



Evaluation of the project  
"Creating peaceful societies  
through women's improved  
access to management  
of natural resources,  
land tenure rights and  
economic empowerment  
in Sierra Leone"

**Project Evaluation Series  
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**Evaluation of the project “Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone”**

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## **Abstract**

In 2020, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund requested for an evaluation of the “Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone” project (UNJP/SIL/050/PBF). This report presents the results of the project evaluation. The project was jointly implemented by FAO and ILO between November 2019 and August 2020, in close collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

The overarching message from the evaluation is the project was very relevant and aligned to Sierra Leone’s peacebuilding goals as it addressed the two underlying causes of conflict in the country - gender discrimination and fragmented land governance. It is also clear that the project has successfully created a momentum for women and their communities at large to address conflict issues more confidently in the future given the capacities and institutions that have been put in place. The combination of peacebuilding through addressing land disputes using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and economic empowerment was quite effective in contributing to the project’s strategic vision of increasing land tenure security. The evaluation found there were adequate materials and equipment for the whole project implementation, particularly for the mapping exercise.

The evaluation recommends for a follow-up on the livelihood component. Given the strong connection between the mapping efforts and peacebuilding through resolution of land disputes, scale-up and sustainability should be the next steps for widespread mapping of family-owned lands. Providing a lighter version of the mapping software (SOLA) would help in this regard, and it could also sustain mapping at the community level after project closure.



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The evaluation benefited from the inputs of many other stakeholders, including project beneficiaries and farmers' organizations. Their contributions were critical to the team's work and are deeply appreciated.



## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

CAN-SL	Community Aid Network in Sierra Leone
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VALC	Village Area Land Committees
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

# Executive summary

## Introduction

1. This report presents the results of the final evaluation of the project “Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone” (UNJP/SIL/050/PBF), funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The project was jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) between November 2019 and August 2020, in close collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLHCP), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD).
2. According to the conflict analysis as part of the project design, gender discrimination and fragmented land governance are the underlying causes of conflict in Sierra Leone, leading to women’s political and economic marginalization, underutilization of land and food insecurity. The project aimed at tackling the two conflict factors by focusing on: i) more effective and gender-inclusive land tenure governance; ii) women’s economic empowerment through skills, knowledge, gender-sensitive financial services and organizational capacity. The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach for data collection. This included a desk review of documentation, community-level focus group discussions (FGD), and virtual key informant interviews. COVID-19 presented a clear limitation for this evaluation as the team relied on virtual key informant interviews and the field visits were conducted following the COVID-19 protocols. In total, there were 85 interviews with internal and external key informants and stakeholders.

## Main findings

3. The evaluation was designed to answer a set of specific questions focussing on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, coherence, catalytic effect and cross-cutting issues.
4. **Relevance and strategic positioning.** The project was clearly appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in the country. The evaluation found the project very relevant as it addressed the two underlying causes of conflict in the country-gender discrimination and fragmented land governance. In fact, considerable progress was made as conveyed by testimonies of women and their proactive participation.
5. It is also clear that the project has successfully created a momentum for women and their communities at large to address conflict issues more confidently in the future given the capacities and institutions that have been put in place. Particularly women’s participation in design and management of income-generating economic activities was successful; to the point, in fact, of creating substantial demand for follow-up projects and investments. In retrospect, the theory of change as applied appears to have been appropriate, responsive and functional. Given the short time frame of the project, the selection criteria and selection process applied were inclusive as well as appropriate and useful in enabling the implementing partner responsible for carrying out the mapping exercise to have a quick and good access to the communities.
6. **Efficiency in coordination.** Overall, resource allocation was considered adequate, particularly in critical fields such as materials and equipment. Women’s economic activities were successful to the point of raising high demand for follow-up activities and financing.

7. **Effectiveness of implementation.** The project largely achieved its strategic objectives, which were well aligned with the Government's vision and strategies. The combination of peacebuilding through addressing land disputes using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and economic empowerment was quite effective in contributing to the project's strategic vision of increasing land tenure security. Activities implemented were well appreciated by the communities given their high level of support and participation and the reported positive outcomes. Most critical was the link made between land management and peacebuilding; it was realized by all that the one cannot go without the other and had to be addressed simultaneously. This realization contributed to a noteworthy uptake of civil society participation in the project and beyond. FAO and ILO worked well together in the project and managed to present a roadmap, as it were, to the Government to initiate more projects in more regions following the same or a similar approach towards peacebuilding.
8. **Impact and sustainability.** The project engaged women in land tenure challenges resulting in mobilization of demand for equitable adjustments, triggering the same demand outside the project areas. This reportedly resulted in the reduction of land-related conflicts within and between communities. Productive assets and ownership of land is increasingly claimed by and awarded to women. Government institutions that became helpful in promoting and effectuating more equitable registration and rulings picked up on this trend. This may well trigger a more comprehensive role of the Ministry of Lands through the country. In that sense, this project, despite its limitations in time and resources, may have generated a lasting effect. It also laid the foundation of many more investors, donors, academic and community organizations to further promote the theory of change practiced in this project.
9. **Coherence and catalytic.** The implementing agencies worked well with Government and civil society in the project areas. Activities on peacebuilding, gender and land rights (led by FAO and partners) laid the foundation for activities aimed at women's economic empowerment. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer and gender officer functions were shared, which provided the overlap between the components and learning. Both components worked with the same beneficiaries in the same target areas, which meant there was incremental support from both components.
10. **Cross-cutting issues.** Gender sensitivity was promoted and prioritized throughout, and well-integrated with land use and livelihood issues. Conflict sensitivity and resolution was at the core of the project design. Although the project primarily targeted women (80 percent); it also targeted men who were considered to be of influence such as paramount chiefs, religious leaders and councillors (to train on gender and land rights).

## Conclusions and recommendations

11. The evaluation concludes that the project was relevant and strategic. It applied a theory of change that truly resonated on the ground and triggered much higher levels of women participation and control of productive resources. This focused on the key issues of land ownership and its direct implications for peacebuilding. Furthermore, the project was well managed and implemented, and culminated in higher levels of civil society participation and activism with a keen gender-based undertone.
12. The evaluation recommends for a follow-up of the livelihood component. Given the strong connection between the mapping efforts and peacebuilding through resolution of land disputes, scale-up and sustainability should be the next steps for widespread mapping of family-owned lands. Providing a lighter version of the mapping software (SOLA) would help in this regard, and it could also sustain mapping at the community level after project closure.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of the evaluation

1. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final evaluation of the project UNJP/SIL/050/PBF– “Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone” jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project had a total budget of USD 1.5 million and was funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).
2. This evaluation was requested by PBF, the development partner, for accountability and learning purposes. The main objective is to provide an independent assessment of the extent to which planned collective objectives have been met, and to draw lessons and recommendations that could inform future projects.

## 1.2. Intended users

3. The primary intended users of the evaluation are PBF, FAO, ILO, the implementing partners, institutional counterparts and all actors involved in project implementation.

## 1.3. Scope and objectives of the evaluation

4. The scope of this evaluation is the entire project implementation period, from January 2019 to August 2020.
5. The overarching evaluation questions presented in Box 1 guided the evaluation and formed the basis for specific evaluation sub-questions contextualized to activity, project and stakeholder. The evaluation matrix shows the indicative sources of information, methods and tools identified to answer each evaluation question and sub-question accordingly. The evaluation matrix and the various data collection tools were finalized prior to the main evaluation phase, conducted from the last weeks of October to the first week of November 2019.

### Box 1. Evaluation questions

#### **Relevance**

- To what extent is the project appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in Sierra Leone, as well as to priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), FAO, ILO and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), at the time of project design?
- Was the project relevant in addressing conflict drivers and factors for peace identified in a conflict analysis?
- To what extent has the project responded to the peacebuilding gaps?
- To what extent did the project respond to the needs of the different target groups (government, civil society organizations, employers/workers organizations and beneficiaries)?
- Were these stakeholders consulted during project design and implementation?

#### **Efficiency**

- How efficient was the overall staffing, planning and coordination within the project (including between the two implementing agencies and with stakeholders)?
- Have project funds and activities been delivered in a strategic and timely manner? How efficient was the project’s implementation approach, including procurement, number of implementing partners and other activities?
- To what extent did the project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system/strategy provide data analysis for accountability, management and learning through base and end lines, and can it demonstrate project changes at outcome and impact level in the target groups?

**Effectiveness**

- To what extent did the PBF project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the project’s strategic vision? What are the unintended positive and negative results of the project?
- What are the perceptions of targeted groups with regard to the project contribution to peacebuilding in the areas of intervention? To what extent has the project increased economic opportunities and addressed grievances of particularly marginalized members of society?
- To what extent did the achieved results affect the conflict dynamics as anticipated? To what extent did employment, activities contribute to peacebuilding outcomes?
- What were the characteristics of the FAO and ILO joint activities in terms of the sequencing, time frame and to what extent was the combination of the package useful?

**Orientation towards impact and sustainability**

- To what extent has the project worked towards significant changes in the intermediate and final beneficiaries?
- Which institutions have improved their capacities through the project, including government institutions, civil society organizations, and FAO/ILO constituencies?
- What are the prospects for sustaining the results and scaling-up activities beyond project closure? In particular, did the project design include an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy to promote national/local ownership and use of national capacity to sustain the positive changes after the end of the project?

**Coherence**

- To what extent did the project complement and create synergies with other projects implemented by FAO, ILO or other partners, including any other relevant PBF projects?
- How well did the two fund recipient organizations and their respective partners coordinate to manage the project and deliver results together?

**Catalytic**

- To what extent has the PBF project been used to scale-up other peacebuilding work and/or has it helped to create broader platforms for peacebuilding or generated learning for partners?
- Has the project integrated in its implementation and results, dimensions such as climate change, gender equality, social cohesion, empowerment, (through the promotion of rights and cooperative businesses) as well as dialogue among the relevant stakeholders (beneficiaries, civil society organizations, employers, worker’s organizations and national institutions)?

**Cross-cutting Issues**

- How were gender equity, non-discrimination, conflict sensitivity and “do no harm” considerations mainstreamed in the project design and in the identification of beneficiaries?

**1.4. Methodology**

6. The evaluation adopted a consultative approach, seeking and sharing feedback with stakeholders at different stages throughout the process. The evaluation used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods taking into consideration resources available. A total of 85 people were interviewed (see Appendix 1 for the list of people interviewed). The evaluation team used different evaluation tools to collect the views of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, in particular: i) structured focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries and cooperating partner staff; ii) structured key informant interviews with beneficiaries, cooperating partner staff, national and local government representatives, implementing partners, FAO and ILO project staff and other key stakeholders in the country; iii) direct observation of project activities and outputs; iv) a debriefing session with FAO and ILO project staff to discuss preliminary findings; and v) a debriefing session with the resource partner (PBF) to discuss preliminary findings. The fieldwork took place over two weeks to interact with actors from three districts (Bo, Kenema, and Port Loko) in Sierra Leone. The evaluation originally planned to cover all four implementation districts but due to political tensions in the North during the fieldwork, Bombali was excluded.

7. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and is in line with the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) Evaluation Manual and Guidelines for the conduct of programme evaluations. Gender and equity aspects were examined throughout the evaluation, as it is a cross-cutting theme.
8. As mentioned above, different data collection methods were utilized and both primary and secondary data was collected to address the different objectives and issues under the evaluation matrix. In line with the evaluation terms of reference (TOR), data was collected using the following evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency and coordination, effectiveness, impact of the intervention, sustainability, and lessons learned, which generated information that provided answers to the evaluation questions outlined above. The evaluation team also utilized evidence collected during the FAO country programme evaluation (CPE) in Sierra Leone and the PBF implementation progress reports.
9. Following, specific data collection tools and the category of respondents to whom each were administered:
  - i. Observations were used to physically assess key variables of interest (e.g. land maps produced, farm sites cultivated, Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) boxes made, etc.).
  - ii. Key informant interviews/in-depth interviews were administered to selected stakeholders with vital information relating to the project (e.g. Government representatives, FAO and ILO project staff, implementing partners, community leaders, etc.).
  - iii. Focus group discussions were administered to selected primary beneficiaries of the intervention (e.g. women cooperatives, VSLA members, etc.).
  - iv. Extensive review of different reports: existing literature and project-related documents.

