coordination were inadequately developed during the project’s implementation and monitoring phases. Each agency worked individually on the procurement and management of its activities. Coordination was limited by the unavailability of staff, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, the agencies attended board meetings on a non-regular basis to discuss difficulties and challenges, and make adequate decisions with government representatives.
60. The evaluators found that the agencies had adopted a joint M&E strategy at the design phase but did not realize it during implementation. The evaluation team also found that field visits were conducted by each agency individually, but there was no joint M&E report. Only FAO and the WFP have a dedicated officer in charge of M&E and reporting. Monitoring on behalf of the ILO may have been hindered by the lack of such an officer and explains why there were no field visits on record. Nevertheless, overall cooperation among the partners was deemed adequate by the evaluation team. Each of the three agencies had staff with the right skills needed to implement the project. The M&E activities were conducted in the field by the agriculture technicians assigned by FAO. These technicians conducted routine monitoring to determine if the project’s activities were on track. While joint monitoring visits had been planned, these were cancelled due to the government’s COVID-19 measures. In January 2020, the PBF project conducted a monitoring visit to touch

base on the progress achieved and provide adequate advice on existing gaps and field challenges.

Figure 2. An FAO-supported poultry house in the Salala District



Bong County, Republic of Liberia.

61. Evidence from the KIIs and the progress reports stressed that although funds were usually delivered on time, various delays were recorded at different stages of implementation. This involved the distribution of inputs to farmers; the construction of poultry houses and irrigation systems; trainings; and the monitoring of field activities. Participants stated that the UN administration was not very flexible. This caused long delays in the procurement and delivery of field materials in terms of the livelihood component. Field visits confirmed that livelihood activities, such as the production and development of value chains for grains and vegetables, were still underway in Bong and Lofa.⁹

3.3.2 Collection and use of data to monitor results, and the effectiveness of updated data to provide adaptive project management

62. Discussions with the consortium team and a desk review revealed that there was effective monthly reporting from all field staff. Although delays were encountered with feedback, no negative impact on the overall process was recorded. Each agency used its own monitoring data to review the management process of its field activities. There was no evidence of any shared data among agencies to coordinate field activities. Data quality is key to effectively enhance mutual accountability between agencies. However, this mutual accountability did

⁹ In fact, two FAO technicians in Bong and Lofa continue to engage with project beneficiaries. Under FAO's sustainability approach, these beneficiaries are now enrolled as FAO- and Ministry of Agriculture-supported farmers and value chain actors. This could not be verified by the evaluation team since the information was received outside of the evaluation period; however, it does speak to FAO's commitment to the project.

not occur in the absence of an appropriate baseline with data disaggregated by geographic location, sex, community and typology of the beneficiaries.

63. The evaluators did not find any evidence of a systematic data collection mechanism to inform decision-making. Discussions with the consortium team stressed that there was no effective data collection system over the course of the project, except for records that were kept by the project's focal person and FAO field technicians. There were a few individual monitoring visits where the consortium team shared challenges and opportunities during meetings in Monrovia. In fact, apart from monthly project reports, agencies did not really collect data systematically. Rather, monthly reports always included challenges and recommendations to ease the decision-making process. This mitigated the absence of a systematic monitoring system. Per the project design framework, two surveys should have been conducted. There was a plan to conduct mobile surveys using ODK or Epicollect to measure the project's peacebuilding outcomes. This involved a baseline survey of participants' perceptions and behaviour regarding their peacebuilding capacities, economic opportunities, grievances and social cohesion. A second survey was scheduled towards the end of the project in order to document the changes in the perceptions and attitudes of the participants, as well as the beneficiaries' satisfaction with the project. However, the evaluators found no evidence that these data collection mechanisms had provided adaptive management avenues for the project.

3.3.3 Extent to which the project was a good investment and an efficient use of resources

64. The PBF project was a good investment since it was strategic in the efficient use of available resources. The desk review and the KIIs revealed that the project adopted a training of trainers model for all the training packages delivered to support progress towards their expected results. This included an increased number of farmers with enhanced capacity to manage their agricultural cooperatives effectively by employing the intensive techniques received. Furthermore, field technicians were recruited locally in each of the two counties in an effort to reduce costs and create local ownership of the project. Throughout implementation, each agency had its own procurement and procedures but shared certain practices. For example, a request for money was not possible when an agency was below 75 percent of delivery. These management processes were very useful in reducing the transaction costs of the project deliveries. However, there was no reliable data on the extent to which transaction costs were reduced or what amounts were in fact saved.
65. Internal coordination mechanisms under the PBF leadership for supporting common services were meant to ensure that the three agencies apply joint programming and common services. However, they were only weakly developed. This might have contributed to missed opportunities regarding critical action for leveraging responses to the implementation and monitoring challenges. Discussions with the consortium team stressed that joint activities, common operations and joint procurement, as well as the sharing of information and responsibilities and the pursuit of collective outcomes could have enhanced project management and provided cost-efficient deliverables.
66. During implementation, resources were used to train youth. However, many of them decided not to participate in the project due to long breaks during project activities, the non-completion of activities and general delays. For example, the creation of a community

action plan to be built by youth was pending due to the lack of a skilled workforce. Overall, the partners provided the bulk of what was in the project design. During project implementation, resources were made available to each agency from the PBF project to ensure the timely delivery of tools, irrespective of delays.

3.4 Sustainability and ownership

Box 6. Key findings: Sustainability and ownership

The project design included a sustainability and exit strategy to promote local ownership, and support positive changes in peacebuilding and resilience building through the strong involvement of stakeholders at all levels. This involved government authorities, implementing partners and groups of beneficiaries, such as young women's and men's organizations. However, the project could not bring in other partners, such as financial institutions. The government authorities participated on the steering committee to support ownership, but their commitment was limited by a lack of resources for continuing the work completed. Emphasis was placed on job creation through strong capacity development and the completion of the livelihood components. These elements sought to provide opportunity for strengthening youth employment in agriculture. Ownership on behalf of the beneficiary groups rested on the establishment of peace structures to address disputes and land management, as well as the knowledge gained through trainings for self-organization in the long run. However, ownership of the livelihood component was limited by a lack of both water for crop irrigation and equipment, such as grain mills for the warehouse that was built. On the one hand, the project was neither financially nor programmatically catalysed by other peacebuilding projects. On the other hand, the project had catalysed government action when the government adopted a plan to work on similar projects.

3.4.1 Extent to which the intervention included an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy to support positive changes in peacebuilding after project closure

67. Evidence from the desk review and the KIs confirmed that the project design included an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy to promote local ownership and support positive changes in peacebuilding and resilience building after project closure. This was done through the strong involvement of stakeholders at all levels, including government authorities, implementing partners and groups of beneficiaries, such as young women's and men's organizations. However, contrary to what had been expected, the project could not bring in the collaboration of any other partners, such as financial institutions like the World Bank and other development organizations operating in Liberia, including the private sector. The exit strategy hinged on bringing in such a partner to ensure both the continuity of results achieved and the financial viability of the activities after project closure.
68. At the start of the project implementation stage, the creation of a steering committee supported extensive consultations at national and local levels. However, this committee became less effective in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the national level in particular, where government restrictions were harsher than at local levels, members of the steering committee disengaged.
69. The project also emphasized job creation through strong capacity development and the completion of the livelihood components. These initiatives sought to strengthen youth employment in agriculture. They focused on promoting the business and technical skills necessary for entrepreneurship and self-employment in both farm and off-farm activities.

Overall, this exit strategy had potential and could have been successful. For example, the poultry component is considered a catalytic project and had the possibility of duplication in other communities. Although poultry farming is generally perceived as raising chickens for meat and egg purposes, farmers believe that the poultry business goes beyond this. They want to hold specialized business opportunities that can enhance growth in the sector, create employment opportunities and increase income. However, they lack the processing equipment to make poultry feed more affordable for farmers. Moreover, local ownership and interest by farmers rests on the agricultural know-how of rice and vegetable production – an asset supported by farm value chain development through the construction of market stores that support the sustainability of household activities. Beneficiary cooperatives help to achieve results as they are able to hold meetings, run their business and take care of household income. At the local level, the implementation process was facilitated by the involvement of community leaders to ensure project ownership through free land access for farm activities. For the peace sector, the provision of motorbikes, office equipment and paid office fees supported the capacities of agents of peace, women and men employed by the peace structures set up to resolve conflict.

Figure 3. Women participating in an FGD in the Totota District



Bong County, Republic of Liberia.

3.4.2 Degree of commitment by the government and other stakeholders to own and sustain the results, especially women's participation in decision-making processes

70. Commitment from the Republic of Liberia and other stakeholders to own and sustain the results of the PBF project and its ongoing initiatives, especially women's participation in decision-making processes, was relatively good. Indeed, participants affirmed that the government is committed but may lack financial resources. The lack of expertise and knowledge was also mentioned but could not be ascertained. There is an explicit commitment from the government to further this initiative at local levels with an emphasis on women's participation. The FGDs and site visits in Bong and Lofa Counties revealed that the government, through the Ministry of Youth, had helped empower this population through government-run projects. This included the United States Agency for International Development-funded Youth Opportunities Project to improve access to income generation

activities among targeted youth (World Bank, 2022c). The Youth Opportunities Project scales up farming through the peacebuilding project. The government reportedly adopted a plan to boost efforts and ensure that the PBF project's achieved results last, and that similar structures that can duplicate existing practices remain. However, the evaluators did not find any evidence of this existing plan nor information of when it was adopted. Although the project field officers had worked with the local government to show them the project's activities, the government was strongly involved at the national level. Their financial capacity is weak and therefore limits their ability to scale up further interventions that align with the PBF project. A second phase of the project might have provided an opportunity to reinforce their ability in this regard.

