



Opportunity Salone Programme, Sierra Leone

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BDS	Business Development Services
DC	District Council
DCED	Donor Conference on Enterprise Development
EMF	Everybody Must Farm
FAA	Finance and Administration Assistant
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
ILO	International Labour Organization
LBA	Labour-Based Approach
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MoELSS	Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security
MoWPA	Ministry of Works and Public Assets
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
MSA	Market Systems Analysis
MSD	Market Systems Development
NAO	National Authorising Officer
NAYCOM	National Youth Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Programme Assistant
RMFA	Road Management Fund Administration
SLCCIA	Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
SLeCAD	Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development
SLLC	Sierra Leone Labour Congress
SLLCA	Sierra Leone Local Content Agency
SLRA	Sierra Leone Roads Authority
SME	Small to Medium Enterprises
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency
TPAC	Technical Programme Advisory Committee
VCD	Value Chain Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

Executive Summary

Project background. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been implementing an EU-funded multi-partner initiative in Sierra Leone, focusing on job creation in the districts of Bo, Bombali, Kenema, and Port Loko. The programme takes a value chain and market system development approach, emphasizing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and feeder road infrastructure to enhance market connectivity. It encompasses technical skills training in road maintenance, value chain enhancement, entrepreneurial training, and financial management for SMEs. The overarching goal is to alleviate poverty by generating decent employment opportunities for the youth, women, and persons with disabilities, fostering value chain development, and making substantial investments in employment-driven infrastructure. The programme has the following outcome areas:

Outcome 1 focuses on enhancing conflict-sensitive agricultural value chain and entrepreneurship development, with outputs including the development of four value chains, increased business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth, improved market access, and financial education for 1,000 individuals.

Outcome 2 emphasises improved feeder road maintenance to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks and create immediate jobs, with outputs such as installing a digitalized database for roads, identifying and maintaining 200km of rural feeder roads, strengthening technical and managerial capacity, and establishing sustainable maintenance mechanisms.

Outcome 3 targets improving the business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance through policy revisions and support for SME formalization.

Concerning the strategic fit, this project will promote peace and social cohesion through an inclusive and conflict sensitive approach to employment creation which is in line with Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace (<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/r205/lang--en/index.htm>).

The project is managed from Freetown by a team of ILO staff who include Programme Manager Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), Feeder Roads Engineer, Enterprise Development Officer, Feeder Roads Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Finance and Administration Assistant and two Drivers.

The project targeted groups are small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives in the selected agricultural value chains, SME contractors engaged in infrastructure development, workers and their families, including young women and men between the ages 18 and 35, and persons with disabilities in targeted districts, value chains and road construction sector.

Evaluation background objectives, scope and clients. The Independent Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Opportunity Salone programme was conducted to ensure accountability by reviewing the project's progress and implementing necessary adjustments. The evaluation's main goal was to measure the programme's advancement towards its set objectives and outcomes, employing OECD/DAC criteria to examine aspects such as relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. It specifically aimed to evaluate the project's alignment with national requirements, policies, community needs, and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), national agendas, and donor strategies. Additionally, the MTE sought to assess the project's response to COVID-19 challenges and the success of the market systems approach in realizing project goals, including any unforeseen outcomes.

Moreover, the MTE scrutinized the project's organizational structure, execution capabilities, coordination methods, and management tool utilization. It evaluated the integration of gender equality, disability inclusion, fundamental labour rights, and environmental awareness into the project's

framework. The evaluation highlighted key lessons, effective practices, and innovative methods in fostering social dialogue, tripartism, and market system development. Lastly, it assessed the efficiency of resource use, internal collaboration within the ILO, the mobilization of external resources, and strategies aimed at maintaining project benefits and enhancing peace and social harmony in the targeted regions.

The evaluation methodology. The MTE complies with evaluation norms and standards and follows ethical safeguards, all as specified in ILO's evaluation policy and procedures. It uses an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to gather and analyse data/ information to offer diverse perspectives to the evaluation and promote different groups of stakeholders' participation. To ensure the integrity of their findings, evaluators for the ILO project meticulously reviewed existing data to prevent duplication. They compiled program documents and conducted a thorough literature review and write the inception report. A variety of data collection methods were employed, including desk reviews, stakeholder meetings, and a validation workshop, with a focus on in-person interviews to enhance interaction. The project's documentation was analysed to shape the data collection tools, shedding light on the project's objectives and the needs of its beneficiaries. Key informant interviews with stakeholders and focus group discussions in districts like Bo, Bombali, Kenema, and Port Loko provided valuable insights into the project's relevance, impact, and sustainability, as well as the economic and social benefits for the community.

At the end of field data and information collection, a stakeholders' workshop was conducted to present key findings to the stakeholders, validate the findings, and address the gaps.

Findings

Relevance. The project is well-aligned with Sierra Leone's national development plans and international frameworks such as the SDGs through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2023 by focusing on stimulating economic growth and empowering marginalized groups. It supports the country's key priorities, including agriculture, financial inclusion, employment, and gender equality, with a particular emphasis on enhancing rural infrastructure and skills development. Despite facing challenges with timely financial disbursements, the project's design effectively addresses community needs and mobilizes resources. It aims to tackle Sierra Leone's development challenges, concentrating on employment, skills development, and infrastructure improvements, while adapting to the evolving post-COVID-19 context. The project incorporates a comprehensive risk analysis with mitigation strategies to ensure resilience and adaptability to local conditions. Utilizing the Market System Development Approach, it strengthens SMEs and fosters the economic integration of marginalized groups, thereby creating inclusive economic opportunities. Moreover, the project has shown adaptability to the changing circumstances brought about by the pandemic, maintaining its relevance and effectiveness through innovative solutions like virtual training and stakeholder consultations.

Validity of intervention logic and coherence. The agricultural value chains selected for the project were determined through a collaborative process with national stakeholders, focusing on job creation and alignment with national development priorities, ensuring their sustainability beyond the project's lifespan. The project's expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts are grounded in reality, supported by a clear plan of action and risk mitigation strategies. It incorporates the ILO's cross-cutting themes of tripartism, gender, and non-discrimination, fostering inclusive practices in both training and employment. The comprehensive Theory of Change underpinning the project provides a clear roadmap for implementation, with well-defined indicators ensuring inclusivity and relevance. Despite initial delays caused by the global pandemic, the project has successfully adapted by utilizing virtual meetings and ILO support, keeping its focus on the overarching goals amidst the challenges.

The programme has successfully established alignment and synergies with essential stakeholders, ensuring its initiatives are in line with national development goals and enhancing the program's overall effectiveness. This alignment is further bolstered by support from other interventions and government collaborations, which provide additional financial and structural backing. Despite encountering challenges due to political and economic shifts, the programme has demonstrated remarkable adaptability, continuing to make progress through well-considered strategic adjustments. The integration of the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) with market systems development interventions has proven to be particularly effective, simultaneously facilitating immediate job opportunities and fostering long-term sustainable economic growth. Moreover, the programme's commitment to International Labour Standards is evident, promoting an inclusive approach that prioritizes decent work conditions and encourages the active participation of marginalized groups, thereby ensuring consistency with global best practices.

Effectiveness. The implementation of the Opportunity Salone Programme has been influenced by a variety of factors, which have had distinct impacts on women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwD). While these targeted groups have accessed and benefited from the project's services, disparities in access due to geographical, socio-economic, and logistical challenges have been noted. The project has made considerable efforts to involve women, youth, and PwD, yet there is a need for more focused support to ensure their complete inclusion. The Opportunity Salone Programme has made commendable progress in enhancing agricultural value chains, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving infrastructure. By training over 1,200 smallholder farmers, cassava yield increased by 30%, while 25 processing centers improved market prices by 20%. Training programs, such as GET Ahead, equipped 3,000 individuals—60% women and 40% youth—with financial and business skills, leading to the creation of 150 new businesses. Infrastructure improvements, including 135 km of feeder roads, reduced transportation costs and improved market linkages for farmers and SMEs. The program's inclusive focus on women, youth, and persons with disabilities has strengthened cooperatives, increased access to finance for over 1,000 entrepreneurs, and empowered local communities through public-private partnerships for sustainable road maintenance.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
The programme has effectively engaged multiple stakeholders, fostering a supportive environment for implementation and sustainability. Extensive training programs have enhanced the business and financial skills of women, youth, and PwD, leading to better management practices and increased entrepreneurship.	Resource limitations and logistical challenges have impacted implementation efficiency. The lack of a streamlined procurement process has led to delays on both the EIIP and the market systems sides. Both contractors and SMEs expressed concerns with payment or funding from ILO that negatively affected their business operations
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
The programme has leveraged public-private partnerships to enhance feeder road maintenance and business development, providing sustainable support and resource mobilization. The focus on market systems development has created opportunities for systemic change and long-term impact.	Political instability and economic volatility remain significant threats to project activities and stakeholder engagement. Expectations for tangible support rather than facilitation can also lead to challenges in managing expectations and participation. Additionally, economic instability, including high inflation and rising fuel prices, poses significant challenges to the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

Moreover, the programme has encountered challenges such as seasonal work preferences, delayed payments, and infrastructural issues, which have caused project delays and dissatisfaction among the beneficiaries, highlighting the necessity for adaptive strategies and continuous engagement to address these concerns effectively.

Effectiveness of management arrangements. The governance structure of the project has been a cornerstone in achieving its goals, although the efficiency of financial approvals remains an area for improvement. The support from the ILO, donors, and tripartite constituents has been fundamental to the project's success; however, there is a recognized need for better backstopping and streamlined administrative processes. Private sector partnerships have been a key factor in the project's positive outcomes, with a promising outlook for future collaboration. The project team's expertise in the Market System Development (MSD) approach has been effectively transferred to partners, ensuring a consistent understanding and application of these principles. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is robust, fostering adaptive management; all data (baselines, training/ workshop beneficiaries, EIIP labourers, etc.) are disaggregated by sex, disability and age (youths). Even so, the use of existing M&E tools, such as the data collection tools by partners are resource intensive, overstressing the capacity of the M&E unit, hence the need for enhanced human resources and logistics use. Lastly, the project's communication strategy has successfully raised awareness and facilitated knowledge-sharing, but leveraging digital platforms could further improve information dissemination and stakeholder engagement.

Efficiency. The project demonstrates strategic financial planning, dedicating a significant portion of its budget to essential activities while recognizing the need to minimize administrative costs to better support implementation efforts. Despite having competent personnel, the project acknowledges the necessity for an increased workforce and enhanced support to maintain efficiency. Resource expenditure is generally well-managed, with a notable 15% of funds specifically allocated to initiatives promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth empowerment. While 80% of project activities are completed punctually, economic fluctuations and logistical hurdles have led to some delays, which are being mitigated through revised schedules and resource reallocation. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities receive 7% of the budget, surpassing ILO recommendations, and are primarily affected by logistical rather than financial limitations. The program excels in leveraging external resources and partnerships, thereby amplifying its impact and efficiency without incurring extra expenses.

Sustainability and impact orientation. The project has successfully trained local authorities in sustainable road maintenance, yet there is a need for the development of actionable plans to ensure ongoing infrastructure upkeep. A comprehensive sustainability plan has been established, emphasizing capacity building, institutional strengthening, and fostering local ownership to preserve the benefits of the project. Stakeholders, including local government, community organizations, and private sector partners, are actively engaged in these sustainability efforts, backed by formal agreements that guarantee continued support and resource allocation. The project's methodologies have been integrated into national policies, reflecting a strong commitment from both the government and local communities to support these interventions. Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals and aligning with national strategies, the project supports Sierra Leone's key development priorities, thereby promising a significant long-term impact. Moreover, it has been instrumental in promoting peace and social cohesion within the targeted districts, evidenced by a reduction in conflicts, as revealed during FGDs with the beneficiaries and an enhanced sense of unity and cooperation among diverse community groups.

Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination and environmental dimension. The project has made significant strides in fostering gender equality and empowering women and persons with disabilities (PwDs), integrating them into various activities which have led to notable improvements in employment, income, and access to essential services. This integration is supported by specific budget allocations for gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of PwDs. Moreover, the active involvement and engagement of ILO tripartite constituents—government, employers, and workers' representatives—have been instrumental in aligning the project with national priorities, thereby enhancing its sustainability and ensuring committed participation from all stakeholders. Additionally, the project has been diligent in incorporating ILO principles and guidelines, promoting social dialogue, and leveraging tripartism, which has been pivotal in ensuring fair labour practices and inclusivity across the board, with a particular focus on gender equality, youth empowerment, and the inclusion of disability considerations. The Opportunity Salone project incorporated environmental issues as a cross-cutting theme by emphasising sustainability and resilience in its interventions. Recognising climate change as a critical risk, the project integrated environmental considerations into its value chain development and road maintenance components.

Conclusions.

The Opportunity Salone project stands as a pivotal initiative for Sierra Leone's growth, closely aligned with both national and international objectives, and directly addressing the needs of the local population. Its relevance is maintained through continuous updates that reflect evolving frameworks. The project's intervention logic is robust, with realistic goals aimed at sustaining value chains over the long term, though there is room for improvement in risk management. Coherence is achieved through strong stakeholder partnerships and alignment with national strategies, yet there is potential for greater effectiveness through deeper collaborations and consistent evaluations. The project has shown effectiveness in developing value chains and enhancing skills, but it requires further training support and a shift towards sustainable financial practices among beneficiaries. Efficiency is marked by strategic resource use and a solid Monitoring and Evaluation system, with room for enhancement in human resources and logistics. Sustainability and impact orientation are evident in the project's comprehensive planning and stakeholder engagement, underscored by the success of Public-Private Community Partnership platforms. Lastly, the project's commitment to tripartism, social dialogue, gender equality, and non-discrimination is commendable, integrating ILO standards and promoting inclusivity, with ongoing efforts necessary to secure leadership roles for women and persons with disabilities and to instil inclusive practices across all project activities.

Lessons Learned.

1. **Continuous alignment with evolving national and international frameworks:** Adaptability to changing national and global priorities ensures project relevance and effectiveness, maintaining alignment with stakeholders' needs.
2. **Comprehensive risk mitigation strategies:** Robust and regularly updated risk management plans help projects remain resilient in the face of unforeseen challenges like political instability or health crises.
3. **Strong partnerships to enhance project coherence and impact:** Collaborating with diverse stakeholders, including government bodies and the private sector, ensures alignment with broader development goals and increases sustainability.
4. **Efficient resource allocation and management:** Adequate staffing and logistical planning are crucial for avoiding delays and ensuring smooth project implementation.

5. **Promotion of inclusive practices, with active participation of marginalized groups (women, youth, and PwDs):** Involving marginalized groups in decision-making leads to more impactful and sustainable project outcomes by fostering greater ownership and participation.

Good Practices.

1. **Market systems development approach for systemic change and long-term impact:** The focus on value chains, like cassava and palm oil, facilitated systemic improvements that benefited farmers and processors, ensuring sustained market growth.
2. **Effective stakeholder engagement with government, private sector, and community organizations:** Engaging multiple stakeholders fostered a supportive environment for implementation and alignment with national goals, increasing the project's effectiveness.
3. **Extensive training and capacity-building programs for women, youth, and PwDs:** Training programs improved business and financial skills, leading to better management practices and increased entrepreneurial activity in targeted groups.
4. **Leveraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) for sustainability:** PPPs created sustainable models for infrastructure maintenance and business services, exemplified by platforms for community and private sector collaboration on road maintenance.
5. **Enhancing financial inclusion through business plan competitions and linking entrepreneurs to financial services:** Providing access to financial services and competitions fostered financial literacy and supported business growth, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Recommendations

Relevance

1. **Adhere to Market System Development:** Continue a market system development approach, document pilot project impacts, and establish feedback mechanisms to guide adjustments and scaling decisions.

Who: ILO

Timeframe: Immediately.

Priority: High

Level of resources: Low.

Effectiveness -

2. **Allocate Additional Resources to Support SMEs:** Allocate resources to support SMEs in accessing finance and markets and consider designing a sustainable SME fund in collaboration with financial partners.

Who: ILO

Timeframe: Immediately, next 6 months.

Priority: High

Level of resources: Medium-High.

3. **Facilitate Innovation in Financial Products:** Collaborate with market players to develop tailored financial products, such as flexible loans and mobile banking solutions, to ensure sustainable access to finance.

Who: ILO, Financial service providers, MoF, SMEDA

Timeframe: Immediately, in the next 6 months.

Priority: Medium-high

Level of resources: Medium-high.

4. **Facilitate Innovation in Appropriate Technology for productivity improvement and occupational safety:** Promote the use of technology that not only increases productivity but also ensures that workers are protected from occupational hazards, fostering a safer and more efficient working environment.
Who: ILO
Timeframe: Immediately, next 3 months.
Priority: High
Level of resources: Medium.

Efficiency -

5. **Enhance Resource Allocation and Management:** Recruit additional administrative and field staff, improve logistical planning, and streamline payments to reduce delays.
Who: ILO
Timeframe: Immediately, next 3 months.
Priority: High
Level of resources: Medium.
6. **Improve Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Processes:** Conduct more regular M&E activities, involving local stakeholders and use findings to inform project adjustments and the use of existing data collection tools by partners.
Who: ILO
Timeframe: Immediately
Priority: High
Level of resources: Medium.
7. **Foster Stronger Partnerships and Collaboration:** Deepen partnerships with stakeholders, regularly evaluate their effectiveness, and streamline collaboration with local NGOs and community-based organizations.
Who: ILO, NGO partners
Timeframe: Immediately.
Priority: High
Level of resources: Low - Medium.
8. **Scale-Up Success Stories:** Expand successful programs like GET Ahead, SIYB, COOP training and reskilling initiatives for women, and scale feeder road maintenance projects and initiatives for job creation and infrastructure improvement.
Who: ILO, SMEDA
Timeframe: Immediately, in the next 12 months.
Priority: High
Level of resources: Medium.

Sustainability -

9. **Ensure Sustainability Through District Councils:** Support district councils in integrating project achievements (the sustainable feeder road mechanism, the digitalized database of roads, the feeder roads maintenance equipment revolving facility and the revised feeder roads policy) into their local plans and budgets for continued advancement beyond the program's end.
Who: ILO, Public Private Partnerships Unit (PPP Unit), Ministry of Public Works and National Assets (MOWPA), Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA), Road Management Fund Administration (RMFA)
Timeframe: Immediately.
Priority: High
Level of resources: Low - Medium.

10. **Change Attitudes Towards Grant Money:** Shift beneficiaries' mindset towards financial responsibility and repayment by implementing structured micro-loan programs and financial literacy training.

Who: ILO

Timeframe: Immediately.

Priority: High

Level of resources: Low.

11. **Collaborate on Regulatory Reform:** Engage stakeholders in reviewing the Cooperative Act to support policy reform interventions and enhance the business-enabling environment.

Who: ILO

Timeframe: Immediately.

Priority: High

Level of resources: Low.

1.0 Project Background

1.1 Description of the project

The Opportunity Salone programme is a part of the larger EU-funded Jobs and Growth programme implemented by several partners that aim to stimulate job creation in Sierra Leone. The ILO focuses its intervention in four districts (Bo, Bombali, Kenema and Port Loko) with the closer collaboration of stakeholders using a market systems development approach centred on SMEs underpinned by feeder roads in selected districts to contribute to improved linkages between market actors. The programme involves technical skills transfer in feeder road maintenance, value chain development, and entrepreneurial training, including access to finance and SME management.

The project aims to contribute to poverty reduction by creating decent jobs for youth, women, and persons with disabilities through value chain development and employment-intensive infrastructure investments. The overall objective is to enhance job creation and improve job quality in sustainable enterprises for unskilled or semi-skilled individuals in selected districts.

Outcome 1 focuses on enhancing conflict-sensitive agricultural value chain and entrepreneurship development, with outputs including the development of four value chains, increased business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth, improved market access, and financial education for 1,000 individuals.

Outcome 2 emphasises improved feeder road maintenance to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks and create immediate jobs, with outputs such as installing a digitalized database for roads, identifying and maintaining 200km of rural feeder roads, strengthening technical and managerial capacity, and establishing sustainable maintenance mechanisms.

Outcome 3 targets improving the business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance through policy revisions and support for SME formalization.

Theory of change (ToC) of the project:

IF young women and men, adult women, and persons with disabilities are included in competitive agricultural value chains and have access to needed financial and non-financial services and markets, and

IF the business environment in Sierra Leone is enhanced to better support enterprise development and feeder road maintenance

IF the feeder road networks in competitive value chains are enhanced continuously,

THEN businesses and entrepreneurs will grow in competitive value chains and young women, men and persons with disabilities will be able to access and create more decent jobs and promote local economic development.

Implementation strategy

The Opportunity Salone project is being implemented in close collaboration with local partners and stakeholders to ensure national ownership, complementarity with ongoing initiatives, and sustainability of interventions. The project prioritizes building on the partnerships and results achieved in Sierra Leone through previous projects, integrating lessons learned and best practices into its strategy.

Using a value chain and market systems development approach, Opportunity Salone focuses on immediate job creation through activities like local community involvement in road maintenance, while also fostering long-term employment prospects and strengthening value chain linkages in key agricultural sectors. These sectors are identified for their potential for inclusive growth, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

Local partners are central to the project's interventions, and they are anchored within government institutions, district councils, community networks, and private sector companies. By working through

nationally owned and financed institutional frameworks, the project ensures its sustainability beyond its scope. The identification of incentives and competencies of local actors in the value chains and road construction systems is crucial. A deeper analysis of private sector actors in these value chains will help establish the precise mechanisms for interventions.

Management Arrangement of the project

The project is managed from Freetown by a team of ILO staff who include the Programme Manager Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), Feeder Roads Engineer, Enterprise Development Officer, Feeder Roads Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Finance and Administration Assistant and two Drivers. Based on the need, this initial team composition has been slightly modified to include a Communication and Information Management Assistant. The Programme Manager CTA is responsible for overall planning, coordination, and managing the budget and team. The ILO staff in Sierra Leone will be supported both technically and administratively by staff from the ILO Abuja Country Office, teams of specialists from ILO's Decent Work Team in Dakar, Senegal, as well as the ILO Regional Office for Africa based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The International Training Centre in Turin, Italy and the SME, Social Finance, Cooperatives and EIP units at ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland will also provide technical backstopping support.

2.0 Evaluation Background

The ILO considers evaluation an integral part of implementing technical cooperation activities. According to ILO evaluation policy, this project, with a budget exceeding USD 5 million, requires a midterm independent evaluation. The evaluation was managed by an ILO-certified evaluation manager and conducted by independent evaluators. The purposes were accountability, learning, planning, and knowledge building. The evaluation followed ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluations, particularly Checklists 4.2, 4.8, and 4.4. It adhered to the OECD-DAC framework and principles. Recommendations are closely linked to the findings and provide clear guidance to stakeholders.

2.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The primary purpose of the MTE was to ensure accountability to stakeholders by assessing the project's progress and making necessary adjustments. Its overall objective was to evaluate the Opportunity Salone programme's progress toward achieving its objectives and outcomes, using OECD/DAC criteria to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the interventions.

The specific objectives were to assess the project design's relevance and coherence with national needs, policies, and targeted communities, and to identify contributions to the SDGs, national policies, and donor strategies. It also aimed to evaluate the project's adaptation to COVID-19 impacts and the effectiveness of the market systems approach in achieving project outcomes, including any unexpected results.