## **1.5. Limitations**

10. COVID-19 presented a clear limitation for this evaluation. The team leader could not travel to Sierra Leone and the field visits were done following the COVID-19 protocols. There were some difficulties in getting clearance to undertake the field visits, which resulted in the evaluation being delayed by one month. The evaluators were not able to interact with some key actors due to challenges with internet connectivity, and therefore most of the key informant interviews were done virtually. In some cases, they had to reschedule interviews several times.
11. The evaluation field mission was originally planned to cover all four districts where the project was implemented. During the field visits, there were political tensions; as a result, the evaluation could not carry out the fieldwork in Bombali. In order to counter this limitation, the team used the report of the FAO CPE field visits to Bombali which the team leader participated in, and the additional secondary reports from implementing partners to assess implementation.

## **1.6. Structure of the report**

12. Following this introduction, section 2 presents the background and context of the project; section 3 covers the evaluation findings based on the evaluation questions; followed by lessons learned in section 4. Lastly, conclusions and recommendations are presented in section 5.



## 2. Background and context of the project

### 2.1. Context of the project

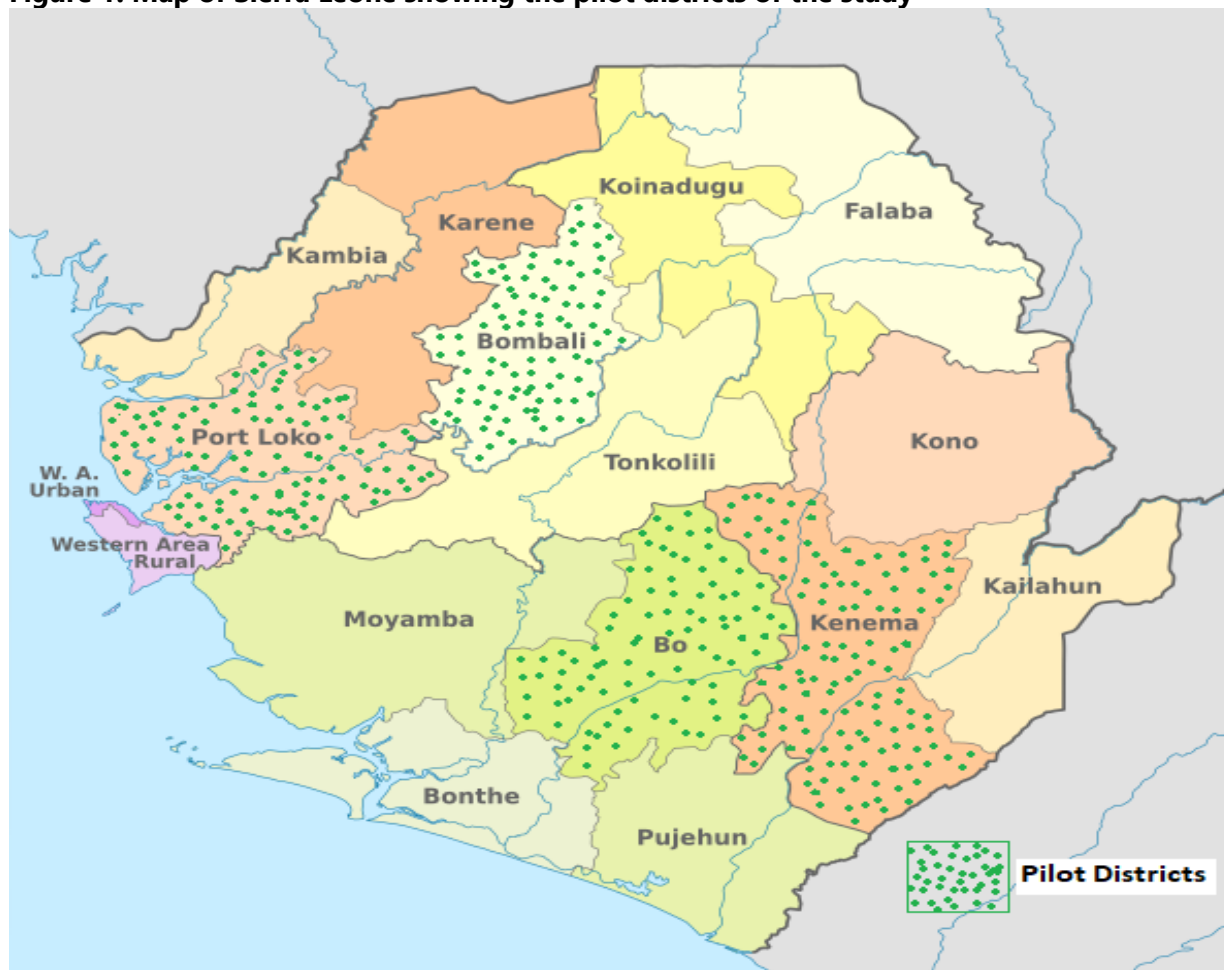
13. This PBF project was jointly implemented by FAO and ILO between November 2019 and August 2020, in close collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLHCP), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), and Ministry Of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), together with traditional leaders (paramount chiefs, section chiefs, chieftom councils, landholding families) and local authorities. FAO led the components on strengthening women's land rights and tenure security, while ILO led components focusing on women's access to entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and financial services necessary to engage in commercial agricultural production and cooperative business development. Direct beneficiaries include farmer-based groups, workers and cooperative support organizations, women including female-headed households and widows in the selected chiefdoms (FAO and ILO activities targeted the same group of beneficiaries).
14. According to the conflict analysis as part of the PBF project design, gender discrimination and fragmented land governance are the underlying causes of conflict in Sierra Leone, leading to women's political and economic marginalization, underutilization of land and food insecurity. The project aimed at tackling the two conflict factors by focusing on: i) more effective and gender-inclusive land tenure governance; ii) women's economic empowerment through skills, knowledge, gender-sensitive financial services and organizational capacity. The project has two outcome areas:
  - i. **Outcome 1:** Land-related disputes and discriminatory practices against rural women's access and ownership of land and other productive assets are reduced, and women's decision-making is increased at all levels.
  - ii. **Outcome 2:** Women are empowered to increase their agricultural economic opportunities and develop women-led cooperative businesses.
15. Sierra Leone's dual land tenure system presents significant challenges to equitable land access, including insecure forms of tenure and rights due to the absence of a system of registration; lack of proper cadastral mapping and land information; unclear and diverging tenure forms under customary law; weak land administration and management; inadequate concession practices and protective mechanisms to prevent land grabbing in the commercial sector. The National Land Policy (NLP) formulated in 2015 by the Government of Sierra Leone is aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) and development partners as a deliberate effort to address the numerous land problems in the country. In the provinces, land is essential for many reasons; it is the source of livelihood for individuals and the most valued economic asset. Land is however under stress from other competing uses. Mining, logging and plantation agriculture continue to absorb huge tracts of land often resulting in conflict between communities and investments.
16. The project builds on government and FAO's efforts in the implementation of the National Land Policy within the VGGTs framework.



## Geographic project locations

17. The project was implemented in four districts: Bombali, Bo, Kenema and Port Loko; and in six chiefdoms: Paki Massabong and Bombali Seborá chiefdoms in the Bombali district, Selenga and Lugbu chiefdoms in the Bo districts, Gaura and Small Bo chiefdoms in Kenema district and Bureh and Makonteh chiefdoms in Port Loko district.

**Figure 1. Map of Sierra Leone showing the pilot districts of the study**



Source: UN. 2014. [Map 3902, Rev. 6.](#)

## Key partners involved in the project

18. **Government partners.** FAO and ILO collaborated with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), Government ministries and agencies in Sierra Leone.
19. **Civil society partners.** FAO and ILO engaged various civil society organizations as the implementing partners for project activities. The main civil society organizations which FAO and ILO Sierra Leone collaborated with on this project are Community Aid Network in Sierra Leone (CAN-SL), West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), NAMATI, Green Scenery, Sierra Leone Labour Congress, and United for the Protection of Human Rights (UPHR). FAO worked with NAMATI and Green Scenery, and ILO with WANEP and Labour Congress. The key partners like Green Scenery subcontracted other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as UPHR in Port Loko.

20. **WANEP.** This implementing partner was the forerunner to the boundary demarcations and economic empowerment aspects of the project. Since land rights issues are very sensitive, WANEP was the first to engage the communities and heavily sensitize them on the programme objectives and activities to pave the way for NAMATI and Green Scenery for the boundary demarcations and economic empowerment trainings. They were specifically involved in building the capacity of women and local authorities to understand their land rights and engage in peace processes, and effect policies on women's rights and participation in decision-making. For that reason, they worked in all the target districts. WANEP provided occupational safety and health training for ILO in Bombali. ILO also worked with WANEP on financial education training in Bombali, cooperatives training in Bombali and Port Loko as well as on data collection.
21. **NAMATI.** This implementing partner carried out the mapping related to land boundaries and rights. They serve as a legal advisory NGO to the government, particularly related to the Land Policy, and drafting and review of the current Customary Land Law. They are members of the technical working group supporting VGGT implementation, and pursue a strong protection of community lands priority. NAMATI has a strong background working with local communities, particularly on issues relating to law, land, gender, local governing structures and the development of by-laws.
22. **Green Scenery** implemented activities under both Outcomes 1 and 2. They covered the two chiefdoms in Port Loko district. The implementing partner worked with their local partner UPHR.
23. **Sierra Leone Labour Congress** is the umbrella organization for trade unions in Sierra Leone. It facilitated the identification of and coordination with sector-specific worker organizations in the implementation of economic capacity building activities. It also worked on the project's labour-related trainings. Labour Congress also implemented the Get Ahead business training and cooperative training modules in Bombali and Port Loko.
24. **United for the Protection of Human Rights (UPHR)** implemented financial literacy in Port Loko and with additional funding to provide financial literacy in the other three districts further along.
25. **Community Aid Network in Sierra Leone (CAN-SL)** implemented all the business, financial education, cooperatives and occupational safety and health training activities in Bo and Kenema.