71. Access to economic opportunities was the project's linchpin to ensure women's participation in decision-making processes. Some of the factors that positively affected performance were the equal inclusion of women and men in activities, the provision of trainings and the targeting of young people who were prone to violence. Women were also members of the decision-making bodies that had been set up to address disputes and lead the peacebuilding structures in the two counties. This achievement was largely supported by a study on the profile and analysis of land-, youth- and gender-related conflict in Bong and Lofa Counties that was conducted and validated ahead of the implementation phase.

Box 7. Testimony from a KII member in the Salala District, Bong County

"People now see young people making peace instead of engaging in violent activities. Young people now feel like they are an important part of the community, and the general narrative around young people as troublemakers has changed a lot. They are now involved in key development activities in the town. Some of their leaders and peacemakers are now changing the way we look at youth. The desired change of the project was met for sure."

A peacebuilding member during a KII in the Salala District, Bong County

Source: Collected by the evaluation team, Bong County, Republic of Liberia.

3.4.3 Extent to which the project results are owned by the stakeholders

72. Discussions with both the KII and FGD participants revealed that project ownership at the stakeholder level was based on two key achievements. First, the establishment of the peace structures to address disputes and land management on behalf of community members and themselves was very successful. Participants affirmed that they can address and resolve any community dispute peacefully and congenially with the participation of both women and men. The peacebuilding process and its structure to manage conflict received strong support from the local administration of townships, chiefs and community leaders that represent Indigenous Peoples.
73. Second, the training package developed around local business enterprises enabled young entrepreneurs to run their local businesses. This increased ownership over the project's results. Those trained were able to train others in both managing existing businesses and starting new ones. Connections and linkages with other organizations for partnership, even after project closure, were critical tools for sustainability. Beneficiary groups have strengthened the existing cooperative structures so that they remain independent. This affirms that much knowledge was gained through trainings, and that the participants can use the acquired knowledge to organize themselves in the long run. The Cooperative

Development Agency offers legal support for the incorporation of farmers' cooperatives. As such, it allows for legal ownership of these business groups in the short, medium and long term.

Figure 4. Male entrepreneurs participating in an FGD in the Salala District



Bong County, Republic of Liberia.

Figure 5. A view of the FAO-built warehouse, which still lacks equipment



Republic of Liberia.

74. Ownership over the livelihood component may be hindered by a number of factors. These include the limited availability of water for crops since the irrigation system had not worked properly, as seen in the Salala District. Furthermore, the warehouse was built by the project, but the planned provision of machinery such as grain mills remains unfulfilled. An equipped warehouse would significantly contribute to the livelihood of group beneficiaries and help make them independent. These groups were also meant to draw surrounding community members so that they could use these machines and other existing equipment, thereby generating revenue. However, this was not the case because the equipment had not been provided due to delivery delays.

3.4.4 Extent to which the project is financially or programmatically catalytic in scaling up other peacebuilding work

75. The evaluators did not find any supporting evidence that the project had been financially or programmatically catalytic in scaling up other peacebuilding activities and results. Participants from both the KIs and the FGDs confirmed that they had not received similar interventions beyond those from the consortium team. The PBF project complemented government activities in the country, but there is no other entity striving for similar or complementary achievements.
76. While discussions with the agencies revealed that FAO had received money from the United Arab Emirates to complement and develop further peacebuilding and resilience interventions, including agricultural development in the Republic of Liberia, the evaluators did not find any evidence indicating that this could be attributed or linked to the PBF project. In addition, the involvement of the agricultural extension officers provided a learning opportunity for the government in that they can initiate and extend similar interventions in other counties. However, government participants assessed that, most likely, COVID-19 and the country's political environment make it unattractive for foreign investment, as well as external support from humanitarian and development agencies.

3.5 Coherence

Box 8. Key findings: Coherence

The synergies and complementarity among agencies and the government were limited in terms of coordination at the design, implementation and field level. Among agencies, the partnership brought a key complementarity of resources (financial, technical and knowledge) into the implementation process of the overall activities. The evaluation did not find any evidence that the project had ensured synergies and complementarity within different programmes of FAO, the ILO and the WFP, or any other implementing organizations, including donors in the same thematic area. The project design did not fulfil the conditions for the adoption of an HDP nexus application within the PBF project. This implies that the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors should have been made explicit. Government leadership, which is a critical factor of HDP nexus success, was missing in the PBF project.

3.5.1 Extent to which the project ensured synergies and complementarity within different FAO, ILO and WFP programmes, and other implementing organizations and donors in the same thematic area

77. The evaluation found no evidence that the PBF project had ensured synergies and complementarity among different FAO, ILO and WFP programmes, or any other implementing organizations. This includes other donors on the topic of peacebuilding in the same portfolio. The PBF project remains the unique donor, and no other implementing organization was involved beyond the Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa, which engaged in managing the project activities.
78. Nonetheless, synergies and complementarity were built on the coordination front at the following three levels: i) design (government and UN co-chair); ii) implementation

(government and agencies); and iii) field (involvement of district agriculture officers and the local land administration authorities).

79. Another layer of synergy and complementarity was built among agencies. Partnership among the consortium team brought a key complementarity of resources (financial, technical and knowledge) into the implementation process of the overall activities. This was greatly supported by joint planning among agencies, which became quite limited due to COVID-19, and the participation of government counterparts in the coordination. For example, as mentioned, FAO, the ILO and the WFP interlinked their activities, relying on building blocks provided by other members of the consortium team. FAO provided improved seeds, delivered fertilizers and built a poultry house while providing basic knowledge. The WFP supported the linkage of farmers to their native communities through social cohesion and peacebuilding actions that were facilitated by the establishment of peacebuilding structures in the two counties. The ILO supported education and business trainings for farmers, which enabled them to gather into cooperatives and become potential entrepreneurs.

3.5.2 Extent to which the project design took the HDP nexus into account in designing activities, outcomes and targets

80. A document review, as well as interviews with the consortium team, revealed that the project design did not fulfil the conditions for the adoption of an HDP nexus application within the PBF project. The HDP nexus implies interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors. It specifically refers to attempts in these fields to work together to meet people's needs, mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, and move towards sustainable peace more effectively. Although the consortium team pursued collective outcomes, the project's timeline was too short for them to properly leverage their comparative advantage. An attempt for durable solutions was made through collaboration among agencies to achieve the intervention around peacebuilding and development. However, none of these agencies had a dedicated staff member or the resources to cover the HDP nexus. In fact, the project design had not been built on the application of an HDP nexus, which required that the above conditions be met.
81. The main element of the HDP nexus emphasizes the need to place the experiences of local people and communities at the centre of their planning and interventions. Understanding these realities from the bottom up brings community and individual knowledge to the fore and may help address certain operational and technical challenges in implementing the HDP nexus approach. The evaluation found that the group beneficiaries were not systematically consulted in the design stage of the project. The evaluation considers this a missed opportunity to more fully capture the needs of these groups and the project's ability to achieve its stated goals.
82. One of the most important early findings related to operationalizing the HDP nexus is that government leadership was a critical factor for success. Oftentimes, this means that national governments adopt dedicated laws to deal with protracted humanitarian crises, as well as include humanitarian crises and conflict drivers into national development or peace planning and analysis. National and local policies on durable solutions may be key in ensuring that people's needs and solutions are embedded into integrated HDP nexus planning and interventions. These critical conditions were not present in the PBF project.

3.6 Conflict sensitivity

Box 9. Key findings: Conflict sensitivity

The PBF project adopted explicit multisectoral and holistic approaches to conflict sensitivity by engaging young women and men as change agents to play instrumental roles in the prevention and resolution of conflict. The project involved large awareness meetings and the scaling up of strong participation by calling on religious and community leaders to work with youth in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding structures for decision-making at all levels. These efforts were facilitated by livelihood development to mitigate the causes of conflict. Nevertheless, the project was ineffective in supporting further partnership. This might have been helpful to increase political, financial, technical and logistical support for the work among young peacebuilders. No unintended negative impacts due to the project were found. Potential unintended impacts were anticipated through a needs assessment that had been completed in the beginning to identify conflict drivers.