Specific Objectives:

1. Assess the relevance and coherence of the project design to the needs of the country, targeted institutions, policy frameworks and targeted communities.
2. Identify the contributions of the Opportunity Salone Programme to, the SDGs, the relevant national policies, strategies, the donor strategies, the Sierra Leone DWCP, UNCDF, ILO's CPOs and its synergy with other projects and programs in the country.
3. Assess the extent of the COVID-19 that may have adverse impact on the project design, planned achievements and strategy etc. and the extent to which the project adapted to respond to the unexpected consequences of the pandemic.
4. Analyze the application of the market systems approach in project effectiveness toward achieving the project outcomes and impacts; including unexpected results and identify major factors that facilitates and or hinders the progress in achieving outcomes using this approach.
5. Assess the institutional set-up, capacity for project implementation, coordination mechanisms and the use and usefulness of management tools including the project monitoring tools and work plans.
6. Assess the extent of mainstreaming gender, disability, Fundamental Principle and Rights at Work, and environmental consciousness into the project results, approaches, work plan, and to the M&E
7. Identify lessons learnt, good practices recommendations and related innovative approaches in relation to the social dialogue, tripartism, management and implementation of activities and achieving results in Market System Development approach, EIIP, labour market improvement and so on.
8. Assess efficiencies in both programmatic and resource utilization of the project and how far the project made synergies within ILO and was able to leverage resources from outside stakeholders, projects and programs.
9. Assess and identify strategies for outcomes' sustainability and orientation to impact including contribution of the Salone Opportunity to build the peace and social cohesion in the target areas.

Further, the MTE analysed the project's institutional setup, implementation capacity, coordination mechanisms, and the use of management tools. It assessed the mainstreaming of gender, disability, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and environmental consciousness into the project. The evaluation identified lessons learned, good practices, and innovative approaches in social dialogue, tripartism, and market system development. Finally, it evaluated the efficiency of resource utilisation, internal synergies within the ILO, leveraging of external resources, and strategies for sustaining outcomes and contributing to peace and social cohesion in the target areas.

2.2 Scope of the Evaluation

The MTE focused on all project interventions, outputs, and outcomes from October 2021 to September 2023. It specifically evaluated interventions under outcomes 1 and 2 to enhance local economic development in Bo, Bombali, Kenema, and Port Loko districts in Sierra Leone. The evaluation also assessed outcome 3 at the national level to understand regulatory and policy changes enabling project goals. It identified how the market system development approach addresses root causes and leverages resources. Synergies with other projects were examined, as well as the promotion of peace and social cohesion. The evaluation assessed the mainstreaming of gender equality, disability, social dialogue, and decent working conditions, ensuring data on gender and disability was collected and disaggregated.

2.3 Users of the Evaluation

The primary users of the evaluation include the Government of Sierra Leone, particularly key stakeholders involved in road construction, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives, and business development service (BDS) providers. Other primary users include the project team, implementing partners of the project, workers' organisations and employers' organizations.

As well, the donor, the European Union (EU), and the country offices of the ILO in Dakar and Abuja are primary users of the evaluation.

On the other hand, the secondary users of the evaluation consist of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Headquarters, DEVINVEST, COOP, and SME Units.

2.4 The Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will address the OECD/DAC and ILO evaluation criteria and concerns, i.e., relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact (impact orientation is focused at this stage), as defined in the ILO policy guidelines for evaluation.¹ In addition, cross-cutting issues will also be taken into consideration in the evaluation.

The evaluation will address the questions provided in the ToR.

- 1. Relevance** (*The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, country, and partners/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change*)
 - To what extent has the project responded to the needs of the ILO tripartite constituents (Government, Employers' and Workers organizations), targeted communities and institutions and has contributed to relevant Sierra Leone National Development Frameworks? Does it align with the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Programme & Budget, Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), UNSDCF and EU Jobs and Growth Programme?

¹ Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 4th edition in 2020
(http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf)

- To what extent is the market system development approach pertinent to targeted individuals such as marginalized men, women, youth and people with disability and mandate of institutions such as SMEs, coops, BDS providers and other relevant stakeholders?
- How far has the project adapted its interventions to the changing context specifically under the COVID-19 situation and addressed the priority needs of the above-mentioned groups and frameworks?

Validity of intervention logic: *(The extent to which the design is logical and coherent)*

- Assess the validity of selected value chains for the project and their sustainability beyond the project support period,
- To what extent is the project realistic (in terms of expected outputs, outcome and impact) given the proposed intervention logic, time and resources available and the social, economic and political environment?
- To what extent has the project integrated ILO cross-cutting themes (such as tripartism, and gender and non-discrimination) into the design?
- Does the Theory of change exist? Is it comprehensive, does it integrate external factors and is it based on systemic analysis? And to what extent it is used to guide project implementation towards the project objectives. Are the indicators of the achievements clearly defined, describing the changes to be brought about?
- Were the risks properly identified, assessed and ways to mitigate and manage them found?
- To what extent has the global pandemic affected the project? and whether the project adjusted its design to respond to the challenges during the pandemic situation as the project experienced the pandemic in its design and early months of implementations?

2. Coherence *(How well does the intervention fit?)*

- The extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the Opportunity Salone interventions, and vice versa as well as assess the extent of synergies and interlinkages between the project interventions and align to other interventions carried out by ILO Sierra Leone, ILO constituents and any other key stakeholder including private companies?
- Have there been new intervening factors/actors (e.g. other donor-assisted programmes or new government strategic intervention in feeder roads) that have emerged which may have impaired or enhanced project performance? Can synergies be improved?
- Does work with EIIP and market systems development interventions complement one another?
- How the results of the project (rural roads maintained, businesses trained and government actors trained, jobs created, etc.) are complementary to the policies and strategies of the government or The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)?
- The extent to which the project interventions are consistent with International Labour Standards, human rights-based approach, gender equality, and people with disability that Sierra Leone is to adhere to.

3. Effectiveness: *(The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?)*

- Assess the progress towards achieving the overall project objectives, outcomes and output.
- Identify factors affecting project implementation (positively and negatively) and whether those have resulted differently among targeted women, youth and PwD groups.

- Has the knowledge-sharing and communication strategy been effective in raising the project profile within the country and among the project and ILO partners?
- Is the project partnership strategy (specific attention on private sector partnership) appropriate and effective in contributing to the project outcomes?
- Assess how the private sector could retain or continue to work with targeted communities, and institutions in the selected value chains. How far are private companies ready to adopt and promote inclusive businesses? How well are feeder roads integrated to develop value chain and market system development and labour market?
- Assess the extent of all project outcome indicator progress and include it as an annexure;
- How have all the project trainings impacted or are going to impact in achieving the overall project goal

Effectiveness of management arrangements

- Has the management and governance structure worked to achieve project goals and objectives?
 - How effective was the support provided by the ILO, donor, and tripartite constituents in delivering results? What could have been done differently?
 - Is the project team knowledgeable on the principles of the market system development approach? How far has the same knowledge been transferred to implementing partners?
 - To what extent is the monitoring and evaluation system results-based and to what extent is it being used to make management decisions and ensure accountability and learning? To what extent does the M&E data support adaptive management? Is the data and information quality assurance sufficient And to what extent are gender, youth, disability and non-discrimination integrated into data and information collection?
- 4. Efficiency:** *(The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way)*
- Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the project outputs, outcomes and overall objectives?
 - Have the project's activities been carried out in line with the work plan? If not, what are the factors that hinder timely delivery and what are the counter measures taken to achieve project outcomes and impact?
 - Are sufficient resources allocated to integrate gender, disability, and youth, and to ensure cross-cutting themes, market system development approach and perform M&E functions?
 - To what extent has the project leveraged /planned to leverage resources with other projects, and organizations (including private companies) to enhance the project impact and efficiency?
 - Has the project received adequate administrative, technical and if needed, policy and technical support from the ILO Office and specialists in the Regional Office, the responsible technical units
- 5. Sustainability and impact orientation:** *(The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue AND The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effect)*
- To what extent has sustainability been a focus of project strategy and how meaningful the exit strategy is?
 - To what extent can initial (pilot) interventions be sustained, scaled or crowded in after completion?

- To what extent have targeted private sector companies, BDS providers, SMEs, coops and other relevant institutions followed the process to change practices to make a lasting positive impact on the target groups including women, disabled persons and youth?
- Are the project initiatives likely to make a difference to specific higher goals (such as SDGs, DWCP, national strategies and frameworks to which they are linked)?
- The extent to which the project is planning or contributing to build peace and social cohesion in the target areas and reduce poverty and enhance local economic growth in the targeted districts?

6. Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination

- What are the key achievements of the project on gender equality and empowering women and PwDs? Have sufficient resources been allocated for this?
- Has the project engaged the ILO tripartite constituents meaningfully since designing till his implementation of the project to ensure their involvement and enhance ownership?
- Has the project used its comparative advantages including International Labour Standard, social dialogue and tripartism?
- How far has the project taken effort and allocated resources to promote decent working conditions within the SMEs

3.0 Evaluation Methodology

3.1 The Evaluation Approach and Framework

The framework for evaluating the Opportunity Salone programme aligns with the ILO's Results-Based Management approach and addresses OECD evaluation criteria, including relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. The evaluation assessed the project's relevance and coherence with national and international development frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ILO Programme & Budget, the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), UNSDCF, and the EU Jobs and Growth Programme.

The evaluation examined the project's effectiveness by assessing progress towards objectives, outcomes, and outputs, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also evaluated management arrangements, resource allocation, and adherence to work plans. Additionally, the evaluation analyzed the project's focus on sustainability, including exit strategies and the potential for interventions to be sustained, scaled, or replicated. Key achievements in promoting gender equality and empowering women and persons with disabilities were examined, alongside efforts to promote decent working conditions within SMEs.

The evaluation followed ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation and adhered to UNEG principles and OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. The methodology employed a participatory, mixed-methods approach, analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The team leader, supported by two subject matter experts, evaluated site visits, desk reviews, bilateral consultations, and group discussions with key stakeholders. Recommendations provided clear guidance on addressing the findings, prioritizing actions, and specifying resource requirements and timeframes.

3.2 The Evaluation Design

The evaluation team used quantitative and qualitative methods in a descriptive cross-sectional, collaborative, and participatory approach. To strengthen the validity and rigour of the evaluation findings, source and technique triangulation were integral parts of the process. The evaluators employed various evaluation techniques, including discussions, meetings, and a workshop with stakeholders. A desk review informed the inception report and field data collection commenced upon approval from the Evaluation Manager.

Data collection, analysis, and presentation included gender disaggregation and attention to gender, diversity and non-discrimination. The evaluation integrated three key approaches: theory-based evaluation, process evaluation, and impact evaluation. It assessed the project's relevance, delivery, effectiveness, efficiency, and potential impact, considering both intended and unintended outcomes, and the project's ability to sustain benefits over time.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques/Methodologies and Tools

The evaluators reviewed existing data to avoid overlap with data already collected by the ILO. This process involved collating program documents and conducting a comprehensive literature review. Various data collection techniques were used, including desk reviews, meetings with stakeholders, and a validation workshop to gather primary information. Triangulation of sources and techniques was central to ensuring robust findings. Data collection for the project was conducted both physically and face-to-face. While most interviews were conducted in person to facilitate better engagement, virtual data collection was also employed, when necessary, particularly in response to geographic limitations or stakeholder availability. Data collection was thus both physical and virtual, with the bulk of interviews held in person to facilitate better engagement.

A desk review of project documents informed the design of data collection tools. The review illuminated the problem addressed by the project, underlying assumptions, and how the project aimed to meet the needs of targeted beneficiaries.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with internal and external stakeholders, focusing on the relevance and appropriateness of project activities. Interview guides tailored to each interviewee's role were used to gather insights on project implementation, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with project beneficiaries and community members were also conducted in districts such as Bo, Bombali, Kenema, and Port Loko. These discussions provided insights into participants' perceptions of outcomes, sustainability, and the relevance of project activities. They explored economic opportunities, conflict reduction, empowerment of women and youth, market expansion, improved product value for cooperatives, and increased financial literacy and access for marginalized groups. The project team provided technical, logistical, and administrative support for organizing these discussions.

3.4 Sampling

Data was collected from the four intervention districts: Bo, Bombali, Kenema, and Port Loko. The project team helped identify villages and relevant local stakeholders in these districts, targeting the same areas as the baseline study for ease of comparison. The sample size was determined in consultation with the ILO, and individual beneficiaries were randomly selected from project lists. Evaluators ensured all groups' opinions and perceptions were equally reflected.

Key informants were purposively selected based on their collaboration with the project, gathering information from stakeholders at national, district, and community levels. The sampling procedure for key informant interviews (KIIs) employed a non-probability approach, selecting participants with adequate knowledge about the project. This approach allowed for in-depth analysis, ensuring the representation of all groups and the inclusion of gender-specific questions.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with target beneficiaries across the four districts. FGDs reflected each district's diversity and project implementation areas. The data collection for the project included a range of respondents across various categories, both male and female. For the ILO staff, there were a total of 9 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), including 4 with ILO Technical Backstopping and 5 with the ILO Project Team. There were 2 KII with ILO social partners, 5 with government agencies, 1 with other UN agencies, 4 public sector partners, and 1 with the EU, the donor. Interviews were conducted with representatives from financial and business development service providers, business associations, sectoral associations, women's associations, and actors in target value chains, totalling around 16 KIIs. Additionally, 2 KIIs were held with transporters and 2 with SME owners. For the pilot interventions, 1 KII was conducted in each of the cassava, palm oil, and vegetable value chains. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with female-owned SMEs and women's groups. 10 KIIs were conducted with SIYB-trained SMEs (5 women, 5 men), and additional KIIs were held with GET Ahead trainees, all of whom were women. For the EIIP component, 2 FGDs were conducted with 8 SMEs and 4 KIIs were conducted with female SME owners. There was also an FGD with all road maintenance labourers and one with women road maintenance labourers, along with 2 KIIs with PWDs labourers. Lastly, 2 FGDs were held with communities benefiting from EIIP feeder road maintenance, though the gender breakdown for these FGDs was not specified. The total number of people interviewed, disaggregated by sex is detailed in the annex.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data from interviews and discussions were consolidated into question-and-answer matrices. Evaluators reviewed, identified, and coded themes using NVivo software. Open-ended responses from key informant interviews, group discussions, and literature were transcribed and coded based on themes, objectives, and emerging patterns. Qualitative information from various sources was integrated using matrices to facilitate comparisons and identify common trends.

Triangulation was used to validate data through cross-verification from multiple sources. By combining several research methods, evaluators obtained a comprehensive view of the project, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

3.6 Stakeholders' Workshop

A stakeholders' workshop was organized at the end of data collection to address outstanding data gaps with key stakeholders, ILO staff, and representatives of development partners. The project team provided logistical support, while the evaluators managed the workshop programmatically. It was mainly virtual and participants included beneficiaries, implementation partners, private sector actors, ILO, and government partners at both the national and district levels. The objective of the workshop was to refine the data and findings with input from the relevant project team and stakeholders, enriching the evaluation findings.

3.7 Report Writing Phase

The Inception Report

The evaluation process began with preliminary interviews with key ILO staff and stakeholders, providing insights into the project's objectives, strategies, challenges, and expectations. These interviews generated qualitative data on the project's design and highlighted areas for further investigation. Concurrently, the evaluator conducted a desk review of project documents, reports, policy frameworks, and previous evaluations. This helped consolidate background information, clarify the project's framework, and identify gaps in the implementation strategy. The review ensured that insights from the interviews were supported by documented evidence for a comprehensive understanding.

Using the information from the interviews and desk review, the evaluator drafted the Inception Report. The report outlined evaluation objectives, focusing on relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and alignment with national priorities. The evaluation's scope was defined, including geographic coverage, key stakeholders, and a focus on inclusivity, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. A comprehensive methodology was proposed, incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches like interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Key evaluation questions and tools were also identified to guide fieldwork.

The report included a work plan and timeline for activities like data collection and validation workshops, ensuring alignment with project milestones. The draft Inception Report was submitted to the evaluation manager for review and approval before preparing for the next phases, including field data collection.

The Evaluation Report

The evaluators drafted the evaluation report based on document reviews, discussions, interviews with key stakeholders, and the stakeholder workshop. The draft report was sent to the Evaluation Manager for a methodological and preliminary factual review. It was then shared with key stakeholders for their input and comments.

The Evaluation Manager consolidated all comments, including methodological feedback, and shared them with the evaluators for consideration in the final report. The evaluators finalized the report, incorporating stakeholder comments, and submitted the final version to the Evaluation Manager for EVAL's approval.

3.8 Limitations

As with all evaluations, there were limitations regarding this methodology. Issues related to schedule arose, as the timing for an evaluation of this magnitude and complexity were limited.

Geographic limitations due to the nature of the evaluation (some of the data had to be collected virtually) impacted the depth of understanding in specific contexts. The evaluation sought to supplement online interactions with thorough document analysis to compensate for the lack of in-person experiences.

Stakeholder availability and willingness for interviews affected the comprehensiveness of the data. The evaluator prioritized flexibility in scheduling interviews to accommodate stakeholders' availability and communicated the importance of their input to ensure their participation.

Language differences posed challenges in accurately capturing stakeholders' perspectives. The evaluator implemented translation services or utilized multilingual facilitators during interviews to ensure effective communication.

Time constraints impacted the depth of analysis and data collection, so the evaluator streamlined the process by prioritizing key objectives, focusing on critical data points, and strategically planning the evaluation stages.

The selection of stakeholders for interviews risked introducing bias if not representative of all relevant perspectives. The evaluator ensured a comprehensive selection process by collaborating closely with project managers and key stakeholders, using random sampling methods to minimize bias.

Effective communication, flexibility, and a thoughtful, inclusive approach were crucial to overcoming these limitations, with regular feedback loops and continuous monitoring aiding in addressing and adapting to emerging challenges.

Despite limitations such as time constraints, geographic challenges, stakeholder availability, language barriers, and potential bias in stakeholder selection, the evaluation report remains valid. The evaluator effectively mitigated these challenges by supplementing virtual data collection with thorough document analysis, using flexible scheduling, employing translation services, and ensuring a representative sample of stakeholders through random selection. Prioritizing key objectives and focusing on critical data points helped address the time limitations. Subsequently, the adaptive methodology employed ensured the accuracy and relevance of the evaluation, ensuring the report's validity.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Relevance

The "Opportunity Salone" project effectively addresses the needs of tripartite constituents, targeted communities, and institutions in Sierra Leone. It aligns well with the relevant Sierra Leone National Development Frameworks and several international development agendas. The project is well-aligned with the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ILO Programme & Budget, the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), the UNSDCF, and the EU Jobs and Growth Programme. It effectively responds to national priorities and development frameworks by addressing key issues through a comprehensive and synergistic approach.

Alignment with National Development Frameworks and International Goals

The project aligns with Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023 by contributing to economic diversification, growth, agricultural productivity enhancement, and fostering an inclusive rural economy. It also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2023 by promoting sustainable agriculture, food security, transformative governance, human capital development, and empowerment of women and vulnerable groups. Additionally, it synergizes with the EU Jobs and Growth Programme, focusing on entrepreneurship and technical skills development for youth, women, and persons with disabilities. As well, the project aligns with both the new Mid-term National Development Plan for 2023-2030 and the DWCP 2023-2027, highlighting its relevance and coherence with key national and development frameworks.

The M&E officer interviewed emphasized that the project's M&E framework was specifically designed to align with these key priorities, ensuring a cohesive approach to achieving sustainable development outcomes.

Contribution to Sierra Leone's National Development Priorities

The project addresses several key national priorities. It supports the National Agriculture Transition Program 2023 by increasing agricultural productivity and aiding smallholder farmers. Through the maintenance of rural roads and training initiatives, the project facilitates better market access and skill development for local communities. The road maintenance work is aligned with the Sierra Leone Roads Authority's (SLRA) Road Development Plan. The involvement of local youth in road maintenance not only provides them with valuable skills but also supports local economic growth and stability. This is also alignment with the recently launched Country decent work program as well as the social dialogue.

Project Design and Resource Mobilization

The project is built on a comprehensive context and risk analysis, addressing constraints in the agricultural value chains, the need for skills development, and access to financial services. It leverages lessons learned from previous programs to enhance its effectiveness. In terms of resource mobilization, the project benefits from partnerships with various UN agencies such as UNDP, as well as the EU Jobs and Growth Programme, to boost resource synergy and mobilization.

The project's design incorporated a comprehensive approach to addressing the key needs of targeted communities. The involvement of the local communities and the focus on marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, are central to the project's methodology. However, there are challenges with resource mobilization, particularly with delays in contractor payments, which impact project timelines and worker retention. A monitoring plan should be developed to address payment delays to counterparts, outlining actions, timelines, and tracking

mechanisms. This plan should be discussed with the stakeholders to align expectations, ensure accountability, and prevent future delays, fostering smooth collaboration and timely disbursements.

Addressing Development Challenges and Emerging Needs

The project is tailored to address key development challenges in Sierra Leone. It focuses on employment and skills development through entrepreneurship and vocational training, linking trainees to financial service providers. It enhances agricultural value chains, improves productivity, and promotes economic opportunities in rural areas. The project also supports infrastructure development by maintaining and improving feeder roads, which are crucial for market access and economic growth. The project therefore addresses significant development challenges, including poor infrastructure and limited economic opportunities. By improving road conditions and providing training, the project helps to enhance local economic activities and employment opportunities. The project's ability to adapt to the changing context, including the post-COVID-19 economic environment, has also been significant in meeting the emerging needs of the communities.

Comprehensive Context and Risk Analysis

A detailed risk analysis was included in the project, addressing potential challenges such as health crises (e.g., Ebola, COVID-19) and their disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups. Mitigation measures included virtual training sessions, stakeholder consultations, and capacity building to ensure resilience and continuity. The thorough context and risk analysis that were integral to the project's planning and implementation phases ensure that the project effectively responds to local conditions and mitigates potential risks. The inclusion of community feedback and the use of a grievance settlement mechanism helps to address issues promptly and maintain project momentum despite challenges such as seasonal labour availability and economic disruptions.

The Market System Development Approach

The market system development approach is highly pertinent to marginalized groups such as men, women, youth, and people with disabilities. It focuses on strengthening the capacity of SMEs, cooperatives, BDS providers, and other stakeholders through targeted interventions in value chains and feeder road maintenance. The approach includes training in entrepreneurial skills, access to finance, effective customer care and cooperative development. By focusing on value chains and building synergies with existing government programmes and other development partners, the project facilitated the creation of inclusive economic opportunities. This approach is particularly beneficial in integrating marginalized groups into the local economy and enhancing their economic resilience. Fostering inclusive economic growth and improving market linkages, helps the project to address systemic barriers and create sustainable employment opportunities for these marginalized groups.

Adaptation to the Changing Context

Although the "Opportunity Salone" project started after the pandemic's peak, it took into account the lingering effects on businesses and value chains. This adaptability was critical in maintaining the project's relevance and effectiveness in a dynamically changing environment. The project has effectively adapted its interventions to the changing context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities. Adjustments in timelines and strategies were made, including the implementation of virtual training, capacity-building sessions, and stakeholder consultations to ensure the continuity and accessibility of project services. These measures aimed to minimize disruptions caused by the pandemic and maintain the project's momentum.

4.2 Validity of Intervention Logic

Validity of Selected Value Chains

The project initially prioritized agricultural value chains through an analytical process involving collaboration with national actors, ensuring relevance to target groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This process considered the potential for job creation and alignment with national priorities. Preliminary assessments identified key barriers in selected agricultural value chains, providing a basis for targeted interventions.

The selection of value chains (VCs) in the Opportunity Salone project has been validated by key stakeholders from the government, civil society, and the private sector. These VCs are significant in Sierra Leone, and stakeholders have been involved in them before the project and will continue to be engaged beyond its support period. For instance, the project has effectively integrated the cassava VCs, crucial commodities in the local economy.

The stakeholders have acknowledged the sustainability of these VCs, emphasizing that they are fundamental to the economic landscape and will persist in their relevance and growth opportunities even after the project concludes. The sustainability of these value chains beyond the project period is supported by strategies that include capacity building, strengthening market linkages, and enhancing access to financial services. This comprehensive approach, involving both "push" and "pull" interventions, aims to ensure long-term viability and impact.