## 2.2. Theory of change

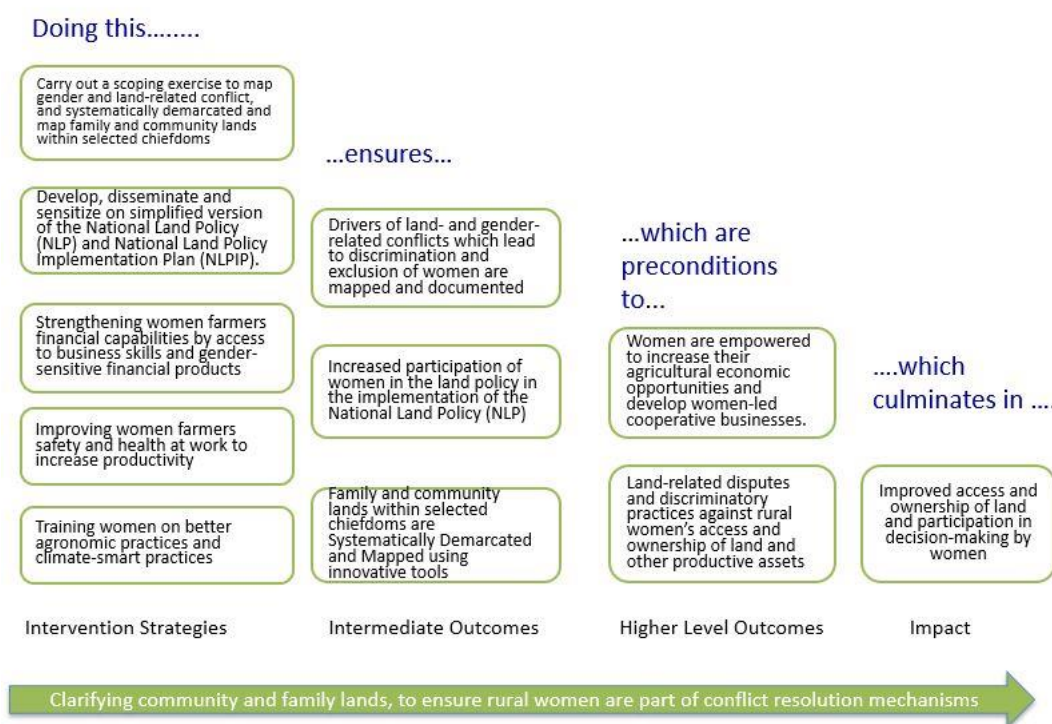
26. Figure 2 presents the project theory of change (TOC). Based on the conflict analysis conducted for the project, gender-discrimination and fragmented land governance were identified as the two underlying causes of conflict in Sierra Leone leading to women's political and economic marginalization, underutilization of land and food insecurity. As extracted from the project document, the causal linkages are:
  - **IF** women are empowered and given the opportunity to participate in decision-making on land tenure, ownership and relevant dispute resolution mechanisms; **IF** women are economically empowered and have access to better employment opportunities and receive access to business skills and gender-sensitive financial products, and gender is mainstreamed into the community, major government policies on land tenure and ownership;
  - **THEN** several of the negative effects of the complex land tenure system on women, such as gender discrimination and inequality at the economic and political level will be reduced; **AND** women's ability to make a positive contribution to peace both at the local and national

levels will be increased; **AND** a more gender-inclusive peace in rural Sierra Leone will be established and sustained;

- **BECAUSE** political and economic marginalization and exploitation and violation of rights due to a lack of gender-sensitive policies will be addressed directly at the local level where these problems are metastasized, enabling women - as the majority of the rural work force - to have enhanced economic and political opportunities to contribute to conflict and violence risk reduction at the community level and beyond.

27. The theory of change claims is supported by desk review findings from the Rosalind Shaw 2005: *Rethinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Lessons from Sierra Leone* (findings in respect to women, refer to paragraph 100) and the IMF 2019 *IMF Country Report No.19/218* (Cluster Five: Empowering Women, Children, and Persons with Disability, p. 136) and other similar studies and reports.

**Figure 2. PBF project theory of change**



Source: Developed by the evaluation team from the project document

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Relevance and strategic positioning

**To what extent is the project appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in Sierra Leone, as well as to priorities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), FAO, ILO and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the time of project design?**

**Finding 1.** The project was clearly appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in Sierra Leone, as well as to priorities of UNDAF, FAO, ILO, and the SDGs - the project specifically contributed to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 16 and 17.

28. The PBF project was relevant and timely as per the identification of land issues and rights as a priority for areas for peacebuilding in Sierra Leone by the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Within the context of land issues and rights, women's economic empowerment, gender equality and land tenure were identified as key priorities by the Government and included in its fourth Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-4). Consultations with the Ministry of Development and Planning confirmed that agriculture and land issues would remain Government priorities for the years to come.
29. The project contributed to UNDAF pillars 1 (economic diversification to promote inclusive growth) 2 (managing natural resources), 5 (labour and employment) and 8 (gender equality and women's empowerment).
30. **FAO.** The project was well aligned with the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) in Sierra Leone (CPF 2013-2017). More specifically, it contributed to all three outputs of the CPF's priority area 2, which focuses on promoting responsible governance and sustainable management of natural resources. These covered: i) innovative approaches and capacities for sustainable agriculture; natural resources management and climate change resilience are promoted in the land; fisheries and forests sectors are in line with the VGGTs; ii) the establishment of adequate gender-sensitive governance structures and monitoring mechanisms for sustained management and responsible investment in natural resources supported; and iii) natural resources and environmental policies, structures and systems reviewed and strengthened to fully integrate and empower women and men.
31. **ILO.** The project was well aligned to ILO's work in Sierra Leone and contributed to UNDAF pillars 1 and 5. Under pillar 1, ILO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Bank of Sierra Leone in 2017 on the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Since then, ILO has provided technical assistance to Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, undertook several assessments including on the enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, on services available to enterprises and conducted a number of capacity building activities. Under pillar 5, ILO has supported the Government of Sierra Leone in the revision of the Employment Act that specifies the rights and duties of Government, employers and various categories of employees. It has also supported a number of policies and frameworks to strengthen the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) sector such as the SME Development Strategy, the SME Policy, the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, the Made in Sierra Leone initiative, and the establishment of the SMEDA.

32. **SDGs.** The project contributed to Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 16 (peace and justice) and 17 (partnership for the goals).

**Was the project relevant in addressing conflict drivers and factors for peace identified in a conflict analysis?**

**Finding 2.** The project was built around the two underlying causes of conflict in Sierra Leone gender discrimination and fragmented land governance. There were effective conflict management mechanisms that increased community skills to prevent conflicts. The active participation of women can not only be considered as a necessary strategy for addressing issues of inequity but also appears to push back or soften non-land and non-gender sources of conflict: social, economic, traditional, cultural, ethnic, etc. When people, women in particular, come to work together on key issues such as land and gender, a progressive cooperation mechanism is established for addressing other sources of conflict and grievances. The project appears to have clearly contributed to that purpose.

33. The project design was built around the twin issue on land rights and gender. This is because lack of equality and equity in these two domains were broadly identified as major conflict drivers in the past. Project implementation and progress reports verified the validity of this design.
34. Issues about discrimination against women are deeply rooted in being economically dependent on their male counterparts. Even in marriage, women most often entirely depend on their husbands to support the home, which increases their vulnerability and reliance on men. This household level dependency syndrome and vulnerability repeats itself at the community and national levels.
35. The discussion on the issues around land ownership and tenure from a gender perspective had a double effect: it created a more broadly shared understanding of the need to work towards equitable solutions and – equally if not more important – it recognized that women were the main actors in such an effort. There are convincing testimonies of women (see below comments from beneficiaries) initially hesitantly but later steadily speaking up, claiming a place at the table and becoming quite involved in pursuing solutions as identified and supported by the project.

**Box 2. Comments from beneficiaries**

“Honestly, this project has changed our perception forever. Until now, our tradition did not allow us to share the family land with our sisters because they would leave the family sooner or later to join their husband’s family. So our forefathers told us that our sister actually belong to their husband’s family. But today, we have learned something new that we are ready to follow”.

[A male member of the Village Area Land Committee in Feiba Community, Bo district]

“I was surprised at the relative ease with which the community elders agreed to give us the land for our cooperative work. They did not even change the particular location we asked for. Before now, it would take very long to even respond to such request. And when they finally did, they would likely change the location with some flimsy excuses. This project is a blessing to us women. May God bless the donors and those who have been working with us here in our village”.

[An FGD participant in Mabaine community, Port Loko district]

**To what extent has the project responded to the peacebuilding gaps?**

**Finding 3.** Indeed, it can be argued that shared or common levels of prosperity contribute to peace and, consequently, to peacebuilding. It is clear that the project has successfully created a momentum for women and their communities at large to address conflict issues more confidently in the future given the capacities and institutions that have been put in place. Through this, persisting issues can be addressed and solutions can be negotiated. This is based on the momentum and additional initiatives that are being explored on peacebuilding.

36. The project's theory of change identified land and gender issues as the major underlying causes of conflict in Sierra Leone. Addressing both issues simultaneously, particularly through the combination of progressive land use and business development, created overall better income earning capacity. Women came together, got trained and became confident to start businesses. The evaluation found that the project was successful to the point of creating more eligible demand for investment capital than could be instantly accommodated. This is clearly a point to be taken up in a later phase or through other mechanisms.
37. The project focused on strengthening women farmers' financial capabilities by access to business skills. Gender-sensitive financial products ensured that they were empowered to increase their agricultural economic opportunities, and the development of women-led cooperative businesses increased women's decision-making at all levels.

**To what extent did the project respond to the needs of the different target groups (government, civil society organizations, employers/workers organizations and beneficiaries)?**

**Finding 4.** The theory of change designed for the project appears to have been appropriate, responsive and functional. The positive participation of community elders earmarking tracks of land for communal tilling of land was particularly important. Moreover, the cascaded matrix does allow for continued consideration of promoting peacebuilding efforts and activities.

38. Respondents confirmed that issues addressed by the project were very relevant because communities cannot enjoy lasting peace without addressing land rights and resource conflict which dominate more than 85 percent of local court systems. It is difficult to achieve food security and promote peaceful coexistence where conflicts over land and resources are rampant.
39. Activities related to women's economic empowerment were equally very relevant to strengthening the livelihoods of families and resilience to cope with shocks such as climate change, epidemics and other disasters. Once women are economically empowered, the benefits trickle down to the household and the entire community, and reduce enormous pressure on their husbands. There is also evidence that families that are economically insecure and lack access to resources (land, capital, etc.) have more incidents of gender-based violence – especially violence against women and girls (IrishAid, 2007).
40. Once it was possible to demonstrate results in some communities, larger sections of the population also wanted to benefit but this was not always possible because of the limited resources available. Therefore, beneficiaries selected in those communities were less than the total population, and those who were left out might have felt unhappy being excluded. This was beyond the control of the implementing partners as the time frame and resource envelop of the project activities was not enough for scale-up purposes. It was noted, however, that at project coordination level suggestions were made to attempt writing in scaling-up plans in other institutions' future programmes under preparation in Sierra Leone. The evaluation did not follow-up on those suggestions but would subscribe to their merits for future peaceful coexistence

between families and neighbouring communities and to contribute to their household income level and food security.

41. The project was designed based on a clear conceptual approach, as formulated in the theory of change. The chosen focuses on land issues and gender allow for rather logical sequencing of steps and activities to get to the next level of results and outcomes. When relevant in that cascaded intervention model, other target groups, as identified in the question, were engaged to play their respective attributed roles. Actually, as the targeted change, and the spread thereof, will take more time to be realized in the near future, the model allows for continued involvement of the target groups mentioned. It is advised to describe the future necessary roles of all parties, for instance in a follow-up project, not so much in terms of their respective needs but rather in terms of roles and support. Likewise, in international development parlance the phrase 'target groups' is usually reserved for citizens or actors and not for donor support or research institutions.

### **Were the stakeholders consulted during project design and implementation?**

**Finding 5.** Given the short time frame of the project, the evaluation found that both the selection criteria and selection process applied were inclusive as well as appropriate and useful in enabling NAMATI to have a quick entry point into the communities. This ensured that the mapping exercise could start smoothly, allowing them to use lessons learned in the more challenging areas when they were dealt with later on in the process.

42. In order to have a balanced geographical coverage/representation, the project team together with Government and civil society organizations or implementing partners agreed on selection criteria during the project development phase. The three selection criteria focused on the following: i) select district(s) that represent all the geographical regions of Sierra Leone (North, North West, East, and South); ii) ethnic representation balance, mainly Temne, Mende, Limba and Krio; and iii) districts with hard history of land conflicts or large-scale land investments.
43. Based on the above, the following districts were chosen: Bombali in the North, Port Loko in North West, Bo in South, and Kenema in the East. In each of these districts, a detailed scoping exercise was carried out in collaboration with Government, district local Government leaders, paramount chiefs and civil society organizations to select specific chiefdoms for the project. The selection of beneficiary communities was done in consultation with the chiefdom councils. The NAMATI team undertook a scoping in four communities in each of the chiefdoms and selected two for implementation. The critical criteria used for the selection include: absence of non-land-related disputes, strong community leadership and eagerness to participate, appetite for collective community engagement, willingness to host and implement the project, involvement of all women groups.