3.6.1 Extent to which the PBF project had an explicit approach to conflict sensitivity

83. The desk review, as well as discussions with key informants and group beneficiaries, support that the PBF project adopted explicit multisectoral and holistic approaches to conflict sensitivity. Indeed, the project engaged young women and men as change agents to play instrumental roles in the prevention and resolution of conflict. This was a key aspect in the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. By doing so, the project recognized that youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation. It also recognized that targeting a large youth population presented a unique opportunity to contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity in the selected locations.
84. Furthermore, the project worked on a specific domain of actions. This included large awareness meetings and the scaling up of strong participation by calling on religious and community leaders to involve young people in conflict prevention and resolution, violence prevention and the promotion of social cohesion. The established peacebuilding structures considered the representation of youth, women and men in decision-making at all levels. In addition, capacity building modules and trainings considered issues such as protection in recalling the obligations to protect vulnerable groups and to ensure the human rights of all – including youth (girls and boys) – and protect them from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, the project engaged with young people to help address the root causes of conflict. This addressed their relationship to the past and put them at the forefront of reshaping the narrative on how they can work collectively to build a better living environment for all. As highlighted in Section 3.1 (Relevance criteria), the project selected two counties that had been most affected by conflict. Here, it strengthened the leadership and capacities of young women and men. By doing so, the project helped young women and men actively participate in peacebuilding activities in their communities under peace committees that had been set up to resolve conflict. This developed their potential as leaders and helped them become peace ambassadors in their communities.
85. The project supported livelihood development to mitigate the causes of conflict. This was a unique occasion for beneficiary groups to have a community planning process and adapt their livelihood through both farming and poultry production in order to generate additional household income. This was key in ensuring that people and their communities have access to alternative livelihood opportunities by adopting good agricultural practices and enabling income generation through a conflict-sensitive approach. In turn, access to

alternative livelihoods strengthened the communities' environment, which can be directly attributed to the socioeconomic investments of the project.

86. Still, the project was ineffective in supporting further partnerships that could have been helpful in increasing political, financial, technical and logistical support for the work with young peacebuilders. This would have engaged relevant UN entities, as well as financial, regional and international organizations. Further partnerships could have ensured the sustainability of the project's effects over time. In particular, the conflict sensitivity results could have been maintained and strengthened. Currently, these gains are likely dependent on the goodwill of individuals and may not benefit from further incentives.

Box 10. Testimony from an FGD participant in Bong County

"The project was useful because prior to the project there were a lot of disturbances and violence in the county. When this peacebuilding project came, it put an end or diminished a lot of riots in the community. It brought unity among young people through cooperative development. The project also taught people how to work together to achieve one goal. Before the launching of the project, young people usually got involved in violent activities. Since the start of the project, we have seen a massive reduction in violent activities in the communities because young people are involved in meaningful activities. So young people served on all the committees in the communities. Instead of being perpetrators [of violence], young people became peace ambassadors."

A male FGD participant in Bong County

Source: Collected by the evaluation team, Bong County, Republic of Liberia.

3.6.2 Unintended negative impacts and context monitoring

87. The evaluation did not find any unintended negative impacts from the project. The existing M&E framework was set up to address project needs and capture any unintended impacts. The M&E system was based on joint collaboration among agencies, which actually did not take place outside of the project's planning stage. Interviewees revealed that the potential for unintended impacts was present at the beginning of the intervention. Specifically, the irrigation systems in Salayea and Zorzor were provided to boost the long-term development of farming rice and vegetables, but these did not work as expected. Moreover, another potential source of unintended impacts without significant effects was related to the size of community member groups. These varied from one to another, and variations were much greater than anticipated. For example, some communities had about 100 beneficiaries instead of 30 as planned. Although the project decided to reorganize them so that only 30 people were selected in certain communities, this was not possible in others.
88. Strategically, the project anticipated and sought to mitigate any unintended impacts by completing a conflict analysis. During project design, a needs assessment was completed to identify conflict drivers that dealt with land access, the facilitation of trainings and social meetings. This helped to mitigate any unintended impacts related to conflict since people were busy with farming. It involved the provision of revenue sources, that is, income through agriculture and livestock activities. Beneficiary groups were trained on the contribution of gainful employment to peacebuilding. They were encouraged to consider social cohesion opportunities at the community level to build peace.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

89. The conclusions are based on findings that emerged from the data collected, as analysed by the evaluation team.

Conclusion 1. The PBF project aligned with national policy documents and targeted SDGs, and met the peacebuilding and livelihood initiatives of selected communities. Its ambitions were curtailed by a short implementation period for a vast implementation area. This factor was compounded by budget and time constraints, which further limited the project's actual scope and coverage.

90. Despite limited consultation with the stakeholders, peacebuilding drivers were identified from studies and assessments early on through the design phase. The project addressed important needs of the communities living in the two counties. However, the project's approach led to delays in delivering the livelihood component. The budget and time constraint did not adequately cover the youth target. Its TOC was adequate in producing the desired change.

Conclusion 2. The project's effectiveness is reflected in its achievement of most outputs and outcomes from the target indicators. This, despite negative factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, hindered most field activities just a year after the project had begun.

91. The involvement of community and religious leaders, as well as the partnership among the consortium team to share roles and resources, positively supported peace promotion and the project results. However, delays due to feedback, traditions and local norms, weak coordination during implementation, the absence of a joint M&E system, and the COVID-19 pandemic substantially limited its performance. The project is gender-sensitive in that it supported the equal participation of women, men and youth in its design and implementation.

Conclusion 3. The project's efficiency is reflected in its ability to develop strong coordination among agencies, which made it a good investment. However, most data were not disaggregated by gender, beneficiary groups or location. This was due to the lack of a data collection system to detail progress and identify gaps. Globally, the project did not provide an opportunity to adopt corrective measures, such as a mid-term evaluation.

92. Strong coordination and a joint M&E framework were adopted at the design stage. The M&E, however, was less effective during implementation. There were delays in completing project activities. This, however, had no significant impact on the results other than delayed achievements. The project used available resources efficiently, making it a good investment. The project could have enhanced project management and delivery, as originally planned, by applying joint activities, implementing common operations, using joint procurement, sharing information and responsibilities, and pursuing collective outcomes.

Conclusion 4. The sustainability and exit strategies were useful in promoting local ownership and supporting positive change in peacebuilding and livelihood development at the local level. However, ownership at the national level remained very weak since the government lacked adequate resources to ensure continuity of the achieved results. The sustainability strategy was also built on job creation, and the established peace committee was set up to manage conflict resolution. This proved to be successful and sustainable.

93. The implementation of sustainability and exit strategies was inclusive, but no financial institution was involved. Government commitment is limited by a lack of resources for continuing the achieved results. The provision of a functioning irrigation system, equipment for the warehouse built by the project, and grain mills – as originally planned – could enhance sustainability.

Conclusion 5. The project generated synergies and complementarity among agencies and the government. However, it was less effective in promoting such elements within the different programmes of FAO, the ILO and the WFP, as well as other organizations and donors working on the same portfolio. Furthermore, the project was unable to effectively apply an HDP nexus approach since the conditions had not been met.

94. Synergies between agencies and the government were limited to coordination at the levels of design, implementation and fieldwork. However, partnership among agencies was supported by complementary resources during the implementation of the overall activities. The conditions for adopting an HDP nexus approach within the project had not been met, implying that the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors were not achieved. Governmental leadership on the HDP nexus approach was also missing.

Conclusion 6. The project had a conflict-sensitive nature because of its inclusive, multisectoral approach. The project was weak in terms of building new partnerships. It was, however, able to avoid any unintended negative impacts.

95. Engaging young women and men as agents of change in conflict prevention and resolution was essential for peacebuilding. The project's conflict-sensitive nature was facilitated by livelihood development, which sought to mitigate the causes of conflict. Greater partnership might have increased political, financial, technical and logistical support for the young peacebuilders, but no new partners joined the project. Potential unintended impacts were anticipated by a needs assessment that had been completed in the beginning to identify conflict drivers.

4.2 Recommendations

96. The following recommendations are based on findings and conclusions of the evaluation, as well as active consultation with key stakeholders. Each interview verified the perceptions of various stakeholders on the main recommendations that can assist FAO and its partners. In terms of supporting further PBF projects, these recommendations are addressed to the consortium team since they are primarily responsible for formulating, managing and implementing the intervention.

Recommendation 1. Through an inclusive and participatory approach, the consortium team should engage target stakeholders in all steps of the design phase of future PBF projects. This includes identifying additional sources of livelihood to cope with the needs of the beneficiaries. Sufficient funds should be allocated under an appropriate timeframe.

Recommendation 2. This PBF project should seek additional support through technical cooperation funding that is specific to peacebuilding and livelihood development. For example, the comparative advantage of the consortium team could be useful in seeking substantial contributions from the PBF, as well as other country donors to further support peacebuilding and livelihood development.

97. This effort could help enlarge the scope of the PBF project to at least 35 percent of the most violent counties of the Republic of Liberia. Indeed, this is relevant because the needs addressed by the project in the two counties are similar across the nation.

Recommendation 3. The consortium team should further contribute to the harmonization of data collection tools and the monitoring process among agencies through a joint M&E framework. This would strengthen their respective decision-making processes.

98. Reinforcement of the gender-sensitive nature of future PBF projects would benefit from mandatory joint data collection among all implementing partners. This would enable data disaggregated by gender, site and targeted group to be generated. It would also better inform the consortium team in its decision-making process on gender.

Recommendation 4. The consortium team should reinforce partnership development with national and local organizations by inviting other UN agencies and development entities during joint meetings.

99. This may not only reinforce existing partnerships but also start fruitful ones. It can include those that had been planned under this project, such as financial institutions, but were not realized in the end.

Recommendation 5. Even though the project timeline has ended, the consortium team should complete the sustainability strategy by considering a second project phase to sustain the achieved results.