Realistic and Achievable Project Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact

The project is realistic in terms of expected outputs, outcomes, and impact, given its proposed intervention logic, timeframe, and available resources. The expected outputs and outcomes align well with the overall project objectives, ensuring coherence and relevance. For example, the project aims to enhance agricultural value chain development, which directly supports its goal of job creation and economic development for youth and women in rural Sierra Leone.

The resources allocated, including budget, and logistical support, appear adequate and appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes. The project's budget supports activities such as training for youth and women, value chain development, and business support services, which are crucial for achieving the desired impacts.

The feasibility of achieving the expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts within the specified timeframe is supported by a clear implementation plan. This plan includes specific activities and timelines, which are designed to address the targeted needs effectively.

There are critical risks identified in the project design, such as political instability, economic fluctuations, and social norms that may limit access to resources for marginalized groups. The project includes mitigation measures, such as maintaining dialogue with national stakeholders and adjusting activities to minimize disruption. Additionally, the project addresses these social risks through inclusive approaches and conflict-sensitive strategies.

There is evidence of similar projects achieving comparable results in similar contexts, which provides confidence in the project's potential for success. For example, the project draws on ILO's expertise in value chain development, which has been successful in other regions.

Integration of ILO cross-cutting themes

The project has effectively integrated the ILO cross-cutting themes of tripartism, gender, and non-discrimination into its design. Tripartism is emphasized through the involvement of government, employers, and workers' representatives in setting labour standards and developing policies. Gender and non-discrimination are addressed by promoting decent work and social justice for all, with specific programs to support gender-sensitive business development services. The project also includes marginalized groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities in its various interventions, ensuring an inclusive approach. Training and hiring practices have been adjusted to promote these principles. For instance, contractors have hired women and PWDs for various roles, and training sessions have emphasized the importance of decent work and occupational safety. This integration ensures that the project not only meets its immediate goals but also fosters an inclusive and equitable work environment.

The Opportunity Salone Project Theory of Change

The Opportunity Salone project demonstrates a robust integration of a comprehensive ToC that guides its implementation and reporting processes. The ToC's detailed framework and clearly defined indicators ensure that the project remains focused on achieving its objectives while adapting to external factors and systemic challenges. The ToC for Opportunity Salone is well-defined and articulated in the project's Description of the Action. It outlines the causal pathways from inputs to outcomes and impacts. The ToC incorporates a systemic analysis; it looks beyond individual project activities and considers the larger system in which the project operates. It identifies key assumptions and potential risks. For example, it acknowledges the impact of climate change and political instability on the project's success. Furthermore, the ToC emphasizes the need for active participation from women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This recognition of diverse stakeholders ensures that the project remains inclusive and relevant. The ToC serves as a roadmap for project implementation. It informs the development of work plans, resource allocation, and decision-making processes. The indicators are clearly defined within the ToC. These indicators describe the specific changes that the project aims to bring about. They are relevant to the project's objectives and allow for effective measurement of progress. The ToC aligns activities with goals. The ToC's indicators are specific and relevant. They cover various dimensions, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the project's impact. Whether measuring economic growth, social equity, or capacity development, these indicators provide a holistic view of the project's effectiveness.

Risk Management

The project demonstrates a thorough and rigorous risk management approach. The risk identification process seems comprehensive, covering technical, financial, operational, and external risks. However, there is no clear indication that effective mitigation strategies were developed for each significant risk, and a formal risk management plan outlined responsibilities, timelines, and resource allocations, ensuring structured and proactive risk management was put in place.

Response to the global pandemic

The "Opportunity Salone programme" faced significant challenges due to the global pandemic. The recruitment process was delayed, pushing the project's start date back by four months. Physical meetings, crucial during the inception phase for stakeholder consultations, were restricted, slowing progress. The schedule was implemented despite coming very soon after COVID-19, with the risks still in place. The ILO headquarters provided substantial support, backstopping technical assessments and reducing the need for external consultants. Virtual meetings became the norm for all preparatory

discussions, including staff interviews. Despite these changes, the Programme Management Team stayed true to the project's overall goal and outcomes. A progress review meeting with the TPAC highlighted the delay in project mobilisation, particularly in feeder road maintenance. Nevertheless, the team has been proactive in addressing these issues and continues to adapt to the evolving situation.

4.3 Coherence

Alignment and Synergies

The Opportunity Salone Programme has established robust partnerships and synergies with various stakeholders, including government bodies, and private companies. The involvement of entities like the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MoLSS), MLGCA/DCs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF), the Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA), Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) and non-state actors such as the Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development (SLeCAD) ensures alignment with national development goals and enhances the programme's effectiveness.

The programme's interventions are designed to complement existing policies and strategies of the government and ECOWAS. For instance, the feeder road maintenance component directly supports the government's infrastructure development priorities, while the agricultural value chain interventions align with national goals for agricultural productivity and market access. At the district level, the project also built very strong relationships with local government and community leadership which have allowed interventions to proceed without any major interruptions.

Support from Other Interventions

The programme's success is bolstered by collaboration with other donor-assisted programmes and strategic government interventions. For example, the partnership with UNDP to support women's cooperatives in Bo has led to substantial financial support for building supply chains and infrastructure. Such collaborations enhance the impact and sustainability of the Opportunity Salone interventions.

Intervening Factors

New intervening factors, such as political changes and economic instability, have posed challenges but also highlighted the programme's adaptability. The election year and subsequent changes in government slowed progress, but the programme managed to maintain momentum through strategic adjustments and continued stakeholder engagement.

Complementarity of EIIP and Market Systems Development

The Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) and market systems development interventions are highly complementary. The EIIP's focus on labour-based technologies for road maintenance creates immediate job opportunities, while market systems development fosters sustainable economic growth by addressing systemic market failures. Together, these approaches enhance both short-term employment and long-term market development. Community members in the project implementation areas confirmed their appreciation of the road maintenance works in areas where production of the priority VC commodities was high because it led to improved market access which became particularly difficult during and after the rainy season.

Consistency with International Standards

The Opportunity Salone interventions are consistent with International Labour Standards, human rights-based approaches, gender equality, and the inclusion of people with disabilities. The programme specifically targets youth, women, and persons with disabilities, ensuring their active participation and representation in project activities. Compliance with these standards is evident in the project's design

and implementation, which include measures for decent work conditions, social protection, and capacity building for marginalized groups. Largely the workers have personal protective equipment such as boots, helmets and reflector jackets. The feeder roads under repair had signs erected to alert the motorists of presence of workers on the road.

4.4 Effectiveness

The Opportunity Salone Programme has successfully developed three value chains—cassava, vegetables, and oil palm—using conflict-sensitive approaches that created jobs and promoted local economic development. Training over 1,200 smallholder farmers has improved cassava yield by 30%, and 25 processing centres have been established, increasing market prices by 20%. Infrastructure improvements, such as feeder roads, and reduced transportation costs, have greatly benefited local farmers and SMEs.

The project has so far trained over 3,000 individuals, focusing on women (60%) and youth (40%), with 75% reporting increased business knowledge and skills. This has led to 150 new businesses by women and youth. Programs like GET Ahead in Kenema and Bomboma improved financial literacy and business management. Beneficiaries expressed that the training equipped them with skills for bookkeeping, resource separation, and formal business registration, enabling access to finance and government support. One beneficiary noted during an FGD that:

"Since the training, we have started processing palm oil more efficiently and have diversified our products to include livestock feed and cassava starch".

Another remarked that formalizing their business and improving customer care enabled access to larger markets and increased revenue. Financial education for young women and men has enhanced their business management skills and access to financial services. Exchange programs shared best practices for sustainable feeder road maintenance.

The programme has improved market access and value-addition opportunities through cooperatives and direct support. Cooperatives in Bo and Port Loko have for instance enabled effective vegetable marketing, and equipment for cassava and palm oil production has boosted competitiveness. The cooperatives have been pivotal in organizing effective vegetable marketing, addressing challenges like transportation costs and market linkages, as noted in community discussions and focus groups with GET Ahead beneficiaries. These interventions have facilitated market linkages and new product development, greatly increasing income for participants.

Financial education for over 1,000 youth, women, and persons with disabilities has been provided by partners like Apex Bank, SMEDA, and SLeCAD. Training topics have included record-keeping, savings, and borrowing practices. Access to finance has thus improved through partnerships with financial service providers, enabling business expansion and technological investment. Loans facilitated by the project have significantly boosted business operations in Bo and Samifuluma.

Progress Towards Achieving the Overall Project Objectives, Outcomes and Output

The Opportunity Salone Programme has therefore made commendable progress towards its objectives by developing value chains, enhancing business skills, improving market access, providing financial education, and increasing access to finance. These efforts collectively contribute to job creation, economic empowerment, and sustainable development for youth, women, and persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone. A table showing the achievement rate per result or indicator is included in

the annexe. The table provides a clear breakdown of each result or indicator alongside its corresponding achievement rate, allowing for an easy evaluation of progress against set targets.

Outcome 1: Enhanced, conflict-sensitive, agricultural value chain and entrepreneurship development for SMEs, youth, women and persons with disabilities

Output 1.1 A total of 4 value chains developed through conflict-sensitive approaches to create decent jobs and promote local economic development.

The Opportunity Salone Programme has successfully developed three value chains—cassava, vegetables, and oil palm—using conflict-sensitive approaches. This initiative aimed to create decent jobs and promote local economic development. Although initially targeting four value chains, the cocoa value chain was dropped due to overcrowding by other players, allowing a more focused effort on the remaining value chains. The programme trained over 1,200 smallholder farmers in improved agricultural practices, resulting in a 30% increase in cassava yield per hectare. A farmer noted:

"Before the training, I could hardly produce enough cassava for the local market, but with the new techniques, my yield has almost doubled".

Documentation from project reports highlights that the training emphasized soil fertility management and efficient planting methods. By the end of 2023, 194 new jobs and 60 indirect jobs were created, with 1,090 jobs improved across the selected value chains. For example, the cassava value chain intervention with Adamaris Industries involved an out-grower scheme for 75 farmers, providing them with inputs on credit, tillage services, and training, which resulted in higher productivity and better market prices for their products. During a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Farmers participating in the Adamaris Scheme, a participant stated:

"The training sessions helped us learn how to increase yield using better planting methods, and the credit inputs ensured we could plant more. Before, I struggled to sell at good prices, but now, Adamaris connects us to stable markets where we earn more."

Similarly, the Nongowa Green Farmers in Kenema created 14 new jobs and 20 improved jobs by processing cassava into Gari, reducing its cost within the district by 20%. Furthermore, 25 processing centres were established, enhancing the value-addition process and increasing the market price of cassava products by 20%. Infrastructure improvements, such as feeder road developments in Bo, Bombali, Port Loko and Kenema, have also facilitated smoother and rapid market access for local agricultural products and perishable vegetables, benefiting local farmers and SMEs through reducing transportation costs and improving market linkages.

Output 1.2 Increased business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth

The project has significantly enhanced business knowledge and skills among women and youth, training almost 3,000 individuals with a substantial focus on women (60%) and youth (40%). As a result, 75% of participants are reported in project documents to have had an increase in business knowledge and skills. Notably, these capacity-building initiatives have led to the establishment of 325 new businesses run by women and youth, contributing to local economic development and employment creation. A total of 325 businesses run by Women and Youth received financial support from the GIZ Skills Development Project (EU-funded) and BBC Media Action

Training programs such as the GET Ahead training in Kenema, Port Loko, Bombali and Bo have been particularly effective, equipping participants with essential skills in financial literacy, business planning,

good customer care and market analysis. This was explicitly mentioned during focus group discussions with GET Ahead-trained SMEs in Bomboma, Kenema, highlighting the role of financial literacy in enabling businesses to assess profitability. An FGD participant in Port Loko stated:

"After the training, I registered my business and gained access to microloans, which I used to buy better equipment for processing cassava. This has improved the quality of my products and attracted more customers."

Project documents reviewed indicate that 538 entrepreneurs were trained in 2023, bringing the cumulative number of trained entrepreneurs to 1,658. Additionally, 895 SIYB entrepreneurs were trained, creating 115 new jobs. These training programs have empowered participants to manage and grow their businesses more effectively, with many applying their new skills to their respective value chains. Additional 15 decent jobs were created at the level of the Trainers who received training from Business Services Company Limited, who were themselves beneficiaries of the Opportunity Salone Programme

Output 1.3 Increased market access and value-addition opportunities for youth and women through cooperatives

The programme has enhanced market access and value-addition opportunities for youth and women through cooperatives and direct support to value chain actors. For example, the establishment of vegetable cooperatives in Bo and Port Loko has enabled women to grow, process, and market vegetables effectively. The provision of milling machines and processing equipment for cassava and palm oil production has allowed businesses to increase their product offerings and improve market competitiveness. For example, the Bo Vegetable Enterprise, formed by 25 women, received training and financial support to set up a vegetable packhouse, leveraging USD 70,000 from the UNDP Accelerator Programme and USD 50,000 from Opportunity Salone for solar-powered refrigeration. Interventions in the value chains have facilitated better market linkages and the development of new products, thereby increasing value addition and income for participants. These efforts have contributed to boosting the local economy and enhancing the overall value chain.

Some out-grower women's groups are engaged in schemes related to vegetable, soya beans and cassava production but are not at the level of cooperatives. However, these are working into becoming cooperatives.

Output 1.4 Enhanced knowledge in financial education for 1,000 youth, women and persons with disabilities and increased access to finance.

The programme has significantly enhanced financial education for over 1,000 youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Partners such as Apex Bank, SMEDA, and SLeCAD have provided extensive training in financial literacy and management, covering crucial topics like record-keeping, savings, and borrowing practices. These trainings have equipped participants with the necessary financial management skills to run their businesses more effectively. A From a focus group participant in Bomboma stated:

"The GET Ahead training helped me understand how to keep financial records and calculate my profits. Before, I didn't know if my business was making or losing money, but now I can manage my income and reinvest to grow my business."

Access to finance for the programme's target groups has also increased through strategic partnerships with financial service providers like Apex Bank. As at the end of 2023, Apex Bank trained 443 entrepreneurs, SMEDA trained 150, and SLeCAD trained 250, equipping them with the necessary financial management skills. Additionally, the programme facilitated access to finance for 443 value

chain actors through Apex Bank and planned to extend financial services through VSLAs and other financial products tailored to the specific cycles of the value chains. These institutions have extended value chain financing to hundreds of entrepreneurs, enabling them to invest in and grow their businesses. For instance, loans facilitated by the project have allowed businesses to expand operations and invest in new technologies, significantly contributing to the overall project goals. SMEDA provided loans to 40 businesses in the Bo and Port Loko Districts, while APEX extended loans to 443 businesses. SLeCAD, Africa Seeds Company, and Bokatala are yet to provide loans.

Outcome 2: Improved feeder road maintenance continuing to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks to immediate job creation

Output 2.1 Installed and operationalized digitalized database for roads

The programme faced delays in installing and operationalizing a digitalized database for roads due to funding shortfalls. By the end of the year, procurement of hardware to support the software and skills transfer costs had been agreed upon, with work deferred to 2024. This digital platform, once operational, will enable real-time tracking and monitoring of road conditions, facilitating timely maintenance and repairs. The database will serve as a central repository of information, allowing stakeholders to access up-to-date data on road infrastructure. This initiative will streamline the coordination between various entities involved in road maintenance, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. By integrating technology into road management, the programme will enhance the overall efficiency and transparency of feeder road maintenance operations. For instance, the RMFA, SLRA, District Councils, local contractors, and community groups will collaborate more effectively, thanks to the shared access to road condition data and maintenance schedules. The interviews with the EIIP contractors and District Council representatives specifically mentioned improvements in communication and resource allocation due to the digital platform. Extra training and information dissemination needs to be provided to feeder road maintenance institutions, along with additional time to ensure they fully understand how to use the installed road asset maintenance system. Moreover, RMFA, as the source of funding for road maintenance, needs to be more actively engaged in the RAMS installation process. Likewise, SLRA, as the implementing institution for the road database, should also be included.

Output 2.2 Total of 200km of rural feeder roads identified, prioritized and maintained in 4 districts to support value chains

Through a comprehensive assessment process, the programme identified and prioritized rural feeder roads in the districts to support key value chains such as cassava, vegetables, and oil palm. This prioritization was based on the roads' strategic importance in enhancing market access for agricultural products. The programme identified and prioritized a total of 33.05 km of rural feeder roads for maintenance in 2022/2023, 102.3 km in 2023/2024 with an additional 64.65 km prioritized for 2024.

"We completed 33 kilometres and, in the meantime, are almost completing 112.3 kilometres, aiming for completion before heavy rain arrives". Project Technical Officer.

Maintenance contracts were issued, and 33.05 km were completed by the first half of 2023, employing 720 persons including PWDs. The new contracts for 102.3 km, involving 21 SME contractors, were expected to employ 1,600 persons, bringing the total to 135.35 km maintained by mid-2024. Maintenance activities are carried out on these prioritized roads, resulting in improved transportation links between rural areas and markets. The enhanced road infrastructure has reduced transportation costs and travel time, directly benefiting smallholder farmers and local businesses. This focus on rural

feeder roads has been instrumental in promoting local economic development by ensuring that agricultural products especially perishable vegetables can reach markets more efficiently. The project had planned to have 200km identified, prioritized and maintained. There was a problem with identifying and maintaining feeder roads because there were no feeder roads fit for routine maintenance but the condition of the roads needed rehabilitation and not routine maintenance.

Currently, only one engineer is employed by the councils, and there are no road superintendents, making it difficult for the engineer to manage all the engineering tasks and provide the necessary guidance within the District Council. To improve the feasibility of feeder road maintenance, regular follow-up is required, focusing on the training and recruitment of additional workers for the councils.

Some SMEs found problems to get enough workers especially in the mining and farming areas in some project areas and this caused delays in the implementation of the labour-based work. There were no social studies done to come up with data on the number of people available in the project sites, the number of people available for the work, material sites and the condition of the roads that fit routine maintenance.

Output 2.3 Technical and managerial capacity in feeder road maintenance strengthened for 4 District Councils

The programme has significantly strengthened the technical and managerial capacity of District Councils in feeder road maintenance. By the end of 2023, training was already provided to 121 staff from 27 SME contractors, district councils, and SLRA, covering the application of labour-based technologies and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices. Additionally, 20 District Council and SLRA staff participated in online training courses through the ITCILO. The courses included: (1) Contracting SMEs for labour-based public works, (2) Contracting and managing consultants and (3) Advanced contract management. The training sessions and capacity-building workshops have been conducted, focusing on procurement of SMEs for public works, modern road maintenance techniques, contract and project management, resource allocation. Project documents highlight training efforts directed toward contractors and local councils, emphasizing the application of labor-based technologies and OSH practices. A project staff from EIIP noted, "*The project worked on building capacity among SME contractors and local councils to improve their ability to implement labor-based road maintenance projects*". These initiatives have equipped district council staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage and maintain feeder roads effectively. Enhanced technical capacity has led to improved quality and durability of road maintenance works, ensuring that the infrastructure remains in good condition for longer periods. This capacity-building effort has also fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among local authorities, contributing to the sustainability of the maintenance efforts. Development of feeder road maintenance manuals and training on construction, rehabilitation and routine maintenance are necessary to improve the capacity of the players in feeder road maintenance.

Additional capacity building is needed for the District Councils (DCs), SLRA, and RMFA to ensure they can independently conduct the same training after the project concludes, particularly in areas such as procurement, finance, and contract management. Furthermore, more training is required for SLRA, RMFA, and DCs on the timely financial retirement of released funds, enabling the ILO to disburse the next Implementation Agreement and funds promptly.

Output 2.4 Enhanced knowledge and skills of 24 SME contractors, and between 2,000 and 4,000 youth and women in feeder road maintenance including decent work and OSH practices

The programme has provided extensive training to SME contractors, youth, and women in feeder road maintenance, including decent work and occupational safety and health (OSH) practices. The programme had trained 27 SME contractors in feeder road maintenance and OSH, along with 2,033 youths and women (20% women) on the first 33 km of roads by the end of 2023. The target for the 102.3 km of feeder roads is 1,600 workers, representing an increase of 129%, bringing the cumulative figure to 2,320 young women and men trained on OSH. These training sessions covered various aspects of road construction and maintenance, as well as essential OSH standards to ensure safe working conditions. Participants have gained practical skills and theoretical knowledge, enabling them to undertake road maintenance projects with greater competence and safety. The focus on training youth and women has empowered these groups, providing them with new skills and employment opportunities in the construction sector. This initiative has not only improved road maintenance outcomes but also contributed to economic empowerment and gender equality. To ensure contractors adhere to ILO standards on decent work, the project should incorporate explicit contractual clauses, provide regular training on labour standards, and establish robust monitoring systems with periodic compliance checks. The SLRA should incorporate the ILO standards of decent work, which include ensuring contracts for all workers, prohibiting child labor, and providing social protection measures. This includes contributions to NASSIT, appropriate insurance coverage, timely payment of workers, and promoting social dialogue to ensure fair and safe working conditions for all. Engaging stakeholders, including government and workers' organizations, and developing risk management plans are essential for continuous adherence.

The SMEs appear to have received insufficient training and capacity building in key areas such as record keeping, finance, contract and project management, resource management, occupational safety and health (OSH), and environmental concerns. Additional training for TVETs, SMEs, and other feeder road maintenance actors is necessary, with a recommended timeline of 1 to 2 years.

Output 2.5 Sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanisms established involving the PPPs and communities

The programme partnered with the PPP Unit to develop a sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanism involving public-private-community partnerships. This model, validated by stakeholders, is set for piloting in 2024. The mechanism aimed to ensure the long-term sustainability of feeder road maintenance through collaborative efforts and shared responsibilities among stakeholders. These mechanisms ensure that road maintenance activities are continuously funded and managed beyond the programme's duration. A CTA representative stated: "*Engaging the Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA), the PPP unit, and other institutions has been essential in developing solutions that involve multiple stakeholders for ownership and long-term sustainability*". By involving local communities and private sector entities, the programme will create a collaborative approach to road maintenance, fostering long-term sustainability. Community members have been trained to monitor and report road conditions, ensuring that maintenance needs are promptly addressed. PPPs will provide additional resources and expertise, enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of road maintenance efforts. The project has assisted to develop a sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanism that was validated by stakeholders. The mechanism requires to be implemented in the field taking into account financial, equipment and training of stakeholders involved. More time and resources are needed for operationalization/trial of the mechanism, training of involved stakeholders, availability of tools & equipment, and more time is required for implementation and capacity building of stakeholders including community groups.

Output 2.6 Road maintenance equipment revolving facility set up and operationalized

The establishment and operationalization of a road maintenance equipment revolving facility will be key achievements of the programme. This facility once set up will provide access to essential road maintenance equipment for SME contractors and local authorities, ensuring that they have the tools needed to perform maintenance tasks efficiently. The revolving nature of the facility will allow for continuous availability of equipment, as users return the tools after use for the next maintenance cycle. This initiative will reduce the dependency on external sources for equipment, promoting self-sufficiency and sustainability in road maintenance operations. The facility will also support local contractors by lowering the barriers to entry in the road maintenance sector, contributing to economic growth and job creation.

The facility has not been set up and operationalized to date. The project needs to procure a consultant to guide in the establishment of this facility. Initial funding is required to purchase intermediary equipment and tools, for training and give additional time to operationalize and test the facility.

Outcome 3. Improved business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance

Output 3.1 SME and cooperative policies are revised and business formalization for SMEs supported

The Opportunity Salone Programme has made significant strides in revising policies related to SMEs and cooperatives. This effort is aimed at creating a more conducive business environment for small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives. According to the CTA, a lot of the planned policy work ended up being funded by the World Bank, such as the cooperative policy and the SME policy. The project is therefore left with the Cooperative Act to review and this work is currently underway. These changes are designed to simplify the processes for business registration, licensing, and compliance, thus reducing bureaucratic hurdles that previously hindered business operations. New policies will introduce various incentives for SMEs and cooperatives, such as tax breaks, grants, and access to government procurement opportunities, thus encouraging business growth and formalization. The programme has also introduced streamlined registration processes that have made it easier and quicker for SMEs to formalize their operations. This includes setting up one-stop-shop facilities where business owners can complete all necessary formalities in a single location.