## **3.2. Efficiency in coordination (organizational performance)**

### **How efficient was the overall staffing, planning and coordination within the project (including between the two implementing agencies and with stakeholders)?**

**Finding 6.** Overall, the evaluation found there were adequate materials and equipment for the whole project implementation, particularly for mapping equipment. In line with observations made above, additional resources for economic empowerment would have been welcomed due to possibly unexpected high demand that the project created.

44. The evaluation found that capable and adequate human resources were allocated throughout the project implementation. In hindsight, the project might have benefited from more human

resources committed to the project component managed by ILO to strengthen support of the interventions. There was a regrettable five-month delay in the recruitment of the ILO project coordinator.

45. Funds were provided adequately to finance the planned activities. Each activity was funded, and money disbursed in tranches. It is now clear that more financial resources could have been allocated to the project's livelihood component, given the unexpectedly high uptake and feedback from beneficiaries. This would have increased sustainability of income to the beneficiaries. The above-mentioned initial delays did not adversely affect the successful implementation of the project. Although a no-cost extension was approved; additional funding was not provided by PBF and this created a burden for FAO who could not extend the contract for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer until project closure. The project extension was granted to deal with some implementation delays cause by COVID-19.
46. FAO and ILO recruited two project coordinators who were based in the FAO Office in Sierra Leone and provided the day-to-day management of the project. As the lead agency, FAO recruited most of the key experts. The M&E officer and the gender officer were shared between FAO and ILO, and the evaluation found that this arrangement resulted in increased efficiency, effective management and cross-learning between components. FAO in Sierra Leone and ILO in Abuja provided the steering of the project. The two heads of agencies, the FAO Representative and the ILO Representative provided the signoff and authorization of project expenditures.
47. Coordination involved stakeholder engagement, community meeting, training of project beneficiaries and distribution inputs. In addition, a multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) was pursued. The partnership was well coordinated and the implementing partners worked in synergy to complement the implementation of project activities. All partners co-designed the project implementation strategy, and shared and harmonized work plans. Partnership meetings were held consistently and monthly project progress reports were shared with the various partners. Overall, project coordination was well executed.
48. The project management team was considered by CAN-Sierra Leone as very efficient in implementing the project and this contributed to achievement of the project results. The bottom-up approach was often used to manage and govern the project in order to deliver the intended results. NAMATI has its headquarters in Freetown with offices in each of the regions. The project was implemented in Bombali, Bo and Kenema districts where it has offices. Each was staffed with a paralegal and a leader who played the leading role in project implementation. At community level, they worked with the community mobilizers who were selected by the communities themselves and trained by their paralegals. The systems of internal control and management structure were assessed as effective as all players in the implementation period were committed to its responsibilities.
49. For NAMATI, project finances were basically adequate but human resources costs turned out to be higher than expected. FAO allowed for a readjustment of the budget lines without topping up the overall budget. Due to COVID-19 and project delays, the allocated funds were not used entirely and when field operations came to a halt, some ongoing project activities had to be suspended. This affected some planned activities: adoption of the community by-laws by the chiefdom council, training of the Village Area Land Committees (VALCs) in the communities, some family maps were not completed nor printed in Kenema due to court injunctions, and the last climate-smart agriculture roll out was not done.



50. CAN-Sierra Leone noted that ILO provided all training manuals and modules upon completion of the training of trainers (TOT). For other training materials and equipment, costs were included in the budget and procured as and when the activities were conducted by CAN-Sierra Leone

**Have project funds and activities been delivered in a strategic and timely manner? How efficient was the project's implementation approach, including procurement, number of implementing partners and other activities?**

**Finding 7.** Funds and activities were delivered in a strategic and timely manner. Efficiency was quite good all around.

51. As stated above, the project was able to utilize the entire project funding with a two-month no-cost extension. Due to the sequencing of activities, FAO funding was depleted earlier on schedule than ILO funding. It was observed that FAO's local knowledge was very helpful in ILO's identification of implementing partners on the ground, most of whom had worked with FAO on earlier projects. The selection of implementing partners was based on their geographical presence, which really facilitated project implementation. The training of trainers was very useful in terms of quickly cascading the training to the communities. It is important to note that by the close of the project, FAO and ILO had been able to implement nearly all activities and that targets set by the project document were realized despite COVID-19 and other setbacks, which confirms good design. Yet, smooth implementation may also indicate a potentially higher absorption capacity in the field than originally envisioned. This could be something to focus on in any similar or follow-up activity in country and region.
52. Table 1 shows the total PBF approved project budget by recipient organization. The approximate implementation rate as percentage of total project budget was 92.5 percent. This was a gender-responsive budgeting and the project was expected to indicate the amount in USD from the project document to be allocated to activities focussed on gender equality or women's empowerment. The total budget allocation to gender equality and women's empowerment was at level 3 and allocated a total of USD 1 200 000 (80 percent). Review of the final project report shows that the actual amount spent on activities focussed on gender equality or women's empowerment equalled USD 912 000.

**Table 1. Budget allocation**

Recipient organization	Amount (USD)
FAO	1 000 000
ILO	500 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 500 000</b>

**To what extent did the project M&E system/strategy provide data analysis for accountability, management and learning through base and end lines, and can it demonstrate project changes at outcome and impact level in the target groups?**

**Finding 8.** Project management and implementing partners rigorously followed the theory of change where possible and, when challenged, they applied common sense in consultation with other stakeholders.

53. A possible lesson to learn and incorporate in future programming is to apply some cash flow calculations for women and families participating in programme-supported Village Savings and Loans Association. Such VSLAs encourage women to deposit their savings to be invested in laudable activities such as land and water rehabilitation. However, these are long-term investments squeezing women's capacity to also invest in shorter-term and quick-yielding

ventures promoted in the project as well. This was not incorporated in project design, and since the design could not be adjusted halfway through implementation, women graduating from the projects entrepreneurship and other trainings were left unproductive, somewhat undercutting the effectiveness of the project. In hindsight, this could possibly be marked as a flaw in project design as other multilateral institutions, especially the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), already identified this cash flow challenge; or, as is suggested here, it could be taken as a valuable lesson for future programming.

54. A baseline survey was conducted at the beginning of the project using a digital tool. The PBF-funded project was monitored at three stages: at community level, at project officer's level, and at district programme manager's level. The Programme Manager monitored on monthly basis. Information gathered from the Project Officer was used to probe into the issues raised and technical support was offered.
55. During project implementation, both FAO and ILO project staff made joint visits to the communities to observe the progress of the work accomplished and to make technical inputs at field and management levels. ILO also used consultants to monitor trainings. Gender champions who were important partners in the implementation of the project also contributed by monitoring the activities carried out to ensure achievements made are sustained. FAO and ILO conducted joint monitoring visits to all project communities. The evaluation found that this monitoring pattern facilitated the necessary, effective way to address challenges, which led to improved implementation of project activities. However, discussions on the M&E revealed that although the shared M&E officer between FAO and ILO was a good example, M&E issues were not taken seriously and not adequately supported which led to limited monitoring travel to the field. This was confirmed by the non-renewal of the M&E Officer's contract during the no-cost extension period, which is normally crucial in the closing activities of any project.

### **3.3. Effectiveness of implementation**

#### **To what extent did the PBF project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the project's strategic vision? What are the positive and negative unintended results of the project?**

**Finding 9.** The project largely achieved its strategic objectives, which in turn were well aligned with the Government's vision and its strategies. There were noticeable positive results, but these were intended. The combination of peacebuilding through addressing land disputes using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and economic empowerment was quite effective in contributing to the project's strategic vision of increasing land tenure security. The unintended positive results were the increased funding that FAO was able to source for peacebuilding activities.

56. The project was implemented in a context characterized by a legacy of land tenure insecurity and land grabbing that escalated into extremely violent conflicts around the turn of the century. Whereas most of the dust has settled, underlying disparities are still strongly felt. Against this background, the systematic demarcation and mapping of customary land rights became a high priority of the Government. The project addressed this urgent need through the use of innovative geospatial technologies (SOLA and Open Tenure). FAO and partners, in collaboration with the Ministry of Land, Housing and Country Planning, have mapped 111 family land parcels amounting to a total of 21 484 acres in 11 village communities in Port Loko, Bombali and Bo districts collectively. The mapping process in Kenema district was halted due to a violent conflict related to land grabbing which prompted the Court to issue an injunction on the chiefdom land.

57. FAO in collaboration with partners conducted a scoping exercise to engage in consultation with districts and chiefdoms authorities, relevant stakeholders and other key line ministries to finalize and select the specific communities where the systematic demarcation and mapping of land parcel would take place in the target districts and chiefdoms for outcome area 1. For outcome area 2, ILO focused on the contribution of employment to social cohesion and sustaining peace, which also informed the project development. Both outcomes were pursued simultaneously though not necessarily at the same time in all cases.
58. After stakeholder consultation and finalization of the community selection process, FAO in collaboration with the implementing partners and the Ministry of Lands engaged all landowning families and local authorities in the selected communities to introduce the project aims and objectives and benefit to the communities. Over 320 young men and women - 30 percent were young women over the age of 18 - were selected from the landowning families to be trained as para-surveyors to use innovative geospatial technologies (SOLA and Open Tenure) for the mapping and recording of land rights. Preference was given to women following FAO's strong recommendation. However, civil society organizations indicated that the majority of the para-surveyors were inevitably men as some of the women admitted were physically incapable of traversing the rough terrain of thick forests, hills and swamps for very long hours (seven hours on average) during the mapping exercise. Yet, the male to female ratio after this inevitable turnover was 70:30.

**What are the perceptions of targeted groups with regard to the project contribution to peacebuilding in the areas of intervention? To what extent has the project increased economic opportunities and addressed grievances of particularly marginalized members of society?**

**Finding 10.** Activities implemented were well received by the communities as witnessed by the high participation levels and the documented positive outcomes.

59. The evaluation found that before the actual boundary demarcation started, there was extensive sensitization about the project idea itself, since it was dealing with sensitive issues of land and gender. This was found to be very successful and helped prepare the communities (mainly male-dominated) for the big shifts in culture and tradition that the project was introducing.
60. The sensitization was followed by land-related conflict mapping in all targeted chiefdoms. The evaluation found that this mapping exercise was also successful, but largely focused on the land disputes and not much on the drivers of discrimination against women, which was very crucial to understand at the onset.
61. Table 2 shows the key indicators for effectiveness on Component 1. Over 100 youth were trained as para-surveyors to be able to use GPS machines and participate in the mapping and demarcation of their family land boundaries. Over 80 women became certified training of trainers and were able to replicate the training on peacebuilding, gender and land rights, and reached over 1 000 people in their communities.
62. A number of land conflicts were resolved through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Thirty-three land and natural resources conflicts were identified: 15 were related to disputes between families in the same communities, while 18 were between the project communities and neighbouring communities. Out of the 33 land disputes, 29 were successfully resolved with four remaining unresolved at the time of mapping. This represents 88 percent of all conflicts identified and resolved.