100. For example, the project can provide the equipment to the warehouse, ensure its maintenance or provide a new irrigation system for farming where necessary. This is essential in sustaining local ownership of the achieved results by group beneficiaries in Bong and Lofa Counties. Furthermore, this will provide an opportunity for reinforcing the ability of government stakeholders to scale up farming activities through another peacebuilding initiative or another intervention.

Recommendation 6. Coordination with the government should be strengthened at the national level to better engage and ensure government ownership over the achieved results. To do so, a possible avenue could be to change the leadership of the steering committee and set up a rotating chairperson. This would ensure at least periodic ownership and responsibility. Another option would require strengthening such a link through either the incentive or the required validation of outputs and reports.

101. Within this collaboration, the agencies should provide capacity building support to government entities. The aim would be to strengthen their institutional ability of sustaining the achieved results.

Recommendation 7. The consortium team should reinforce the synergies and complementarity by adopting an HDP nexus approach in the design stage. This can be done under governmental leadership from the inception phase of any future project. Such an effort would support and strengthen the interlinkages among the humanitarian, development and peace sectors.

5. Lessons learned

102. Several lessons emerged from the evaluation findings, which are outlined as follows:

- i. Having a consortium of UN agencies on board can help achieve greater results with limited time and resources. The implementation of the PBF project is an example of joint efforts towards the achievement of ambitious outputs and outcomes. The overall PBF project results are attributed to FAO, the ILO and the WFP, and might not have been achieved individually.
- ii. The promotion of peacebuilding and local economies requires joint efforts from humanitarian and development actors when working in a fragile country context like the Republic of Liberia. The instrumental role played by the consortium team, as well as partners and government entities, was essential to leverage peace and development results in recovery and resilience while providing life-saving support to the most vulnerable groups in Bong and Lofa Counties. Continued and more effective collaboration of this kind should therefore be sought in future projects.
- iii. A substantive change in attitude and behaviour regarding peace, social cohesion and gender-based violence is possible by empowering the entire community. This can include women, men and youth, as well as community leaders, in a common space. By targeting women, men, youth and community leaders, the project enabled an environment for people to learn collectively from their common interests and needs. Essentially, they worked together and shared responsibilities on how to handle existing challenges.
- iv. Community engagement and participation strongly rely on targeting the key agents for change. The PBF project made this possible by giving more space to women and youth. This created positive outcomes at the community and household levels.
- v. Systemic assessment at an earlier stage of a peacebuilding project provides a unique opportunity for all community members to get involved in the identification of conflict drivers. This is necessary to foster peace and develop livelihoods. For example, participatory methods adopted in conflict resolution were helpful to bring back peace when there was little to no common dialogue.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

List of people met for the KIIs

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Organization	Gender (M/F)
1	Cole	Alberta	Chairperson	Project Focal Person, Salala	F
2	Dennis	John	Country Coordinator	PBF Secretariat, Liberia	M
3	Jeremiah	Jackson	Project Officer	Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa	F
4	Karmah	Evelyn Z.	FAO Agriculture Field Technician	FAO	F
5	Kawa	Julius B.	Policy and Planning Director	Liberia Land Authority	M
6	Kemokai	Alieu L.	Administrative and Technical Assistant	Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Youth and Sports	F
7	Kerkula	Benedick	Youth Chairperson	Project Focal Person, Tumutu	M
8	Massalay	Salif A.		ILO	M
9	Owen	Anne-Clémence	Evaluation Manager	FAO Office of Evaluation	F
10	Quarbo	Octavius	Assistant Representative	FAO	M
11	Sackie	Rufus		WFP	F
12	Sargbah	Christopher P.	District Agriculture Officer	Ministry of Agriculture	N
13	Soni	Jerry	Regional Evaluation Specialist	FAO	M
14	Sumo	Rufus	Town Chief Yeala	Project Focal Person, Yeala	M
15	Vawah	Micheal		WFP	M
16	Watson	Momo T.		ILO	M
17	Wennie	Amos	Youth Chairperson	Project Focal Person, Totota	M
18	Winnie	Edward	Agriculture Technician, Lofa	Agricultural Extension Officer	F
19	Zelenovic	Jelena	Programme Manager	PBF/Peacebuilding Support Office	F
20	Zolue	Moses	Project Coordinator	Ministry of Agriculture	F

List of people met for FGDs

Bong field mission

Name of group: Totota Progressive Youth for Development (mixed)

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
1	Bennie	Bill S.	Member	M
2	Daniel	Yamka	Member	F
3	Dennis	Bill	Member	M
4	Dennis	Moses	Member	M
5	Gwee	Karton K.	Member	M
6	Kerkula	Zebedee	Member	M
7	Wennie	Emmanuel D.	Member	M

Name of group: Women's Totota Progressive Youth for Development

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
8	David	Ruth C.	Member	F
9	George	Esther Y.	Member	F
10	Giddings	Tutu	Member	F
11	Gwee	Fatuma K.	Member	F
12	Kollie	Nowa	Member	F
13	Sumo	Cathrine G.	Member	F
14	Sumo	Rachel	Member	F

Name of group: Salala Kaigieyamah Farmers' Youth Cooperative

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
15	Aecee	Samson	Member	M
16	Cole	Alberta G.	Chairperson/Project Focal Person	F
17	Fahnbulleh	Amadu	Secretary	M
18	Garnett	Tonia	Member	F
19	Jackson	Martin	Member	M
20	Kerkula	George	Member	M
21	Kerkula	Mary	Member	F
22	Kolleh	Thomas	Member	M
23	Lincoln	Emmanuel	Member	M
24	Momo	Korto	Member	F
25	Sherirf	Abraham	Member	M

Name of group: Tumutu Tonyanwelekermah Cooperative

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
26	Addy	Winston	Member	M
27	Bondo	Aaron	Member	M
28	Bondo	William	Member	M
29	David	Esther	Member	F
30	Davies	Sumo	Member	M
31	Garmo	Nelly S.	Member	F
32	Gorpu	Nathaniel S.	Member	M
33	Johnson	Edward T.	Advisor	M
34	Kanneh	Beyan D.	Member	M
35	Kanneh	Mohammed	Member	M
36	Kelleh	S. Mohammed B.	Member	M
37	Kerkula	Benedick	Chairperson/Project Focal Person	M
38	Kesselly	Lawou D.	Member	F
39	Klemeh	Nelson	Member	M
40	Kollie	Richard	Member	M
41	Kromah	Prince	Member	M
42	Lavelah	Junior	Member	
43	Massaquoi	Jemah	Member	F
44	Nelson	Emmanuel	Member	M
45	Paye	Mamie	Member	F
46	Sackie	Ezekiel	Member	M
47	Sirlief	Sekou F.	Member	M
48	Sirleaf	Watta	Member	F
49	Wenney	Queeta	Member	F

Lofa field mission

Name of group: Try and See Cooperative, Salayea

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
50	Flomo	Lorpu	Assistant Chairperson	F
51	Johnson	Klubo	Member	F
52	Kamara	Tutu	Member	F
53	Sumo	Henry	Project Field Supervisor	M

54	Sumo	Lorpu	Member	F
55	Tolongo	Nathaniel P.	Youth Chair	M
56	Weedor	Gayduo	Member	F

Name of group: Try and See Cooperative

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
57	Sumo	Barkolleh	Member	M
58	Sumo	Junior N.	Member	M
59	Yarkpazuo	Junior M.	Member	M

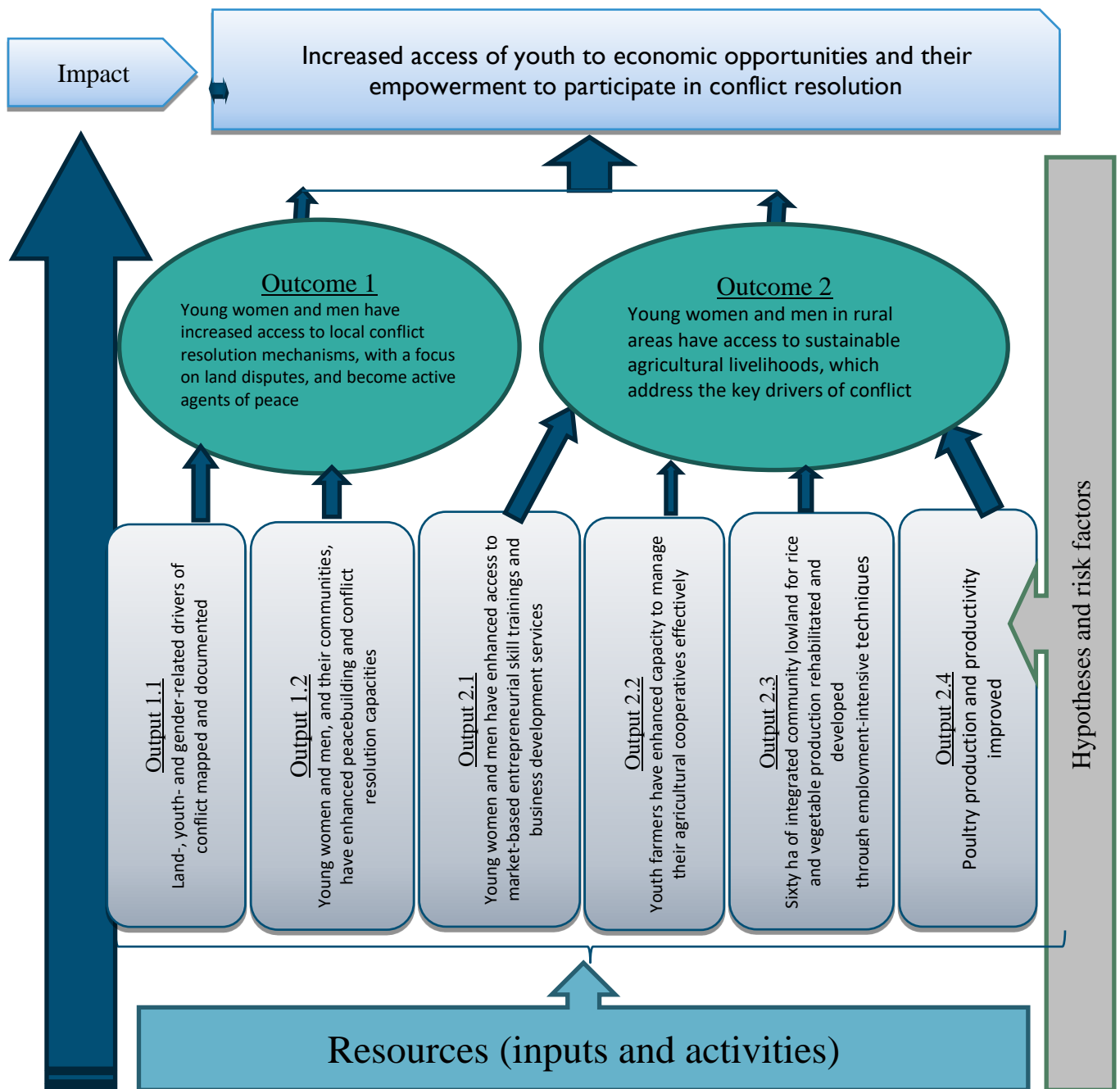
Name of group: Yeala United Youth Multipurpose Society