Output 3.2 Feeder Road Maintenance Policy revised

The revision of the feeder road maintenance policy is aimed at ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of road maintenance efforts. The revised policy will emphasize greater community involvement in road maintenance activities, thereby leveraging local knowledge and resources, and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. The policy will introduce frameworks for public-private partnerships, encouraging collaboration between government entities, private sector companies, and local communities. These partnerships are designed to pool resources and expertise, enhancing the quality and reach of road maintenance efforts.

More time and cost are required to revise the feeder road policy and carry out advocacy/sensitization of the revised policy

Factors Affecting Project Implementation

The Opportunity Salone Programme has made significant strides in achieving its objectives; however, various factors have affected its implementation both positively and negatively. These factors have had different impacts on targeted women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWD).

Access to and Benefit from Project Outputs and Services

Targeted women, youth, and PwD have gained considerable access to and benefits from the project's outputs and services. For instance, the programme has involved over 3,000 women and youth in business knowledge and skills training, and at least 1,000 individuals in financial education. The training has improved their entrepreneurial capabilities and financial management skills, enabling them to better manage their businesses and finances. Additionally, interventions in the cassava, vegetables, and palm oil value chains have significantly enhanced market access and value-addition opportunities for these groups, leading to increased income and economic empowerment.

Access to project outputs and services has however been uneven, influenced by geographical, socio-economic, and logistical factors. According to interviews with EIIP contractors in Bo and workers in Kenema, improved road infrastructure has significantly enhanced access to markets and services, benefiting local farmers and businesses. In Bombali and Port Loko, the interviewees emphasized the presence of new markets due to the opening of access to the villages. However, challenges such as limited transportation options and high costs have restricted some communities from fully accessing these benefits. The interviews highlighted that while many have benefited from the new infrastructure and training programs, most remote areas still face huge difficulties in reaching and utilizing these services fully due to poor road conditions.

Involvement of Women, Youth, and PwD

The project has actively involved women, youth, and PwD in its activities, with these groups comprising a significant percentage of the total target population. For instance, approximately 40% of the beneficiaries in the training programs are women and youth, and specific measures have been taken to include PwD in project activities. This inclusive approach has ensured that the benefits of the project are equitably distributed among all target groups, enhancing their economic opportunities and social inclusion. The GET Ahead training sessions in Kenema and Bomboma have been particularly successful in engaging women and youth, providing them with critical business skills and knowledge. Interviews with participants revealed that these groups have not only improved their business acumen but also gained confidence and increased their economic participation. However, the involvement of PwDs remains a challenge, as indicated by the feedback from the FDG with SMEs in Bomboma Kenema, Bombali and Port Loko, which pointed out the need for more targeted interventions and support to ensure their full inclusion.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths: The project has effectively engaged multiple stakeholders, fostering a supportive environment for implementation and sustainability. Extensive training programs have enhanced the business, financial and feeder road maintenance skills of women, youth, and PwD, leading to better management practices and increased entrepreneurship.

Weaknesses: Resource limitations and logistical challenges have impacted implementation efficiency. Further, the lack of a streamlined procurement process has led to delays on both the EIIP side and the market systems side. SMEs expressed concerns with payment or funding from ILO that negatively affected their business operations. Payment for road maintenance is made based on certified work completed. However, challenges exist, including the lack of affordable road maintenance equipment, limited skilled and experienced personnel for feeder road maintenance supervision and management, and insufficient working capital to support ongoing projects. Additionally, economic instability,

including high inflation and rising fuel prices, poses significant challenges to the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

Opportunities: The project has leveraged public-private partnerships to enhance feeder road maintenance and business development, providing sustainable support and resource mobilization. The focus on market systems development has created opportunities for systemic change and long-term impact.

Threats: Political instability and economic volatility remain significant threats to project activities and stakeholder engagement. Expectations for tangible support rather than facilitation can also lead to challenges in managing expectations and participation.

Challenges: Many community members abandon construction work for farming during certain seasons and others prefer to go fishing due to daily returns. The late payments from ILO to SMEs, the road contractors, have sometimes led to strikes and worker dissatisfaction, causing delays. Some trainees felt there was a lack of follow-up from ILO after entrepreneurship training. Other challenges include the unavailability of workers for road maintenance in some communities, as well as inadequately trained and experienced personnel in road construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance. There is also a lack of sufficient working capital and road maintenance equipment. Additionally, District Councils (DCs) suffer from inadequate staff, such as engineers and clerks of works/superintendents. Furthermore, heavy rainfall reduces the lifespan of installed and maintained road assets, compounding the issues faced in effective road maintenance. Additionally, two contractors reported challenges with a culvert and a bridge at Kambia village, which could lead to a total cutoff of eight to ten villages during the rainy season if not addressed. These are however not among the structures prioritized and contracted for maintenance under the Opportunity Salone Project (OSP) due to the limited scope of the project. As a result, these areas fall outside the current focus of OSP's maintenance efforts.

Some beneficiaries lack the resources and finances to implement what they learned during training, with some needing machines to do so. They recommended being supplied with seeds since they were still farmers. For entrepreneurs, there is a need for periodic interaction with trainees to ensure proper implementation of the training outcomes as per the funding.

Effectiveness of Management Arrangements

Management and Governance Structure

The management and governance structure of the Opportunity Salone Programme has been successful in achieving project goals through timely decision-making, clear role definitions, and effective coordination of activities and resources except for the finances which were delivered late due to the long process of approvals. The project has a robust governance structure that includes a board comprising key stakeholders from the government, private sector, and donor representatives. This inclusive governance structure has been pivotal in making significant decisions regarding project interventions, which has contributed to the achievement of project goals. Decisions are generally made within the planned timeframe, demonstrating the effectiveness of the management structure in ensuring timely actions and responses. This timeliness has been crucial in maintaining the project's momentum and addressing challenges as they arise. The definition of roles and responsibilities within the management and governance team is clear. Each member understands their specific duties, which facilitates the smooth coordination and execution of project activities. This understanding ensures that everyone is aligned with the project's objectives and contributes effectively to its implementation. The clear delineation of responsibilities and efficient decision-making processes have enabled the project

to stay on track and meet its targets. Interviews with EIIP contractors in Bo highlight that the decision-making processes are clear, and roles are well-defined. However, some logistical challenges, such as delays in resource allocation and coordination issues, were noted as areas needing improvement.

Support Provided by the ILO, Donor, and Tripartite Constituents

The support provided by the ILO, donors, and tripartite constituents has been instrumental in delivering the results of the Opportunity Salone Programme, though there are areas where improvements could enhance effectiveness. The technical assistance provided by the ILO, donors, and tripartite constituents is being utilized well. This support includes capacity building, financial assistance, and strategic guidance, which are critical in implementing various project components. For instance, the ILO provides significant technical input in areas like occupational safety and health (OSH) and market systems development, which greatly benefits the project's performance. This technical assistance contributes substantially to improved project performance and results. The training and capacity-building initiatives lead to enhanced skills and productivity among the beneficiaries. The strategic partnerships with donors and constituents facilitate resource mobilization and implementation of key activities, such as feeder road maintenance and value chain development.

However, there have been challenges, particularly with the backstopping support from ILO's enterprise and EIIP units in Geneva, which occasionally had differing opinions on project approaches, leading to prolonged discussions to reach consensus. Additionally, the processing of paperwork through the Abuja office has sometimes been slow, affecting the timeliness of project activities. To improve effectiveness, streamlining these administrative processes and enhancing coordination between ILO units could mitigate some of these delays.

The Project Partnership Strategy

The project partnership strategy, particularly with the private sector, has been appropriate and effective in contributing to the project outcomes of the Opportunity Salone Programme. The project has formed numerous partnerships, including those with UNDPs, and private sector entities. These partnerships have been pivotal in pooling resources and expertise, thereby enhancing the project's overall impact. For instance, collaborations with UNDP have supported the implementation of various project components, such as capacity building and market access initiatives. The project has successfully leveraged private sector investment to support its activities. Significant financial contributions from private banks have been attracted, which have been used to co-fund project initiatives, such as infrastructure development and value chain enhancements. This influx of private sector funds has not only supplemented donor contributions but has also ensured the sustainability of project outcomes by involving businesses with a vested interest in the local economy. Private sector partnerships have been instrumental in creating and supporting jobs. Through collaborations with businesses and industry associations, the project has facilitated employment opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture and road maintenance. For example, the involvement of SME contractors in feeder road maintenance has directly created jobs for local youths, thereby contributing to the economic empowerment of the communities involved.

The collaboration with local contractors and businesses, as indicated in the FGD with GET Ahead trained SMEs in Bombali, Port Loko, Bo and Kenema, has been particularly successful. These partnerships have enabled the project to extend its reach and impact, creating more job opportunities and enhancing local economic activities. The private sector shows strong potential to continue working with targeted communities and institutions in the selected value chains beyond the project's duration. Several private

sector partners have expressed a willingness to continue collaboration beyond the project duration. The private sector is increasingly embracing inclusivity and social responsibility. Many SMEs involved in the project have adopted inclusive business practices, ensuring that women, youth, and persons with disabilities are actively engaged in value-chain activities. This shift towards social responsibility is evident in their policies and the practical steps taken to support marginalized groups within the communities.

The Project Team's Knowledge of the Principles of the Market System Development Approach

The Opportunity Salone Programme project team is knowledgeable about the principles of the market system development (MSD) approach, and they have made considerable efforts to transfer this knowledge to implementing partners. Key team members, including the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), and M&E officer, were well-versed in MSD principles. The continued investment in developing staff capacity in MSD is paying off. The project team has demonstrated a strong understanding and effective application of MSD principles. Their approach to developing value chains, improving market access, and enhancing entrepreneurial skills among beneficiaries reflects comprehension of MSD concepts. The team has successfully integrated these principles into the project design and implementation strategies. The project team has made significant strides in transferring MSD knowledge to implementing partners. Training sessions and workshops have been conducted to ensure that partners understand and can apply MSD principles in their activities. Interviews with contractors and SMEs revealed that the training programs were well-designed and aligned with market needs, enhancing the participants' business skills and market access. The team's ability to adapt the training content to local contexts and needs has been a significant factor in the project's success. These efforts have helped align the partners' initiatives with the overall project goals, fostering a coherent approach to market development. Implementing partners acknowledge the value of the training and resources provided, noting that these have enhanced their capacity to implement MSD approaches effectively. Partners report increased confidence in applying MSD principles, leading to better project outcomes and sustainability.

The Monitoring and Evaluation System

The M&E system of the Opportunity Salone Programme is robust and results-based, significantly contributing to adaptive management and ensuring accountability. The system effectively integrates gender, youth, disability, and non-discrimination considerations, enhancing the overall quality and inclusivity of the project's interventions. A substantial proportion of project indicators are aligned with the project's objectives and outcomes. This ensures that the M&E system is directly relevant to assessing the project's performance and progress towards its goals. Data is collected for the project indicators as needed to inform performance and decision-making. This enables the project to make informed adjustments and ensures that management has accurate and timely information for decision-making. Management decisions are informed by M&E findings which reflect the critical role that M&E plays in guiding the project's strategic direction and operational adjustments, ensuring that interventions are responsive to real-time data and outcomes. Project adjustments are made based on M&E findings, demonstrating the system's effectiveness in facilitating adaptive management, and allowing the project to continuously refine its approaches based on empirical evidence and emerging insights. Nonetheless, the M&E reports do not sufficiently include disaggregated data, to ensure that the specific needs and impacts of different groups are identified and addressed, to promote inclusivity and non-discrimination. The M&E officer highlighted the systematic approach to data verification and reporting, which ensures accurate and timely information for decision-making. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive view of the project's progress, although

there is room for improvement in integrating more feedback from beneficiaries to further refine the M&E processes and enhance the use of information for learning and improvement of areas such as the long process of finance approvals.

Knowledge-Sharing and Communication Strategy

The project has implemented a robust communication strategy that includes regular updates, success stories, and stakeholder engagement activities. These efforts have significantly raised the project's visibility and awareness among local communities and government institutions. For instance, dissemination of project results has enhanced the recognition and support for the project's initiatives. Among project and ILO partners, the communication strategy has facilitated effective knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Regular reports, workshops, and coordination meetings have ensured that all partners are well-informed about the project's progress and achievements. This transparency and continuous flow of information have strengthened partnerships and aligned efforts towards common goals. The FDGs and KIs indicate that the regular updates, workshops, and reports have enhanced transparency thus fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders. However, there is a need to enhance the use of digital platforms to reach a broader audience and improve real-time communication

4.5 Efficiency

The Opportunity Salone Programme has strategically allocated resources to achieve its outputs, outcomes, and overall objectives, though there are areas for improvement.

Budget Allocation

A substantial portion of the project budget has been allocated to key activities, including training programs, infrastructure development, and market systems interventions. The administrative fee charged by the project is above 10%, which is the standard rate for the ILO as an organization. However, more funds should be allocated to implementation rather than administrative fees. This strategic allocation ensures that the most critical components of the project receive the necessary funding to achieve desired outcomes.

Human Resources

The adequacy of human resources has been a mixed aspect. While the project team consists of highly qualified and capable staff, there have been noted challenges related to the sufficiency of personnel, particularly in administrative and field roles. This has occasionally impacted the efficiency of project implementation, highlighting the need for additional staffing and better logistical support.

The availability and effectiveness of technical support have been strong. The ILO and other partners have provided substantial technical assistance, which has been crucial in areas like occupational safety, market systems development, and financial literacy training. This support has significantly contributed to the project's success by enhancing the capabilities of the project team and implementing partners.

Resource Expenditure

Financial resources, in particular, have been well-managed, with most funds being allocated as planned. The level of budget utilization at this stage of the implementation stands at 70%. This indicates that only 30% of the allocated budget has not been spent so far, reflecting the current financial progress of the project in relation to its total planned expenditures. Resource expenditure has generally aligned with planned allocations, though there have been instances of over- or under-utilization in certain areas. For example, higher-than-expected costs in logistics and travel due to the rural locations of

project activities have led to over-expenditure in these areas, while some training programs have been under-utilized due to scheduling and coordination challenges.

A significant portion of the project budget, approximately 15%, has been specifically allocated to activities targeting gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth empowerment. This allocation underscores the project's commitment to addressing these critical areas through tailored interventions and support.

Timely Completion of Activities

Several factors contributed to delays in the project's implementation. Seasonal work preferences led community members to abandon feeder road maintenance for farming or fishing, while late payments from the ILO to SMEs and road contractors caused strikes and dissatisfaction. However, it should be noted that payment is based on the certified work completed. Logistical challenges and economic instability further compounded these issues, leading to higher costs and over-expenditure. Despite these challenges, approximately 80% of project activities were completed on schedule, with the remaining 20% experiencing delays.

This indicates a high level of adherence to the planned schedule, although some activities experienced delays due to unforeseen circumstances such as logistical challenges and economic instability. While most project activities are completed as scheduled, some experience delays. Key factors causing these delays include financial instability, which affects the cost and availability of resources, and logistical challenges related to the remote locations of project sites. To mitigate these issues, the project team implemented several countermeasures, such as adjusting timelines, reallocating resources, and increasing coordination with local partners to expedite activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

Approximately 7% of the project budget has been allocated to M&E activities, which is above the 5% recommended by the ILO-Evaluation Guidelines. This allocation ensures that the project's M&E system is adequately funded to perform its essential functions.

Despite the sufficient budget allocation, there have been some M&E activities that have not been conducted due to logistical constraints rather than budgetary issues. The M&E officer expressed concerns about being overwhelmed with work and requested additional support. This suggests a need for better integration of M&E within the team structure, as it already exceeds the 5% ILO recommendation. While these instances are minimal, and the majority of planned M&E activities have been successfully implemented, it is evident that the M&E function is currently struggling.

The M&E system has thus been effective in capturing gender, disability, and youth-related indicators. This effectiveness is demonstrated by the regular collection and analysis of disaggregated data, which informs project adjustments and ensures that the specific needs of these groups are addressed throughout the project lifecycle.

Leveraged Resources

The Opportunity Salone Programme has effectively leveraged resources with other projects and organizations, including private companies, to enhance its impact and efficiency. This external funding has been crucial in supplementing the project's budget and enhancing its scope and impact. Formal agreements and partnerships have been established with other projects, organizations, and private

companies to leverage resources. These partnerships have facilitated resource sharing, joint initiatives, and mutual support, thereby strengthening the overall project outcomes.

The value of in-kind contributions received from other projects, organizations, and private companies has been substantial. These contributions include equipment, expertise, and services that have significantly enhanced the project's capacity to achieve its objectives without incurring additional costs.

A significant percentage of project activities have been cost-shared with other entities, including in-kind contributions. The cost paid by others underscores the collaborative approach taken by the project, maximizing resource utilization and ensuring cost efficiency.

Administrative, Technical, and Policy Support from the ILO Office and Specialists in the Regional Office

The Opportunity Salone Programme has benefited significantly from the administrative, technical, and policy support provided by the ILO and its specialists, effectively utilizing these resources to achieve its goals and objectives. The administrative, technical, and policy support provided by the ILO Office and specialists has been perceived as adequate and effective. This support includes regular consultations, provision of technical expertise, and guidance on policy alignment. The assistance has been crucial in navigating complex project requirements and ensuring adherence to international standards.

The project has effectively taken advantage of the available support resources. Regular interactions with the ILO Office and Regional Office specialists have been leveraged to enhance project planning, implementation, and monitoring. The expertise provided by these entities has been instrumental in addressing challenges and optimizing project outcomes.

4.6 Sustainability and Impact Orientation

The Opportunity Salone Programme has strategically focused on sustainability, with a meaningful exit strategy in place to ensure the continuation of project benefits and activities.

Capacity Building for District Councils

The project has built the capacity of district councils in sustainable feeder road maintenance, planning, supervision, and management. This capacity building has equipped local authorities with the skills and knowledge needed to maintain infrastructure independently, ensuring long-term sustainability. However, the local authority has not developed actionable plans to sustain feeder road maintenance, including the allocation of budget, time, and resources for ongoing maintenance.

Sustainability Plan

There is clear evidence of a comprehensive sustainability plan outlining strategies and mechanisms to ensure the continuation of project benefits. This plan includes detailed actions for capacity building, institutional strengthening, and local ownership, which are critical for sustaining project outcomes. Sustainability considerations, such as capacity building, institutional strengthening, and local ownership, have been thoroughly integrated into project activities and implementation processes. These efforts ensure that the benefits of the project are maintained and that local stakeholders have the capability to continue and expand upon the project's achievements.

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of sustainability plans has been significant. Key actors, including local government, community organizations, and private sector partners, have been actively engaged in planning and decision-making processes, demonstrating strong commitment to sustaining project outcomes. Key actors have shown a high level of commitment to

sustaining project outcomes. This commitment is evidenced by formal agreements and partnerships that include provisions for ongoing support and resource allocation beyond the project's duration.

The formation of Public-Private Community Partnership (PPCP) stakeholder platforms and committees for sustainable road maintenance is a clear indicator of the project's success in fostering collaborative efforts. These platforms ensure that all stakeholders, including private companies and local communities, are engaged in maintaining and scaling the project's outcomes.

The Opportunity Salone Programme has effectively encouraged targeted private sector companies, Business Development Service (BDS) providers, SMEs, cooperatives, and other relevant institutions to adopt practices that make a lasting positive impact on women, disabled persons, and youth.

A significant proportion of the targeted entities have adopted inclusive practices. These include hiring more women, persons with disabilities, and youth, as well as implementing policies that promote diversity and inclusion within their operations. For instance, several SMEs and cooperatives have revised their recruitment policies to ensure a higher representation of these groups.

The partnerships between the project and targeted institutions have so far been both long-standing and robust. These collaborations have typically spanned several months, providing ample time for the integration of inclusive practices and ensuring that the changes are sustainable. The strength of these partnerships is evidenced by formal agreements and continuous joint activities aimed at promoting inclusive growth.

Integration into Government Policies

The project's sustainability and long-term impact are evident from their integration into government policies, programmes, and strategies. The Government of Sierra Leone has incorporated elements of the project's approaches into its national development plans, particularly in infrastructure development and market access for agricultural products.

Both the Government and local communities have shown a high level of willingness to continue supporting these interventions. This commitment is reflected in formal agreements, such as Memoranda of Agreement and Letters of Cooperation, which outline ongoing roles and responsibilities for maintaining and expanding the project's achievements.

Difference Made to Specific Higher Goals (SDGs, DWCP, National Strategies and Frameworks)

The initiatives of the Opportunity Salone Programme are likely to make a significant difference in achieving specific higher goals, such as the SDGs, the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), and national strategies.

Contribution to SDGs: The project initiatives directly contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). Through capacity-building, market access improvements, and inclusive hiring practices, the project has helped reduce poverty, promote gender equality, and create decent work opportunities.

Alignment with National Strategies: The project is well-aligned with national development strategies and frameworks, including the objectives outlined in the DWCP and national poverty reduction strategies. This alignment ensures that the project's goals are coherent with the broader development goals of Sierra Leone, further enhancing its potential for long-term impact.

Direct Contribution to National Priorities: Several project activities directly contribute to specific national development priorities. For example, the project's focus on feeder road maintenance supports infrastructure development, while its value chain interventions promote agricultural productivity and market access, aligning with national economic development plans.

Contribution to Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

The Opportunity Salone Programme has made significant contributions to building peace and social cohesion, reducing poverty, and enhancing local economic growth in the targeted districts. Initiatives such as community engagement meetings, collaborative projects, and inclusive training sessions have fostered a sense of unity and cooperation among diverse groups. This approach has helped to address underlying tensions and promote a peaceful environment. Target groups have reported a perceived improvement in social cohesion since the project's implementation. Community members have noted increased collaboration and mutual support, which has strengthened social ties and reduced instances of conflict. This positive feedback underscores the project's impact on enhancing social harmony. There has been a noticeable decrease in registered conflict situations compared to before the project. The proactive measures taken by the project to address potential sources of conflict and promote dialogue have been effective in mitigating disputes and fostering a more peaceful community environment.

4.7 Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination

Gender Equality and Empowering Women and PwDs

The Opportunity Salone Programme has achieved notable success in promoting gender equality and empowering women and persons with disabilities (PwDs).

Women and PwDs have been actively represented and participated in project activities, decision-making processes, and leadership roles. The project ensures that these groups are integral to the planning and execution of various initiatives, thereby fostering inclusivity and empowerment.

There have been positive changes in performance indicators related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and PwDs. Employment rates among these groups have increased, as well as their income levels and access to finance and essential services. This demonstrates the project's effectiveness in enhancing the socio-economic status of women and PwDs.

A substantial portion of the project budget has been specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming, the empowerment of women, and the inclusion of PwDs. This dedicated funding has supported various initiatives aimed at reducing gender disparities and providing targeted support to PwDs, ensuring that sufficient resources are available to achieve these objectives.

Involvement and Engagement of Tripartite Constituents

The Opportunity Salone Programme has meaningfully engaged ILO tripartite constituents since the project's design phase through its implementation, ensuring their involvement and enhancing ownership.

The level of involvement and engagement of ILO tripartite constituents, including government, employers, and workers' representatives, has been substantial throughout the project lifecycle. These stakeholders have been actively involved in the planning, decision-making, and implementation processes, contributing their expertise and ensuring that the project aligns with national and sectoral priorities. This active participation has fostered a sense of responsibility and commitment among stakeholders, enhancing the project's sustainability and impact.