63. A system of community conflict monitors and mediators (CCMM) was established to continue to monitor and resolve conflicts that come up over time using alternative dispute resolution before escalating into violence. A total of **80 community peace and conflict monitors (60 females and 20 males)** were trained on how to monitor land-related disputes and other discriminatory practices that could trigger violence and social instability. To ensure sustainability, the conflict monitors in all the targeted chiefdoms are now members of the chiefdom leadership/committees. The capacity of **over 800 community members** was strengthened on gender and land rights. A training of trainers capacitated **33 gender and land rights champions** who in turn trained over **750 community members (190 male and 560 female) on gender and land right and the alternative dispute resolution mechanism**. Two of the community gender champions have been appointed as the first female town chiefs of Matete and Mabaine communities in Port Loko district.

**Table 2. Key indicators on effectiveness for Component 1**

Indicators	Baseline	Actual	Target	% Achieved	Comment
<b>Outcome 1: Land-related disputes and discriminatory practices against rural women's access and ownership of land and other productive assets are reduced and women's decision making increased at all levels.</b>					
Percentage of reported land dispute cases in targeted areas addressed and resolved through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms	0	29	33	88%	A good achievement. Suggests the alternative dispute resolution system worked well.
Percentage of rural women with increased access and ownership to land and other productive assets	0	50	30%	167%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this.
Percentage of women on decision-making structures/committees on land at all levels	0	50	40	125%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this. But their active participation is still not so strong.
Number of copies of simplified National Land Policy and implementation plan produced.	0	1 000	900	111%	Field data confirms widespread distribution of copies and also the aired audios on local radio stations.
Number of Village and Family Land Maps produced and validated by the community	0	18	20	90%	Field data confirms this. Communities visited had their maps, except in Kenema district.

64. The harmonization of boundaries and mapping of land helped to resolve community land conflicts and intra-family land conflicts, most of which are boundary-related. Using GPS technology, the boundaries were demarcated, mapped and families received their cadastral maps handed over by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning.
65. Trainings on peacebuilding and community awareness raising on radios, town hall meetings etc. promoted a culture of peace and non-violence with a common principle of *"treat others the way you would like to be treated"* and *"act now for peace and non-violence"*
66. The project strengthened community governance through development of Community By-laws and Village Area Land Committees in all villages as stipulated in the National Land Policy. Among the criteria for VALC leadership, the National Land Policy recommends at least 40 percent women. The project was able ensure that 50 percent of women are members of all the 16 VALC established in Kenema, Bo, Bombali and Port Loko.

### Box 3. Comments from a participant in the focus group discussion

“But the sensitizations were really good because it helped us to change our perception completely. I now appreciate the power of sensitization.”

[An elderly man in the focus group discussion in Selenga, Port Loko]

**Finding 11.** The target women were trained on several key economic empowerment topics including business management, communication and negotiation skills, gender and entrepreneurship, safety and health at work, cooperative governance, decision-making, developing support networks, etc. In the area of finance, awareness has been raised on managing risks, setting goals, avoiding debt, and using credit to expand business.

67. The evaluation found that most of the target women understood these concepts because they were able to clearly explain what some of the concepts mean and how they can be put into practice. What was missing was the start-up capital to use the knowledge in a practical sense, as the project did not have any component for linking beneficiaries/cooperatives to financial institutions.
68. Under Component 2 on economic empowerment, women leadership capacities were enhanced though the various training provided. The women in the leadership position of the cooperatives were accepted in the communities’ decision-making processes. This was a positive effect of capacity building.
69. As shown in Table 3, the civil society organizations were capacitated through a training of trainers approach and cascaded training programmes to 955 farmers (85 percent women), with a view to strengthening skills and capacities on (cooperative) business development; 640 (82 percent women) benefited from financial education; 200 (77 percent women) from safety and health during farming activities by ILO; and a total 2 500 (80 percent women) attended climate-smart training to better manage natural resources and protect their environments.
70. Under Component 2, the project reported that during the implementation period civil society organization partners have rolled out training on gender and entrepreneurship to 425 beneficiaries (77 percent women) in entrepreneurship training “GET Ahead”; 640 (82.83 percent women) in financial education; 450 (81 percent women) in cooperative development; 200 (77 percent women) in occupational safety and health as “occupational safety and health volunteers”; and 200 (80 percent women) in climate-smart agriculture. The project trained 180 women farmers on Village Saving and Loan Association as a self-reliance initiative. The VSLAs serve as a backbone for women’s empowerment, particularly rural women farmers.
71. Women gained enormous skills in business development, entrepreneurship and marketing through targeted trainings conducted by civil society organizations. The Village Saving Loan Schemes and Cooperatives have been established to boost women’s access to credit and competitiveness. Most of the cooperatives are functional. Some have cultivated large areas of farmland together, with little or no governance challenges. In Mabaine community, Port Loko district, the cooperative women reported *“they used the VSLA funds to cultivate the farm they have. Now there is no money left to proceed with the VSLA or any other activity”*. So they said *“we are waiting for the farm to be harvested and sold. Then we resume our VSLA with the proceeds of the sale”*.

**Table 3. Key indicators on effectiveness for Component 2**

Outcome	Performance indicators	Baseline	Target	Actual	% Achieved	Comments
<b>Outcome 2: Women are empowered to increase their agricultural economic opportunities and develop women-led cooperative businesses.</b>						
<b>2.1:</b> Business management skills and resilience of women farmers strengthened	Indicator 2.1.2: No. of persons who benefited from entrepreneurship trainings	0	300 (80% women aged ≥20)	425 beneficiaries trained (76% women)	142%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this.
<b>2.2:</b> Women farmers' capacity on forming and managing agricultural cooperatives enhanced	Indicator 2.2.3: No. of people receiving cooperative skills training	0	300	450 beneficiaries trained (81% women)	150%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this, but the short training meant the cooperatives required further support.
<b>2.3:</b> Farmers have strengthened their financial capabilities and have access to gender-sensitive financial products	Indicator 2.3.3: No. of people trained on financial education (disaggregated by sex, age, location)	0	300	640 beneficiaries trained (82% women)	213%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this, but lack of start-up capital was raised as an issue.
<b>2.4:</b> Women farmers benefit from improved safety and health at work to increase productivity	Indicator 2.4.2: No. of volunteer women farmers trained	0	30	200 beneficiaries trained (77% women)	667%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data supports this.
<b>2.5:</b> Women are trained on improved agronomic and climate-smart agricultural practices	Indicator 2.5.1: No. of women trained	0	2 000 women aged ≥20	2 500 beneficiaries (80% women)	125%	Surpassed target. Qualitative data shows although training was received they are yet to internalize the lessons.

72. The training provided was the key element of the component and this influenced some farming groups to form cooperatives. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the training provided has influenced the perception of some male household members on women's engagement in economic activities. Women farmers who joined cooperatives reported that they could increase their contribution to household incomes, which was acknowledged by spouses and community members. Support has been provided to women farmers and existing farming groups including on improved agricultural practices and the establishment, management and governance of agricultural cooperatives. Some farming groups have since decided to form cooperatives and a total of eight cooperatives have been registered with the Department of Cooperatives under the Ministry of Trade and Industry.
73. The process of forming women cooperatives in the four operational chiefdoms has been completed. They are now registered with and certified by the Government of Sierra Leone. Women also received trainings to manage the cooperatives. So far, most of the cooperatives have collected membership fees and are on the verge of opening bank accounts.

74. With the introduction of a value added component in livelihood activities, communities now have cassava-processing machines that will enable them to process the cassava into “gari and foo-foo” which will increase their profit margin compared to selling just cassava tubers. The machines’ services will also be rented out to members and other people within the communities for a fee which will bring in additional income for the groups.
75. The component did not focus primarily on the establishment of cooperatives, but on the strengthening of capacities of women farmers to manage and form them. However, women cooperatives came very late in the project and present a challenge for continuity, but they have continued to receive support from the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The cooperatives were implemented in the third phase of the project without much support to ensure sustainability. There is need for further evaluation to see how they are doing.

**To what extent did the achieved results affect the conflict dynamics as anticipated? To what extent did employment activities contribute to peacebuilding outcomes?**

**Finding 12.** In its design and implementation, the project recognized and validated the three potential causes of conflict mentioned above. It also managed to make a start with addressing underlying peacebuilding gaps. The project was probably too limited in size and tenure to generate higher impacts but it served well as an example for larger follow-up initiatives.

76. According to the joint ILO/PBSO/UNDP/World Bank comprehensive review of academic literature (ISDC, 2016) and more than 450 employment programmes in fragile situations, three interlinked main drivers of conflict related to unemployment and insufficient rights and quality at work were identified: a lack of contact and interactions across different social groups, a lack of opportunity, particularly for youth and women and the existence of grievances over inequality, access to fundamental rights at work and exclusion. This project faced all these drivers in practice and its design was geared to addressing them in a cohesive way.
77. Component 2 focused on women’s economic empowerment and provided a good basis for reduced conflicts especially through increased income and reduced gender-based violence. Cooperatives and VSLAs models are self-sustaining models at the community level. In addition, ILO provided additional training on financial literacy, occupational safety and health, and climate-smart agriculture, which were intended to increase entrepreneurs and by extension employment creation.
78. And earlier ILO assessment found that women represent 40 percent of the clientele of all financial service providers in Sierra Leone<sup>1</sup> and highlighted the weak capacities of these providers to effectively offer adapted financial services to male and female small entrepreneurs, in particular in rural areas. The assessment of the demand revealed a low level of financial literacy. The project used the findings to refine the assessments to include the specific needs of women engaged in agriculture in rural areas in the four selected districts. On the supply side, the project used the ILO training Programme ‘Making Microfinance Work’ to strengthen management capacities of financial service providers and support them to offer gender-sensitive financial services in rural areas in particular. The evaluation found there was a time constraint in realizing the full extent of this ILO training. However, beneficiaries were very appreciative of the learning they achieved during the training.

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<sup>1</sup> 14 commercial banks, 13 microfinance institutions, 17 community banks, 59 financial services associations, 3 mobile network operators.

**What were the characteristics of FAO and ILO joint activities in terms of sequencing, time frame and to what extent was the combination of the package useful?**

**Finding 13.** At project level, FAO and ILO worked well together. For results and outcomes to be optimal, public agencies would have had to contribute more. The project was quite useful in terms of showing the gaps that still have to be overcome and how that could be achieved in the future peacebuilding efforts. For example, the promotion of private sector partners in the demarcated land areas to increase economic value of the land would encourage demarcation of the land in Sierra Leone.

79. The combination of the project's two main components was a milestone in leveraging the comparative advantages of the two UN agencies. The project also enabled the two agencies to practically deliver as one. Through implementation, FAO realized the need to include economic empowerment in their interventions. ILO on the other hand, realized the need to have peacebuilding in their economic empowerment effort. The project has brought to the forefront the alternative dispute resolution mechanism. It is clear that women's empowerment is central to economic development and contributes to peacebuilding with growing demand to promote women's socioeconomic empowerment.
80. This project builds on the ongoing work by FAO and the Ministry of Land, Housing and Country Planning with civil society partners on "Promoting Women's Customary Land Rights in Sierra Leone" within the framework of the implementation of VGGT and National Land Policy. This ultimately culminates in the creation of a favourable environment for the legal and institutional reforms required to improve the tenure governance system for women, taking into account lessons learned and recommendations from multi-stakeholder consultations. Through FAO's previous efforts, a series of training of trainers were conducted and over 200 certified women land rights advocates were trained on gender and land rights issues using conflict-sensitive gender training tools to address women land tenure rights in male-dominant rural settings. The evaluation observed that these certified women advocates played a key role in the PBF project as cofacilitators and trainers using local languages on gender and land rights in each of the project areas.
81. Building on other FAO VGGT efforts, the Organization also supports the ongoing capacity building of the organization for responsible agricultural investment (RAI). Once the mapping was done, private sector investors were introduced to bring economic value to the communities. Under the FAO VGGT intervention three investors were identified and trained on the seven step responsible agricultural investment.<sup>2</sup> Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) primarily guides private sector investment in rural Sierra Leone. As highlighted in the evaluation of FAO's country programme in Sierra Leone there are significant limitations in SLIEPA's support to investors, and the prolonged and confusing process to comply with the numerous, time-consuming steps to obtain investment approval. Chiefdom level leadership and investors are not clear about what the interaction with investors and chiefdom and family-level leadership should look like. Greater harmonization would allow for an examination of what activities are clashing or where gaps exist and where certain activities are putting undue strain on local communities.
82. Factors contributing to the achievement of results
83. First, inclusion of traditional authorities in all phases of the project implementation was found to be a strong contributing factor to the achievement of results. Customary law remains an important basis for land governance in Sierra Leone and the traditional authorities are the custodians and

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<sup>2</sup> The private sector partners for the responsible agricultural investment engagement are Lizard Earth, Sierra Tropical and Gold Tree.



play an important role in dispute resolutions. Traditional leaders are also important decision makers on land allocation so their participation in project activities was key.