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
60	Brown	Tokpa	Youth Chairperson/Project Focal Person	M
61	Goloi	Supu	Member	M
62	Kortimai	Suwa	Member	M
63	Kwewu	Johnson	Member	M
64	Noko	Kebbeh	Member	F
65	Noko	Mamie	Member	F
66	Sumo	Lorpu	Member	F
67	Sumo	Sieneh	Member	F
68	Tuboi	Cooper	Member	M
69	Wanee	Lawuo	Chairperson	F
70	Zayzay	Big Boy	Member	M

Name of group: Konia Youth in Action for Development Cooperative

No.	Last name	First name	Position	Gender (M/F)
71	Dulleh	Mawatta	Member	F
72	Flomo	Sarr	Member	M
73	Forfana	Fatuma	Member	F
74	Gayflo	Jackson K.	Member	M
75	Gayflor	George	Member	M
76	Mulbah	Kebeh	Member	F
77	Sarnor	Fatu	Member	F
78	Tarnue	Kebeh	Member	F
79	Yanquoi	Mulbah	Member	M
80	Yekeh	J. Akoi	Chairperson/Project Focal Person	M

Appendix 2. Conceptualized TOC for the PBF project



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

Appendix 3. Stakeholder mapping

Categories	Stakeholders	Roles and responsibilities
Government	Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Internal Affairs	Joint Implementers
UN agencies	ILO and WFP	Joint Implementers
	FAO	Implementer and convener, overall coordination and accountability
Donors/funders	UN Secretary General Peacebuilding Fund PBF, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Liberia Peacebuilding Support Office	Project funder Provided oversight for the project
Implementing organizations (CSOs/NGOs)	Cooperative Development Agency Liberian National Federation of Cooperative Societies West Africa Farmers Cooperatives National Farmers Union Network	Project participants and implementers
Beneficiary groups	Young women	Project recipients

Source: Adapted from the PBF project document.

Appendix 4. Evaluation matrix

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
1. Relevance				
1.1. Was the project appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in the country at the time of the PBF project's design, including a conflict analysis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of alignment to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges - Alignment to national plans and priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
1.2. Was the project relevant to the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs, in particular SDG 16?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of relevance of UN peacebuilding mandate in Liberia - Degree of alignment of the project to concerned SDGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Triangulation
1.3. Was the project relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries? Were they consulted during the design and implementation of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alignment to the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries - Degree of inclusiveness of the target beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs - FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Triangulation
1.4. Did the project's TOC clearly articulate assumptions about why the project approach is expected to produce the desired change? Was the TOC grounded in evidence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of adequacy between assumptions and the project approach - Amount and nature of existing evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Triangulation
2. Effectiveness				
2.1. To what extent did the PBF project achieve its intended objectives/results and contribute to the broader strategic outcomes identified in Liberia's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of progress towards the achievement of intended results - Extent to which the achieved results contribute to the collective outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs - FGDs - Field observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Strategic comparative advantage analysis - Contribution analysis

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
nationally-owned strategic plans, legislative agendas and policies?		- Beneficiary groups		- Triangulation
2.2. What unintended changes, positive and negative, did the project contribute towards?	- Extent to which unintended changes (positive or negative) exist - Alignment of achieved results to unintended results	- Project report and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff	- Desk review - KIIs	- Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
2.3. What are the factors (positive and negative) that affected the performance of the project?	- Extent to which positive factors have supported the performance of the project - Extent to which negative factors have hindered the performance of the project	- Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups	- Desk review - KIIs - FGDs - Field observations	- Content analysis - Funding analysis - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
2.4. To what extent have gender equality and women's empowerment considerations been included in the design and implementation to support gender-responsible peacebuilding?	- Extent to which the project promotes gender equality and women's empowerment - Extent to which the project involved inclusive participation for both sexes	- Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups	- Desk review - KIIs - FGDs - Field observations	- Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
3. Efficiency				
3.1. How efficient was the overall staffing, planning, procurement and coordination within the project (including among FAO, the ILO, the WFP and stakeholders)? Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?	- Degree of efficiency of the project towards staffing, planning and coordination among agencies - Extent to which project fund was delivered in a timely manner	- Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies	- Desk review - KIIs	- Content analysis - Strategic comparative advantage analysis - Funding analysis - Triangulation
3.2. How well did the project collect and use data to monitor results? How effectively was updated data used to provide adaptive management of the project?	- Extent to which M&E was grounded in the implementation process - Quality and availability of timely data for decision-making processes	- Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners	- Desk review - KIIs	- Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
3.3. Overall, did the PBF project provide value for money? Have resources been used efficiently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability and positive factors for a reduction in transaction costs - Nature of coordination mechanisms and functioning pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Funding analysis - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
4. Sustainability and ownership				
4.1. 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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which the project develops coping mechanisms for the identified challenges - Extent to which the project promotes national ownership on the development process - Existence of exit strategy and extent to which they can support the achieved results for the institutional level (government) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
4.2. How strong is the commitment of the Liberian Government and other stakeholders in sustaining the results of the PBF project, and their support for continuing initiatives – especially women’s participation in decision-making processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which existing synergies and collaboration fostered by the agencies have contributed to the sustainability of the achieved results by having government champions - Existence of and extent to which agencies and the government were jointly involved in the coordination process of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs - FGDs - Field observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Strategic comparative advantage analysis - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
4.3. How were stakeholders (including minority groups and Indigenous Peoples, if applicable) involved in the project’s design and implementation, and to what extent were the project results owned by the stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of inclusiveness of the vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples in the design and implementation of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs - FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
4.4. Was the project financially and/or programmatically catalytic in scaling up other peacebuilding work and/or has it helped to create broader platforms for peacebuilding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which the project attracts other donors and partners - Extent to which the project contributes to the creation of platforms for peacebuilding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports and UN reports - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners - Beneficiary groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs - FGDs - Field observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
5. Coherence				
5.1. To what extent did the PBF project ensure synergies and complementarity within different FAO, ILO and WFP programmes and other implementing organizations and donors with the same portfolio?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which existing synergies and collaboration fostered by agencies have contributed to the sustainability of the achieved results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
5.2. To what extent and how did the project design take account of the HDP nexus in designing activities, outcomes and targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent to which the project design involved the HDP nexus approach and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Contribution analysis - Triangulation
6. Conflict sensitivity				
6.1. Did the PBF project have an explicit approach to conflict sensitivity, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict analysis reports - Consistency of the project design with conflict sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Triangulation
6.2. Was the project responsible for any unintended negative impacts, and were an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that tracks unintended impacts established?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of support provided by the project towards the generation of unintended impacts (positive and negative) - Performance of existing M&E structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project reports, UN reports and national documents - UN agencies - Government staff - Implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review - KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Analysis of coherence - Triangulation