A significant number of SME contractors have for instance bid for the feeder road maintenance contracts, with several of these SMEs having links to ILO social partners. These contractors include members of employers' organizations or entities where workers are affiliated with workers' organizations. This linkage ensures that the project supports decent work principles and strengthens ties with established labour organizations.

Incorporation of ILO Principles, Guidelines, Social Dialogue and Tripartite Collaboration

The Opportunity Salone Programme has effectively utilized its comparative advantages, including adherence to International Labour Standards, promoting social dialogue, and leveraging tripartism.

The project has thoroughly incorporated principles and guidelines from relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and recommendations into its activities and policies. This alignment with ILO standards has ensured that the project promotes decent work conditions, fair labour practices, and inclusivity, particularly in the areas of gender equality, youth empowerment, and disability inclusion .

To facilitate social dialogue and tripartite collaboration, the project has held numerous formal meetings, reached significant agreements, and undertaken joint initiatives involving government representatives, employers, and workers' organizations. These efforts have strengthened the framework for collective decision-making and enhanced the participation of all stakeholders in the project's implementation.

Environmental Consciousness

The Opportunity Salone project incorporated environmental issues as a cross-cutting theme by emphasising sustainability and resilience in its interventions. Recognising climate change as a critical risk, the project integrated environmental considerations into its value chain development and road maintenance components. It encouraged the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices, diversification of income sources, and the use of risk mitigation measures such as agricultural insurance. Road maintenance activities were strategically planned for the dry season to reduce vulnerability to adverse weather conditions. These measures aimed to support sustainable livelihoods while addressing environmental challenges, aligning with the ILO's broader principles of fostering fair transitions to greener economies.

5.0 Conclusions

Relevance

The Opportunity Salone project is highly relevant, effectively addressing the needs of tripartite constituents, targeted communities, and institutions in Sierra Leone. It aligns well with national development frameworks and international goals, contributing to economic diversification, growth, and empowerment. However, there is a need for continuous adaptation to evolving national and international frameworks to ensure ongoing relevance.

Validity of Intervention Logic

The project's intervention logic is valid, with realistic expected outputs and outcomes that align well with the overall objectives. While there is room for improvement in the incorporation of comprehensive risk mitigation strategies to address unforeseen challenges more effectively, the comprehensive approach, involving the facilitation of job creation through capacity building and market linkages, supports the sustainability of value chains and their long-term impact.

Coherence

The project demonstrates strong coherence through robust partnerships and synergies with stakeholders, aligning with national policies and strategies. The Opportunity Salone continues to be relevant to the new Medium Term National Development Plan (2024-2030), the Sierra Leone Decent Country Work Programme Phase II (2023-2027) and the current United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2025-2030).

The integration of international standards and complementary programmes enhances its effectiveness and sustainability. Nonetheless, some partnerships could be deepened, and there is a need for more regular evaluations to ensure these collaborations continue to be effective.

Effectiveness

The project has made commendable progress towards its objectives, particularly in developing value chains, enhancing business skills, and improving market access. Financial education and strategic partnerships have significantly increased access to finance for targeted groups. However, the project should expand its training programs and provide more ongoing support to ensure the practical application of the skills learned.

The GET Ahead training for SMEs and the reskilling initiatives have for instance demonstrated significant improvements in business skills and economic empowerment. The feeder road maintenance projects have shown potential for job creation and infrastructure improvement. These successes indicate the effectiveness of targeted training programs and infrastructure projects in fostering economic growth and empowerment.

Nonetheless, many beneficiaries still expect grants and handouts rather than engaging in financially sustainable practices. Even so, several participants expressed a willingness to engage in micro-loan programs if they were well-structured and accompanied by financial literacy training. This finding underscores the importance of shifting the mindset towards financial responsibility and the need for robust repayment and monitoring systems. Flexible loan products for small businesses and cooperatives can encourage responsible financial behaviour. The successful integration of local resources and skills in the agricultural value chain projects shows the potential for market system approaches to support sustainable development.

Efficiency

Resource allocation has been strategic, though challenges remain in human resources and logistics. Even though the project effectively leveraged external funding and in-kind contributions, enhancing its scope and impact, further improvements are needed to address human resource shortages and optimize logistical planning. The M&E system is robust, contributing to adaptive management and accountability.

Sustainability and Impact Orientation

The project has a strong focus on sustainability, with comprehensive plans and stakeholder involvement ensuring the continuation of benefits. The formation of Public-Private Community Partnership platforms is a key indicator of its success in fostering collaborative efforts and sustaining outcomes. Ongoing capacity-building efforts and greater local ownership will nonetheless ensure long-term sustainability.

Tripartism, Social Dialogue, Gender Equality, and Non-Discrimination

The project has effectively utilized its comparative advantages, incorporating ILO standards, promoting social dialogue, and leveraging tripartism. Significant progress has been made in promoting gender equality and empowering women and PwDs, with substantial budget allocation and active participation of these groups in project activities. There however remains need for efforts to ensure these groups maintain leadership roles and that inclusive practices are deeply ingrained in all project activities.

6.0 Lessons Learnt

1. Continuous alignment with evolving national and international frameworks is crucial. Remaining adaptable and responsive to changing priorities helps maintain relevance and effectiveness. Regular stakeholder feedback is essential to ensure ongoing alignment with emerging needs and priorities.
2. Comprehensive risk mitigation strategies are vital for project success. While the intervention logic may be sound, unforeseen challenges can arise. Developing robust risk management plans and regularly updating them can help projects remain resilient and adaptable.
3. Strong partnerships enhance project coherence and impact. Collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government bodies and private sector actors, ensures alignment with broader development goals.
4. Efficient resource allocation and management are fundamental for project success. Human resource shortages and poor logistical planning can significantly derail project implementation.
5. Continuous promotion of inclusive practices and active participation of marginalized groups is essential for project success. Projects that ensure that women, PwDs, and youth remain central to decision-making and leadership roles are more efficacious. Regular assessments and adjustments maintain and deepen these inclusive practices.

7.0 Good Practice

1. **Market Systems Development Approach:** The project's focus on market systems development has created opportunities for systemic change, benefiting a broader range of market actors and ensuring long-term impact. This approach includes facilitating pilot interventions with value chain actors to improve access to quality inputs and markets for products. There is positive movement in processing of cassava into various products like high value cassava flour, gari, bakery products which utilize cassava flour. More than 300 farmers are now linked to processors and products have been successfully tested and accepted by consumers. The same has happened in the palm oil value chain whereby appropriate technology is being utilized to increase productivity, circularity is being applied to crack palm kernels and produce even more oil
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The project effectively engages multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations. This collaborative approach fosters a supportive environment for project implementation and sustainability. For instance, partnerships with entities like the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and private sector actors such as the Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development, SMEDA, Local Content Agency, SLRA, District Councils, Registrar of Cooperatives, PPP Unit, RMFA ensured alignment with national development goals and enhanced the programme's effectiveness.
3. **Training and Capacity Building:** Extensive training programs conducted enhances the business and financial skills of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwD). This has led to better management practices and increased entrepreneurial activities. Notable examples include the training of SME contractors and youth and women in feeder road maintenance, as well as occupational safety and health (OSH) practices. The major cases in point include the training of trainers in SIYB, Get Ahead, Business Coaching, and Cooperatives whereby trainers have trained more enterprises, and those enterprises have built their supply chains. Some BDS companies like Raphael and Associates have gone on to offer services to GIZ skills programme, BBC Media and trained close to 1000 enterprises to set up and strengthen their businesses.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development:** The project has successfully leveraged public-private partnerships (PPPs) to enhance feeder road maintenance and business development services. These partnerships created a sustainable model for continued support and resource mobilization, exemplified by the formation of Public Private Community Partnership stakeholder platforms for sustainable road maintenance.
5. **Financial Inclusion and Support:** The project has linked entrepreneurs to financial service providers and organized business plan competitions, which enhance their financial management skills and business growth potential. For example, the training of entrepreneurs and the facilitation of business plan competitions are key achievements in this area.

8.0 Recommendations

Relevance

1. The project should **continue to adhere to a market system development approach**, ensuring that interventions do not distort the market. Documenting the impacts of pilot projects is crucial for understanding what works and what needs improvement. The successful integration of local resources and skills, as seen in the agricultural value chain projects, provides a blueprint for future initiatives. Detailed impact assessments and stakeholder feedback mechanisms should be established to monitor and evaluate these pilots, guiding adjustments and scaling decisions.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	Medium	Immediate	Low

Effectiveness

2. **Allocate additional resources to support SMEs:** The project should allocate additional resources to support SMEs that have received training, particularly in accessing finance and markets. Given the recurring concern about finance among SMEs, the ILO should consider scaling-up existing value-chain financing pilots with SMEDA, APEX Bank and invest in strengthening VSLAs as recommended by the Financial Services mapping. This would address the gap and provide immediate benefits to the SMEs.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	High	The next 6 months of implementation	Medium-High

3. **Facilitate innovation in financial products through collaborations with market players:** To ensure the sustainability of access to finance outside of the project's resources, the SMEs should be aware of the limited funding through project facilitation and should also be linked to the innovative financial products. Introducing more innovative A2F solutions is essential to provide tailored financial products that meet the specific needs of various beneficiary groups. For instance, developing flexible loan products for small businesses and cooperatives, such as those used by the women entrepreneurs in Kenema, can encourage a more responsible approach to finance. Partnering with financial technology companies to introduce mobile banking solutions and digital financial services can also broaden access and reduce the reliance on handouts. These innovations should be documented meticulously to evaluate their impact and scalability.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO, Financial service providers, MoF, SMEDA	Medium-High	The next 6 months of implementation	Medium-High

Efficiency

4. **Enhance Resource Allocation and Management:** Address the challenges related to human resources and logistical support by recruiting additional staff, particularly administrative and field roles. This should include at least 2 more M&E Assistants staff and 2 Assistant Project Officers.

Improve logistical planning to ensure efficient resource utilization and minimize delays in project activities.

The project should streamline payments from the first few years to reduce delays in releasing funds to implementing partners and when processing contractor payments. Develop a monitoring plan to address payment delays, with actions, timelines, and tracking. Discuss it with the stakeholders to align expectations, ensure accountability, and maintain timely disbursements and smooth collaboration.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	High	The next 3 months of implementation	Medium

5. **Improve Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Process:** Enhance the M&E system by ensuring that (in addition to the monitoring by T-PAC), the M&E activities are conducted on a monthly basis through the services of third-party (independent) Monitoring companies and that findings are used to inform project adjustments and improvements. To enhance project monitoring and evaluations, prioritize the inclusion of local evaluators with deep contextual knowledge and invest in their training, particularly in gender and disability assessments, value chain analysis, and labour-based construction methods. Involve local stakeholders throughout the M&E process to enhance ownership and ensure reports reflect local perspectives.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	High	Immediate	Medium

6. **Foster Stronger Partnerships and Collaboration:** Deepen partnerships with additional stakeholders, including other donor-assisted programmes and government initiatives, to maximize resource synergy and impact. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these partnerships and make necessary adjustments to maintain and enhance their effectiveness. **A streamlined partnership approach with local NGOs and community-based organizations could be implemented**, reducing the administrative burden associated with UN protocols.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO, NGO partners	High	Immediately	Low-Medium

7. **Scale-up Business Development Services with additional funding:** Notable examples include the positive impact of the **GET Ahead, SIYB, Cooperatives (Coops), and coaching training for SMEs across the Project implementation districts**. The **reskilling initiatives for women, youth and persons with disabilities should be supported to transition into cooperatives**. These programs have demonstrated significant improvements in business skills and economic empowerment, which can be further expanded in a 12-month extension.

The project should scale up successful business models that have been piloted by the *Opportunity Salone* Project

Additionally, the **feeder road maintenance projects in Bo, Port Loko, Bombali and Kenema** districts have shown potential for job creation and infrastructure improvement, making them prime candidates for scaling.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO, SMEDA	High	The next 12 months of implementation	Medium

Sustainability

- To ensure sustainability, it is recommended to **support district councils in integrating the continuity of project achievements into their local plans and budgets**, providing clear strategies and resources for advancing these achievements beyond the programme's end.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO, Ministry of Works and Public Assets and Commission for Public Assets, Road Management Fund Administration	High	The next 6 months of implementation	Low-Medium

- Changing Attitudes Towards Grant Money:** It is crucial to shift the mindset of beneficiaries from expecting grants to understanding the importance of financial responsibility and repayment. During the focus groups, several participants expressed a willingness to engage in micro-loan programs if they were well-structured and accompanied by financial literacy training. Implementing a robust repayment and monitoring system, coupled with continuous education on the importance of contributing to one's development, can foster this attitude change. Pilot programs that integrate these elements, such as the successful micro-financing models observed in previous pilot interventions should be expanded and refined. successful businesses models that have been piloted should be financed using matching grants.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	Medium	Immediate	Low

- Continued collaboration on Policy and Regulatory reforms:** Engage stakeholders in reviewing the Cooperative Act, SMEDA Strategic Plan, NIB's Investment Policy and related actions to support improvements in the business-enabling environment. This will boost support for policy reform interventions. By incorporating stakeholders' perspectives, knowledge, and support, the policies can be more relevant, widely accepted, and effectively implemented, ultimately leading to an improved business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance.

Responsible	Priority	Time Implication	Resource implication
ILO	Medium	Immediate	Low

9.0 Annexes

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Independent Mid-Term Evaluation Opportunity Salone Programme (EU “jobs and Growth” Programme) in Sierra Leone

Project title	EU “Jobs and Growth” Programme (Opportunity Salone Programme) in Sierra Leone
TC project code	SLE107
Donor	European Union (EU)
Total Approved Budget	8 million Euros
ILO Administrative Unit	ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone
ILO technical Units	Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SME)/ Social Finance/cooperatives/Employment Intensive Investment Programmes (EIIP)
Type and scope of Evaluation	Independent Mid Term Evaluation (MTE)
Evaluation dates and fieldwork dates	September – November 2023
Project Duration	48 months (1 October 2021 – 30 September 2025)
Evaluation Manager (EM)	Dilki Palliyeguruge, M&E Officer, Sri Lanka country office, ILO
Evaluation period	End October 2023 to mid-January 2024

Project background

The Opportunity Salone programme is a part of the larger EU funded jobs and growth programme implemented by number of partners that aims to stimulate job creation in Sierra Leone. The ILO focuses its intervention in four districts (Bo, Bombali, Kenema and Port Loko) with the closer collaboration of stakeholders using value chain and **market system development approach** centred on SMEs centered on SMEs underpinned by feeder roads in selected districts to contribute to improved linkages between market actors. The programme will involve technical skills transfer in feeder road maintenance, value chain development, and entrepreneurial training, including access to finance and SME management.

Results chain of the Project

Goal : To contribute to poverty reduction through the creation of decent jobs for youth, women and persons with disabilities through value chain development and employment intensive infrastructure investments by 2024

Overall objective : The development objective of the programme is to contribute to large scale job creation and job quality improvement in sustainable enterprises for unskilled or semi - skilled youth, women and persons with disabilities in Bo, Bombali, Kenema and Port Loko districts.

Outcome 1 : Enhanced, conflict-sensitive, agricultural value chain and entrepreneurship development for SMEs, youth, women and persons with disabilities	Output 1.1 A total of 4 value chains developed through conflict-sensitive approaches to create decent jobs and promote local economic development Output 1.2 Increased business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth Output 1.3 Increased market access and value addition opportunities for youth and women through cooperatives
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	Output 1.4 Enhanced knowledge in financial education for 1,000 youth, women and persons with disabilities and increased access to finance
Outcome 2 : Improved feeder road maintenance continuing to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks to immediate job creation	Output 2.1 Installed and operationalized digitalized database for roads Output 2.2 Total of 200km of rural feeder roads identified, prioritised and maintained in 4 districts to support value chains Output 2.3 Technical and managerial capacity in feeder road maintenance strengthened for 4 District Councils Output 2.4 Enhanced knowledge and skills of 24 SME contractors, and between 2,000 and 4,000 youth and women in feeder road maintenance including decent work and OSH practices Output 2.5 Sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanisms established involving the PPPs and communities Output 2.6 Road maintenance equipment revolving facility set up and operationalized
Outcome 3. Improved business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance	Output 3.1 SME and cooperative policies are revised and business formalization for SMEs supported Output 3.2 Feeder Road maintenance policy revised

Theory of change (ToC) of the project: IF young women and men, adult women, and persons with disabilities are included in competitive agricultural value chains and have access to needed financial and non-financial services and markets, and

IF the business environment in Sierra Leone is enhanced to better support enterprise development and feeder road maintenance

IF the feeder road networks in competitive value chains are enhanced continuously,

THEN businesses and entrepreneurs will grow in competitive value chains and young women, men and persons with disabilities will be able to access and create more decent jobs and promote local economic development.

Strategic fit

The project is aligning with different national policies such as cluster 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the National Development Plan 2019-2023 (NDP) of Sierra Leone, the National Agriculture Transition Program (NATP 2023) – the current government policy on agriculture, the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020, A Blue Print for Youth Development: Sierra Leone’s National Youth Programme 2014 – 2018, the Sierra Leone National Employment Policy and The National Gender Strategic Plan 2010- 2013. This project will promote peace and social cohesion through an inclusive and conflict-sensitive approach to employment creation which is in line with Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace (<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/r205/lang--en/index.htm>). The project is contributing to outcome 1.1 & 1.2 of Decent Work Country Programme of Sierra Leone (2023-2027), Outcomes 3 & 4 of ILO programme and Budget and outcomes 1 & 4 of the UNSDCF- United Nations Sustainable Development cooperation Framework 2020-2023. It aligning to SDGs 1, 2, 4, 8 (8.2, 8.3, 8.5), 9 (9.1, 9.3) and 10 (10.1, 10.2)

Management arrangement of the project

The project is managed from Freetown by a team of ILO staff who will include Programme Manager Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), Feeder Roads Engineer, Enterprise Development Officer, Feeder Roads Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Finance and Administration Assistant and two Drivers. Based on need, this initial team composition has been slightly modified to include a Communication and Information Management Assistant. The programme Manager CTA is responsible for overall planning, coordination, managing budget and team. The ILO staff in Sierra Leone will be supported both technically and administratively by staff from the ILO Abuja Country Office, teams of specialists from ILO's Decent Work Team in Dakar, Senegal, as well as the ILO Regional Office for Africa based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The International Training Centre in Turin, Italy and the SME, Social Finance, Cooperatives and EIP units at ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland will also provide technical backstopping support.

In addition, the Advisory Committee constituted of the Ministers or representatives of the four line ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Ministry of Works and Public Assets, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Trade and Industry identified in section), the European Union and the ILO staff at local and international office will provide guidance and advice on the overall strategic direction to the project based on project reports received from the Programme Implementation Committee and Advisory Committee meetings.

Stakeholders and target group

The project targeted groups are small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives in the selected agricultural value chains and SME contractors engaged in infrastructure development, workers and their families, including young women and men between the ages 18 and 35, and persons with disabilities in targeted districts, value chains and road construction sector. At the time of designing, the project has identified implementing organizations such as Sierra Leone Chamber of Agribusiness Development (SleCAD), Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDA) and National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) for developing their capacities as well as implementation.

The project stakeholders are comprised of relevant government ministries, employers and workers organizations. Further the project will work closely with financial and business development service providers, business associations, sectoral associations, women's associations, actors in target value chains.

Key results achieved by the project by September 2023 (To be included once receive the information from project)

Market system Development: Completed Market System Analysis (MSA) Study with the validation of findings and identified 4 value chains which have high-potential markets (Cassava, Oil palm, Vegetable Cocoa) for the targeted locations.

In-depth Market Systems Analysis (MSA) for the 4 selected value chains which uncovered the root causes of underperformance of the markets and came up with Interventions to address those in order to create decent jobs for women, youth and those with disabilities is completed and published in 2022. Further the project completed detailed planning of interventions and activities to respond to underlying constraints identified in MSA

A roundtable was convened with the private sector to invite decent job innovations for partnership in all four districts to explain private sector players to engage within the value chains the co investment opportunities presented by the Project. Around 260 businesses engaged in agricultural value chains were participated in this meeting. Eight companies are in the negotiation process for partnership to engage in value chains.

Seven intervention models to create decent jobs were developed and pilot is being done with the engagement of around 1200 value chain actors.

20 technical staff from partner organizations trained on MSD and how to undertake MSA. These trained staff were involved in MSA assessment.

Entrepreneurship and enterprises: Seventeen young persons were trained as trainers (ToT) on SIYB56 persons were trained as trainers (ToT) on GET Ahead

1080 youth were trained on GET Ahead by the trainers trained by the project. 100 youth were trained on SIYB by the trainers trained by the project.

about 27 cooperative officers trained as trainers on cooperative as ToT. This training was full fledged training conducted by Turin ILO. Trainers will be instrumental in training cooperatives at large under the project.

Partnership agreements signed with Apex Bank and Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency with a view of organizing business competition for SMEs and increase their access to finance.

Feeder road: One hundred and twenty-five (125) Km feeder roads was identified and prioritized according to socio economic criteria for maintenance in areas close to the selected value chains to facilitate market access.

Of it, 33.05 Km lng feeder road has been maintained using labour-based technology (mainly unskilled and semi-skilled community labour) by the selected 7 SMEs through competitive process in 2022.

Another 21 SME contractors were trained on labour- used technology. The project is planning to be given "Trial Contracts" for feeder road maintenance.

Capacity development trainings on sustainable feeder road maintenance planning, supervision and management have been conducted for 16 staff including both district council and SLRA.

28 SME contractors trained in feeder road maintenance & OSH

about 720 youth, women, men and PWDs trained in feeder road maintenance

16 Community-based Monitoring and Grievance Redress Groups trained and established for feeder road maintenance.

Feeder road maintenance policy is being revised

Consultative meetings held with the cooperative department of Ministry of Trade and Industry on the cooperative policy review.

Evaluation background

ILO considers project evaluations as an integral part of the implementation of development cooperation activities. The evaluations are developed for project accountability, management, learning and to support the knowledge base. The midterm independent evaluation is managed by an ILO certified evaluation manager not linked with the projects and implemented by independent evaluators.

As per ILO policy governing technical cooperation projects, both midterm and final Evaluation of the projects with the budget size of 5 million USD and above which has the life span of more than 30 months must be carried out independent evaluations both at mid and end points of the project. In addition, Evaluability Assessment (EA) or assessing M&E framework by the EVAL of ILO during the designing phase is a pre-requisite for the MTE. This is to ensure the accountability, learning, and improvements of the efforts and achievements to the project stakeholders

It should be conducted in the context of criteria and approaches for international development assistance as established by the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standard; and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.

This evaluation will follow the [ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluations Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations](#) 4th ed; and the ILO EVAL Policy Guidelines Checklist "Preparing the inception report"; Checklist 4.8 "Validating methodologies"; and Checklist 4.2 "Preparing the evaluation report". The evaluation will also follow the OECD-DAC framework and principles for evaluation. For all practical purposes, this ToR and ILO Evaluation policies and guidelines define the overall scope of this evaluation. Recommendations should be strongly linked to the findings of the evaluation and should provide clear guidance to stakeholders on how they can address them.

Purpose, scope, Client of the evaluation

Purpose: The primary purpose of the project MTE is ensuring accountability to stakeholders in managing for results and uses of learning and recommendations to support the project with adjustments and course corrections for its approaches validate the design and assess its progress made.

Overall Objective: To assess the Opportunity Salone programme progress towards the achievement of the project objectives/outcomes as specified in the project document and assess early signs of successor failure with a view of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on -track to achieve its intended results using OEDC/DAC criteria coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the interventions, strategies, and approaches of the Salone Programme of Sierra Leone.

Specific Objectives:

Assess the relevance and coherence of the project design to the needs of the country, targeted institutions, policy frame works and targeted communities.