84. A second contributing factor was the inclusion of stakeholder consultation at the national, regional and community levels, and the strong partnership with government bodies, mainly the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.
85. Third, the project included vulnerable men and women in the targeting and implementation of the project, particularly youth and women in the mapping exercise with 100 youth trained as para-surveyors. Gender mainstreaming was implemented in all project activities, and the economic empowerment interventions and mapping exercises targeted women. Inclusive trainings of the project design was found to be very positive, as well as the mixture of both men and women in the project activities.
86. Planning and teamwork was found to be strong at the project coordination level. The shared M&E Officer provided the link between the two components, and was found to be a positive component of the project coordination and implementation.

### **3.4. Orientation towards impacts and sustainability**

#### **To what extent has the project worked towards significant changes in the intermediate and final beneficiaries?**

**Finding 14.** The evaluation found that capacity of women to better advocate for their land rights and improved land tenure security through mapping of customary land was strengthened and now women are aware of the provision of law and National Land Policy on issues of customary land rights.

87. Respondents reported that there is a reduction in land-related conflicts between families and neighbouring communities. There has been increased access to and ownership of land and other productive assets by women, as well as increased participation in decision-making. For example as a result of the training there is inclusion of women in land-related discussions at family level. There is an increase in women participation in community development programmes and reduced discriminatory practices against women. There is notable increase in economic opportunities for women at household and community level through increased agricultural livelihood support and improved household food security.
88. Women indicated that there is an increased level of understanding of the skills in running their businesses, cooperation between men and women as they work together, zest to get their cooperatives up and running as they have raised membership fees to establish bank accounts. The strong bond that has been created between the cooperative communities is something that did not exist in the past.
89. The communities and the respective landowning families now know the boundaries of the land. Most of the conflicts have been resolved, allowing people to live in peace and harmony. Women can be seen meeting and collectively working on their livelihood activities. Women now have better knowledge of village savings, occupational safety and health (OSH) and they can work on their farms without their husband's interference.
90. At national level, the formulation of policies on land and natural resources management and the enactment of the land commission and the customary land bills is a notable achievement. There is a stronger collaboration with Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other government institutions especially the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning and

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and a general improvement in the land sector. Some of the lessons and results of this project were used to inform the two land bills led in the drafting. The best practices from the project were included in the land bills, especially the customary land rights bill.

91. The registration certificate given to the cooperatives by the Cooperative Department shows that the Department has recognized the relevance of cooperatives in the economic development of the country.

**Which institutions have improved their capacities through the project, including government institutions, civil society organizations, and FAO/ILO constituencies?**

92. There was a notable result in the form of the collaboration with MDAs and other government institutions and their stronger collaboration with civil society organizations and other NGOs. The project has attracted development partner interest in scaling-up the boundary demarcation process as a strategic means of contributing to peace in Sierra Leone. The building of MDA and implementing partner staff capacities through the various training of trainer packages has created tremendous capacities within those institutions. Therefore, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning now has the capacity to respond to land disputes using the alternative dispute resolution method more effectively than before.
93. FAO has developed a comparative advantage having gained a valuable experience on land issues in Sierra Leone through this project. It is now a credible organization to deal with issues of land. This was observed as a major strength of FAO because many development partners were not ready to go into this area, but this project and other FAO projects focussed on similar issues and have now raised the interest.
94. The inclusion of selected communities and their neighbours in the mapping exercise ensured inclusive participation. In addition, the involvement of landowning families and young men in the participatory mapping and all follow-up actions contributed to women's empowerment. Where mapping should take place between communities involving boundary lines of two districts, care must be taken to harmonize the boundaries and establish a proper coordination that should respect district borders.
95. The shared resources, such as forests, should be recognized as common to all without the need for maps to show individual community patches. Women's empowerment on natural resources allowed them to play a better role in nation building and finally they should be partners in development.
96. In future projects, all neighbouring communities should be fully involved in the mapping of family and community lands. Also, awareness with neighbouring communities on the benefits of mapping their lands should be implemented upfront before the actual mapping is done. Change in mindset takes time. It is important to note that there are community leaders whose perception and thinking in treating land-related disputes was not changed and has not changed.
97. Most of the civil society organizations that participated in the implementation are located in the communities and continue to engage both the beneficiaries and the partner organization in new projects with the lessons learned from this project.
98. The use of nationals to train local community people is cheaper and more effective than bringing in people from outside the country. Use of community mobilizers was beneficial in project

implementation. The project identified ethnic differences and cultural diversities and included them in project implementation, which is beneficial.

99. The one and a half years of intervention were not enough to fully sustain the gains achieved by the project. Peacebuilding takes a long time and as such there is need for PBF to review the length of support. If there were no plans put in place to follow-up, even the cooperatives would find it hard to survive. Discussions with women clearly indicated a need for more support to ensure sustainability of their activities.
100. There is a need to document and share with partners the lessons learned from the two UN agencies delivering as one and in addition the community involvement in the mapping exercise as a precursor to titling land. This can provide interesting insights for peacebuilding initiatives.
101. The process and the enactment of the supporting laws and the community institutions ensure sustainability of the conflict resolution. They will also be included in policy briefs and recommendations to government. This should be well documented for the benefit of future design and implementation of similar projects.
102. There are external factors which can affect project sustainability, as any unexpected changes in communities' supportive leadership or other poorly designed interventions that may reverse the gains of this project, as well as natural disasters.

**What are the prospects for sustaining the results and scaling-up activities beyond project closure? In particular, did the project design include an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy to promote national/local ownership and use of national capacity to sustain the positive changes after the end of the project?**

**Finding 15.** The evaluation found that the involvement and leadership of the Ministry of Lands and their ownership of the implementation was a key sustainability strategy. In addition, the establishment of the community base conflict monitoring system is key for community peaceful co-existence through the community structures such as the VALC. These will continue to enforce the by-laws and help in resolving conflicts. The business skills training and the establishment of VSLAs and cooperatives were indeed an effort to ensure project activities are sustained.

103. Initially, the two agencies were not in sync but over time the implementation arrangement took shape and indeed complementarity between the two agencies became clearer. For example, both agencies targeted the same group of beneficiaries to ensure complementarity and synergies in project implementation. Among others, training of trainers organized by ILO in the areas of business development, financial education, cooperatives development and occupational safety and health targeted civil society organizations and implementation partners of both FAO and ILO interventions which ensured that project partners were capacitated in the different intervention areas of the project. When ILO decided to expand some training activities, project partners had already been trained and could seamlessly support the rollout of activities. Towards the end of the project, ILO also collaborated with FAO in the training of additional trainers in climate-smart agriculture, which showed the effectiveness of the training of trainers model and the added advantage of joint implementing partners.
104. The evaluation observed that the following facilitated sustainability of efforts:
  - i. The establishment of a community-basis conflict monitoring system is key for achieving peaceful coexistence through community structures such as VALC, which will continue to enforce the by-laws and help in resolving conflicts.

- ii. Allowing the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning to own implementation was a key sustainability strategy; as well as the involvement of community stakeholders and local authorities in all the phases of project implementation.
  - iii. The establishment of the VSLAs and the registration of cooperative with Government and financial services associations is another sustainable strategy taken up by women who can manage them at community level. The women livelihood project is expected to continue since they now have the required material to carry out their livelihood activities.
  - iv. Collaboration and implementation with civil society organizations and the training of gender champions in all project locations, as well as the capacity building of traditional authorities on gender and land right issues. Finally, the involvement and training of community members has built capacities at the local level.
105. In addition to the skill training on business development, entrepreneurship and marketing, the VSLAs and cooperatives were established to boost women's access to credit and competitiveness. Beyond the seeds for cultivation, the evaluation found that the project also supported beneficiaries with agricultural tools. This was noted to be a big relief to the beneficiaries, who reported that they mostly don't cultivate large areas because of a lack of seeds and good tools.
106. Beyond the tools, the evaluation noted that the project supported beneficiaries in the cassava value chain with processing machines and drying trays to process gari. At the time of the evaluation, the communities had not started using the machines because they were waiting to harvest their cassava farms. The prospect of commercialization including the utilization of the machines (e.g. renting to other community members at a fee), although promising, is yet to be implemented.
107. Beneficiaries understood the trainings in climate-smart agriculture. They were able to clearly explain the concept and rationale. However, its implementation is yet to take full effect. For instance slash-and-burn methodology is still practised. The reason advanced by the farmers is that they are engaged in many other activities. As a result, they have limited time that is why they burn their remaining crops as a quicker method of catching-up with planting season.
108. A number of land conflicts were resolved through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Out of the 33 land disputes, 29 were successfully resolved with 4 remaining unresolved at the time of mapping. A system of community conflict monitors and mediators was established to continue to monitor and resolve conflicts that come up over time. The harmonization of boundaries and mapping of land helped to resolve community land conflicts and intra-family land conflicts, as well as strengthened community governance through the development of community by-laws and VALCs. Even though all the land was successfully mapped, only few of the communities have received their land maps. This has not gone down well with the other communities who mentioned that they spent too much energy and time to support the mapping process. This was reported in Kenema district.
109. It was clear from the field visits that women were given access to and use of land and they could make decisions on how to use this land. Women were included in community development programmes and involved in land-related discussions. Commitment made during consultations shows that local authorities are more than ready to work with women in accessing land and other opportunities. The involvement of community leaders in supporting and empowering women to access and own lands is now at a higher level. NAMATI's engagements on land tenure rights with community leaders have reduced the strong stance men hold against women. The gender

champions residing within the communities will continue to advocate for women access to and ownership of land, and some of the by-laws put in place will also assist.

110. The evaluation found that the project contributed to the preparedness of the targeted leaders in dealing with the future. The following evidence supports this finding:
- i. The platform of establishing community-based conflict monitors is a system that was put in place for community leaders to deal with future land disputes.
  - ii. The community leaders were part of all the conflict resolutions during the harmonization of all the land disputes that were identified during the intervention. They were part of the sensitization and capacity building activities. They now know that women are partners in development.
  - iii. With the mapping of family and community lands, and with the map now available, community leaders have an easy point of reference to deal with land disputes. Also, the young people who participated in the mapping exercises are very good community resources that can be tapped into by community leaders to settle future land disputes.

### 3.5. Coherence

#### **To what extent did the project complement and create synergies with other projects implemented by FAO, ILO or other partners, including any other relevant PBF projects?**

**Finding 16.** The evaluation found that both components worked with the same beneficiaries in the same target areas. Activities on peacebuilding, gender and land rights (led by FAO and partners) laid the foundation for activities aimed at women's economic empowerment. Customary lands that were mapped and conflicts resolved through alternative dispute resolution processes increased in agricultural productivity and production through various livelihood supports. Women farmers invested more in different agricultural value chains like cassava, groundnuts, pepper, cabbage and other vegetables.

111. The Project Implementation Unit of both FAO and ILO and the partners held monthly meetings to monitor and track progress. Joint monitoring and evaluation activities were conducted to ensure the project achieved its set objectives. It also built on the progress made in land tenure and conflict resolution, the project improved agricultural practices and opportunities of the same target group. The project helps to build the capacity of the existing women's groups that have been working with UPHR for the past five years. Trainings on occupational safety and health, savings, financial education, climate-smart agriculture and cooperative have really improved the capacity of the groups.

**Finding 17.** The evaluation found that UN women partnership on HeForShe was a good example of partnership with UN agencies delivering as one.

112. HeForShe convinced men paramount chiefs to be champions or change agents of women issues and they received a badge of honour. Furthermore, the lesson sharing session between the north and the south led to women paramount chiefs being appointed in the north, which was a big change.

#### **How well did the two fund recipient organizations and their respective partners coordinate to manage the project and deliver results together?**

113. The implementing partners (FAO and ILO) worked with the same beneficiaries in the same target areas. The activities on peacebuilding, gender and land rights (led by FAO and partners) paved

the way for activities aimed at economic empowerment of women. Customary lands that were mapped and conflicts resolved through alternative dispute resolution processes increased in agricultural productivity and production through various livelihood support. Women farmers invested more in different agricultural value chains like cassava, groundnuts, pepper, cabbage and other vegetables. These activities were complemented by ILO trainings on entrepreneurship, business development and cooperatives, which resulted in improved marketing of agricultural produce, storage and value addition. The implementing partners' capacities were built in terms of the training of trainers that were carried out, as well as the business skills training from ILO.

114. According to civil society organization partners cascading the training, participants realized the need to save and vowed to do so by using a local 'cash-box method', which was similar to collecting loose coins at home, or by establishing separate family and business 'purses'. VSLAs formed at community level can promote savings and address access to finance.
115. Before the advent of the PBF project, CAN-Sierra Leone was working with women groups through trainings on the three Gender Acts in Sierra Leone, the Sexual Offences Act, Business Skills and other local and international human rights conventions. Also, CAN-Sierra Leone was also providing microfinance supports to these women and encouraging them to embark on backyard gardening and other agricultural activities. With the implementation of the PBF project, the facilitation skills of the staff sharpened, additional partnership opportunities such as with community banks and financial services associations were created. Other women focussed organizations such as World Vision Sierra Leone, Commit and Act Foundation – Sierra Leone, Restless Development, SEND-SL and Gola Rainforest are some the organizations operating within Bo and Kenema districts. These organizations are providing trainings, livelihood supports and other health-related facilities. NAMATI is also providing livelihood support to women's groups and helping communities and chiefdoms to demarcate their lands to avoid conflict.
116. The land mapping exercise carried out by the project really helped other institutions working on land governance to mitigate land conflict and improve their advocacy strategies and also make their work easy as most of those communities now have better understanding on land governance issues.

### **3.6. Catalytic**

**To what extent has the PBF project been used to scale-up other peacebuilding work and/or has it helped to create broader platforms for peacebuilding or generated learning for partners?**

**Finding 18.** If lasting peacebuilding hinges on progress in terms of equality, equity and livelihoods, the project has really made a firm contribution. As depicted above, not all activities were full success stories, but the effort was made and has borne fruit. That is something of value to build on. The project was implemented jointly and was able to demonstrate delivery of the UN as one. The M&E officer and gender officer functions were shared, which provided the overlap between the components and learning. The target group was the same for both interventions, which meant there was incremental support from both components.

117. Peacebuilding is not merely an activity in its own right but can be the result or outcome of a range of activities dealing with various patterns or histories on inequality and inequity. The project managed to design a range of activities that scored highest on that list: land rights and women's rights. By offering solutions through dialogue and cooperation, participants felt empowered and regional and national officials felt obliged to weigh in.

118. Women gained enormous skills in business development, entrepreneurship and marketing. Village Saving and Loan Schemes and cooperatives have been established to boost women's access to credit and competitiveness. Beyond the seeds for cultivation, the evaluation found that the project also supported beneficiaries with agricultural tools. This was noted to be a big relief to the beneficiaries, who reported that they mostly don't cultivate large areas because of lack of seeds and good tools.
119. During the project implementation period, FAO-ILO were able to leverage additional non-PBF funding. This is impressive for a short period of time for project implementation. Building on the lessons from the project, the two agencies have designed and successful raised funding to implement two projects as follows: a peacebuilding project tilted High Risk Youth project being implemented by FAO as the leading Organization, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Food Programme (WFP); while ILO designed a project that has been submitted to the European Union for funding. There is need to document the lessons learned for wider sharing from this project in order to inform future projects and partnerships, as "UN delivering as One" which was clearly demonstrated. Moreover, the sequencing and layering of project activities enabled the two agencies to achieve results building on earlier projects supporting the same communities.
120. Table 4 below indicates the funding agent and amount of additional non-PBF funding support that has been leveraged by the project. The additional funding was for scaling-up project activities in other communities in Sierra Leone. This is a clear demonstration of the catalytic effect of the project. FAO and ILO are expected to be able to attract more funding to support the successful activities of the project.

**Table 4. Catalytic funding from other partners**

Development partners	Amount (USD)
The Federal Republic of Germany to enhance the enabling environment for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems	183 000
The Department for International Development (DfID) to promote responsible land investments in Sierra Leone	370 000
Flexible Multi-Donor Mechanism basket to upscale the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, responsible agricultural investments, among others	300 000
The World Bank to support the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Country Planning in development of the Customary Land Rights Bill and the National Land Commission Bill	100 000
Total	953 000

**Has the project integrated in its implementation and results, dimensions such as climate change, gender equality, social cohesion, empowerment (through the promotion of rights and cooperative businesses) as well as dialogue among the relevant stakeholders (beneficiaries, civil society organizations, employers, workers organizations and national institutions)?**

**Finding 19.** The project sufficiently integrated gender equality, social cohesion and economic empowerment considerations in the project design. It also promoted leadership development at all levels, with an emphasis on women, which is commendable and highly appreciated by women trained.

121. The project was designed with considerations for gender equality, social cohesion and economic empowerment. The project contributed to the preparedness of the targeted leaders in dealing with future land disputes and the following evidence supports this finding. First, the established community-based monitors put in place serve as a key sustainability strategy which helps community leaders deal with future land disputes. Second, following the mapping of the family and community lands, the maps are now available at the community level and community leaders have a reference when dealing with future land disputes. Furthermore, the youth engaged in the mapping exercise are very good community resources that can be consulted to settle future land disputes. Also noteworthy, is the training provided to women on farmers on Village savings and loans association as a self-reliance tool which serve as a backbone for women empowerment particularly rural farmers.

### **3.7. Cross-cutting issues**

**How were gender equity, non-discrimination, conflict sensitivity and “do no harm” considerations mainstreamed in the project design and in the identification of beneficiaries?**

**Finding 20.** Gender sensitivity was promoted and prioritized throughout, and well-integrated with land use and livelihood issues. Conflict sensitivity was at the core of the project and conflict resolution was a major project component. The evaluation found that whereas the project targeted 80 percent of women as beneficiaries, men (20 percent) were involved during the project implementation. The project targeted men who were considered to be of influence, such as paramount chiefs, religious leaders, and councillors among others who were trained on gender and land rights.

122. From the focus group discussion, women were more empowered via the mapping to be able to protect their access to inherited land. Women noted they are now part of land use decision-making. FAO has experienced that only a few years ago women were reluctant to take part in FAO discussions with villages while now they are much more assertive. The statement below made by a man and confirmed by his sister, shows that land mapping has played a role in sensitizing men to women’s land rights.

123. The influential men became “Advocates for Women Land Rights” and in collaboration with UN Women, they were decorated as “HeForShe” champions. Most of these male champions were very instrumental in advocating for women’s land rights, as Paramount Chief Desmond Kagobai of Selenga Chiefdom, Paramount Chief Bai Shebora Kasanga II of Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, and Chairman Bindi of Bo District Council, among others. Other several traditional leaders like Chief Samuel Conteh (R.I.P) in Paki Massabong chiefdom played a key role throughout project implementation.



**Box 4. Comments from a participant**

“Initially, we were not happy about the whole idea of community mapping, because part of the sensitizations was that our sisters also have right to all the family properties. This didn’t go down well with us. It was like disturbing a long-standing tradition that we met. So, I, in particular was not attending any of their meetings initially. But later, our chief called a town hall meeting and encouraged everybody to cooperate because, according to her, the land mapping will do more good to the community than harm. This was when I started attending the meetings and changing my perception gradually. Today, I have relinquished some of the family lands to my two sisters. One of them is here, she can attest to that. Also, all of us now clearly know the boundaries of our lands, which we never did. In fact, I have realized that we now have more land that I ever thought, because I never knew the true boundaries until after this land mapping.”

[A male focus group discussion participant in Misilla community, Kandu Leppiama chiefdom, Kenema district]

124. The PBF project set a gender marker of 80 percent on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Under the project, the capacity of implementing partners has been strengthened on how to design, monitor and evaluate peacebuilding results in livelihoods and employment interventions. During a meeting in Freetown in November 2019, key indicators were developed to measure the contribution of implementing partners to social cohesion and social justice at the community level in line with the theory of change developed in the framework of an ILO/Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) partnership. The project enhances women’s access to and control over land and supports their economic empowerment while sensitizing stakeholders and the broader community about gender-sensitive approaches, as well as women’s land rights and their role in enterprises. It raises awareness on the demarcation of boundaries and promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
  
125. Through the project, over 50 percent of women beneficiaries have been appointed on decision-making structures/committees in all the 16 Village Area Land Committees established in Kenema, Bo, Bombali and Port Loko districts. Moreover, women are gradually taking up leadership, for example, in Port Loko district two gender champions have been appointed as the first female town chiefs of Matete and Mabaine villages, respectively. Such positions were traditionally reserved for men in the past. Apart from awareness raising and other capacity development initiatives to reduce discriminatory practices against rural women’s access and ownership of land and other productive assets, the PBF project has strengthened community governance through development of community by-laws and Village Area Land Committees in all the villages as stipulated in the National Land Policy. Among the criteria for VALC leadership, the National Land Policy recommends at least 40 percent women. The project was able to ensure that 50 percent of women are members of all the 16 VALC established in Kenema, Bo, Bombali and Port Loko. The establishment of VALC was done in collaboration with the chiefdom councils and with facilitation from NAMATI.
  
126. Through training on cooperative development and financial education, women farmers have formed Village Savings and Loan Association. This has enhanced their savings and loan portfolio through the sale of their agricultural produce. Given that access to financial services is a key factor in eliminating poverty and generating local development, women farmers who are members of the VSLA can obtain small loans to cover expenses such as school fees and medical bills without selling productive assets. As a result, VSLA members experience significant improvements in household income, health and wellbeing, and an overall improved quality of life.

127. Inclusion of men in this project was paramount in the minds of CAN-Sierra Leone staff. As a way of complying with the principle of "do no harm" in project implementation, men were included at all stages and levels of project activities.

**Finding 21.** The evaluation found that from the start during project design, the target was rural people living in remote areas in customary lands, most of which are vulnerable women and youth. Most of the project activities were conducted in far to reach remote areas and all trainings were conducted in local languages Temne, Mende and or Krio.

128. Evidence collected showed that the project ensured the inclusion of vulnerable people, people living in remote areas and youths.