Appendix 5. Explanation of sampling strategy

Proposed sample	Purpose/objective	Sampling criteria	Population/sampling frame	Sampling unit	Sample size	Sampling design/method	Limitations
Sampling for desk review							
Project documents and related materials (external reports relevant to the project)	To utilize secondary data as an evidence stream	Relevant to the project in Liberia	All project- and programme-related materials	Individual materials	Number of project and programme materials available and related to the project	Census	Quality of some materials and reliability of some data may be an issue
Sampling for the KIIs							
Sample of stakeholders in Liberia and abroad (out of the country)	To capture qualitative primary data related to evaluation questions; quantitative data could also be captured	Specific stakeholders in each group to be identified in collaboration with the project and partners	All individuals and partner organizations identified (but the exact sampling frame is unknown)	Individuals in Monrovia, Bong and Lofa with credible knowledge of the project	Total: +30 to be disaggregated between women and men	Purposive and non-random sampling	Confidence intervals not applicable; subject to bias
Sampling for the FGDs							
Sample of group beneficiaries in Liberia (women's, men's and youth groups)	To capture qualitative and quantitative primary data related to the evaluation questions	Specific stakeholders in each group to be identified in collaboration with agencies and partners	All beneficiary groups identified	Beneficiary groups in Bong and Lofa with credible knowledge of the project interventions	Total: seven FGDs, mixed, women's and men's groups (four in Bong and three in Lofa)	Systematic sampling	Confidence intervals not applicable
Sampling for the field observations							
Sample of project partner locations in Liberia	To capture additional qualitative primary data related to evaluation questions that have been raised or are missing and serve as physical evidence of data collected	Key achievements (mostly physical) identified in the project's annual and final reports	All physical achievements identified (sampling frame can be known)	Each physical achievement in the project partner locations in Liberia	Total: two counties	Purposive and random sampling	Can be too subjective and time consuming

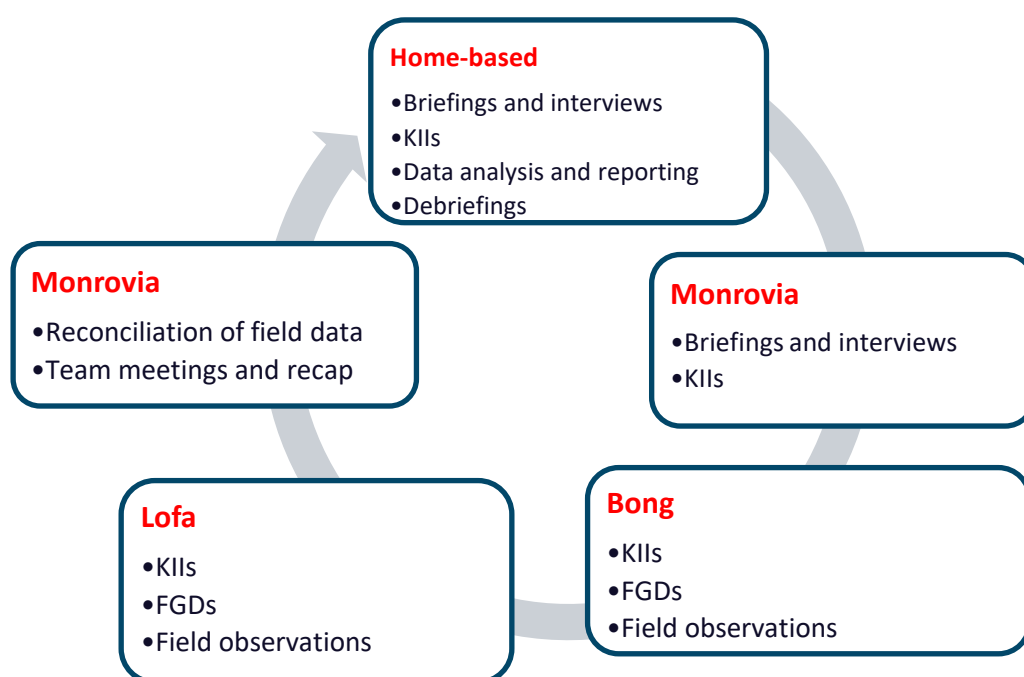
Appendix 6. Description of the evaluation methods

Sampling for sites and fieldwork strategy

The sample frame for the KIIs and the FGDs covered stakeholders and beneficiaries from 30 target groups. The following criteria were used by the evaluators to consider the final sample frame for site visits: i) country-wide insecurity issues; ii) distance between locations; iii) timeline for site visits to be covered within 15 days, plus travel days; iv) travel times estimated for a day; and v) road conditions.

Travel to field locations was done by road. The field workplan considered various limitations such as time and security concerns in each of the PBF implementation areas. The field work activities were done during a three-week period and included online KIIs. Work activities in the field were carried out based on a six-day work week and adjusted to community ceremonies and obligations. Efforts were taken to inform group beneficiaries at least two days before to avoid work delays in their respective fields and to schedule those group interviews at a convenient time. Appendix Figure 1 provides the strategy for fieldwork and site visits with evaluation activities. The evaluation timeline is available in Appendix 8.

Appendix Figure 1. Evaluation workplan strategy



Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team

Sampling and sources for document review and analysis

The document review included a range of relevant and available documents that were internally provided by FAO and the PBF, as well as external documents collected from a Google search. A census sampling approach was used for the document review, and all relevant documents were included in the sampling frame. All documents were compiled in a Google Drive and made available to the evaluators.

Content analysis was used to glean key information and emerging themes. A systematic review of available documentation was developed by the evaluators. Using a content analysis method, the

evaluators were able to: reconstruct the project logic; develop an understanding of the context of project design and implementation of its activities; analyse the utilization of the results and resources framework; and search for evidence of progress made towards the expected outcomes, management of challenges and initial lessons prior to field visits to the Republic of Liberia. Furthermore, the review provided background information and a list of primary stakeholders that were relevant to project implementation.

Sampling and sources for the KIIs and analysis

Regarding the KIIs, the evaluators met individuals who had been involved in appropriately related roles and responsibilities through either the design or implementation of the project activities. A purposive and non-random sampling technique with maximum variation (de Vaus, 2001, p. 148) was used to obtain a list of the KIIs. Using an interview guide, most of them were one-on-one and face-to-face. The evaluators used telephone (WhatsApp), Microsoft Teams and Zoom calls to interview key informants who were unable to meet face-to-face.

The evaluators acknowledge that purposive sampling is prone to expert bias. However, guidance was provided by the evaluators to the Evaluation Manager so that a complete list of people to meet based on additional criteria could be made. It included: primary beneficiary groups and/or representatives of key stakeholder groups; likely availability, position/role of the individual and sex for gender balance; and geographic location, given the country's insecurity issue. Therefore, bias was limited since key informants were free to provide key information. The primary aim was to gather their opinion on the project's performance, as well as on future programming. The actual list of key informants is available in Appendix 7. This list is disaggregated by location, gender and group.

Following workplan approval, all data collection methods such as interview protocols were explicitly linked to the specific criteria and questions in the evaluation matrix. This ensured that all questions were adequately addressed and that the criteria and each question had multiple and diverse data sources. During each individual or group interview, responses were recorded in the response forms. Each form was organized according to selected classification codes related to the type of actors, geographic area, thematic activities and gender. Each KII took from 45 to 60 minutes. Fieldwork for data collection was scheduled in February during the dry season, which was convenient for travel.

Sampling and sources for FGDs

The FGDs involved beneficiary groups of women, men and youth (girls and boys). A convenience sampling technique was used to obtain a list of FGDs. The FGD participants in each women's, men's and youth group were purposively and specifically sampled by the evaluation team. There was no bias with a systematic sampling of concerned participants in the research and evaluation. Individual women, men and youth (girls and boys) from each group were free to express their opinions.

The following criteria were applied to the selection of group beneficiaries: i) all types of trainings and awareness; provision of inputs and other farming services around peacebuilding; food security; availability and access to social services (education, health, water and sanitation, hygiene, etc.); and women and youth empowerment activities; ii) security issues in the targeted counties that might prohibit or impede access; iii) distance and time constraints between villages to be covered within a maximum of 10 km from the county capital; iv) accessibility of the targeted counties and villages due to poor roads or flooding; and v) gender distribution within beneficiary organizations. The actual list of FGDs completed using a semi-structured interview guide is available in Appendix 7. This list is disaggregated by location, gender and beneficiary group.

Each FGD had a minimum of four participants. Some FGDs with women gathered from 15 to 22 participants. The FGDs were conducted outdoors to respect social distancing measures against COVID-19. Respondents included purposively selected women's, men's and youth (girls and boys) groups from each the county. Each FGD took from 60 to 120 minutes. Given the time constraint to complete some of the KIIs and FGDs under a tight schedule, the evaluators usually created two subgroups to cover the meetings at both sites.

Sampling and sources for site visits

A site visit was also conducted by the evaluators in each location after the KIIs or the FGDs. A structure checklist was used. These sites were sampled to capture additional, missing or highlighted primary data related to evaluation questions, and serve as physical evidence of data collected. The sample frame included a list of key achievements (mostly physical investments and equipment given to beneficiaries) selected from the project report. Field observations relied on photographs with the assistance of community members in Bong and Lofa. Although time consuming, site visits were a critical part of the evaluation methodology. In fact, they helped to identify and compare, for example, types of physical equipment and infrastructure provided by the UN agencies to beneficiary groups in the targeted communities. Photographs of these materials serve as evidence of either the quality of asset infrastructure or to confirm the existence of subsistence-level tools and livelihoods in each community.

The site selection process was informed by UNMIL security information, given the fragile context. Site visit locations were therefore randomly selected based on the following criteria: i) security context in each location; ii) staff availability and project modalities; iii) timeline for site visits to be covered within 15 days, plus travel days; and iv) gender distribution within beneficiary groups to include women, men and youth.