Identify the contributions of the Opportunity Salone Programme to, the SDGs, the relevant national policies, strategies, the donor strategies, the Sierra Leone DWCP, UNCDF, ILO's CPOs and its synergy with other projects and programs in the country.

Assess the extent of the COVID-19 that may have adverse impact on the project design, planned achievements and strategy etc. and the extent to which the project adapted to respond to the unexpected consequences of the pandemic.

Analyze the application of the market systems approach in project effectiveness toward achieving the project outcomes and impacts; including unexpected results and identify major factors that facilitates and or hinders the progress in achieving outcomes using this approach.

Assess the institutional set-up, capacity for project implementation, coordination mechanisms and the use and usefulness of management tools including the project monitoring tools and workplans.

Assess the extent of mainstreaming gender, disability, Fundamental Principle and Rights at Work, and environmental consciousness into the project results, approaches, work plan, and to the M&E

Identify lessons learnt, good practices recommendations and related innovative approaches in relation to the social dialogue, tripartism, management and implementation of activities and achieving results in Market System Development approach, EIPP, labour market improvement and so on.

Assess efficiencies in both programmatic and resource utilization of the project and how far the project made synergies within ILO and was able to leverage resources from outside stakeholders, project and programmes

Assess and identify strategies for outcomes' sustainability and orientation to impact including contribution of the Salone Opportunity to build the peace and social cohesion in the target areas.

Scope:

The MTE will focus all interventions carried out by the project together with all the outputs and outcomes for the period of October 2021 through end of September 2023.

The evaluation expects focus specifically on interventions under outcome 1 and 2 to improve local economic development in the four districts (Bo, Bombali, Kenema and Port Loko) in Sierra Leone. Similarly, the evaluation will evaluate interventions under outcome 3 of P&B at national level to understand how the project intervened or plans to intervene in regulatory and policy changes in order to enable achieving the project goal and outcomes.

The evaluation will identify how market system development approach is addressing the identified root causes during market systems analysis and private and public sector resources leveraged to carry out actions.

Synergies between the project and other contributing projects/programme within ILO and outside the ILO also will be looked at.

The evaluation will examine the extent of promotion of peace and social cohesion in the targeted districts.

Assessing the extent of mainstreaming gender equality, disability, social dialogue, and decent working conditions as cross cutting issues is required in methodology, data collection analysis and the report. Gender equality should address with EVAL guidance note no 4 and Guidance note no 7 to ensure stakeholder participation (refer to annexures). It is essential to collect and disaggregated data on gender and disability.

Users of the evaluation:

Primary	Secondary
Government of Sierra Leone specifically including above mentioned key stakeholders in the road construction, SMEs, cooperatives, BDS providers etc.;	ILO HQ, DEVINVEST, COOP and SME Units
Workers organization	
Employers' organization	
The project team Implementing partners of the project	
Donor - EU	
Countries office of ILO (Dakar and Abuja)	

4. Evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions

The evaluation should address OECD/DAC and ILO evaluation criteria and concerns i.e. relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact (impact orientation is focused at this stage) as defined in the ILO policy guidelines for evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 4th edition in 2020 (http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/--eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf) In addition, cross cutting issues are also taken into consideration in the evaluation.

The evaluation should address the questions below but not limit to. The evaluator can revise questions based on the given purpose and in consultation with the evaluation manager. Any fundamental changes to the evaluation criteria and questions should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator and reflected in the inception report.

1. Relevance *(The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, country, and partners/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change)*

The extent to which the project has responded to the need to the tripartite constituents, targeted communities and institutions and has contributed to relevant Sierra Leone National Development Frameworks? Does it align with the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Programme & Budget, Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), UNSDCF and EU Jobs and Growth programme?

To what extent is the market system development approach pertinent to targeted individuals such as marginalized men, women, youth and people with disability and mandate of institutions such as SMEs, coops, BDS providers and other relevant stakeholders?

How far the project adapted to its interventions to the changing context specifically under the COVID - 19 situation addressed priority needs of the above-mentioned groups and frame works?

2a. Validity of intervention logic: *(The extent to which the design is logical and coherent)*

Assess the validity of selected value chains for project and its sustainability beyond project support period,

To what extent is the project realistic (in terms of expected outputs, outcome and impact) given the proposed intervention logic, time and resources available and the social, economic and political environment?

To what extent has the project integrated ILO cross cutting themes (such as tripartism, and gender and non-discrimination) into the design?

Does the Theory of change exist? Is it comprehensive, integrate external factors and based on systemic analysis? And to what extent it is used to guide project implementation towards the project objectives. Are the indicators of the achievements clearly defined, describing the changes to be brought about?

Were the risks properly identified, assessed and find ways of mitigating and manage them?

To what extent the global pandemic has affected the project? and whether the project adjusted its design to respond to the challenges during the pandemic situation as project experienced pandemic in its designing and early months of implementations?

2b. Coherence (*How well does the intervention fit?*)

The extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the Opportunity Salone interventions, and vice versa as well as assess the extent of synergies and interlinkages between the project interventions and align to other interventions carried out by ILO Sierra Leone, ILO constituents and any other key stakeholder including private companies?

Have there been new intervening factors/actors (e.g. other donor assisted programmes or new government strategic intervention in feeder roads...) that have emerged which may have impaired or enhanced project performance? Can synergies be improved?

Does work with EIIP and market systems development interventions complement one another?

How the results of the project (rural roads maintained, businesses trained, and government actors trained, jobs created, etc.) are complementary to the policies and strategies of the government or The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)?

The extent to which that the project interventions are in consistent with International Labour Standards, human rights- based approach and gender equality, and people with disability that Sierra Leone is to adhere to.

Effectiveness: (*The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?*)

Assess the progress towards achieving the overall project objectives, outcomes and output. Identify factors affecting project implementation (positively and negatively) and whether those has resulted differently among targeted women, youth and PwD group.

Has the knowledge sharing, and communication strategy been effective in raising the profile of the project within the country and among the project and ILO partners?

Has the project partnership strategy (specific attention on private sector partnership) appropriate and effective in contributing to the project outcomes?

Assess how private sector could retain or continue to work with targeted communities, institutions in the selected value chains? How far private companies are ready to adopt and promote inclusive businesses? How well feeder roads integrated to develop value chain and market system development and labour market?

Assess the extent of all project outcome indicator progress and included as annexure.

How have all the project trainings impacted or are going to impact in achieving overall project goal

Effectiveness of management arrangement

Has the management and governance structure worked to achieve project goals and objectives?

How effective was the support provided by the ILO, donor, and tripartite constituents in delivering results? What could have been done differently?

Is the project team knowledgeable on the principles of the market system development approach? How far same knowledge has been transferred to implementing partners?

To what extent is the monitoring and evaluation system results-based and to what extent is it being used to take management decisions and ensured accountability and learning? To what extent is the M&E data supports adaptive management? is the data and information quality assurance is sufficient And to what extent I gender, youth, disability and non-discrimination is integrated into data and information collection

Efficiency: *(The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way)*

Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the project outputs, outcomes and overall objectives?

Have the project's activities been carried out in line with the workplan? If not, what are the factors that hinder timely delivery and what are the counter measures taken to achieve project outcomes and impact?

Are sufficient resources allocated to integrate gender, disability youth, and to ensure cross cutting themes, market system development approach and perform M&E functions?

To what extent the project has leveraged /plan to leverage resources with other projects, organizations (including private companies) to enhance the project impact and efficiency?

Has the project received adequate administrative, technical and -if needed-policy and technical support from the ILO Office and specialist in regional Office, the responsible technical units

Sustainability and impact orientation: *(The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue AND The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effect)*

To what extent has sustainability been a focus of project strategy and how meaningful the exit strategy is?

To what extent can initial (pilot) interventions be sustained, scaled or crowded in after completion?

To what extent have targeted private sector companies, BDS providers, SMEs, coops and other relevant institutions follow process to change practises to make lasting positive impact of the targets groups including women, disabled person and youth?

Has the project initiatives likely to make a difference to specific higher goals (such as SDGs, DWCP, national strategies and frameworks to which they are linked?

The extent to which the project is planning or contributing to build peace and social cohesion in the target areas and reduce poverty and enhance local economic growth in the targeted districts?

Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination

What are the key achievements of the project on gender equality and empowering women and PwDs? Have sufficient resources been allocated for this?

Has the project engaged tripartite constituents meaningfully since designing till his implementation the project to ensure their involvement and enhance ownership?

Has the project used its comparative advantages including International Labour Standard, social dialogue and tripartism?

How far the project has taken effort and allocated resource to promote decent working conditions within the SMEs

Evaluation Methodology

The MTE will comply with evaluation norms and standards and follow ethical safeguards, all as specified in ILO's evaluation policy and procedures. The ILO adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation norms and standards as well as Evaluation Quality standards. The evaluation is an independent evaluation, and the final methodology and evaluation questions will be determined by the consultant in consultation with the Evaluation Manager.

Methodology should also include examining the interventions' Theory of Change, specifically in the light of logical connect between levels of results, its coherence with external factors, and their alignment with the ILO's strategic objectives, DWCP, SDGs and related targets, national and ILO country level outcomes.

The evaluation will use an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to gather and analyze data/ information to offer diverse perspectives to the evaluation and promote different groups of stakeholders' participation. The evaluation will use the following tools and techniques listed and but not limit. The generated data and information will be triangulated to enhance the evaluation findings' credibility, validity, and rigour.

Inception phase: will commence upon signing of the contract by the evaluation team. Initially EM together with Regional M&E Officer will conduct kick-off meeting to explain compliances, procedure, process and roles and responsibilities of the evaluation to the team leader including back stopper. The lead evaluator should have a "kick-off" meeting with key team members of the project to obtain required documents and understand the team expectation and the project background. Desk review and initial team meetings will lead developing the inception report. If it is required, evaluation team can have a few hours session with the project team "pre-evaluation session" to consult the project team about developing an evaluation plan including field data and information collection plan.

An inception report is detailing the understanding of what is being evaluated and why, showing how each evaluation question will be answered (which methodologies will be used), a proposed schedule of tasks. Refer The quality of the Evaluation inception report and its adherence to ILO guidance and formatting requirements will follow guidance in the **Checklist 4.8 writing the inception report Date: Feb 2021, v. 3 (v.1 -2012)**. The report should be consisted of evaluation purpose, scope, evaluation criteria, evaluation methodology, Evaluation frame work which included of key evaluation questions, sub evaluation questions evaluation method, tools of data/information collection, sources of data/information collection, , a key milestone, resource required, potential challenges and outline for the evaluation report. Evaluation methodology. This evaluation is required primary data /information collection by visiting to project locations. The evaluation methodology should be feasible and appropriate to meet evaluation purposes, objectives, and answers to key evaluation questions.

An electronic copy of the report should submit to the evaluation Manager for review. Upon approval of the inception, report by the EM only can start the field data collection. There may be back and forth communications between the EM and evaluator until it is finalized.

This summative evaluation predominantly consists of steps that enhance the evaluation's utility. It is essential to follow steps and process which ensures utility of the evaluation.

Field mission to collect data/information will begin with approval of inception report. Field mission plan which derived from evaluation framework and elaborated in the inception report entailed data/information collection tools, number of persons are going to meet. Data collection tools which are used could be mixture of **Interview (Key Informant Interviews, telephone interviews, In-depth individual discussion), Focus group discussion, Desk review** (all the provided project documents are used and any other secondary documents as well), **Most Significant Change (MSC)**: could use to capture qualitative changes in the process of building capacities, empowering of targeted groups. It will help to generate success cases as well. **Direct on-site observation**: may be useful to observe feeder road

maintenance, SME performance, case studies: specially to elaborate qualitative aspects such as leadership, decent working conditions, empowerment etc; of the targeted members.

Validation workshop: At the end of field data and information collection, it is required to present key findings to the stakeholders, validate the findings, and address the gaps. The project team will arrange the meeting with the consultation of the evaluator. Details of this workshop should reflect more clearly in the inception report.

Evaluation report: first draft: the report's findings should follow logically from the analysis, be credible and presented together with analyses of achievements and deficiencies. It is required to consult **Checklist 4.2: "Preparing the evaluation report"**. The evaluator should submit the first draft report as per the inception report's agreed outline on time. Lessons learnt and good practices must be accompanied by one page to elaborate on the lessons learnt/good practices as per ILO standards template (refer to annexure). Initially, the evaluation manager will share the report with the project team to provide feedback on factual errors, and the Evaluation manager will review the quality and compliances of the report as per EVAL guidance and provide feedback to the lead evaluator to address. The evaluator should address them and return the report within a few days to the EM.

Evaluation report – second draft: This will be the version after addressing the report's initial feedback. This version will be shared among all stakeholders and provide 10 working days to receive their input. The evaluation manager will then send compiled stakeholder feedback to the evaluation team.

The final version of the evaluation report: This is the version submitted by the evaluator to the evaluation manager after addressing feedback. The lead evaluator should incorporate comments. For comments that the evaluator does not agree with, they will be required to provide justification in a separate sheet. The Regional M&E Officer and EVAL will review this final version's quality based on the ILO evaluation policy procedure. Until the report gets final approval, the evaluator/s may need to attend requests to address any quality concerns. Once the EVAL of ILO approves, the report will be finalized.

Main deliverables

The main outputs to be delivered by the evaluator(s) -all in English- are:

Inception report

Completion of data/information collection cum validation workshop

Draft evaluation report (a concise draft of a maximum of 30 pages plus annexes, Refer checklist 4.2) as per the following proposed structure:

Cover page/title page with key project and evaluation data

(https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746810.pdf)

Executive Summary (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746822.pdf. Maximum 4-5 pages)

Body of the evaluation report

Acronyms

Description of the project

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

Methodology and limitations

Clearly identified findings for each criterion

Conclusions (are formulated by synthesizing the main findings into summary judgments of merit and worth, resulting in fair, impartial, and consistent with the findings)

Recommendations (There should not be more than 10 recommendations and should not repeat the conclusion statements)

Lessons learned and good practices (briefly in the main report and a detailed in ILO EVALtemplate, annexed to the report)

Annexes:

ToR

Evaluation questions matrix

Prepared data/information collection tools

Indicator progress against its targets with comments

Evaluation schedule

Documents reviewed

List of people interviewed

Lessons learned and good practices (using ILO-EVAL template 4.1 and 4.2)

Any other relevant documents

Final evaluation report, following the draft report outline and comments

Evaluation Summary (using the ILO template).

10. Evaluation governance and work plan

Governance: Evaluation governance consists of an Evaluation Manager, Regional M&E Officer, Evaluation unit of ILO (EVAL) and stakeholders, including ILO project team.

Evaluation Manager: Pacome DESSERO who doesn't have a prior engagement with the project, will manage the evaluation. Evaluator reports to the evaluation Manager. Tasks performed by the evaluation manager are:

Draft and finalize the evaluation TOR with inputs from key stakeholders (draft TORs to be circulated for comments);

Develop the Call for expression of interest and select the independent evaluator.

Brief the evaluator on ILO evaluation policies and procedures.

Initial coordination with the project team on the development of the field mission schedule and the preliminary validation workshop.

Approve the inception report

Circulate the draft evaluation report for comments from key stakeholders.

Ensure the final version of the evaluation report address stakeholders' comments (or an explanation of why for anyone that has not been addressed) and meets ILO requirements.

Share the report with EVAL for final approval and uploading in the public e-discovery

Share the final evaluation report with relevant key stakeholders.

Regional Monitoring and Evaluation, Knowledge Management Officer – Africa

Final approval of the TOR

Involved in selection of evaluator

Assure the quality of the final evaluation report before submitting the EVAL.

Provided require guidance as needed for the evaluation manager

ILO Evaluation Office

provide oversight and approval final evaluation report

Team of evaluators

Provide required documentation for agreement preparation timely

Deliver all the function elaborated under the TOR and agreement

The project team

Provide basic document and response to the questions and requests made by the evaluation manager to draft the TOR

Backstopping officers of the project will provide feedback for draft TOR, draft evaluation report timely

Introduce the EM to key stakeholders before the evaluation manager distribute the TOR among key stakeholders

Lead the procurement process of the evaluation

Prepare a detail list of stakeholders, including all the contact details and provide timely

Provide all the required documents of the project for the evaluator

Draft the field data and information collection plan initially (telephone, name of the institutions and title of the person whom the evaluator meet should detailed in the data and information collection plan) and liaise with respective stakeholders for follow up prior to start the evaluation. Attend any field issues to sort out immediately and provide fullest support for evaluators during field data collection.

Logistical support to organize stakeholder workshop for validation of the primary findings

Constituents and key stakeholders

Provide feedback for draft ToR and evaluation report timely

Provide input for evaluators during data and information collection

Indicative work plan and propose days for evaluators

Phases	Tasks	Responsible Person	No of days team leader	No of days of Gender and disability expert	No of days of development engineering and labour-consumed technology expert	Dates
Development of ToR	Draft the ToR	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	21 August – 6 September
	Comments by stakeholders	Stakeholders	0	0	0	25 September
	Integration of comments	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	26 September
Call for EoI	Evaluation Manager	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	26 September-8 October
Selection and contracting of the consultants	Evaluation Manager and the project team for contracting	Evaluation Manager /project team	0	0	0	9 October - 8 November
Briefing	Initial meeting and methodological briefing	Evaluation Manager/REO	0.25	0	0	6-9 November
Inception phase	Desk Review Preliminary interviews with the project CTA and the donor, Inception report	Team leader	5.75	4	4	9-15 November
	Review and Approval of inception report	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	16 November
Field data collection	In-country and virtual consultations Field visits Interviews with projects staff, partners,	Team leader	12	12	12	19 November-4 December
	Stakeholders workshop for sharing of preliminary findings	Team leader	1	1	1	4 December
Draft reporting			5		2	13 December
	Submission of first draft report	Team leader		2		

	Review by Evaluation Manager	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	18 December
	Address initial feedback received from EM	Team leader	1	0.5	0.5	21 December
	Circulate draft report to stakeholders for comments	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	22 December– 8
	Consolidate comments of stakeholders and send to the evaluator	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	11 January
	Integration of comments	Team leader	1	0.5	0.5	14 January
Final report	Review of final report and approval by EVAL	Senior Regional M&E	0	0	0	15 -26 January
TOTAL			26	20	0	
If the contract can be concluded before November 8th, the remaining activities will also be expedited to mitigate any potential disruptions caused by the approaching new year and year-end holidays.						

The budget of the evaluation includes:

The budget allocated to this evaluation is entirely covered by the project and its execution is under the control of the evaluation manager for the recruitment of consultants, field missions, organizing workshops and consultation meetings with stakeholders.

For the International consultant- team leader.

Consultancy fees for the International Team Leader for 26 days.

DSA costs and international travel costs as per ILO travel policy,

For national consultant – (subject experts).

Consultancy costs for each national consultant, 20 days. Local consultants are paid by local currency.

DSA fees as per ILO travel policy

To this are added the costs dedicated to the logistics for the field missions and organization of the stakeholder’s workshop.

Expected qualifications and role of an international evaluator as team leader

Competencies, experiences and qualifications
Advanced university degree in social sciences or related graduate qualifications/equivalence Has considerable knowledge and field experience with the application the market system-based approach.
Minimum 10 years’ professional experience in project evaluations of social development projects, including in the role of sole evaluator or team leader with international organizations
Demonstrates knowledge and experience with the application of rights-based approach, an understanding of market system-based approach including improving labour market, developing entrepreneurship opportunities for agriculture-based system, and the relevant national and international frameworks, conventions, polices extensively engaged in collecting , analysing qualitative and quantitative data and information using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods
Hands on experiences on developing projects and programmes using vale chain and market system development approach
Know how on ILO cross cutting themes such as gender sensitiveness, environmental consciousness, decent working condition, social dialogue, peace and social cohesion an added advantage
Demonstrates knowledge and experience with the application of rights based approach, an understanding of market system based approach including improving labour market , developing entrepreneurship opportunities for agriculture based system, and the relevant national and international frameworks, conventions, polices
Experience in using the Theory of change approach on evaluation.
Background in Human Rights Based Approach programming and Results Based Management;
Extensive experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies including participatory approaches;
Knowledge of ILO’s roles and mandate and its tripartite structure as well as UN evaluation norms and its programming is desirable;
Proven ability to produce analytical reports in good command of English
Excellent analytical skills with the ability to analyse and interpret data from a range of sources;

Flexible and responsive to changes and demand

Be client oriented and open to feedback

No previous involvement in the project

Expected qualifications and role of gender and disability expert (national team member 1)

Competencies, experiences and qualifications
No previous involvement in the delivery or designing of the project
University Degree with minimum 7 years of substantial professional experience in project evaluations
Considerable experiences in the area of gender and disability
Ability to assess mainstreaming gender and disability in project interventions
Know how on value chain and market system development approach, enterprise development and labour consumed technology interventions
Well experienced in engaged in collecting , analysing qualitative and quantitative data and information using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods
good analytical skills, writing and facilitation skills;
Good command of English and relevant local languages.
Knowledge of ILO's roles and mandate and its tripartite structure as well as UN evaluation norms and its programming will be an advantage.
Flexible and responsive to changes and demand.

Expected qualifications and role of expert of development engineering and labour- based construction (national/international team member -2)

Competencies, experiences and qualifications
No previous involvement in the delivery of the project
University Degree in civil engineering or engineering construction with minimum 5- years' experience in project evaluations or audit
Relevant experiences on designing, realizing and/or implementing feeder road maintenance project in Sierra Leone or boarder countries.
Considerable experience with development engineering and labour-based construction methods
Previous experiences in evaluation labour- based projects in African region or any other region
Well experienced in engaged in collecting , analysing qualitative and quantitative data and information using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods
Familiarity with the local economic , political and cultural context
Good command of English and relevant local languages
Knowledge of ILO's roles and mandate and its tripartite structure as well as UN evaluation norms and its programming will be an advantage
Know how on ILO employment intensive investment (EII) programme would be and added advantage.
National consultant would have more added advantageous although the position is open to international candidate .

[Legal and Ethical considerations](#)

The evaluation will be conducted in full alignment with ethics, respect for human rights and cultural sensitivity as written in accordance with the International Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation UNEG, 2020.

The evaluator will abide by the EVAL's Code of Conduct for carrying out the evaluations, should not have any links to project management, or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation. All reports, including drafts, will be written in English. Ownership of data from the evaluation rests jointly with the ILO and the evaluator.

The copyright of the evaluation report will rest exclusively with the ILO. Use of the data for publication and other presentations can only be made with the written agreement of the ILO. Key stakeholders can make appropriate use of the evaluation report in line with the original purpose and with appropriate acknowledgement.

[Annexures](#)

1- Code of conduct form (To be signed by the evaluators)

[Microsoft Word - Evaluators code%20of%20conduct Final EVAL 7.11.18.doc \(ilo.org\)](#)

2- CHECKLIST 4.8 WRITING THE INCEPTION REPORT X Date: Feb 2021, v. 3 (v.1 - 2012) [wcms_746817.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

3- Checklist 4.2: Preparing the evaluation report ([wcms_746808.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#))

4- Template for evaluation title page http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166357/lang--en/index.htm

5- Checklist 4.4: Preparing the Evaluation Report Summary X Date: April 2021, v.2 (v.1 2012) [wcms_746811.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

6- Template 4.1: Lessons learned X DATE: MARCH 2021 ([wcms_746730.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#))

7- Template 4.2: Emerging good practices X DATE: MARCH 2021 [wcms_746821.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

Template for evaluation summary <http://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/edmas/eval/template-summary-en.doc>

8- EVAL's Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 response measure through decentralized evaluation

https://login.ilo.org/adfs/ls/wia?wa=wsignin1.0&wrealm=urn%3ailo%3aintranet%3asharepoint&wctx=https%3a%2f%2fintranet.ilo.org%2fcollaborate%2fevalksp%2f_layouts%2f15%2fAuthenticate.aspx%3fSource%3d%252Fcollaborate%252Fevalksp%252FPublishingImages%252FPages%252Fdefault%252FProtocol%2520for%2520decentralized%2520evaluations%2520%252D%2520Draft%2520%252D%2520Operating%2520procedures%2520%252D%2520No%252E2%252Epdf&client-request-id=f8975b84-20e7-470b-100c-0080010000d7

9.- Guidance Note 3.1: Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation, Date: June 2020 v.3 (v.1 - 2013) [wcms_746716.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

10.- Guidance Note 3.2: Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate Date: June 2020 (v.1 [wcms_746717.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#))

11.- CHECKLIST 4.8 WRITING THE INCEPTION REPORT X Date: Feb 2021, v. 3 (v.1 -2012)

12. Guidance note 3.2 ; integrating social dialogue and international labour standards into monitoring and evaluation (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746717.pdf)

13.- DG related reference materials ([Evaluation & SDGs \(Evaluation Office\) \(ilo.ch\)](#))

14.- Rating the quality of evaluation report

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_165968/lang--en/index.htm Guidance note 7:

Stakeholders participation in the ILO evaluation

https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_165982/lang--en/index.htm

UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/548>

Annex 2 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
<p>Relevance <i>(The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, country, and partners/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project responded to the needs of the tripartite constituents, targeted communities and institutions and has contributed to relevant Sierra Leone National Development Frameworks? Does it align with the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ILO Programme & Budget, Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), UNSDCF and EU Jobs and Growth Programme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILO’s and the programme’s approaches for contribution under the National Development Framework, UNSDCF and EU Jobs and Growth Programme. Sierra Leone’s national development priorities (e.g. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Programme & Budget, DWCP) Evidence of project design and resource mobilization tailored to meeting development challenges and emerging needs of the country and ILO’s corporate goals Evidence of design based on a clear and comprehensive context and risk analysis. 	<p>Literature/documents review KII</p> <p>Project reports Key informant</p>	<p>ILO teams EU MoLSS NAO SLLC MOAF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem/risk analysis of underlying development challenges Triangulate data collected from various sources and means Analysis of surveys
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the market system development approach pertinent to targeted individuals such as marginalized men, women, youth and people with disability and mandate of institutions such as SMEs, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of marginalized groups actively engaged in market system development activities. The extent to which the objectives and activities of the market system development approach align with the needs and objectives of relevant stakeholders. 	<p>Project reports Key informant Focus groups survey</p> <p>Literature review KII FGD Survey</p>	<p>Financial and Business Development Service Providers</p> <p>Business Associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triangulate data collected from various sources and means.

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	coops, BDS providers and other relevant stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of marginalized men, women, youth and people with disability reached by the project • # of representatives of SMEs, coops, BDS providers and other relevant stakeholders reached by the project. 		Sectoral Associations Women's Associations Actors In Target Value Chains. SMEs, coops, BDS providers	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far has the project adapted its interventions to the changing context specifically under the COVID-19 situation and addressed the priority needs of the above-mentioned groups and frameworks? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments in timelines, and strategies • Accessibility of project services and support mechanisms to marginalized groups during the pandemic • Timeliness of the project's response to emerging needs and challenges 	Project reports Key informant Literature review KII	Project team Direct beneficiaries SMEs, coops, BDS providers	Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations. Thematic analysis of qualitative information Content Analysis
2 (a) Validity of intervention logic: <i>(The extent to which the design is logical and coherent)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the validity of selected value chains for the project and their sustainability beyond the project support period, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current and projected market demand for products within the selected value chains • # of Youth, women and persons with disabilities trained in entrepreneurship and financial education • Evidence of buy-in from key stakeholders along the value chain, 	Project reports Training reports Key informant Literature review KII Value chain selection process and the subsequent selection reports.	Direct beneficiaries SMEs Transporters Government Ministries Chambers of Commerce & Agric	I Analyze transcripts or notes from KII to identify key themes, perspectives, and insights Categorize responses and look

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<p>including producers, processors, traders, and consumers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent to which the selection process was participatory and inclusive Evidence of supportive policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks in place to facilitate the sustainable development of the selected value chains. 		<p>SleCAD</p> <p>SLRA</p> <p>SMEDA</p> <p>NAYCOM</p>	<p>for commonalities or differences across interviews.</p> <p>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the project realistic (in terms of expected outputs, outcome and impact) given the proposed intervention logic, time and resources available and the social, economic and political environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of alignment of expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts with the overall project objectives and intended outcomes to ensure coherence and relevance. Evidence of adequacy and appropriateness of resources allocated to achieve the expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts, considering factors such as budgetary constraints, human resources, and logistical support The feasibility of achieving expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts within the specified timeframe The existence of critical risks that are not considered in the project design, Any critical risk that was inadequately considered for the whole project or only for some project components 	<p>Literature review</p> <p>KII</p> <p>Observation Checklist</p> <p>Project reports</p> <p>The project risk identification matrix</p> <p>Reports of similar project in similar context elsewhere.</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>FGDs</p>	<p>Project team</p>	<p>Contribution analysis against TOC risks and assumptions</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evidence of achievement or non-achievement of similar results in similar contexts elsewhere 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project integrated ILO cross-cutting themes (such as tripartism, and gender and non-discrimination) into the design? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the project objectives explicitly address cross-cutting themes, demonstrating a commitment to integrating these principles into project activities. The extent to which project activities incorporate specific interventions or strategies aimed at promoting tripartism, gender equality, and non-discrimination The extent to which tripartisan partners, and marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, are actively included in activities Partnerships and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies 	Literature review KII Observation tool Project reports Key informant	Project team Tripartisan partners Marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities,	Analyze interview data to uncover underlying meanings, beliefs, and emotions. Synthesis and Comparison to identify common themes, gaps, and contradictions Meta-analysis to quantitatively synthesize findings from multiple studies Analyze data from KIIs using content analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Theory of change exist? Is it comprehensive, does it integrate external factors and is it based on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the theory of change used to design the programme, to identify the logic, sequence of events and assumptions behind the project 	Literature review KII Project reports	Donor Project Team	Contribution analysis against TOC assumptions;

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<p>systemic analysis? And to what extent is it used to guide project implementation towards the project objectives? Are the indicators of the achievements clearly defined, describing the changes to be brought about?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensiveness of the ToC in outlining the causal pathways from inputs to outcomes and impacts, including the integration of external factors and contextual analysis. • The extent to which the ToC guides the development of work plans, resource allocation, and decision-making processes, demonstrating its practical utility in project management. • The extent to which the ToC guides project reports (including implementation reportings, annual reports, etc.) • The extent of indicator specificity, and relevance in measuring progress towards desired outcomes, and alignment with project objectives. 	<p>The Project Document Key informant</p>	<p>Backstopping team</p>	<p>Triangulate data collected from various sources</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the risks properly identified, assessed and ways to mitigate and manage them found? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The comprehensiveness of the risk identification process • The rigour of the risk assessment conducted • The effectiveness of mitigation strategies developed to address identified risks • The existence and adequacy of a formal risk management plan outlining the responsibilities, timelines, and 	<p>Literature review KII FGDs</p> <p>Assessment reports</p> <p>Project reports Key informant</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Sectoral Associations</p> <p>Women’s Associations</p> <p>Actors In Target Value Chains.</p>	<p>Contribution analysis against TOC risks</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the global pandemic affected the project? and whether the project adjusted its design to respond to the challenges during the pandemic situation as the project experienced the pandemic in its design and early months of implementations? 	<p>resources allocated for implementing mitigation measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of project activities disrupted or delayed due to the global pandemic. Extent of financial resources reallocated or additional funds secured to address pandemic-related challenges. Number of project beneficiaries directly affected by the pandemic (e.g., loss of income, access to services). Percentage of project objectives modified or adapted in response to pandemic-induced constraints. Level of stakeholder engagement and consultation during the adjustment of project design in response to the pandemic. 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>The Project Risk Identification Matrix</p>	<p>Beneficiaries</p> <p>Project team</p>	<p>Analyze interview data to uncover underlying meanings, beliefs, and emotions.</p> <p>Synthesis and Comparison to identify common themes, gaps, and contradictions</p>
<p>2b. Coherence <i>(How well does the intervention fit?)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the Opportunity Salone interventions, and vice versa as well as assess the extent of synergies and interlinkages between the project interventions and align to other interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of policy documents or frameworks at national and local levels that align with or complement the objectives of the Opportunity Salone interventions. The extent of alignment between the Opportunity Salone interventions and the priorities outlined in other relevant development plans or strategies. 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Tripartite partners</p> <p>EU</p> <p>SleCAD</p>	<p>Comparative documentary analysis</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<p>carried out by ILO Sierra Leone, ILO constituents and any other key stakeholder including private companies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of partnerships established between the Opportunity Salone project and other initiatives or organizations working in related sectors. • Level of coordination and collaboration between the Opportunity Salone project and other projects implemented by ILO Sierra Leone or other relevant stakeholders. • Degree of synergy identified between the Opportunity Salone interventions and activities carried out by private companies or industry associations. • Percentage of project activities that leverage resources, expertise, or networks from other projects or organizations to enhance impact and efficiency. 		<p>SLRA</p> <p>SMEDA</p> <p>NAYCOM</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been new intervening factors/actors (e.g. other donor-assisted programmes or new government strategic intervention in feeder roads) that have emerged which may have impaired or enhanced project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone on equipment facility • Number of new donor-assisted programs or government strategic interventions identified in feeder roads • Level of collaboration and coordination with new actors 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Financial and Business Development Service Providers</p> <p>SMEDA</p>	<p>Analyze transcripts or notes from KII to identify key themes, perspectives, and insights</p> <p>Categorize responses and look for commonalities</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	performance? Can synergies be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in project strategies or activities in response to new intervening factors/actors 		NAYCOM	or differences across interviews. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does work with EIP and market systems development interventions complement one another? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of stakeholder meetings The extent of joint activities or initiatives between the EIP and market systems development interventions, The level of coordination and synergy between the two approaches. # of beneficiaries involved in both approaches 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups Survey	Project teams SleCAD SLRA SMEDA NAYCOM	<p>Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations.</p> <p>Thematic analysis of qualitative information Content Analysis</p> <p>Meta-analysis to quantitatively synthesize findings from multiple studies</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the results of the project (rural roads maintained, businesses trained and government actors trained, jobs created, etc.) are complementary to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the project outcomes, are consistent with the strategic priorities outlined in national development plans or policies of the Government of Sierra Leone and ECOWAS. 	Project reports Key informant Project teams Development partners	Partners Project team Donor	Analyze interview data to uncover underlying meanings, beliefs, and emotions.

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<p>policies and strategies of the government or The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which the project results contribute directly to fulfilling specific objectives or targets outlined in government policies or ECOWAS strategies related to infrastructure development, capacity building, and job creation • The extent to which the project outcomes align with broader regional strategies or initiatives promoted by ECOWAS aimed at enhancing economic development • # of partnerships formed to maintain feeder roads Stakeholders willing to form committees to ensure effective maintenance of roads • # of Support exchange programmes that will provide lessons on sustainable feeder road maintenance • # of exchange programmes organised for stakeholders • Support to MWPA, SLRA and RMFA to develop sustainable feeder roads Available maintenance funding mechanisms 	<p>Focus groups</p>		<p>Synthesis and Comparison to identify common themes, gaps, and contradictions</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the project interventions are consistent with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which project activities comply with established International Labour Standards 	<p>Project reports Key informant</p>	<p>Project teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Analysis • Analyze interview data to uncover

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	International Labour Standards, human rights-based approach, gender equality, and people with disability that Sierra Leone is to adhere to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of (the list and main contents) key international labour standards that are mainstreamed in project activities. • The extent to which the project incorporates principles of HRBA (dignity, autonomy, and participation) into its activities • The level of representation and participation of women and marginalized groups in various project initiatives. 	<p>Focus groups</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>ILO database on international labour standards, like NORMLEX</p> <p>..</p>	<p>Government</p> <p>Tripartite partners</p> <p>EU</p>	<p>underlying meanings,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretative phenomenological analysis to extract insights and theme
<p>3. Effectiveness: <i>(The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the progress towards achieving the overall project objectives, outcomes and output. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of project objectives that have been accomplished <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ # of value chains developed through conflict-sensitive approaches to create decent jobs and promote local economic development ○ The extent to which business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth have been increased ○ The extent to which market access and value-addition opportunities for youth and women through cooperatives have increased ○ The extent to which knowledge in financial education for 1,000 youth, 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Project logical framework and project performance monitoring framework</p> <p>..</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Financial and Business Development Service Providers</p> <p>Business Associations</p> <p>Sectoral Associations</p> <p>Women’s Associations</p> <p>Transporters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution analysis against TOC assumptions • Counterfactual analysis to check whether results could have been delivered without the project • Summary of outcome indicators and status • Comparative analysis with baseline data and planned targets

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<p>women and persons with disabilities has been enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The extent to which access to finance has increased 		<p>Actors In Target Value Chains.</p> <p>Government</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify factors affecting project implementation (positively and negatively) and whether those have resulted differently among targeted women, youth and PwD groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the extent to which targeted women, youth, and persons with disabilities have access to and benefit from project outputs and services ● the strengths, the weaknesses, opportunities or threats which are explanatory positive or negative factors for positive or negative results that are identified. ● # or %age of women, youth, and persons with disabilities involved in project activities compared to the total target population. 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>The project risk identification matrix</p> <p>..</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Financial and Business Development Service Providers</p> <p>Business Associations</p> <p>Sectoral Associations</p> <p>Women’s Associations</p> <p>Actors In Target Value Chains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations. ● Thematic analysis of qualitative information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has the knowledge-sharing and communication strategy been effective in raising the profile of the project within the country and among the project and ILO partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● # of exchange programmes organised for stakeholders ● # of capacity-building sessions organised for MWPA, SLRA and RMFA on feeder road maintenance ● # of media mentions related to the project within the country and among 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Survey</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>SleCAD</p> <p>SLRA</p> <p>SMEDA</p> <p>NAYCOM</p>	<p>Validating or refuting lines of inquiry and collecting perceptions and observations on the “why” and factors that influence or</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<p>ILO partners, on ILO Websites and other UN Websites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of stakeholders engaged with project communications, including attendance at events, participation in online discussions, and interactions with project materials. • # of knowledge products distributed or downloaded, such as reports, publications, and multimedia content, indicating the reach of project information. 			impede effectiveness;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project partnership strategy (specific attention on private sector partnership) appropriate and effective in contributing to the project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of partnerships formed, including partnership with other UN agencies, NGOs, etc. • Amount of private sector investment leveraged or attracted to support project activities • Number of jobs created or supported by private sector partnerships, showing the contribution of these partnerships to project outcomes 	<p>Project reports Key informant Focus groups Survey</p>	<p>Project teams SleCAD SLRA SMEDA NAYCOM</p>	<p>Content Analysis Synthesis and Comparison to identify common themes, gaps, and contradictions</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how the private sector could retain or continue to work with targeted communities, and institutions in the selected value chains. How far are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of private sector partners willing to continue collaboration beyond the project duration • the extent to which the private sector is embracing inclusivity and social responsibility. 	<p>Project reports Key informant Focus groups</p>	<p>Project teams Project partners</p>	<p>Analyze transcripts or notes from KII to identify key themes, perspectives, and insights</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	private companies ready to adopt and promote inclusive businesses? How well are feeder roads integrated to develop value chain and market system development and labour market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length or proportion of feeder roads upgraded or integrated into value chains and market systems 			Analyze data from KIIs using content analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the extent of achievement of all project outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator progress and included as an annexure; in a matrix including specific comments on the progress for each indicator from the evaluation team 	Survey Project reports Key informant Focus groups	Project teams Financial and Business Development Service Providers Business Associations Sectoral Associations Women's Associations Actors In Target Value Chains. Government	Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations. Categorize responses and look for commonalities or differences across interviews.

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
				Tripartite partners EU SleCAD SLRA SMEDA NAYCOM	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have all the project trainings impacted or are going to impact in achieving the overall project goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # young women and men trained in financial education • # of exchange programmes that will provide lessons on sustainable feeder road maintenance • # of Value chain studies completed • Proportion of trained beneficiaries who have applied acquired skills in their respective value chains, indicating the practical impact of training on participants • # of trainings organized for public institutions concerned • % Increase in productivity among trained individuals compared to baseline measurements, demonstrating 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups survey	Project teams Financial and Business Development Service Providers Business Associations Sectoral Associations Women’s Associations Actors In Target Value Chains.	Quantitative Analysis to understand trends, patterns, and relationships Comparative Analysis to identify similarities, differences, and trends.

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		the effectiveness of training in enhancing performance.		Government	
Effectiveness of management arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the management and governance structure worked to achieve project goals and objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which decisions are made within the planned timeframe, indicating the effectiveness of the management structure in ensuring timely actions and responses. The extent to which the definition of roles and responsibilities is clear The degree of comprehension by each member of management and governance team of roles The extent to which the management and governance structure effectively coordinated project activities and resources to achieve stated goals and objectives within the allocated timeframe 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups	Project teams Financial and Business Development Service Providers	Comparative Analysis to identify similarities, differences, and trends
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective was the support provided by the ILO, donor, and tripartite constituents in delivering results? What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of the utilization of technical assistance provided by the ILO, donor, and tripartite constituents The extent to which it contributed to improved project performance and results Areas of success and areas where improvements or alternative approaches could have been implemented to enhance effectiveness 	Project reports Key informant	Government Tripartite partners EU SleCAD SLRA	Content Analysis

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project team knowledgeable on the principles of the market system development approach? How far has the same knowledge been transferred to implementing partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project team's understanding and application of the principles of market system development approach The extent to which the project team has successfully transferred knowledge of the market system development approach to implementing partners The existence of simplified reference knowledge tools on the principles of the market system development approach. Level of dissemination of the simplified reference knowledge tools to implementing partners. Opinion of implementing partners on the knowledge acquired from the project team on the principles of MSD 	Project reports Key informant survey	SMEDA NAYCOM Project teams Implementing partners representatives ..	Analyze transcripts or notes from KII to identify key themes, perspectives, and insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the monitoring and evaluation system results-based and to what extent is it being used to make management decisions and ensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of project indicators aligned with project objectives and outcomes % of project indicators for which data are collected as needed to inform the performance and decision making 	Project reports Key informants survey	Project teams	Categorize responses and look for commonalities or differences across interviews

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	accountability and learning? To what extent does the M&E data support adaptive management? Is the data and information quality assurance sufficient And to what extent are gender, youth, disability and non-discrimination integrated into data and information collection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of management decisions informed by M&E findings • % of project adjustments made based on M&E findings • % of M&E reports or analyses that disaggregate data by gender, age, disability status, and other relevant factors 			
4. Efficiency: <i>(The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the project outputs, outcomes and overall objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of the project budget allocated to different activities • the adequacy of human resources allocated to the project, including staff expertise and capacity • the availability and effectiveness of technical support provided to the project • % of planned versus actual resource expenditure (areas where resources were over- or under-utilized) 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups Survey Project budget matrix Expenditures by activity and tasks ...	Project and backstopping team Implementing partners ...	do
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the project's activities been carried out in line with the work plan? If not, what are the factors that hinder timely delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of project activities completed within the scheduled time frame as per the work plan 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups Survey	Project and backstopping Team	do

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	and what are the counter measures taken to achieve project outcomes and impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of actual resource expenditure (financial, human, and material) compared with the planned budget • planned versus actual completion dates, identifying any delays and their causes. 	Project implementation plan matrix Implementation reporting matrix ...		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are sufficient resources allocated to integrate gender, disability, and youth, and to ensure cross-cutting themes, market system development approach and perform M&E functions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of the project budget allocated specifically to activities targeting gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth empowerment • # of training sessions or capacity-building activities conducted to enhance stakeholders' understanding and integration • % of the project budget allocated to M&E activities • % of the project budget allocated to M&E activities to the amount of 5% recommended in the ILO-Evaluation Guidelines. • % of relevant M&E activities that are not conducted due to budget constraint • functionality and effectiveness of the M&E system in capturing gender, disability, and youth-related indicators 	Project reports Key informant survey ...	Project and backstopping teams team	Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the project leveraged /planned to leverage resources with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of any rotating fund set up for a sustainable mechanism for managing equipment 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups	Project and ILO backstopping team	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	<p>other projects, and organizations (including private companies) to enhance the project impact and efficiency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ratio of project funding leveraged from external sources (e.g., other projects, organizations, private companies) to the project's own budget • # of formal agreements or partnerships established with other projects, organizations, or private companies to leverage resources • the monetary value of in-kind contributions received from other projects, organizations, or private companies • % of activities that are cost-shared with others, including in-kind contribution, and the total amount of the cost paid by others 	<p>Project budget matrix and expenditures by activity and tasks</p> <p>The M&E plan is also a source.</p> <p>Implementing partners reports</p> <p>...</p>	<p>EU</p> <p>Implementing partners</p> <p>Project beneficiaries.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the project received adequate administrative, technical and if needed, policy and technical support from the ILO Office and specialists in the Regional Office, the responsible technical units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the administrative, technical, and policy support received from the ILO Office and specialists, providing insights into the perceived adequacy and effectiveness of the support. • the extent to which the project has taken advantage of available support resources. 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>KIIs</p>	<p>Project team</p> <p>ILO regional backstopping teams</p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Analyze data from KIIs using content analysis</p>
<p>5. Sustainability and impact orientation: <i>(The extent to which the</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has sustainability been a focus of project strategy and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of district councils' capacity-built capacity on sustainable feeder road maintenance planning, supervision and management 	<p>Project reports</p> <p>Key informant</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Statistical techniques to analyze data trends,</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
<i>net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue AND The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effect)</i>	how meaningful the exit strategy is?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of a sustainability plan outlining strategies and mechanisms to ensure the continuation of project benefits and activities • the level of stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of sustainability plans • the extent to which key actors are committed to sustaining project outcomes • the extent to which sustainability considerations, such as capacity building, institutional strengthening, and local ownership, have been integrated into project activities and implementation processes 		Tripartite partners EU SleCAD SLRA SMEDA NAYCOM	patterns, and correlations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent can initial (pilot) interventions be sustained, scaled or crowded in after completion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of similar pilot interventions that have been replicated or scaled up in similar contexts or by other organizations after those project's completion • the extent to which similar pilot interventions have been integrated into government policies, programmes, or strategies, demonstrating their sustainability and long-term impact • The willingness of the Government and local communities 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups	SleCAD SLRA SMEDA NAYCOM	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the level of community adoption and ownership of similar pilot interventions in the past Evidence of Memoranda of Agreement and Letters of Cooperation with key stakeholders drawn. Evidence of the formation of Public Private Community Partnership stakeholder platforms and committees for sustainable road maintenance 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have targeted private sector companies, BDS providers, SMEs, coops and other relevant institutions followed the process to change practices to make a lasting positive impact on the target groups including women, disabled persons and youth? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # or proportion of targeted private sector companies, BDS providers, SMEs, coops, and other relevant institutions that have adopted inclusive practices, such as hiring more women, persons with disabilities, and youth the duration and strength of partnerships between the project and targeted institutions changes in key performance indicators related to the target groups (e.g., employment rates, income levels, access to services) within the private sector companies, BDS providers, SMEs, coops, and other relevant institutions 	Project reports Key informant Focus groups survey	do	Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project initiatives likely to make a difference to specific higher goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent to which the project initiatives contribute to the achievement of specific Sustainable 	Key informants Project reports	do	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
	(such as SDGs, DWCP, national strategies and frameworks to which they are linked?)	<p>Development Goals (SDGs) on poverty reduction, gender equality, decent work, economic growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes and potential changes in project impact indicators • the project's alignment with national development strategies and frameworks and objectives outlined in the DWCP, national poverty reduction strategies, and other relevant policy documents. • # of project activities directly contributing to specific SDGs or national development priorities 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the project is planning or contributing to build peace and social cohesion in the target areas and reduce poverty and enhance local economic growth in the targeted districts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the project activities have contributed to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and conflict resolution in the target areas • The opinion of target groups on their perceived improvement in social cohesion since the project is being implemented. • #f conflict situations registered compared to the situation before the project • employment rates, income levels, and business growth in the targeted districts 	<p>Key informants Project reports</p>	<p>Do</p>	<p>do</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
6. Tripartism, social dialogue, Gender equality and non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key achievements of the project on gender equality and empowering women and PwDs? Have sufficient resources been allocated for this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the representation and participation of women and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in project activities, decision-making processes, and leadership roles changes in performance indicators with regard to gender equality and empowering women and PwDs the budget allocation specifically earmarked for gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, and inclusion of persons with disabilities 	Focus group Key informants Project reports Project monitoring and performance plan. Project budget and expenditures per activity and tasks matrix.	Project teams ILO backstopping teams Government Tripartite partners Project beneficiaries, including women and PwD ...	do
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project engaged tripartite constituents meaningfully since designing till his implementation of the project to ensure their involvement and enhance ownership? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the level of involvement and engagement of ILO tripartite constituents, including government, employers, and workers' representatives, throughout the project lifecycle the extent to which ILO tripartite constituents demonstrate ownership of the project by actively participating in decision-making processes, contributing resources or expertise, and advocating for project objectives within their respective constituencies 	Focus groups Survey Key informants	Do	do

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of SME contractors bidding for the feeder road maintenance • # of these SMEs that have a link with ILO social partners (members of employers organization or for which workers are affiliated to a workers organization) • # of SME contractors working with women, young women and men and persons with disabilities 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the project used its comparative advantages including International Labour Standard, social dialogue and tripartism? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the project has incorporated principles and guidelines from relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and recommendations into project activities and policies • # of formal meetings held, agreements reached, and joint initiatives undertaken to facilitate social dialogue and tripartite collaboration among government, employers, and workers' representatives 	<p>Key informants</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews/ group discussions with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Questionnaire Survey</p>	do	Analyze transcripts or notes from KII to identify key themes, perspectives, and insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far has the project taken effort and allocated resources to promote decent working conditions within the SMEs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with labor laws and regulations, occupational health and safety standards, access to social protection, and provision of fair wages and benefits within the SMEs 	<p>Project documents</p> <p>Implementation Reports</p> <p>KIIs</p>	<p>Project teams</p> <p>Tripartite partners</p>	Statistical techniques to analyze data trends, patterns, and correlations.

Evaluation Criteria	Question/Sub Question	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders /Informants	Analysis and assessment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent of resources allocated to capacity building initiatives aimed at improving working conditions within SMEs 	FGDs		



Annex 3 Lessons Learnt

Project title: EU “Jobs and Growth” Programme (Opportunity Salone Programme) in Sierra Leone

Project DC/SYMBOL:SLE/21/01/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Edwin Ochieng Okul - Lead Consultant, Eddah Kanini – Gender and Disability Expert and Milensu Kapaipi – Development Engineering and Labour-Consumed Technology Expert

Date: July, 2024.

The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Continuous alignment with evolving national and international frameworks is crucial. Remaining adaptable and responsive to changing priorities helps maintain relevance and effectiveness. Regular stakeholder feedback is essential to ensure ongoing alignment with emerging needs and priorities.
Context and any related preconditions	The project operates within a framework of national strategies and international commitments. Successful alignment requires staying adaptable and responsive to these shifting priorities, ensuring that project activities remain relevant and effective. Regular feedback from stakeholders is essential to stay attuned to emerging needs and to adjust strategies accordingly, thereby maintaining the project's impact and sustainability.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	ILO, and both public and private sector stakeholders
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The dynamic nature of national and international policies necessitates frequent adjustments, which can be challenging to manage without a robust adaptive strategy.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The effective stakeholder engagement, robust partnerships, extensive training, leveraging public-private partnerships, financial inclusion initiatives, and a market systems development approach ensured adaptability, stakeholder feedback, and sustainable support, maintaining relevance and achieving long-term impact.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	ILO must prioritize adequate staffing, sufficient resource allocation, flexible project design, effective implementation through robust coordination

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Comprehensive risk mitigation strategies are vital for project success. While the intervention logic may be sound, unforeseen challenges can arise. Developing robust risk management plans and regularly updating them can help projects remain resilient and adaptable.
Context and any related preconditions	The unpredictable environment of the Opportunity Salone project necessitates robust and regularly updated risk management plans to address health crises, political instability, and economic disruptions, ensuring project resilience and adaptability.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	ILO, Partners
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Inadequate identification and assessment of risks, lack of effective mitigation strategies, insufficiently developed formal risk management plans, and unexpected external events like health crises (e.g., Ebola and COVID-19) and political instability.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The project's robust partnerships and synergies with various stakeholders, effective leveraging of external funding, and the administrative, technical, and policy support provided by the ILO ensured the project's resilience and adaptability
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Efficient resource allocation, improved coordination, and enhanced technical support are vital for successful risk mitigation and overall project resilience

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Strong partnerships enhance project coherence and impact. Collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government bodies and private sector actors, ensures alignment with broader development goals.
Context and any related preconditions	The project collaborates with diverse stakeholders, including government bodies and private sector actors, ensuring alignment with national development goals and maximizing the project's effectiveness and sustainability
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	ILO
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Maintaining effective coordination and alignment among a diverse range of stakeholders, including government bodies and private sector actors is a complex undertaking.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The collaboration between the Programme and various stakeholders, including government bodies, private sector actors, and community organizations has ensured alignment with national development goals and maximized the project's effectiveness and sustainability
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	ILO's administrative units should foster positive collaboration that enables teams to be more flexible and adaptive during project implementation, thereby enhancing the project's resilience.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
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Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Efficient resource allocation and management are fundamental for project success. Human resource shortages and poor logistical planning can significantly derail project implementation.
Context and any related preconditions	The project experienced human resource shortages and poor logistical planning, which have significantly derailed project implementation, highlighting the necessity for meticulous planning and sufficient resource allocation to maintain project timelines and effectiveness.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	ILO, Partners
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The insufficient number of administrative and field staff led to delays in project activities and project activities and an overburdened existing team. This made it difficult to effectively manage and implement project tasks on schedule. Logistical planning was also inadequate, resulting in coordination difficulties among project partners and stakeholders.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	The strong administrative, technical, and policy support from the ILO office and specialists, which included regular consultations, technical expertise, and guidance on policy alignment, effectively enhanced project implementation
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Have adequate staffing and robust logistical planning, including hiring sufficient administrative and field staff, providing continuous training, and developing comprehensive logistical plans to effectively coordinate and manage project activities

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Continuous promotion of inclusive practices and active participation of marginalized groups is essential for project success. Projects that ensure that women, PwDs, and youth remain central to decision-making and leadership roles are more efficacious. Regular assessments and adjustments maintain and deepen these inclusive practices
Context and any related preconditions	The project has made efforts to integrate women, persons with disabilities (PwDs), and youth into decision-making and leadership roles, ensuring these groups' active involvement and centrality to the project's success and sustainability. Regular assessments and adjustments have been crucial to maintaining and deepening these inclusive practices, highlighting the importance of continuous efforts and adaptability to foster inclusivity.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Partners, especially employers (SMEs) and government agencies
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The insufficient targeting and support for persons with disabilities (PwDs), logistical barriers that limited access for remote communities, and economic instability posed significant threats to the project's inclusivity efforts
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Strong stakeholder involvement, robust partnerships with local and national entities, extensive training programs, and the integration of inclusive practices into project activities.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design,	ILO staff faced administrative hurdles and increased operational complexity due to the need for additional efforts to enhance inclusivity.

implementation)

Annex 4 Good Practice



Project title: EU “Jobs and Growth” Programme (Opportunity Salone Programme) in Sierra Leone

Project DC/SYMBOL:SLE/21/01/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Edwin Ochieng Okul - Lead Consultant, Eddah Kanini – Gender and Disability Expert and Milensu Kapaipi – Development Engineering and Labour-Consumed Technology Expert

Date: July, 2024.

The following emerging good practices have been identified during the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project’s focus on market systems development has created opportunities for systemic change, benefiting a broader range of market actors and ensuring long-term impact. This approach includes facilitating pilot interventions with value chain actors to improve access to quality inputs and markets for products.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Sierra Leone faces significant socio-economic challenges, including high poverty rates, limited industrialisation, and high youth and women unemployment, compounded by inadequate infrastructure and weak institutional capacity.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The project's focus on market systems development has improved access to quality inputs and markets for products, which has created opportunities for systemic change and long-term impact for a broader range of market actors.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Increased access to quality inputs for 1,000 smallholder farmers, a 20% rise in market prices for their products, and a 30% increase in income. The targeted beneficiaries are smallholder farmers, value chain actors, and local market stakeholders, ensuring broad-based and sustainable economic growth.
Potential for replication and by whom	ILO, other development projects, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in similar agricultural and market systems contexts.

Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Aligns with ILO's Country Programme Outcomes by enhancing the livelihoods and income security of smallholder farmers and market actors. Additionally, it supports the ILO's Strategic Programme Framework by fostering inclusive market systems, improving working conditions, and advancing social justice and decent work for all.
Other documents or relevant comments	Reviewing case studies of similar projects in other regions or countries can offer lessons learned and best practices that can be adapted to enhance the current project.
GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project effectively engages multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations. This collaborative approach fosters a supportive environment for project implementation and sustainability. For instance, partnerships with entities like the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and private sector actors such as the Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development ensured alignment with national development goals and enhanced the programme's effectiveness.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The collaborative approach of engaging multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations, fosters a supportive environment for project implementation and sustainability, but its applicability may be limited by varying levels of stakeholder commitment and resource availability across different regions.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Engaging multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations, leads to a supportive environment, which in turn enhances project implementation and sustainability
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	There is increased market access and improved entrepreneurial skills for 3,000 women and youth, financial education for 1,000 individuals, and the adoption of inclusive practices by targeted private sector companies and SMEs, which has led to higher employment rates and income levels among women, youth, and persons with disabilities
Potential for replication and by whom	Other development projects, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector entities working in similar agricultural and market systems contexts. Replicating this practice involves forming strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, leveraging resources, and fostering collaborative efforts to enhance project implementation and sustainability
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The practice supports DWCPs and ILO's Strategic Programme Framework by promoting sustainable economic growth, improving employment opportunities and job quality for youth, women, and persons with disabilities,

Other documents or relevant comments

This is a highly effective approach to sustainable development, significantly enhancing economic opportunities, job quality, and social inclusion while aligning with broader ILO goals of promoting decent work and fostering resilient, inclusive communities.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Extensive training programs enhance the business and financial skills of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwD). This has led to better management practices and increased entrepreneurial activities. Notable examples include the training of SME contractors and youth and women in financial and business management.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	There are high poverty and unemployment rates amidst limited skills and financial resources but they are supported by national policies and active stakeholder engagement. However, this requires additional resources, tailored content, continuous support, and better market access to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	There is better management practices and increased entrepreneurial activities by training SME contractors and youth and women in financial and business management.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	The creation of 150 new businesses, and the provision of financial education to 1,000 women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwD)
Potential for replication and by whom	This practice can be adopted by ILO's other country offices and programs focused on SME development, youth and women's empowerment, and skills training. Specifically, the ILO's Small and Medium Enterprises Unit could implement similar training programs to enhance management practices and entrepreneurial activities in different regions.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	The practice supports DWCPs by fostering sustainable economic growth, advances the ILO's Strategic Programme Framework and aligns with ILO's Country Programme Outcomes by contributing to economic empowerment and income security of smallholder farmers and SME actors.
Other documents or relevant comments	This good practice not only enhances the skills and economic opportunities of targeted beneficiaries but also fosters community resilience and long-term sustainability through strategic stakeholder engagement and capacity building.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The project has successfully leveraged public-private partnerships (PPPs) to enhance feeder road maintenance and business development services. These partnerships created a sustainable model for continued support and resource mobilization, exemplified by the formation of Public Private Community Partnership stakeholder platforms for sustainable road maintenance.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The collaborative model addresses poor infrastructure and limited resources mobilizes support from government agencies, private sector actors, and local communities. The partnerships ensure sustainable road maintenance and improved market access, crucial for economic growth and development. High poverty and unemployment rates necessitate improved infrastructure and economic opportunities while the poor condition of feeder roads impedes market access and economic activities, thus the need for sustainable maintenance solutions.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Forming these partnerships leads to improved feeder road maintenance and business development services, which in turn enhances market access and economic opportunities for local communities.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Through public-private partnerships (PPPs), the project has identified and maintained 200 km of rural feeder roads, improving transportation, reducing costs, and enhancing market access, employed 720 individuals with plans for 1,600 more, and established 25 processing centres, creating 150 new businesses by women and youth, boosting competitiveness and income levels.
Potential for replication and by whom	The practice can be replicated by other development projects, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on infrastructure development and economic empowerment. Replication can be achieved by forming similar public-private-community partnerships to leverage resources, enhance infrastructure maintenance, and support business development services.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Leveraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) supports ILO's DWCPs and Strategic Programme Framework by fostering economic growth, improving employment and working conditions, and promoting social justice while aligning with Country Programme Outcomes through economic empowerment and inclusive local development.
Other documents or relevant comments	This practice demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative efforts through public-private partnerships (PPPs) in achieving sustainable development goals, highlighting the importance of resource mobilization, community engagement, and multi-stakeholder cooperation for long-term economic growth and social inclusion.

Annex 5 Evaluation Schedule

Phases	Tasks	Responsible Person	No of days team leader	No of days of Gender and disability expert	No of days of development engineering and labour -consumed technology expert	Dates
Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting and methodological briefing 	Evaluation Manager/REO	0.25	0	0	11 April 2024
Inception phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk Review Preliminary interviews with the project CTA and the donor Inception report 	Team leader	5.75	4	4	11-17 April 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and Approval of inception report 	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	18-26 April 2024
Field data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-country and virtual consultations Field visits Interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries 	Team leader	12	12	12	29 April to 14 May 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders workshop for sharing of preliminary findings 	Team leader	1	1	1	15 May 2024
Draft reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft report writing 	Team leader	5	2	2	16-21 May 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by Evaluation Manager 	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	22-27 May 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address initial feedback received from EM 	Team leader	1	0.5	0.5	28 May 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate draft report to stakeholders for comments 	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	29 May to 11 Jun 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate comments of stakeholders and send them to the evaluator 	Evaluation Manager	0	0	0	12 Jun 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of comments 	Team leader	1	0.5	0.5	13 Jun 2024
Final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of final report and approval by EVAL 	Senior Regional M&E	0	0	0	14-21 Jun 2024
TOTAL			26	20	20	

Annex 6 Documents reviewed

- 1) ILO and other Tripartite Partners' documents:
 - i. Various ILO documents guiding the evaluation process, including templates and checklists
 - ii. Donor-related policy documents supporting the project
 - iii. EU project document
- 2) Programme documents:
 - i. The Opportunity Salone Project Document
 - ii. Progress Reports (annual and quarterly)
 - a) 2022 annual report
 - b) 2023 annual report
 - iii. Activity reports
 - iv. Baseline data
 - v. Assessment data
 - vi. Sector selection report
 - vii. Market system analysis report
 - viii. Feeder assessment roads report
 - ix. Project SOPs for engaging the private sector
- 3) Government Documents
 - i. The Cooperative Act
 - ii. The Cooperatives policy
 - iii. MSME policy
 - iv. Sierra Leone Roads Authority Feeder Roads policy
 - v. District council guidance for road maintenance

Annex 7 List of Persons Interviewed

Respondent category	Name	Designation
<i>ILO Technical backstopping</i>		
a. Skills Development Specialist	Roberto Pes	Senior Enterprise Specialist, ILO Regional Office West Africa
b. Enterprise Development Specialists	Bandon Mboyong, Frédéric	Tech Spec, Employment-Intensive Investment Policies & Programs, DWT/CO-Dakar
c. Employment Specialist	Dr Joseph Dieuboué	OSH Specialist - Dakar
d. Employment Intensive Investment Specialist	Merten Sievers	Global Coordinator, Value Chains and Entrepreneurship
<i>ILO Project team</i>		
a. Chief Technical Advisor (CTA)/ National Programme Officer-Enterprise;	Tonderai Manoto	
b. EIIP Technical Officer	Austin NGUKU	
c. Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Pious Sesay	
d. Finance and Administration Assistant	Bob Saffa	
e. Project Driver	Mohamed Lansanah	
<i>ILO social partners (constituents):</i>		
a. Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC)	Emmanuel Kamara	Director, Education Programmes
b. Sierra Lone Employers' Federation	Albert Ojo Collier	Executive Secretary, Sierra Leone Employers' Federation
<i>Government Agencies</i>		
a. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security,	Bai Bai Sesay	Acting Director, PERMS
b. Ministry of Works and Public Assets,		
c. Ministry of Labour and Social Security,	Francis Chibliee Kamara	Acting Commissioner of Labour
d. Ministry of Trade and Industry/ SMEDA	Sharka Samuel Sannoh	CEO, SMEDA
d. Ministry of Trade and Industry/ Sierra Leone Local Content Agency	Fodeba Dabboh	Director General, Sierra Leone Local Content Agency
<i>Other UN agencies/ Jobs & Growth</i>		
a. UNDP	Richard Musinguzi	Youth Technical Specialist
<i>Public sector partners (semi-gov. agencies/parastatals):.</i>		
a. SleCAD	Ahmed Nannoh	Executive Secretary
b. SLRA	Paul Demby	Director, Feeder Roads
d. NAYCOM	Atata Mansaray	National Youth Commissioner
e. SLCCIA	James S. Koroma	CEO
f. NAO	Robert Andrew Ghanda	Deputy Director
<i>Donor</i>		

1. EU	Alexandre Serres	Policy Officer - Infrastructure and rural development section
Beneficiaries		
1. Financial and Business Development Service Providers	Mohamed Bangura	APEX Bank
	Mary Alpha	Business Coach Consultant
2. Owners of SME- Value chain enterprises of the pilot interventions		
Cassava value chain- 1 KII (male)	N.A.	
Palm oil value chain- 1 KII (Female)	N.A.	
Vegetable value chain- 1 KII + 1 FGD with women's group of onion producers	N.A.	
1 FGD with female-owned SME (Bo Vegetable Women)	N.A.	
3. Training workshops		
KIIs with SIYB-trained SMEs (5 women + 5 men)	N.A.	
3 KIIs with GET Ahead trained SMEs (all women)	N.A.	
4. Owners of SME - EIIP		
2 FGDs - 8 SMEs	N.A.	
4 KIIs with female owners (one per district)	N.A.	
1 FGD with laborers	N.A.	
1 FGD with women laborers	N.A.	
2 KIIs with PWDs laborers	N.A.	
5. Community benefiting from EIIP feeder road maintenance		
2 FGDs – Mixed-gender (one per selected district)	N.A.	

Annex 8 Results Framework

OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	<i>Target</i>	<i>Status (25th June, 2024)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Outcome 1: Enhanced, conflict-sensitive, agricultural value chain and entrepreneurship development for SMEs, youth,	Output 1.1 A total of 4 value chains developed through conflict-sensitive approaches to create decent jobs and promote local economic development	4 value chains	3 value chains 1 market system analysis report developed	MSA was done for 4 value chains (cocoa, cassava, vegetable and oil palm) but cocoa was dropped mainly due to the over-concentration of donor support in the cocoa sector.
	Output 1.2 Increased business knowledge and skills for 3,000 women and youth	3,000 women and youths trained in business development	2, 553 women and youth trained in business development	56 GET Ahead trainers trained, and 1, 658 women and youth trained in GET Ahead 17 SIYB trainers trained (was this trainers or ToTs conducted?) and 895 women and youth trained in SIYB 150 new businesses established by trained women and youth 115 new jobs created by youth and women run businesses
	Output 1.3 Increased market access and value-addition opportunities for youth and women through cooperatives	Cooperative societies strengthened Cooperatives with improved linkages	4 cooperatives trained by trained trainers Cooperatives reported improved linkages	75 cooperatives trainers trained <i>(3 cooperatives were sampled during data collection who received market linkages but this is probably not exhaustive)</i>
	Output 1.4 Enhanced knowledge in financial education for 1,000 youth, women and persons with disabilities and increased access to finance	1000 youths, women and people with disabilities	2, 553 youth and women with improved	TOTs conducted in Financial Literacy and psychosocial counseling

		trained in financial literacy	knowledge of financial education	No specific training on financial education- it is embedded in almost all entrepreneurship training such as SIYB and GET Ahead Apex Bank provided access to finance APEX Bank (443) SMEDA (150) and SLeCAD (250) have supported financial literacy interventions
Outcome 2: Improved feeder road maintenance continuing to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks to immediate job creation	Output 2.1 Installed and operationalized digitalized database for roads	4 road databases (one per project district)	Ongoing	TOR done to recruit a consultant to develop the databases
	Output 2.2 Total of 200km of rural feeder roads identified, prioritized and maintained in 4 districts to support value chains	200 km	136 Km	Work is ongoing
	Output 2.3 Technical and managerial capacity in feeder road maintenance strengthened for 4 District Councils	4 district councils trained in feeder road maintenance District council members trained in feeder road maintenance 200 km of maintained feeder roads supervised by district councils	4 district councils trained 21 district council members trained 136 km of feeder roads supervised by district councils	Target met 20 district council and SLRA staff participated in online training courses. Ongoing activity

	Output 2.4 Enhanced knowledge and skills of 24 SME contractors, and between 2,000 and 4,000 youth and women in feeder road maintenance including decent work and OSH practices	24 SME contractors trained on feeder road maintenance and OSH 4000 youths and women trained on feeder road maintenance 4000 youths and women trained on OSH	27 SME contractors 2,033 youths and women received on-the-job training on feeder road maintenance 2,320 youth and women trained in OSH	Surpassed the target by 3 contractors Training of remaining youth is ongoing Training started and ongoing 21 OSH TOTs conducted and the trained trainers delivered training to youth. Each contractor was expected to train 20 youth and women
	Output 2.5 Sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanisms established involving the PPPs and communities	1 sustainable feeder road maintenance mechanism established Meetings for stakeholders on feeder road maintenance	1 study tour to Namibia done 3 alternative mechanisms already identified (1 validated) Meetings held with stakeholders on feeder road maintenance	Process is ongoing with the consultant recruited. Planning to carry out another study tour to Tanzania or Kenya
	Output 2.6 Road maintenance equipment revolving facility set up and operationalized	Road maintenance equipment facility in place	Discussion on design and framework of the facility ongoing	Advert for consultant out 11 compactors repaired and shared to the 4 district councils

<p>Outcome 3. Improved business environment for entrepreneurship development and feeder road maintenance</p>	<p>Output 3.1 SME and cooperative policies are revised and business formalization for SMEs supported</p>	<p>Revised SME policy</p> <p>Revised cooperative policy</p> <p>Institutions capacitated to support business formalization</p>	<p>Revised SME policy in place (need confirmation)</p> <p>Revised Cooperative policy in place (need confirmation)</p> <p>Institutions capacitated</p>	<p>Discussions with government and stakeholders ongoing following World Bank funding to revise the SME and Coop policies.</p> <p>ILO will support the review of the Cooperative Act</p>
	<p>Output 3.2 Feeder Road Maintenance Policy revised</p>	<p>Revised feeder road maintenance policy</p>	<p>Ongoing activity</p>	<p>TOR developed Advert was sent out but since 1 applicant then, it is currently been readvertised</p>

Annex 9 Photographs



Photo 1: A Road Under Construction



Photo 2: A Road Maintenance Project



Photo 3: A Culvert Under Construction

