



# Empowering youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Tonkolili and Kenema districts in Sierra Leone

## EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

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### BACKGROUND

The project aimed to support youth at risk (YAR) to be reintegrated into their community and families, and advocate for institutional reforms that address the core issue of recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs. This project, funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and implemented from October 2020 to April 2023 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), directly targeted 418 YAR beneficiaries in 18 communities in the two districts.



### PROJECT INFORMATION

#### PROJECT CODE

UNJP/SIL/052/PBF

#### GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Tonkolili and Kenema districts (Sierra Leone)

#### START/END DATE

October 2020 / April 2023

#### FUNDED BY

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

#### PRIORITY AREAS

- **BL1:** Gender equality and rural women's empowerment
- **BL2:** Inclusive rural transformation

#### PARTNERS

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Government of Sierra Leone



### ABOUT THE EVALUATION

#### KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation asked:

- To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?
- How and why were they achieved or not achieved?
- Were the outcomes sustainable, gender-sensitive and environmentally friendly?
- Have they contributed to peacebuilding and security-related impacts?

#### EVALUATION METHODS

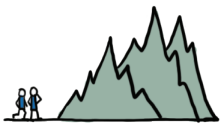
The evaluation methodology relied on a mixed methods approach. Quantitative methods took the form of an endline survey; a total of 576 surveys were carried out in the four project chiefdoms targeted by the project, across three categories of respondents: i) youth at risk; ii) general youth; and iii) community stakeholders.

# EVALUATION FINDINGS



## WHAT DID THE PROJECT ACHIEVE?

The project has coherently targeted the priority needs for sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion in Sierra Leone and helped support the economic and social empowerment of YAR and strengthen trust between beneficiaries and their communities. Civic education and counselling were successfully promoted; and capacity of district and chiefdom youth councils and local youth groups was strengthened. More YAR now believe they can influence decisions in their communities and there is a decrease in violence among the YAR. Also knowledge towards gender, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health was increased. Implementing the Earning Scheme policy Correctional Service Facilities was achieved. Further, 100 inmates were engaged in life skills training. Further, the project design was characterized by extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders that strengthened ownership of the project and increased the likelihood of sustainability.



## WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES?

The project, initially scheduled for two years but extended by six months, faced startup delays and struggled to complete construction and provide necessary infrastructure, equipment, and inputs for YAR's resilience and socioeconomic development. This hindered progress toward socioeconomic and peacebuilding goals. Despite appropriate resource allocation, delays in payments and construction led to cost increases due to inflation. Failure to complete and deliver youth livelihood infrastructure and materials, coupled with unclear communication and exit strategy, poses sustainability challenges.



## LESSONS LEARNED

A judicious and timely combination and coordination of capacity building actions in three dimensions (individual, organizational, enabling environment) is an essential condition to generate visible changes and effects within the project timeline and make significant progress towards sustainable improvement of peace and social cohesion for the benefit of youth at risk and their communities.

In unstable environments and with vulnerable populations, delays in carrying out activities could create frustration and even lead to conflict. They must therefore be prevented through better planning or, failing that, be well managed through good communication and mitigation measures.

Click [here](#) to find out more in the full report.



## NEXT STEPS



FAO, UNDP and UNFPA, the Government of Sierra Leone and subcontractors must complete all project activities and FAO should initiate an exit plan that will ensure the consolidation of benefits and sustain progress towards impact.



FAO must streamline procurement mechanisms and processes to better meet the specific needs of projects and avoid delays that could create frustrations and even conflicts with beneficiaries.



FAO must implement a functional monitoring and evaluation system, capable of collecting and providing conclusive and relevant data to measure the achievements and progress.



UNDP and UNFPA must also consider integrating evidence-based mental health and psychological actions when supporting youth dealing with the after-effects of violence.