Quality assurance and ethical considerations

The evaluation team members were not involved at any stage of the project. All members of the evaluation team were to abide by the UNEG *Ethical guidelines for evaluation* (UNEG, 2020) and the guidelines on *Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations* (UNEG, 2014). Technical support and backstopping were provided by the Evaluation Manager and the evaluation reference group. Quality assurance and technical advice were provided by the Evaluation Manager. Quality assurance in line with UNEG evaluation quality assurance norms and standards had been ensured through reviews by the relevant FAO structures and stakeholder validation workshops before approval and publishing of the evaluation report. This quality assurance does not interfere with the views or independence of the evaluation team. Rather, it ensures that the report provides credible evidence and analysis in a clear and convincing way, and draws its conclusions on that basis.

The evaluation followed the UNEG norms and standards for evaluations (UNEG, 2016) and was guided by the UNEG ethical guidelines and principles for evaluation. Explicit consent was obtained from all interviews, group meetings and survey participants. This principle was also consistent with the *Tri-council policy statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering, Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences, and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1998): ethical conduct for research involving humans, including respect for human dignity; for free and informed consent; for privacy and confidentiality; for inclusiveness; and recognizing the potential for harm, and maximizing benefits for all stakeholders involved. While appreciating the context of the PBF project, the evaluation likely identified examples of good practices upon which future PBF initiatives can be built. Hence, the evaluation assessed challenges faced and used them as learning opportunities. The emphasis was set on what works well, while at the same time pointing out thematic areas where changes are needed.

The evaluation was planned in a realistic timeframe and within the resources available through an inclusive process. Effective research requires honest and meaningful inputs at all stages of the study, and the need to be culturally sensitive. The team carefully adapted research strategies to the cultural context of the Republic of Liberia and considered the sanitary measures to prevent and combat COVID-19. The sample size was distributed across the selected locations, purposefully including women, men and vulnerable groups such as youth (girls and boys). The rights of the respondents who participated in this evaluation were respected. Precautions were taken throughout to ensure the protection of their rights. Ethical principles of respect and justice were applied in the selection of the respondents. Data collection strategies included the following measures: i) no interview began without receiving informed consent from each respondent; ii) interviews were conducted in a private setting as much as possible; data collectors (team members) were always in control of their written notes while the electronic transmission of data was done under secure measures; iii) interviewers were instructed that information provided by respondents should not be discussed outside of the work environment; iv) the evaluators assessed the ability of the respondent to make autonomous decisions through a conversation in their language to ensure informed consent; and v) the approach and activities caused no harm to the participants involved in this evaluation.

Appendix 7. Actual figures for the KIIs and the FGDs

Appendix Table 1. Actual number of KIIs

Stakeholders	Virtual		Liberia		Total (sex)		Grand total	%	
	M	F	M	F	M	F		(M/F)	
								M	F
UN agencies	5	3	0	0	5	3	8	62.5	37.5
Governments	1	0	1	3	2	3	5	40	60
Donors	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	50	50
CSO (community leaders and implementing partners)	0	0	3	2	3	2	5	60	40
Total (M/F)	7	4	4	5	11	9	20	55	45
Total	11		9		20		20	100	

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

Legend: F = Female M = Male

Appendix Table 2. Actual number of FGDs

Locations	Mixed		Men/boys	Female/girls	Total	Total by sex		% (M/F)	
	F	M	H	F		F	M	F	M
Bong	12	30	0	7	49	19	30	38.7	61.3
Lofa	15	13	3	0	31	15	16	48.4	51.6
T (M/F)	27	43	3	7	80	34	46	42.5	57.5
Total	70		3	7	80	80		100	

Source: Assessed by the evaluation team.

Legend: F = Female M = Male

Appendix 8. Evaluation management

Appendix Table 3. The evaluation team

Person/role	Responsibilities
Serge Eric Yakeu Djiam Team Leader, coordination and management of the evaluation team (contact person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the evaluation mission, and maintain contact and provide updates as necessary to the evaluation focal point, i.e. the Evaluation Manager • Conduct the evaluation in accordance with the approved workplan • Lead a desk review, data collection and data analysis • Analyse findings, conclusions and recommendations to respond fully to evaluation questions • Integrate findings, conclusions and recommendations by region and across the two regions • Serve as lead writer and technical reviewer of deliverables • Prepare and submit all deliverables for revision and approval • Ensure the quality assurance of all deliverables • Manage the team and all aspects of the evaluation • Prepare and conduct a meeting/workshop to present findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons from the evaluation
Laura Golakeh National Consultant, lead on the country context and field data collection (provides translation services as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in team planning, meetings and fieldwork • Perform a desk review and contribute to the workplan • Accompany the team during field data collection • Conduct field visits with photographs as additional data validation • Provide translation, and facilitate and participate in the KIIs and FGDs • Provide data analysis inputs during the reporting phase • Provide inputs on pending issues during the reporting phase • Provide any other input upon request by the Team Leader
Oliver Sonah Field Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accompany the National Consultant during field data collection • Conduct field visits with photographs as additional data validation • Provide translation, and facilitate and participate in the KIIs and the FGDs • Provide any other input upon request by the National Consultant and the Team Leader

Quality assurance and technical support

The responsibilities of the Evaluation Manager and the evaluation reference group include:

- i. assure effective scheduling of the KIIs, the FGDs, site visits and timely access;
- ii. identify and facilitate access to documentation and people deemed of importance to the evaluation process;
- iii. share deliverables with key stakeholders;
- iv. collect and consolidate all relevant stakeholder comments on the draft report into a single matrix for ease of reference by the consultant;
- v. collect and consolidate all relevant files and documents by the evaluators into a Google Drive;
- vi. prepare and include the management response to the evaluation report that documents their response to the recommendations and establishes how each organization will (or will not) follow-up on the recommendations;
- vii. assess the overall performance of the consultant for the present mandate; and

- viii. disseminate the evaluation report after completion to ensure that the executive summary is made available to all stakeholders.

Appendix Table 4. Timelines and structure of the evaluation report

Deliverables	Proposed deadline (2022)
Draft inception report, including the evaluation matrix	22 January
Inception workshop/meeting	28 January
Final inception report	1 February
Evaluation field mission	28 February
PowerPoint presentation of primary findings and debriefing workshop	
Draft evaluation report	15 March
Final evaluation report	28 March 2022

The anticipated structure of the final evaluation was as follows:

- i. acknowledgements
- ii. executive summary
- iii. introduction
- iv. evaluation framework
- v. findings (by evaluation criteria) in response to the evaluation questions
- vi. conclusions and recommendations
- vii. lessons learned
- viii. annexes (TOR, evaluation matrix, consulted documents, consulted stakeholders, interview guides, survey questions, etc.)

Appendix 9. Project evaluation data collection schedule

Evaluation workplan for primary data collection (from 27 December 2021 to 31 March 2022)

evaluation team

- i. Serge Eric Yakeu Djiam, Credentialed Evaluator, International Consultant and Team Leader
- ii. Laura Golakeh, National Consultant

Day and date (2022)	Location	Activities
January		
3–31	Home-based	Desk review, KIIs, inception report and preparation for primary data collection
February		
Monday 7	Virtual	Briefing meeting and completion of administrative issues
Tuesday 8–Friday 11	Virtual/Monrovia	KIIs
Saturday 12	Monrovia/Bong	Travel to Bong by road
Sunday 13	Bong/virtual	Team meeting and recap
Monday 14–Saturday 19	Bong	KIIs, FGDs and site visits
Sunday 20	Bong/Lofa	Team meeting and recap Travel to Lofa from Bong
Monday 21–Saturday 26	Lofa	KIIs, FGDs and site visits
Sunday 27	Lofa/Monrovia	Travel to Monrovia from Lofa Team meeting and recap
Monday 28	Virtual/Monrovia	Debriefing meeting of preliminary findings

Note: Online data collection was conducted as the National Consultant managed field work in Bong and Lofa Counties.

Appendix 10. Data collection protocols and tools

A. Informed consent form

Interview protocol (to proceed each interview for informed consent)

FAO has engaged a Team of Consultants to conduct the summative evaluation of the joint project: *Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas in Liberia* (UNDP, 2022b).

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to understand and learn lessons from the implementation of the framework and to see what worked best and what did not work so well. The evaluation is not interested in pointing fingers or blaming people. As someone familiar with this work and given your outstanding experience, we would appreciate your input in the evaluation. The interview will take about an hour.

Your participation in this is totally voluntary. If you do not want to participate in this, you can say no. Although I will record notes, nothing you say will be attributed to your name in any public report produced by this evaluation. It is part of my job as a credentialed evaluator to protect the confidentiality of this interview. I will not connect what you say to your name when I write the evaluation report. Your name will be listed in the inception report, but your input will not be attributed to you.

Do you agree to participate in the interview and the information you provide to be used in the evaluation?

Yes

No – explore conditions under which she/he would be comfortable participating. If she/he still does not consent, thank him/her for his/her consideration.

B. Interview guide

Date: _____ State: _____
 County: _____
 Name: _____ Affiliation: _____
 Position: _____ Contact: _____

(The list of all key informants will be recorded and inserted as an annex of the final evaluation report. The concerned key informant category is marked with an "x".)