## 4. Lessons learned

129. The project provided an opportunity for the two agencies to demonstrate “how to work and deliver as one”. There is need to document the lessons in terms of layering, sequencing and working as one. This can provide valuable lessons for other UN agencies and future projects.
130. This project brings together peacebuilding and economic empowerment. There is need to tease out the key areas of learning for future programming for FAO and ILO. Both partners learned a lot about combining these key issues that each of them has comparative advantage. Findings enabled the two agencies to design new projects based on the lessons learned, as the Risk Youth by FAO, UNFPA and WFP. The mapping exercise is a very good foundation for future titling of land on Sierra Leone. It is a beneficial area of impact that could be scaled up in other parts of the districts or other districts of Sierra Leone that are faced with land-based conflicts and did not take part in the project.
131. The viability of the cooperative groups initiated by the project was to a very large extent depended on the learning opportunities that resulted from trainings conducted by the project, which included entrepreneurship, cooperative and financial education trainings. Project initiatives centred on practical application and locally available resources have more potential to succeed. However, there was an absence of start-up capital in the design and subsequent lessons from experience from the vulnerable women in cooperatives. This has shown that limited or no access to finance may hinder their ability to go into full operation and sustain their activities and therefore needs to be revisited.
132. The ownership of the Ministry of Lands will ensure periodic follow-up with community leaders to monitor progress on conflict resolution, which can help sustain achievements over time
133. Once demarcation is done, linkage to investors is critical and SLIEPA needs to ensure the process is efficient. This is important for the economic use of the mapped lands for improving the income and food security of families.



## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

134. Relevance and strategic positioning

**Conclusion 1.** The project was relevant and strategic both at the national and community levels. It was designed to contribute to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone which, in view of the legacy of civil war was most relevant. Indeed focusing the project on lasting peace, inequitable land and women's right was strategic.

**Conclusion 2.** The applied theory of change provided a useful conceptual framework for addressing these inequities in an inclusive and decisive manner. The theory of change was well designed to effect the needed change in terms of accuracy of the theory itself in delivering the anticipated change and how far the activities implemented translated into the change. The evaluation concludes that the interventions undertaken were apt in addressing the two conflict drivers and has significantly empowered women to know their rights and when those rights are being violated - mainly by men. At the community level, project impact was clearly visible, thus showing that the theory of change was appropriate. However, the project design lacked access to a start-up capital for the cooperatives to ensure VSLA efforts was sustained.

#### **Efficiency (organizational performance)**

**Conclusion 3.** The project was well coordinated, particularly in view of the many stakeholders coordinating and participating, and the determination and persistence of the land and women's right issues in the past. The project managed these potential obstacles by holding its course through efficient coordination, adequate resourcing and applying inclusivity and consultation in implementation. Cooperation in terms of coordination between all stakeholders was reviewed, positively contributing to the realization of all major objectives.

**Conclusion 4.** The M&E component played a valuable role in assessing if benchmarks contained within a theory of change were achieved. The value and necessity of M&E efforts however during implementation was underappreciated and effective monitoring was not adequately facilitated. The evaluation team believes a robust M&E was important to ensure project sustainability; determine what works and what does not, and engage in project information gathering and management, as well as documenting lessons learned.

#### **Effectiveness of implementation**

**Conclusion 5.** With regard to effectiveness, the project realized its objectives and contributed to the ongoing peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. The platform of establishing community-based conflict monitoring teams is an essential and sustainable system for community leaders to deal with future land disputes. The project contributed to FAO's work on land governance under the VGGT that is widely viewed as a significant peacebuilding success. However, the ongoing policy development for peacebuilding would have benefited from greater alignment and coherence between laws, particularly those dealing with compensation, mining, investment and forestry.

**Conclusion 6.** The project has significantly contributed to addressing discrimination against women's access to land, participation in decision-making processes, property rights and economic empowerment in the project area. Given that the pilot activity to map family lands has successfully contributed to peacebuilding goals, moving forward with scalability and sustainability will require expansion of activities, learning from the piloting, considering known options and additional resources.

**Conclusion 7.** The economic empowerment component and agribusiness livelihood support for women's groups was useful. The training of trainer's sessions held with ILO staff provided the much-needed capacities to cascade the training. Using the local dialect in the communities proved to be useful, and pictures and graphs to teach during trainings was highly appreciated.

**Conclusion 8.** The project was timely given that peacebuilding activities are quite important to Sierra Leone. This is because of the country's tumultuous history, inequity, dual land tenure systems, and rich endowment of high value and agricultural natural resources. The project was able to address peacebuilding through the alternative dispute resolution mechanism and policy work, which was commendable. However, there are still needs in i) farmer-herder interaction; ii) land expropriations connected to mining operations; iii) investor-smallholder interaction; iv) resolution of the very large backlog of land disputes; v) youth-elder interaction regarding land use; and vi) the role of paramount chiefs in land trusteeship. There is a need to systematically document good cases and lessons learned, and build on peacebuilding as a necessary ingredient for future programming in the Sierra Leone context. An emerging experience from this project for both FAO and ILO is that it is always important to include peacebuilding aspects as part of the regular programming work.

**Conclusion 9.** The capacity of the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency needs to be significantly improved to avoid conflict with local communities and build lasting peaceful and prosperous relationships with local landholders. This is important because until now there is no statutory land law that can be used by investors, SLIEPA is the only way investors have of navigating the legal and local community requirements necessary for successful investments. There is further scope for SLIEPA to provide to investors and provide clarity on interactions between investors and chiefdom and family-level leadership.

### **Orientation towards impacts and sustainability**

**Conclusion 10.** In terms of impact, the project's main contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding process is likely that it managed to give women a clear voice, not just in terms of formulating concerns but rather in active engagement, which built vocational, social and communal capacities. It prepared the ground for initiating self-administered projects in the future.

**Conclusion 11.** Activities set in motion or accelerated by the project have resulted in an inclusive agenda setting nationally and locally. Innovative ideas and approaches have thus been sustained. On-the-ground activities such as land mapping may require additional resources, but the Government and its main sponsors can be expected to discuss option. As for the projects' livelihood, additional support may be required to consolidate and optimally utilize the capacities built.

**Conclusion 12.** Anecdotal evidence suggests that training provided has influenced the perception of some male household members on women's engagement in economic activities. Women farmers who joined cooperatives reported an increase in their contribution to household incomes, which was acknowledged by spouses and community members. Support has been provided to women farmers and existing farming groups, including on improved agricultural practices and the establishment, management and governance of agricultural cooperatives. Overall, the project provided a solid foundation which other preceding projects could build on and ensure sustainable gains made in order to achieve economic sustainability of the cooperatives.

### **Catalytic**

**Conclusion 13.** The intervention has supported the paradigm that UN agencies still have the capability of working as one to address critical societal ills, like land disputes and delivering as one. FAO was able to leverage a total of USD 953 000 additional funding from different development partners to support

the peacebuilding activities in Sierra Leone. This is a commendable effort but also a clear demonstration of how the project was catalytic in peacebuilding initiatives.

**Conclusion 14.** The intervention attempted to address the critical issue of climate change, through the climate-smart agriculture trainings delivered to beneficiaries. This was a relatively new concept to beneficiaries, but they are gradually learning to adopt it. This is a paradigm shift, which will go a long way in improving future agricultural practices.

### **Cross-cutting issues**

**Conclusion 15.** Strengthening women farmers, financial capabilities by access to business skills and gender sensitive financial products ensured that they were empowered to increase their agricultural economic opportunities and, through the development of women-led cooperative businesses, increased women's decision-making at all levels

**Conclusion 16.** There was a good level of involvement of gender in all activities during implementation. The cooperatives were meant to be for women exclusively; however, men were also minorly involved to work with them. This was a very good strategy to gain acceptance of local authorities and male community members in the land access component of the project. ILO was very deliberate in ensuring people with disabilities and youth were included.

**Conclusion 17.** The project approach borrowed from earlier experience in the country and region. Tested manuals and formats fuelled particularly the ILO-managed technical training and business development activities. In the area of land rights, it worked well to include civil society as well as all government levels.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** There is a clear need for follow-up of the livelihoods component. Capacities have been built, investment opportunities have been identified, women's own resources have been mobilized but now the last mile needs to be addressed: the availability of external investment capital to leverage the limited local resources and switch on the economic accelerator. Possibly ILO and credit or banking partners could design a suitable follow-up initiative in this area.

**Recommendation 2.** FAO Sierra Leone should continue to support the SLIEPA, particularly focusing on improving SLIEPA's capacity to effectively mitigate land conflicts between landowning families and investors. More specifically, there needs to be more clarity on the interactions between family-level leadership, chieftdom and investors on land issues. Greater harmonization would allow for an examination of what activities are clashing or where gaps exist and where certain activities are putting undue strain on local communities.

**Recommendation 3.** Given the strong connection between the mapping efforts and peacebuilding through resolution of land disputes, scale-up and sustainability should be the next steps for widespread mapping of family-owned lands. Providing a lighter version of SOLA would help in this regard, and it could also sustain mapping at the community level after project closure.

**Recommendation 4.** For future similar projects, boundary demarcation as part of the mapping activity needs to be improved in order to strengthen the sustainability of border harmonization efforts. At present, the paint and 'brushing' along the boundaries disappear quickly. Boundary trees are commonly used in demarcation exercises and should be implemented in Sierra Leone. Local farmers indicate that mango is the commonly used boundary tree. Implementation of permanent boundary markers should be part of the mapping activities.



**Recommendation 5.** Monitoring community-based peace and conflicts is a good sustainability strategy. The project should ensure this system is properly handed over to the Government, through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and Ministry of Lands, to ensure continued functionality. When possible, FAO or ILO, jointly or separately, should encourage the Government or other donor partners to scale-up this system to other districts across the country, this time for longer, especially to allow the economic empowerment outcomes/impacts to be strengthened.

**Recommendation 6.** This intervention has proven that UN agencies can work together on critical issues. However, the scale of this was small. This joint collaboration should be tested on a larger scale to see what the partnership will look like, and then reach broader conclusions on such partnership. A likely venture will be the scaled-up version of this same intervention.

**Recommendation 7.** Both FAO and ILO will need to prioritize and strengthen their monitoring and evaluation systems to adequately support implementation of future joint programmes. This is important to ensure there is a robust M&E with lessons systematically documented and used to inform FAO, ILO and partners' efforts.

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## Appendix 1. People interviewed

### Key informant interviews conducted with partners

Last name	First name	Organization	District
B.K Jigba	Israel	Min of Lands	Freetown
Badara Kanu	Ali	UPRH	Port Loko
Bangura	Ibrahim	FAO	Freetown
Correl	Dino	ILO	Abuja, Nigeria
Golia	Dauda	NAMATI	Bo
Mabikke	Sam	FAO	Rome, Italy
Mahoi	Isata	WANEP	Bombali
Marrah	Bockarie	ILO	Freetown
Momodu	Glorious	Labour Congress	Freetown
Rahall	Joseph	Green Scenery	Freetown
Samba	Jobo	Min of Lands	Freetown
Sesay	Daniel	NAMATI	Freetown
Yambasu	Sahr	CAN-SL	Bo

### Key informant interviews conducted with beneficiaries

Community	District	Title of respondent
Feiba	Bo	Town Chief
Mabaine	Port Loko	Town Chief
Ngovopkahun	Kenema	Town Chief
Nyanyawama	Kenema	Town Chief

### Focus group discussions conducted with beneficiaries

Community	District	Category of participants	No. of participants
Feiba	Bo	Women Cooperative Members	7
		Village Area Land Committees	8
		Community Peace & Conflict Monitors	3
Mabaine	Port Loko	Women Cooperative Members	7
		Village Area Land Committees	9
		Community Peace & Conflict Monitors	5
Ngovopkahun	Kenema	Village Area Land Committees	5
		Women Cooperative Members	8
Nyanyawama	Kenema	Women Cooperative Members	11
		Village Area Land Committees	7
Total			70



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