Themes for interview	UN agencies	Government	Implementing partners	Local leaders/ representatives of beneficiary groups
1. Relevance				
1.1. Was the project appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in the country at the time of the PBF project's design, including conflict analysis?	X	X	X	
1.2. Was the project relevant to the UN peacebuilding mandate and the SDGs, in particular SDG 16?	X			
1.3. Was the project relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries? Were they consulted during design and implementation of the project?	X	X	X	X
1.4. 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?	X	X	X	
2. Effectiveness				
2.1. To what extent did the PBF project achieve its intended objectives/results and contribute to the broader strategic outcomes identified in Liberia's nationally-owned strategic plans, legislative agendas and policies?	X	X	X	
2.2. What unintended changes, positive and negative, did the project contribute towards?	X	X		
2.3. What are the factors (positive and negative) that affected the performance of the project?	X	X	X	X
2.4. To what extent have gender equality and women's empowerment considerations been included in the design and implementation to support gender-responsible peacebuilding, and has the project been implemented in a way that ensures equitable participation and benefits for both sexes?	X	X	X	X
3. Efficiency				
3.1. How efficient was the overall staffing, planning, procurement and coordination within the project (including among FAO, the ILO, the WFP and with stakeholders)? Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?	X	X	X	
3.2. How well did the project collect and use data to monitor results? How effectively was updated data used to provide adaptive management of the project?	X			
3.3. Overall, did the PBF project provide value for money? Have resources been used efficiently?	X	X	X	

Themes for interview	UN agencies	Government	Implementing partners	Local leaders/representatives of beneficiary groups
3.4. Was the project financially and/or programmatically catalytic in scaling up other peacebuilding work and/or has it helped to create broader platforms for peacebuilding?	X	X	X	X
4. Sustainability and ownership				
4.1. 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?	X	X	X	
4.2. How strong is the commitment of the Liberian and other stakeholders in sustaining the results of the PBF project and their support for continuing initiatives, especially women's participation in decision-making processes?	X	X	X	X
4.3. How were stakeholders (including minority groups and Indigenous Peoples, if applicable) involved in the project's design and implementation, and to what extent were project results owned by the stakeholders?	X	X	X	X
5. Coherence				
5.1. To what extent did the PBF project ensure synergies and complementarity within different FAO, ILO and WFP programmes and other implementing organizations and donors with the same portfolio?	X	X		
5.2. To what extent and how did the project design consider the HDP nexus in designing activities, outcomes and targets?	X			
5.3. To the extent in which the HDP nexus was applied, were opportunities for this used and partnerships established?	X	X	X	
6. Conflict sensitivity				
6.1. Did the PBF project have an explicit approach to conflict sensitivity?	X	X	X	
6.2. Were regional/national internal capacities of FAO, the ILO and the WFP adequate for ensuring an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach?	X			
6.3. Was the project responsible for any unintended negative impacts, and was an ongoing process of context monitoring and a monitoring system that tracks unintended impacts established?	X	X	X	

C. Focus group guide (women, men and youth)

(NB: This guide will be also applied to the leaders of beneficiaries' groups.)

Date: _____ Type of groups (women/men/mixed): _____

State: _____ County: _____

NB: List of participants to be provided separately (name, affiliation and position).

Introduction

- i.** What are the most living challenges the community encounters? e.g. for women, men, children and youth
- ii.** Who are the most vulnerable and why?
- iii.** How have these challenges changed over the past three years?
- iv.** Which type of supports have you received over the past three years? By whom?
- v.** Who controls the resources in your community? And why?
- vi.** Are there cultural barriers for change?

Effectiveness/Relevance/Sustainability/Conflict sensitivity and Governance

- 1)** Given your collaboration with the UN PBF project, what activities have been more successful in reaching the most vulnerable? Please tell us how these work? (participants, content/type of activities, providers, etc.)
- 2)** What has changed in your life after receiving these activities?
- 3)** Do you think that your primary needs have been met? If yes, how? If no, why? What might be the new activities or improvement of existing activities you would like to see?
- 4)** Which activities were found more important to your needs?
- 5)** Are there people in your community that would meet the project's targeting criteria who have been excluded?
- 6)** How are you collaborating with the government to promote peace?
- 7)** Who else is involved and how does it work?
- 8)** To what extent did the project support and provide more agriculture-based economic opportunities to women as compared to men?
- 9)** In what ways do you report intrahousehold relations to have changed (access and control over resources, services and marketing facilities)?
- 10)** How could the project better target and address the needs of vulnerable people?

Thanks for your participation!

D. Checklist for field observation

Date: _____

State: _____ County: _____

(Observations will be made with videos and photographs where necessary.)

- Ob1. Types of existing facilities
- Ob2. Types of improved agricultural technologies practice
- Ob3. Types and nature of extension services and source of inputs
- Ob4. Types of health services in the community
- Ob5. Number of household members accessing financial services by state/county/village
- Ob6. Saving history for cash transfers (notebooks for each group category)
- Ob7. Number of individuals who have access, owned and controlled resources (e.g. land)
- Ob8. Number of women and men operating viable income generation activities
- Ob9. Types of education services and infrastructures
- Ob10. List of food security coping strategies
- Ob11. List of working equitable and inclusive agriculture and protection policies, services and structures, particularly for women and marginalized populations
- Ob12. Existing forms of gender-based violence experienced in the community
- Ob13. Number of individuals (women) who have access, owned and control resources
- Ob 14. Number of women leading community structures or groups
- Ob15. Any other specific observation (to be completed in-county)
 - Contracts
 - Other relevant observations

Comments on observations:

Appendix 11. Profile of the evaluation team

Serge Eric Yakeu Djiam, B.Sc., Ir., M.Sc., CE

Serge Eric Yakeu Djiam is a Credentialed Evaluator. He is Chair of EvalIndigenous, Vice President of the International Development Evaluation Association and Former President of the African Evaluation Association. His background covers: education and rural development; evaluation capacity development; project design and planning; participatory M&E; outcome mapping and impact assessment; food security; livelihoods management; rural finance and institutional analysis; agricultural economics research; environmental economics, and development evaluation. He has spent over 15 years conducting evaluations in Africa, Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia. He works with stakeholders at multiple levels, including community-based organizations, international donors and funders, governments, and numerous UN agencies.

Mr Yakeu has led design and implementation processes in over 120 countries under complex humanitarian conditions that require strong cultural sensitivity. His ability to manage participatory approaches allows him to adapt to different cultural settings, including very remote ones. He has an excellent command of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and statistics.

He is a visiting professor at various universities, including the Université du Québec à Montréal, the College of Food and Agriculture at the United Arab Emirates University, and the Université Constantine 2 in Algeria. He has also served as senior lecturer for the Higher Institute of Environmental Sciences in Cameroon. Mr Yakeu is very active as an adviser for youth empowerment and a mentor for the EvalYouth Mentorship programme. Furthermore, he is an international resource specialist to chair workshops and conferences and to assist in the scientific review of evaluation journals, research and networks worldwide. He is a member of the Canadian Evaluation Society, the Cameroon Development Evaluation Association and the Canadian Association of International Development Professionals.

Mr Yakeu holds an M.Sc. in Rural Development (Belgium), a Master's in Research Methodologies and Statistics (Wageningen, the Netherlands), an M.Sc. in Environmental Economics (Humboldt, Germany), an Engineer Diploma (M.Sc.) in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, and a B.Sc. in Human Nutrition (Cameroon). He also has several international certificates in Participatory M&E and Results-based Management, Equity-focused Evaluation, Planning and Development Evaluation and Development Cooperation. He has completed the Advanced Security in the Field and the Basic Security in the Field certificates from the UN Department of Safety and Security.

Laura Golakeh, National Consultant

Laura Golakeh is an education advocate and gender expert. She is the founder of the Liberia-based Right to Read that provides reading and writing skills to underprivileged children, engages policy makers on the importance of quality education in Liberia and operates a mobile library. Ms Golakeh is the Founder and main professional of Light Consultants, a Liberian consultancy firm specialized in educational leadership, evaluation, and gender and development, which has provided consultancies to many international organizations, including UNICEF and UN Women. Ms Golakeh served as a National Consultant to develop the *Liberia national action plan for the implementation of United Nation resolution 1325* (Republic of Liberia, 2009) and to build the related capacity of staff at the Ministry of Gender, other government agencies and CSOs. She also worked as a Liberia Education Context Specialist for USAID on a mid-term evaluation of the *Accelerated quality education project* and, most recently, as Gender Expert for the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). Ms Golakeh currently provides consulting services to the World Bank country office in Liberia. She has also worked in various programme and media capacities at NGOs like the Wellesley Centers for Women in Boston and the Liberia Media Center.

She has over five years of experience in both the private and the public sector, including the Executive Office of the President of Liberia at the Ministry of State and the Angie Brooks International Centre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the latter, she worked as a Communications Officer and collaborated closely with the Executive Assistant to implement projects, such as the Women's Situation Room and the UNITAR trainings.

Ms Golakeh has an M.A. in Gender and Peacebuilding. She is a 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow, volunteer Country Director for the EiC Corporation and a former member of the UN Women Civil Society Advisory Committee. Laura loves travelling, writing and mentoring young people.

Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of reference

https://www.fao.org/3/cc6298en/Annex_1.pdf

Annex 2. PBF results framework

https://www.fao.org/3/cc6298en/Annex_2.pdf

Office of Evaluation
E-mail: evaluation@fao.org
Web address: www.fao.org/evaluation

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy