



Fostering innovative, resilient,  
and socially responsible youth  
entrepreneurship in Sierra  
Leone - Queens Young Leaders

Project Impact Evaluation

December 2020

Y CARE INTERNATIONAL

**YMCA**

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“As young people, the business world has a lot in store for us, and YMCA has given me the know-how to explore.”

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# Executive Summary

## Project Overview

Between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2020, the Sierra Leone Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) led a consortium of 8 organisations to implement the **'Fostering innovative, resilient, and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship'** project in Sierra Leone. That consortium comprised of 4 other Sierra Leone-based organisations - namely, A Call to Business (ACTB), the Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA), Global Youth Network for Empowerment and Development (GYNED-SL), and Sensi Tech Hub - alongside 3 UK-based partners - Computer Aid International (CAI), On Our Radar (OOR), and Y Care International (YCI).

Principally funded by Comic Relief as part of the Queen's Young Leaders (QYL) Programme, the project's goal was to **enhance the economic resilience and security of 1,230 (later 930) vulnerable young people<sup>1</sup>** (60% female) across the 3 cities of **Freetown, Makeni and Pujehun** and their surrounding areas<sup>2</sup>. It received further generous financial support from Big Give, Endemol Shine, Hoffnungszeichen (Sign of Hope) Germany, One YMCA and The YMCA Metropolitan Region Trust Fund.

Project partners sought to achieve the above goal by equipping young people with the **skills, resources and networks to establish enterprises and enter employment**. The project model comprised of a multi-pronged approach, combining **basic, core and technical skills training<sup>3</sup> with a package of post-training inputs** - centred on promoting

### Overview of expected project results:

<b>Impact</b>	Young women and men in Sierra Leone have increased economic resilience and security.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1: Youth Entrepreneurship hubs and mobile services are established and benefitting vulnerable young people.</li> <li>2: Young women and men have improved personal skills and resilience.</li> <li>3: Young women and men have the skills and capacity to develop and manage their enterprises and go into employment.</li> <li>4: Young women and men have increased access to assets and networks to develop their enterprise opportunities.</li> <li>5: Young women and men are more economically resilient and secure.</li> </ol>

**opportunities for enterprise and employment (E&E)**, and addressing some of the key barriers youth populations face to accessing and securing livelihoods. Additionally, the project placed a strong onus on **technological innovation**, supporting young participants through 1 of two streams:

- I. The 'in-person' stream** - targeting **630 young participants** across all 4 locations with face-to-face support. This comprised of a holistic skills training package, business mentoring and other inputs, and included ICT training delivered at 3 **'youth entrepreneurship hubs'** - solar-powered, ICT-equipped learning labs, based on Computer Aid International's 'ZubaBox' and Sensi Tech Hub's business incubation models<sup>4</sup>;
- II. The 'remote' stream** - remotely supporting a further **600 (later 300)<sup>5</sup> vulnerable young women and men** in hard-to-reach, rural communities around Makeni and Pujehun. This comprised of E&E skills training delivered via a **bespoke mobile phone-based training platform**, designed by On Our Radar and ACTB, and complemented with in-person business coaching.

Among the activities provided by the project were:

- **Non-formal education (NFE)** (or literacy and numeracy skills training) (I);
- **ICT skills training**, provided at youth hubs (I);
- **Vocational skills training** in sectors such as engineering, hairdressing, catering and 'green' waste management (I);
- **E&E skills training**, provided both in-person (I) and via the remote training platform (II);

- **Savings and credit training** (I & II), alongside promotion of youth-led savings groups (I);
- **Soft skills/leadership training** (I);
- Provision of **start-up capital** to youth enterprises (I);
- Promotion of **access to ICTs** (I);
- Provision of **psycho-social support** (I); and
- Business **mentoring and coaching** (I & II).

The initial project budget was **£1,531,953**. In February 2019, however, partners received a top-up **'Impact Grant'** from Comic Relief, which extended in-person project activities to new communities in Makeni and Pujehun and expanded the project to **Kenema**. The **total project budget across the two grants was £1,781,167**.

## Methodological Overview

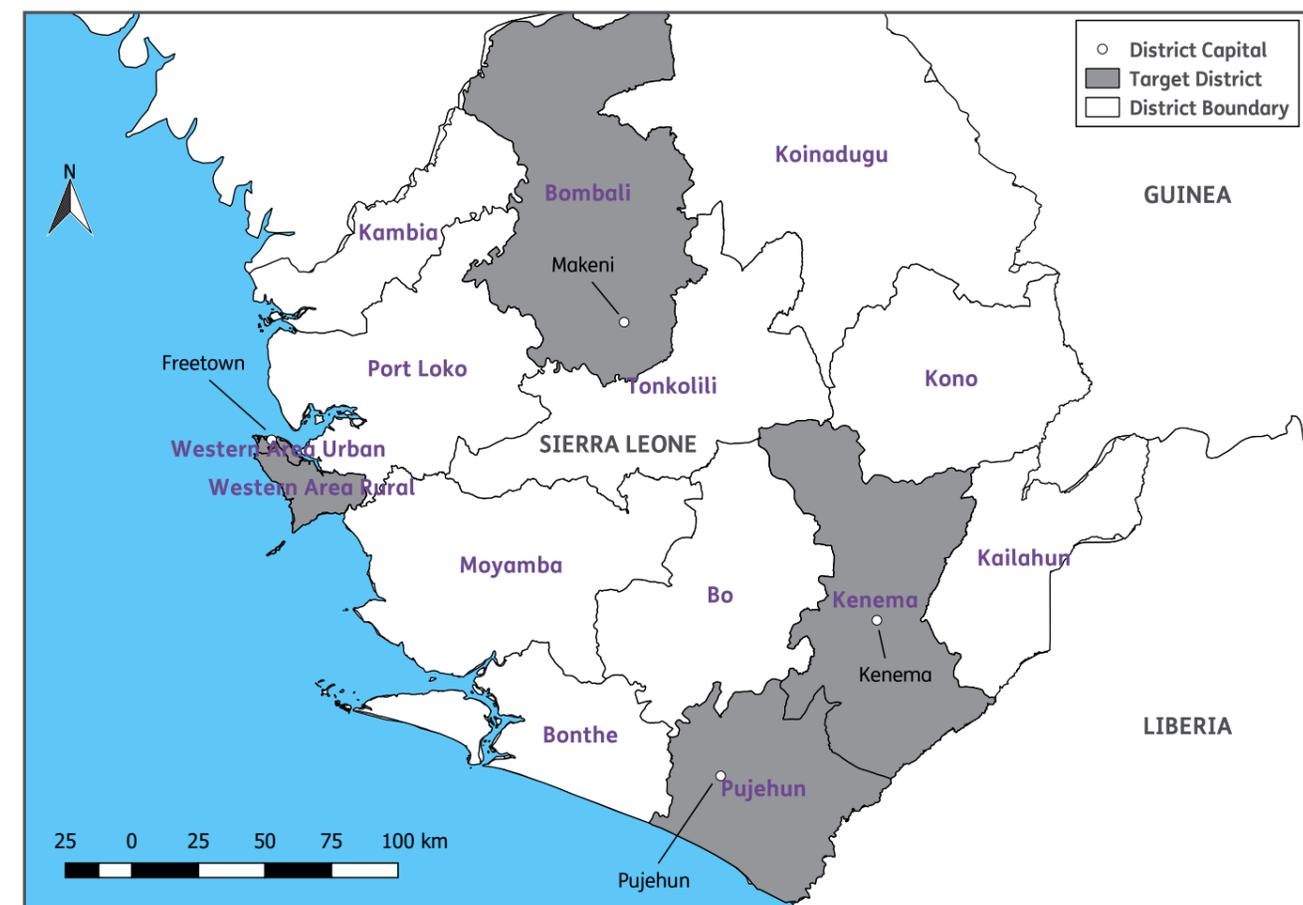
Findings presented in this report are based on **data collected by Sierra Leone YMCA and YCI as part of a final evaluation** of the project. Sierra Leone YMCA was responsible for overall grant management and programme implementation, while YCI provided technical support for programme and financial management, communications, and monitoring,

evaluation and learning (MEL), as well as serving a coordination function for UK partners. **Primary data for the evaluation was collected between 12 May and 12 June 2020** via **structured interviews with a representative sample of 245 young project participants**. In addition, semi-structured **key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 20 project staff members and other stakeholders**. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related preventative measures, most evaluation activities were conducted remotely via telephone and Zoom. Primary data analysis was complemented with a review of available secondary data sources.

The evaluation was intended to serve as **an assessment of the high-level changes that the project has contributed to**, and to measure the extent to which project partners have achieved their overall goal and expected results. The evaluation sought to assess the project according to 7 criteria, exploring the **relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, partnerships, participation and sustainability\*** of the project. From these findings, it has sought to generate a set of **lessons learned and recommendations** for staff and other stakeholders, which can be used to inform the design and implementation of future interventions.

\*Sections can be reached by clicking on the criteria headings.

### Overview of project locations:



## Key Findings

Overall, the evaluation found that **the project has achieved many of its expected high-level results and contributed meaningfully towards its goal of enhancing economic resilience and security among the targeted youth populations.** Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this evaluation signals that the project has performed well across all 7 criteria investigated.

First, the evaluation found that **the project strategy and activities have been relevant in several important respects to the lives of targeted youth populations** and their communities. Participant feedback signals that project activities have successfully equipped many vulnerable youth with skills and competencies that they themselves deem pertinent and now frequently apply in their lives and livelihood activities. This is **particularly true of young people that took part in the project's in-person stream** and demonstrated by the finding that **98% of its participants believed they gained important new skills and knowledge** from the project, compared to **73% of remote stream participants.** Of note, many respondents shared very positive feedback for **youth-hub ICT courses and in-person E&E trainings.** Together, the in-person package of support has helped establish a foundation in digital literacy, alongside essential business management, technical, and soft skills, for over 600 individuals.

The relevance of these inputs to target populations is seen in the numerous **positive, high-level impacts** to which the project has directly contributed. Principally, the project has **supported many young people into paid livelihood activities** - in sectors such as tailoring, catering, farming and mechanics, among others - and, particularly, into enterprise and self-employment. Given that when many enrolled in the project, they were unemployed, running struggling businesses, or in states of precarious employment, the finding that **88% of respondents had at least one regular source of income** - with **73% running a business** - marks a demonstrable improvement in young people's access to livelihoods.

Furthermore, the evaluation found that many young participants were now generating regular incomes higher than those earned before the project. Out of 238 survey respondents for whom income data was available, **three quarters reported having higher earnings now compared to before the project.** Across locations, **average monthly incomes more than doubled from Le 239,410 (approximately £23)<sup>6</sup> to Le 516,417 (£51),** while **median monthly incomes tripled from Le 100,000 (£9.80) to Le 300,000**

**(£29.40)** post-project-inputs. Typically, however, and despite growth in average incomes across locations, streams and genders, **young male participants (Le 603,010/£59 per month)** were found to be **earning considerably more than their female counterparts (Le 454,281/£44 per month).** This is in spite of partners' efforts to address the barriers young women disproportionately face to securing decent livelihoods - including the higher expectations and demands on their time to fulfil 'traditional' labour roles and to undertake unpaid domestic/care work.

Nonetheless, while driving incomes, **the project has contributed to important changes in young people's savings, with 71% of participants reporting higher savings** at the time of data collection compared to before the project. In tandem, **two thirds of respondents reported that their life has 'improved significantly'** since taking part in the project. In qualitative feedback, many participants shared **feelings of strong personal development, higher levels of confidence and self-esteem, and improved interpersonal skills** as among the most significant impacts of the project. Securing work, earning higher incomes, and developing savings are all critical factors that have enabled many project participants - both female and male - to escape unemployment, become economically independent and be closer to achieving their goals and aspirations.

Moreover, the evaluation found **several "positive spill-over effects"** of activities on wider communities. These include: the knock-on job creation generated by young business owners (with **13% of young entrepreneurs employing others**); the increased contributions of young earners to households (with **95% of earning respondents contributing some of their income to household costs**); and the provision of new services in communities, among others.

While helping foster these changes, the **Project Outcome Framework** signals that partners have **effectively achieved many key results and attained most of their intended targets** according to budget and within the 6-month no cost extension to the original timeframe. Important differences, however, are evident between the in-person and remote project streams. In total, the project supported **619 (98%) of the 630 participants targeted through its in-person stream, compared to 129 supported through its remote stream** (22% of its original target of 600, or 43% of the revised target of 300).

In KIIs, **under-achievement of remote results** was attributed to several factors. These included major technical challenges - **frequent power outages, poor mobile network and limited internet connectivity**

of intended users - and issues around **staffing, budgeting and communication** encountered in the development of the platform. These and other factors led to **severe delays in the delivery of remote activities** - with the system only being **rolled out in April 2020 (40 months after the project began) and receiving a user uptake rate of 3%.** While recognising **the important achievement and innovation behind this technology** - hailed by OOR staff as a "sector first" - user feedback in this evaluation signals that **the remote SMS/audio training platform requires further important investment before it is capable of genuinely removing distance as a barrier to learning.** This includes addressing persisting issues of audio for the illiterate, promoting more equitable mobile phone access and access to electricity, and providing complementary inputs for E&E like simultaneous business coaching.

In addition, the evaluation conducted a limited assessment of the project's efficiency, partnerships and participation. It found that the project has delivered results in a **largely resource-efficient manner** and that, despite facing challenges in cross-organisational communication and staff turnover, project **partnerships have improved considerably over the grant lifetime.** Evidence of strong adaptive management is testament to this and demonstrates that, through their collaboration, the consortium achieved stronger results for young people than the sum of its parts. Meanwhile, KIIs indicate that **the project has been highly successful in promoting local participation and ownership** - particularly so at its youth hubs in Makeni and Pujehun.

Finally, the evaluation found mixed results regarding the **sustainability** of project outcomes. At youth hubs, partners have implemented 2 distinct sustainability plans. In Makeni, the introduction of **internationally-accredited ICT courses** - given they receive the

correct inputs - has the potential to continue supporting under-served and digitally-excluded populations in the long-term for many years to come. In Pujehun, **YMCA and CAI's partnership with MoPo** has led to the establishment of an **innovative mobile power solution** at the hub, which has demonstrated consistent and growing uptake since mid-2019, providing **low-cost, solar-charged electricity to rural, largely off-grid communities.** That both hubs have been continuously used by young people and others since project activities ended is testament to their enduring relevance and the likelihood of their impacts extending well into the future.

In contrast, partners are yet to collectively identify opportunities to re-deploy the SMS/audio training platform post-project. This is of concern, given its potential for impacts beyond the reach of traditional education models. With **remote learning ever more essential in a world of COVID-19, there is a strong case for consortium partners to now seek to build on this opportunity and extend the systems' nascent results to hard-to-reach communities elsewhere** in Sierra Leone and beyond.

Ultimately, though, the **durability of QYL's results has been rendered uncertain by the onset of COVID-19.** While the future of the virus and its long-term consequences are unknown and remain contingent on further disease transmission, the evaluation found numerous testimonies of the **widespread harms that COVID-19 is already having on young people's lives,** likely to grow only more pernicious in time. Now, it is perhaps more critical than ever that the YMCA and QYL partners find ways to continue serving under-served youth and their communities, targeting support in particular at those most struggling with the fallout of this pandemic.

The following pages present an overview of the key findings from the young participant survey.

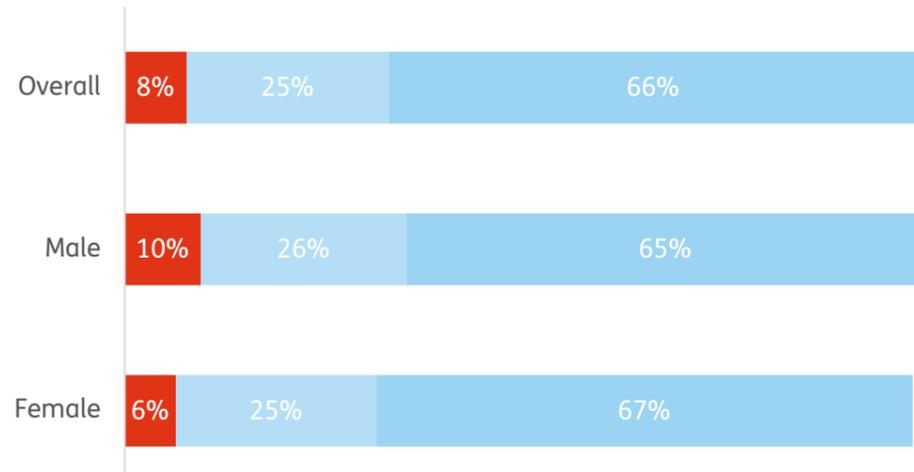
### Achievement vs. targets - number of young people benefitting from project activities:

Stream	Description of target group	Original project targets			Numbers actually benefitting		
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
In-person	Educated and unemployed youth	30	20	50	30	20	50
	Young entrepreneurs (existing business owners)	30	20	50	30	20	50
	Unemployed vulnerable young people	318	212	530	326	193	519
	Total (in-person)	378	252	630	386	233	619
Remote	Marginalised rural youth	360	240	600	58	71	129
Overall (in-person + remote)		738	492	1,230	444	304	748

The final evaluation participant survey reached a total of **245 young women and men** out of the 1,230 (later 930) targeted by project activities.

**'Do you feel your life has changed in any way since taking part in the project?', by gender<sup>7</sup>**

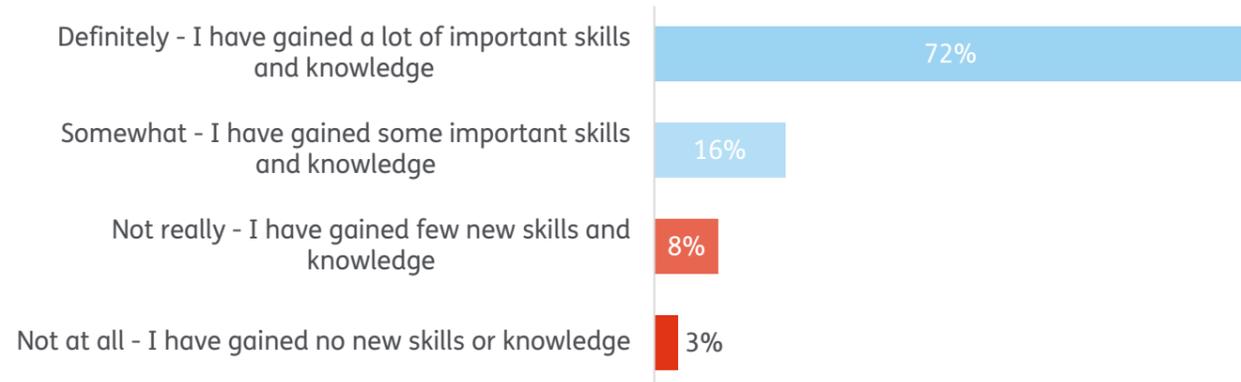
■ No, it has not changed ■ Yes, it has improved slightly ■ Yes, it has improved significantly



**Two thirds (66%) of survey respondents reported that their life 'has improved significantly'** since taking part in the project. Nine out of 10 stated that their lives have improved either 'significantly' or 'slightly'<sup>8</sup>.

In qualitative feedback, young respondents commonly cited a strong sense of **pride and utility in the new skills** they acquired through the project. Many spoke of how these have led to **improvements to their livelihoods, incomes and savings**, as well as **in their ability to support others** - namely through increased contributions to household costs, and sharing their skills among peers.

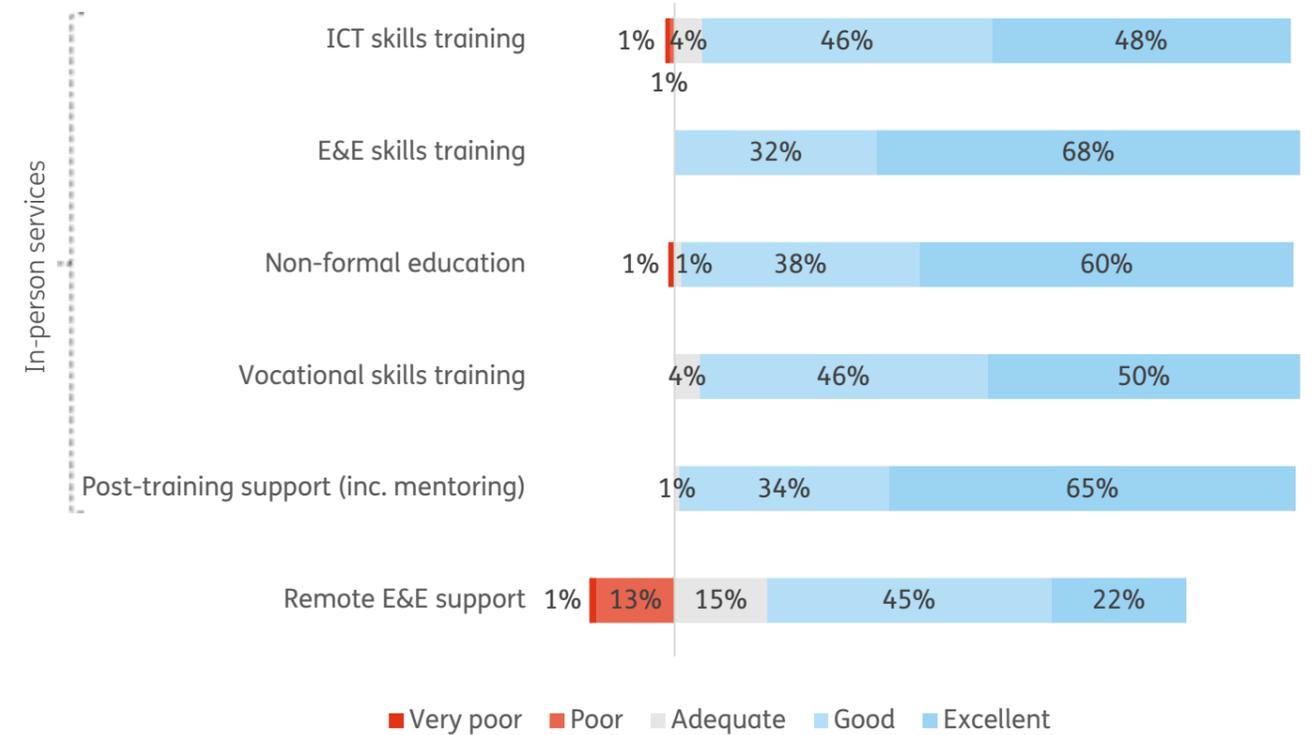
**'Do you feel you have gained any important skills or knowledge by taking part in project activities?'<sup>9</sup>**



**Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents believe they have 'gained a lot of important skills and knowledge'** from taking part in project activities. A further 16% reported that they gained 'some' new skills and knowledge.

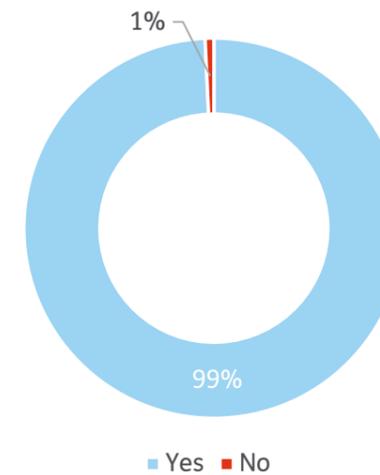
Meanwhile, **11% of young people that were interviewed felt they gained either 'few' or 'no' new skills or knowledge** from taking part in project activities.

**'Overall, how would you rate the quality of project services you have taken part in?'<sup>10</sup>**

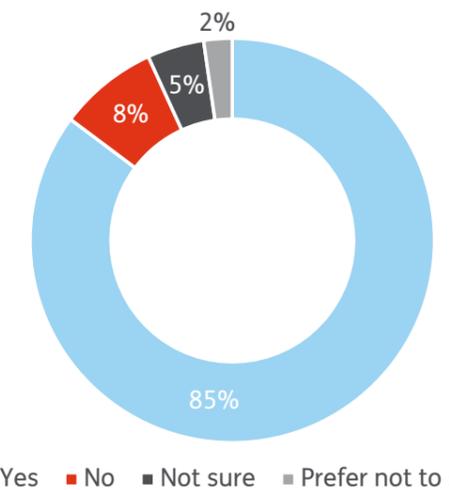


**All in-person project services received ratings of either 'excellent' or 'good' from more than 94% of their users.** In comparison, **two thirds (67%) of participants in the remote stream** rated the remote skills training platform and complementary community coaching - as **'excellent' or 'good'**.

**'Would you recommend the youth hub ICT trainings to your friends and family?'<sup>11</sup>**

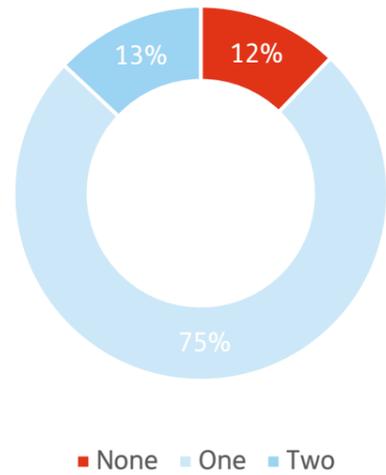


**'Would you recommend the SMS/audio training scheme to your friends and family?'<sup>12</sup>**



The **vast majority (99%) of digital/ICT skills trainees said they would recommend youth hub ICT trainings** to their friends and family members. A **slightly lower proportion (85%) of remote survey respondents said they would recommend the SMS/audio training scheme** to others.

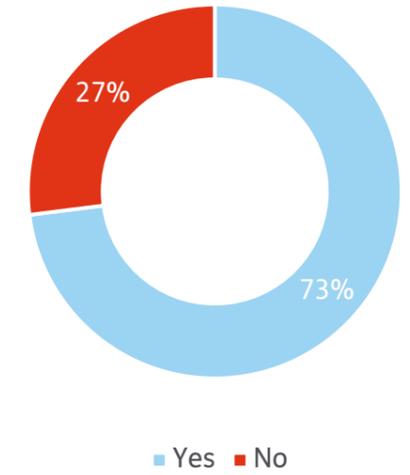
'How many regular sources of income do you currently have?'<sup>11</sup>



Over the project lifetime, participants' incomes rose on average by a factor of **2.16 (116%)**. For young women, average incomes increased by a factor of 2.06; for young men, by a factor of 2.27.

Meanwhile, **monthly median incomes rose by a factor of 3**, from **Le 100,000 (£9.80)** to **Le 300,000 (£29.40)**.

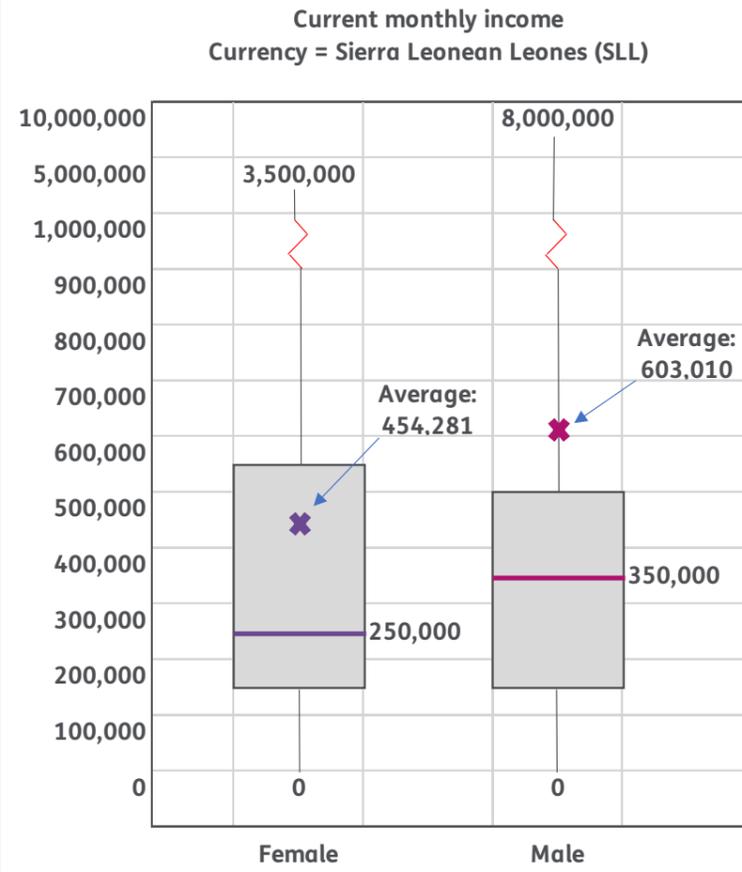
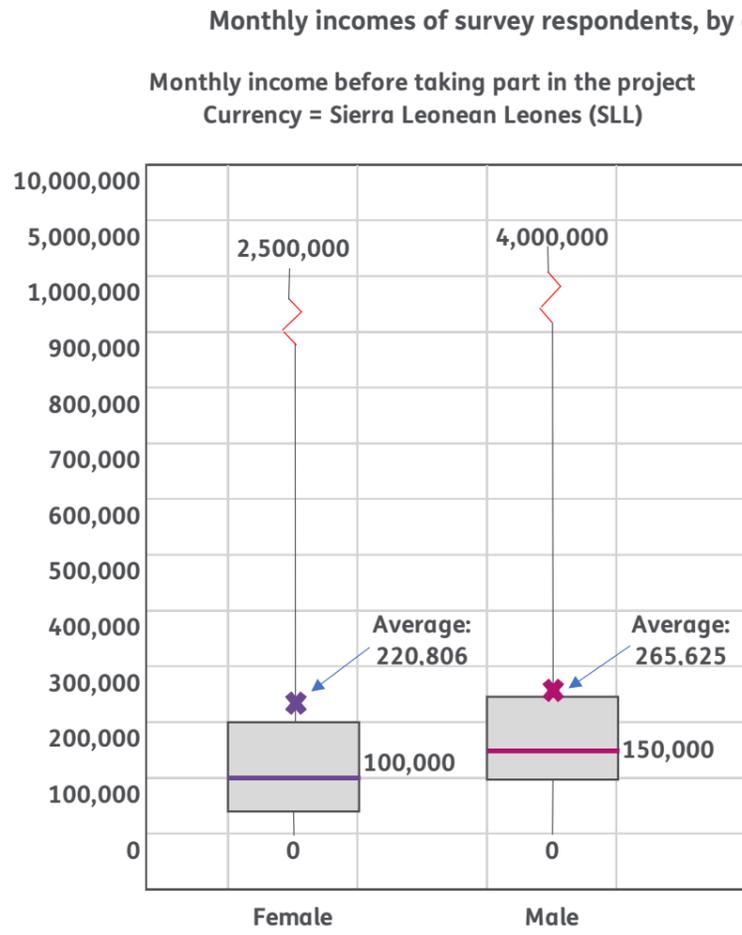
'Do you currently save any money?'<sup>13</sup>



At the time of data collection in May 2020, **88% of respondents had at least one regular source of income**. Many of these were derived from running businesses and self-employment.

**Three quarters of survey respondents said their income had increased either 'significantly' (40%) or 'slightly' (35%)** since taking part in project activities. A further 20% said it had 'stayed the same', while 4% said it had decreased 'slightly' or 'significantly'.

The **average monthly income** for young survey respondents as of May 2020 was **Le 516,147 (approx. £51)**<sup>6</sup>. On average, young men (Le 603,010 / £59) earned more than their female counterparts (Le 454,281 / £44).

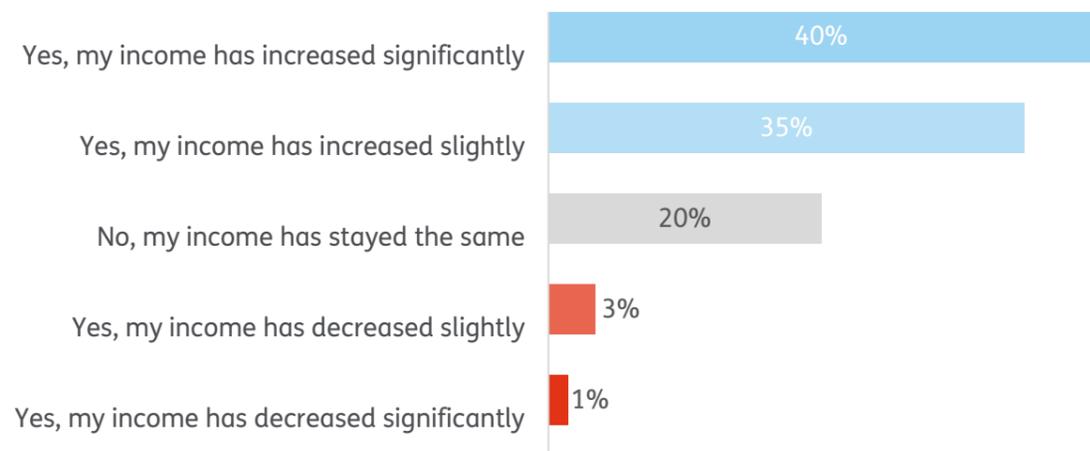


95% of respondents with at least one regular income source **contributed some of this income to household costs**, such as family members' food and medical costs and children's school fees. Most commonly, respondents spent between **1/4 - 1/2 of their incomes on household expenses**.

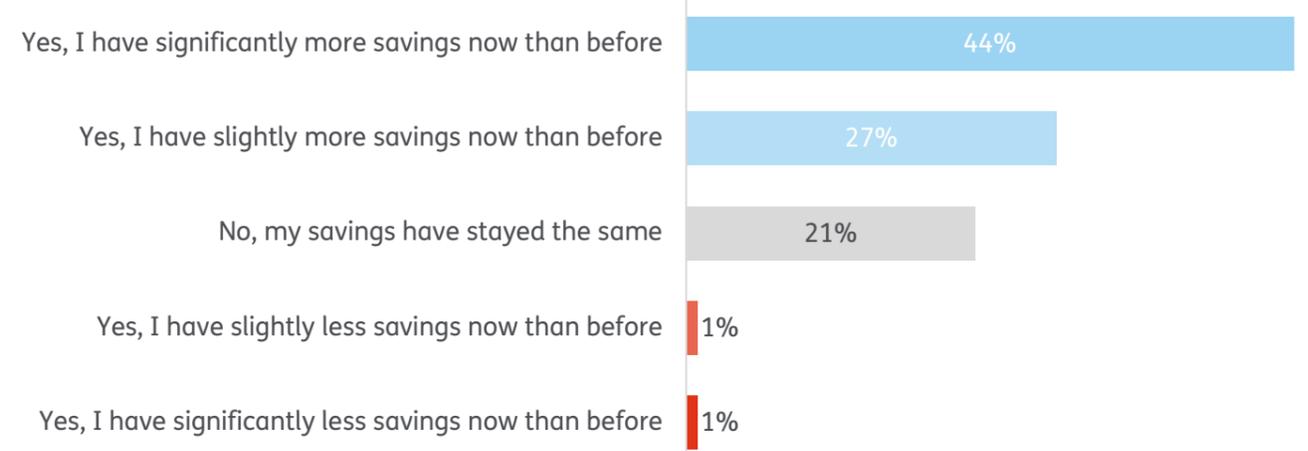
**Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents were regularly saving** at the time of data collection. Almost half (**44%**) reported having **'significantly more savings now than before'** taking part in the project. A further 27% had 'slightly' higher savings, while 21% reported their savings had not changed. **Average monthly savings** at the time of data collection were **Le 171,773 (£17)**, roughly one third of average incomes.

\*See page 47 for guidance on reading box plots.

'Has your income changed since taking part in the project?'<sup>12</sup>



'Have your savings changed since taking part in the project?'<sup>14</sup>



**Work status of survey respondents at time of data collection<sup>15</sup>:**

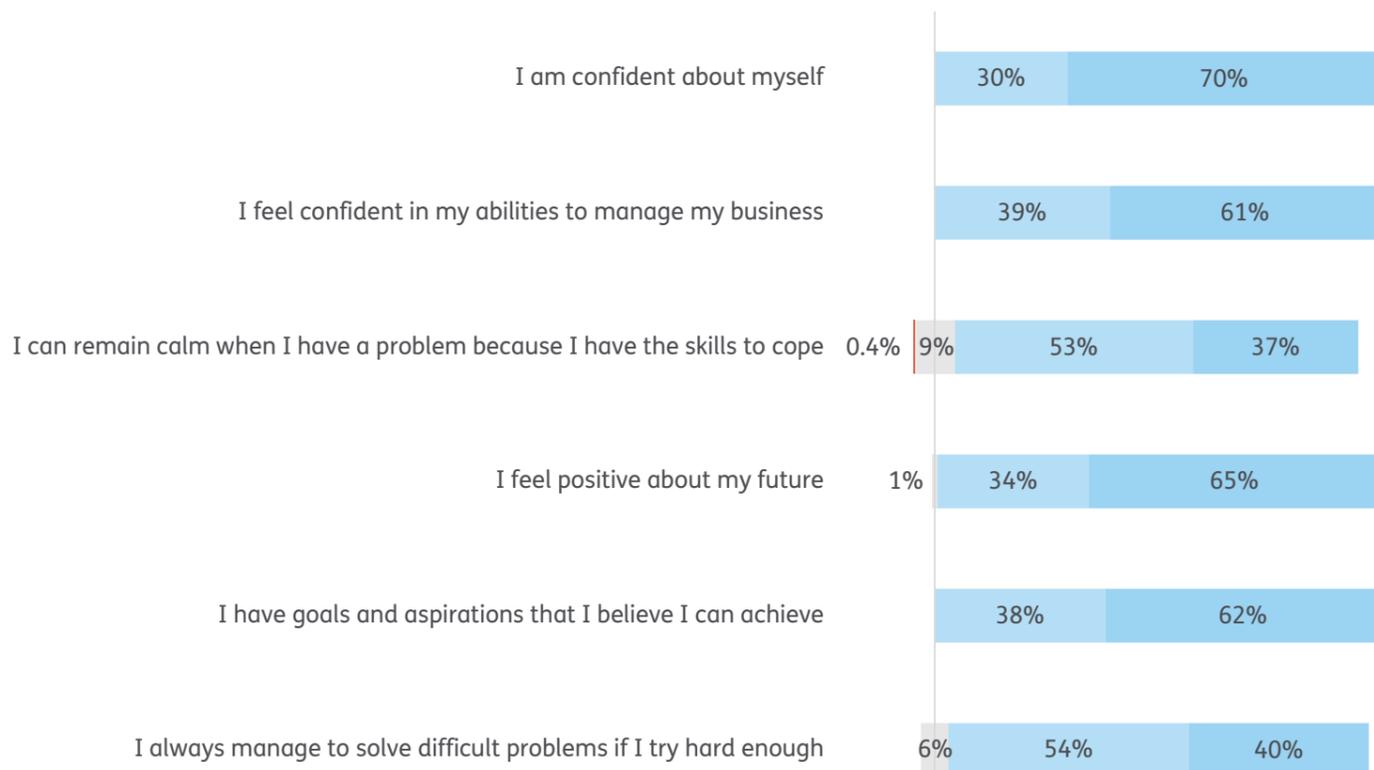


**A high proportion (82%) of survey respondents were self-employed - either running or establishing their own business - at the time of data collection. Approximately 13% of young entrepreneurs employed other people in their businesses: those that did employed an average of 2.04 others.**

Meanwhile, **3% of respondents were in full-time employment**, 2% were working as day labourers, and 1% were in part-time employment. 6% of respondents were job-seeking while 2% were out of the labour force.

**Individual wellbeing measures - Extent to which survey respondents agree with the following statements<sup>16</sup>:**

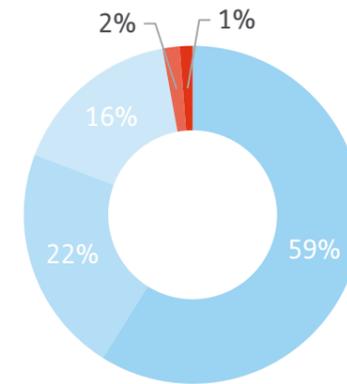
Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree



The vast majority of young survey respondents scored strongly across all measures of individual wellbeing: **100% of respondents reported feeling confident in themselves; 90% believed they could remain calm when there is a problem because they have the skills to cope; and 99% reported feeling positive about their futures.** In qualitative feedback, many attributed improvements in these metrics to project impacts.

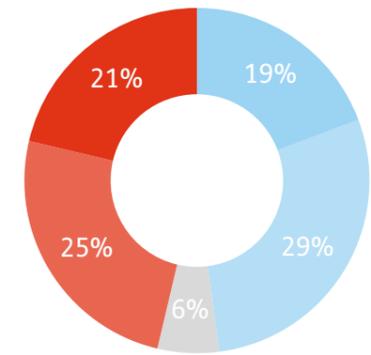
**'How often do other people in your household listen to your opinions when it comes to making decisions?'**

All the time Often Some of the time Rarely Never



**'How involved do you feel in making decisions in your community?'**

Very involved Involved Neither involved nor excluded Barely involved Not involved at all



With regards to feelings of voice and levels of community participation, **81% of young respondents said they feel that other members of their households listen to them** either 'all of the time' or 'often' when it comes to household decision-making.

However, **less than half (48%) of respondents said they feel 'very involved' or 'involved' in community decision-making.** In addition, large gender gaps were noted in this finding, with 65% of young men reportedly feeling either 'very involved' or 'involved' in community decision-making, compared to **just 35% of young women.** This reflects the continued barriers young women disproportionately face to community engagement - in particular, the higher expectations and other demands on their time, with young women **often required to earn an income while fulfilling traditional roles like childcare and domestic work.**

**'What has been the most significant change in your life since you took part in the project?'**

- "Before now, I lacked the requisite skills to handle a business. This training has helped a lot in that respect." - female project participant, 31, Pujehun
- "The electrical installation [training] has been a breakthrough for me. I have been able to make money out of it. I have gained knowledge and I can now train other people in those areas." - male project participant, 33, Makeni
- "My market has become bigger and it's booming. This is due to the numerous techniques I was taught during the training." - female project participant, 33, Makeni
- "I am now self-employed, financially stable and able to meet my financial needs." - female project participant, 26, Freetown
- "Now me and my family survive through my business. I can now take care of my family's health and also help other relatives." - female project participant, 30, Kenema
- "The project is important to me in so many ways: it has helped me to take very good care of my family without any stress and also reduce the idleness in my life." - female project participant, 27, Pujehun

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# Acronyms

ACTB – A Call to Business/Life-by-Design
CAI – Computer Aid International
CODOHSAPA – Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation
COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019
CV - Curriculum Vitae
DAC – The Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
E&E - Enterprise and Employment
FGD - Focus Group Discussion
GYNED-SL - Global Youth Network for Education and Development, Sierra Leone
HDI - Human Development Index
ICT – Information and Communications Technology
ILO - The International Labour Organization
KI - Key Informant
KII - Key Informant Interview
M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFI - Microfinance Institution
MTR – Mid-term Review
NA - Not Applicable
NFE - Non-formal Education
NGS - National General Secretary
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OOR – On Our Radar
PC - Personal Computer
PSC – Project Steering Committee
Q&A - Question and Answer
QYL – Queen’s Young Leaders
R&R - Roles and Responsibilities
SMS - Short Message Service
ToR – Terms of Reference
ToT - Training of Trainers
YCI – Y Care International
YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association



“I can operate a computer now,  
which has been my dream.”

# Introduction

## Project Overview

Between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2020, the Sierra Leone Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) led a consortium of 8 Sierra Leone- and UK-based organisations to implement the 'Fostering innovative, resilient, and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship' project in Sierra Leone.

Principally funded by Comic Relief, the project was part of the Queen's Young Leaders (QYL) Programme, launched in 2014 by Comic Relief, The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, The Royal Commonwealth Society and The University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education<sup>17</sup>. It received further generous financial support from Big Give, Endemol Shine, Hoffnungszeichen (Sign of Hope) Germany, One YMCA and The YMCA Metropolitan Region Trust Fund.

The project's goal was to **enhance the economic resilience and security of 1,230 vulnerable young women and men**<sup>1</sup> (aged 15-35) across the 3 cities of **Freetown, Makeni and Pujehun** and their surrounding areas<sup>2</sup>. This goal was informed by a needs assessment and several rounds of multi-stakeholder consultations, which found that young people in the targeted locations face **multiple barriers to accessing opportunities for decent work and achieving sustainable livelihoods**. The project sought to address some of the key barriers identified in these exercises, by equipping marginalised youth with **the skills, resources and networks needed to establish small enterprises or find employment**.

The project model consisted of a multi-pronged approach, combining individual **basic, core and technical skills**<sup>3</sup> training with a **package of post-training support** and other inputs. Together, these were geared at promoting **opportunities for enterprise and employment (E&E)**. In addition, partners placed a strong onus on **innovation**, piloting 2 'technological solutions' to address the challenges of youth un- and under-employment. In turn, young participants were targeted through 1 of 2 'streams':

**1. The 'in-person' stream** - targeting **630 young participants** across all 4 locations with direct/face-to-face support. This comprised of a holistic skills training package alongside business mentoring, provision of start-up business capital, and other post-training inputs. Within this stream,

digital skills training was provided at 3 'youth entrepreneurship hubs' - solar-powered, ICT-equipped learning labs - based on Computer Aid International's (CAI's) 'ZubaBox' and Sensi Tech Hub's youth business incubation models<sup>4</sup>;

**2. The 'remote' stream** - targeting a further **600 vulnerable young women and men**<sup>5</sup> in hard-to-reach, rural communities around Makeni and Pujehun with remote support. This comprised of E&E skills training, designed by On Our Radar (OOR) and A Call to Business/Life-by-Design (ACTB), and delivered via a **mobile phone-based training platform**. Following project adaptations, remote support was later complemented with in-person business mentoring delivered by roaming community coaches.

While young participants fell into either of these two streams, the **specific activities** individuals took part in within the project varied widely and were based on needs profiles developed at the project's inception. Among the activities provided by partners were:

- **Non-formal education (NFE)**, i.e. literacy and numeracy skills training;
- **Digital/ICT skills training**, provided at youth entrepreneurship hubs;
- **E&E skills training**, provided both in-person and via the remote training platform;
- **Vocational skills training** in sectors such as engineering, hairdressing, agriculture, catering and waste management/recycling;
- **Savings and credit training**, and promotion of youth-led savings groups (based on CODOHSAPA's savings and credit group model);
- **Soft skills/leadership training**;
- Provision of **start-up capital** to youth enterprises;
- Promoting ongoing **access to ICT equipment**, namely PCs and laptops installed at youth entrepreneurship hubs;
- Provision of **psycho-social support**; and
- **Business mentoring and coaching**, complemented with other post-training inputs.

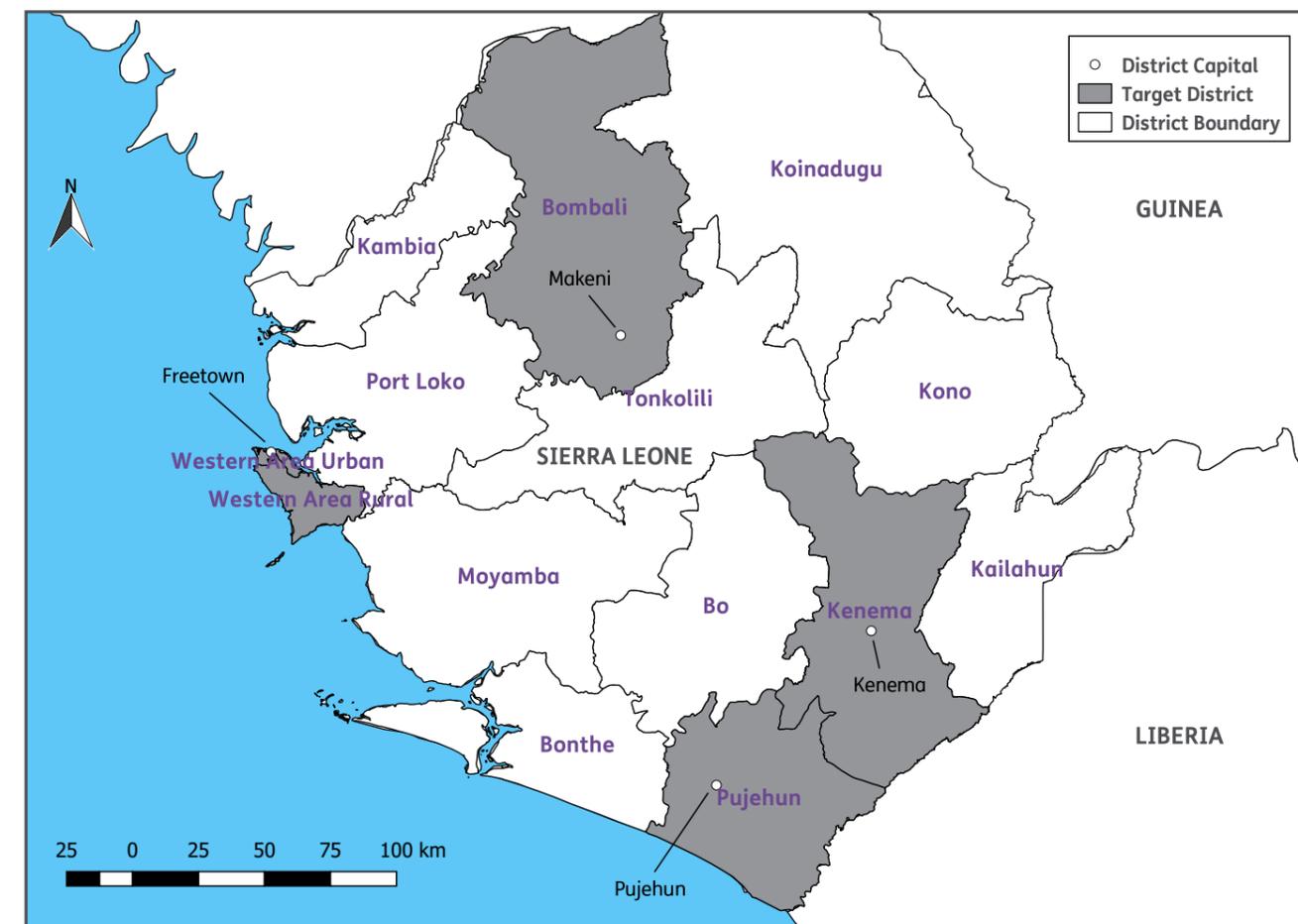
Finally, in February 2019, partners received an additional project 'Impact Grant' from Comic Relief. This extended its in-person activities to new communities in Makeni and Pujehun and expanded the project to Kenema<sup>2</sup>. The **total project budget** across the two grants was £1,781,167 (approximately Le 18,187,496,237)<sup>6</sup>.

The high-level results that the project sought to achieve are outlined in Table 1<sup>18</sup>. An overview of project locations can be seen in Map 1.

**Table 1 – Overview of expected project results:**

Impact	Young women and men in Sierra Leone have increased economic resilience and security.
Outcomes	1: Youth Entrepreneurship hubs and mobile services are established and benefitting vulnerable young people. 2: Young women and men have improved personal skills and resilience. 3: Young women and men have the skills and capacity to develop and manage their enterprises and go into employment. 4: Young women and men have increased access to assets and networks to develop their enterprise opportunities. 5: Young women and men are more economically resilient and secure.

**Map 1 – Overview of project locations:**



## Context

Despite having made significant progress in the 2 decades since the end of its 11-year civil war, Sierra Leone remains, at the time of writing, one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2019, it ranked **181/189 in the global Human Development Index (HDI)**<sup>19</sup>, with an estimated **65% of its near 8 million population**<sup>20</sup> living in multi-dimensional poverty and facing a web of interrelated barriers to escaping<sup>21</sup>. Many people in both urban and rural settings are economically marginalised, politically excluded and food insecure, lack access to basic healthcare and education, and are highly vulnerable to shocks like natural hazards. With a national median age of 19.4 years, such **poverty disproportionately affects the youth of Sierra Leone**. With unprecedented and rapid population growth taking place and further forecast in Sub-Saharan Africa, many point to a growing **youth livelihoods crisis** in the region<sup>22</sup>, underpinned by 4 key challenges<sup>23</sup>.

First is a gulf that exists and is growing between the region’s working age population and the number of **livelihood opportunities available**. Many young people in Sierra Leone are unemployed, in underpaid informal employment, or rely on petty trading to survive. The barriers to escaping such circumstances **disproportionately hinder young women**<sup>24</sup>. Secondly, many argue that traditional education and training schemes fail to equip young people with future-ready skills: those needed to navigate a **rapidly changing and increasingly digital 21st century world of work**<sup>25</sup>.

Thirdly, young people in poverty **lack the critical resources** (namely, finance, land and equipment) to develop their own businesses - a crucial alternative when faced with a widespread jobs deficit. Finally, many young people **lack voice and the platforms from which to be heard**, and are excluded from decision-making processes that affect them – a challenge reinforcing all of the aforementioned issues.

Table 2 – Organisations involved in the project:

Project Donor	Comic Relief	
Sierra Leone Implementing Organisations	Sierra Leone Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)	Consortium Lead Partner
	Sensi Tech Hub	Sub-contractor
	A Call to Business/Life-by-Design (ACTB)	Sub-contractor
UK Implementing Organisations	Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA)	Sub-contractor
	Global Youth Network for Empowerment and Development (GYNED-SL)	Sub-contractor
	Computer Aid International (CAI)	Partner
	On Our Radar (OOR)	Partner
	Y Care International (YCI) (UK Coordinator)	Partner

Such problems have been compounded in recent years by the devastating **Ebola virus outbreak** in west Africa and, more recently, the **COVID-19 global pandemic**.

## Purpose of the Final Evaluation

From May to June 2020, and with project implementation ending, Sierra Leone YMCA and Y Care International (YCI) conducted an internal final evaluation of the project. This was intended to serve as **an assessment of the high-level changes that the project has contributed to**, and to measure the extent to which the project has achieved its overall goal and expected results. The **research objectives** of this evaluation were:

1. To assess and reflect on the results – and, in particular, the highest-level changes, or ‘impacts’ – the project has contributed to;
2. To improve partner organisations’ understanding of youth enterprise, employment and consortia working, in the Sierra Leonean and UK contexts;
3. To develop lessons learned and recommendations that will inform improvements to the design and implementation of similar interventions in Sierra Leone and other locations in the future.

## Partners

The project was the initiative of **a consortium led by Sierra Leone YMCA that included 7 other Sierra Leone- and UK-based organisations**. Sierra Leone YMCA, through its national office in Freetown, was responsible for grant management, consortium coordination, and oversight of project implementation. YCI provided grant management and MEL support, and was responsible for coordinating UK partners. Other partners and sub-contractors delivered activities in line with their areas of technical expertise. The full list of organisations can be found in Table 2.



# Methodology

## Methodological Overview

### Scope, Focus and Criteria

The final evaluation was conducted internally and jointly by staff of Sierra Leone YMCA and YCI and was led by the project Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Officer and YCI's Senior MEL Coordinator. The assessment framework seeks to follow the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) core evaluation criteria<sup>26</sup>. Primary focus was on investigating the **relevance**, **impact** and **sustainability** of the project.

In addition, the evaluation sought to address key questions around the project's **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, **partnerships**, and **participation**, while recognising the limitations of assessing such secondary research criteria given the timeframe and resources available. From these findings, it has sought to generate a set of key **lessons learned** and **recommendations** for project staff and other stakeholders to use for the purposes outlined above.

### Methodological Approaches

To meet these objectives, the evaluation team employed a **mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methodological approach**. The team engaged in primary data collection, secondary data review and data analysis activities specific for the purposes of the evaluation. The Terms of Reference (ToR), methodology and data collection tools were designed jointly by Sierra Leone YMCA and YCI in collaboration with staff of other partner organisations.

As a result of the **COVID-19 global pandemic** and related transmission prevention measures that came into place during the evaluation planning stages, the vast majority of evaluation activities were conducted **remotely**.

Surveys and interviews were conducted via **phone**, **Zoom**, and **WhatsApp**, while recruitment and training of the research team took place remotely over Zoom and later in-person at YMCA's Freetown office. An evaluation call centre was set up in that office to host enumerators throughout the data collection period, with regulations in place in respect of national and local guidelines concerning social distancing, handwashing and personal hygiene.

As part of the evaluation, YCI provided ongoing remote support and training to YMCA staff on **KoboCollect questionnaire design and Excel-based data cleaning and analysis**.

### Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection took place **between 12 May and 12 June 2020**. Data was collected remotely and face-to-face by project staff and enumerators working from Freetown, as well as by YCI's Senior MEL Coordinator working from London. Data collection comprised of 2 core activities:

- 1. Structured survey with young project participants** – a total of **245** individual questionnaires were administered remotely via telephone across the 4 project locations between 18 and 28 May 2020. Respondents were randomly selected, following sample stratification by project stream (in-person/remote), location and gender. The purpose of the survey was to collect quantitative and qualitative information on project participants' current situations and gather their feedback on the project. The sampling methodology allows findings to be generalised with a **90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error** across the overall population of 930 project participants<sup>27</sup>.
- 2. Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs)** – in-depth interviews were also conducted face-to-face<sup>28</sup> and remotely (via a mix of telephone, Zoom and WhatsApp) with a total of **20 key informants (KIs)**, between 12 May and 12 June 2020. Their objective was to gather richer qualitative information on the project and to hear feedback from a range of sources, complementing survey data. In total, these reached:
  - 12 staff members** of Sierra Leone- and UK-based partner organisations, selected based on their involvement in the design and implementation of the project;
  - 8 other stakeholders** across the 4 project locations, including community leaders, government representatives, and project steering committee (PSC) members, among others – selected based on their knowledge of the target communities and thematic areas relevant to the evaluation.

Table 3 – Actual vs. target number of surveys conducted, by gender and location:

Location	Female		Male		Overall	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Freetown	6	6	5	7	11	13
Kenema	3	5	3	3	6	8
Makeni	58	58	41	42	99	100
Pujehun	54	71	43	53	97	124
<b>Overall</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>245</b>

Table 4 – Overview of KIs reached:

KI Type	Info
Partner Organisation Staff	<p>Sierra Leone (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CODOHSAPA, Founder &amp; Director (M), Freetown</li> <li>On Our Radar, Technical Support Officer (M), Freetown</li> <li>Sierra Leone YMCA, National General Secretary/CEO (M), Freetown</li> <li>Sierra Leone YMCA, QYL Programme Manager (M), Freetown</li> <li>Sierra Leone YMCA, Head of Entrepreneurship Training (M), Freetown</li> <li>Sierra Leone YMCA, Youth Hub Lead (M), Makeni</li> <li>Sierra Leone YMCA, Youth Hub Lead (M), Pujehun</li> </ul> <p>UK (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer Aid International, Head of Programmes (M), London</li> <li>On Our Radar, Founder &amp; Director (F), London</li> <li>On Our Radar, Head of Technology (M), London</li> <li>YCI, Head of International Programmes and Partnerships (F), London</li> <li>YCI, International Programmes Coordinator (F), London</li> </ul>
Other Stakeholders	<p>Sierra Leone (8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training Provider (M), ACTB, Freetown</li> <li>Training Provider (M), Sensi Tech Hub, Freetown</li> <li>Kabuwabu Community Leader (M), Kenema</li> <li>Training Provider (M), Kakajama VTI, Kenema</li> <li>Government Official (M), Bombali District Council, Makeni</li> <li>Training Provider (M), Sierra Leone Opportunities Industrial Centre, Makeni</li> <li>Community Leader (M), United Methodist Church, Pujehun</li> <li>Project Steering Committee Member (M), Pujehun</li> </ul>

### Secondary Data Review

Collected primary data was verified against available secondary data sources. The main sources used were: i) quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the project's regular MEL system, ii) annual and bi-annual project narrative reports, iii) project baseline and mid-term review (MTR) reports, and iv) data collected by MoPo on battery pack sales in Pujehun.

### Data Processing and Analysis

**1. Data entry** – data from participant surveys was collected using the **KoboCollect** mobile data collection app, with enumerators entering data via smartphones or the ONA web platform, later stored on YCI's KoboCollect server. Data from KIIs was initially recorded manually on paper forms, and later entered to an Microsoft Excel database,

with missing information added from audio recordings of discussions.

- 2. Data cleaning** – the research team cleaned and checked submissions for duplicate and missing entries, data entry errors, internal inconsistencies, and outliers. Any issues were followed up with enumerators and, where necessary, the original sources of information.
- 3. Data analysis** – once data sets were finalised, the research team analysed them according to analysis plans developed for respective tools. Key calculations carried out on quantitative data included aggregates, averages, proportions of totals, and most common responses across entries. Key principles of content analysis were

\*Sections can be reached by clicking on the criteria headings.



used to interpret open-ended qualitative data generated through the different tools. This entailed organising and codifying participant responses by key themes, exploring common answers repeated across discussions as well as outlying or dissenting views. As far as possible, comparative analysis of data has been made, disaggregating findings by respondents' location, project stream (in-person/remote), gender, age, disability and other factors.

### Limitations

When interpreting the findings in this report, readers should bear in mind several important limitations:

- a. Foremost are the various weaknesses inherent in **phone interviews**. Among these are the fact enumerators cannot observe the body language of interviewees and cannot use visual aids, making it more difficult to build a rapport and mutual understanding than is the case with face-to-face interviews. This may in turn **affect the validity and accuracy** of information collected.
- b. There is a high possibility of **sampling bias** when conducting phone surveys. This occurs when certain members of a population are more likely than others to participate in data collection activities, leading to findings that do not reflect all available perspectives and opinions. The risk of such bias is elevated with phone surveys, as only those with access to phones and decent network, and who are available to speak within specific time windows can participate. Two challenges that arise from this are the possibility of excluding young participants who, because of their jobs, would be too busy to speak, and secondly, excluding those (potentially, disproportionately young women and youth in rural communities) who lack access to a charged phone with reliable network.
- c. Despite these challenges, phone interviews were used as they were deemed the safest option available in the context of COVID-19. The research team sought to address some of the issues of sampling bias, as well as the opportunity costs to respondents of taking part in interviews, by **compensating participants with \$2 of phone credit**, shared only after individual interviews were completed.
- d. There are also **several methodological weaknesses common to KIIs**, conducted both remotely and in-person. In addition to challenges of sampling bias and interviewer bias, one of the key limitations of this evaluation was its **inability to speak with female KIIs**, and KIIs representing other less-heard groups in Sierra Leone. A consequence of this is that views captured in KIIs do not reflect a range of voices and perspectives, as they are predominantly from non-disabled adult males. Given that KIIs were purposively selected, and based on contacts made available from Sierra Leone YMCA, **KII findings should only be considered indicative, and not representative**, of the wider situation and views of all groups.
- e. A further limitation was that the evaluation could neither collect full-length individual **case studies** nor conduct **focus group discussions (FGDs)**, as was originally intended. With the onset of COVID-19, these activities were omitted, due to difficulties respecting COVID-19 prevention measures, and challenges of switching them to remote modalities.
- f. A final important limitation was the evaluation team's **inability to access and hear the views of young men and women that had dropped out of activities** during the lifetime of the project.

“Before, I was unable to take care of myself and family, but with the little money given to me by the YMCA, it has changed my entire life. Now I have my own business and I can take care of myself.”



# Findings - Respondent Overview

## Project participants

According to the end-of-project narrative report and Outcome Framework, the project reached a total of 748 direct young beneficiaries out of the 1,230 (later 930) targeted by project activities. Table 5 below provides a summary of young people reached through the two project streams.

**Table 5 – Achievement vs. targets – number of young people benefitting from project activities:**

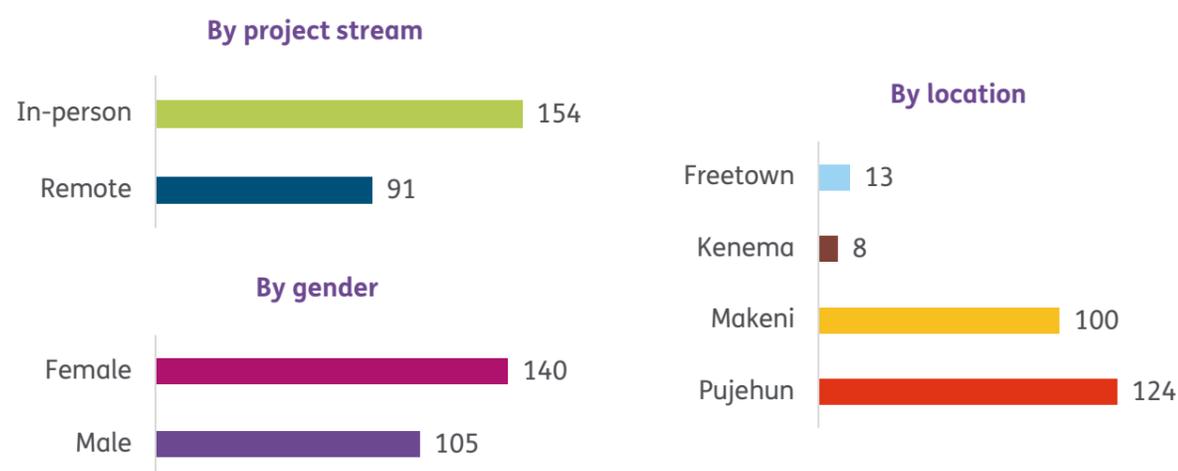
Stream	Description of target group	Original project targets			Numbers actually benefitting		
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
In-person	Educated and unemployed youth	30	20	50	30	20	50
	Young entrepreneurs (existing business owners)	30	20	50	30	20	50
	Unemployed vulnerable young people	318	212	530	326	193	519
	<b>Total (in-person)</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>619</b>
Remote	Marginalised rural youth	360	240	600	58	71	129
<b>Overall (in-person + remote)</b>		<b>738</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>748</b>

## Survey respondents

The participant survey conducted as part of this evaluation reached a total of 245 young women and men out of the 930 targeted. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of respondents by the key disaggregations used in this report. The sample composition sought to reflect the number of people in each category targeted by project activities.

- Age:** The average age of respondents was found to be **27 years old** (both the mean and mode). All respondents were between the ages of 19 and 39, with over 75% aged between 21 and 30.
- Disability status:** The Washington Group Short Set of Questions was used to identify whether survey respondents have any difficulties performing universal basic activities, namely

**Fig. 1 – Number of survey respondents by location, project stream, and gender:**



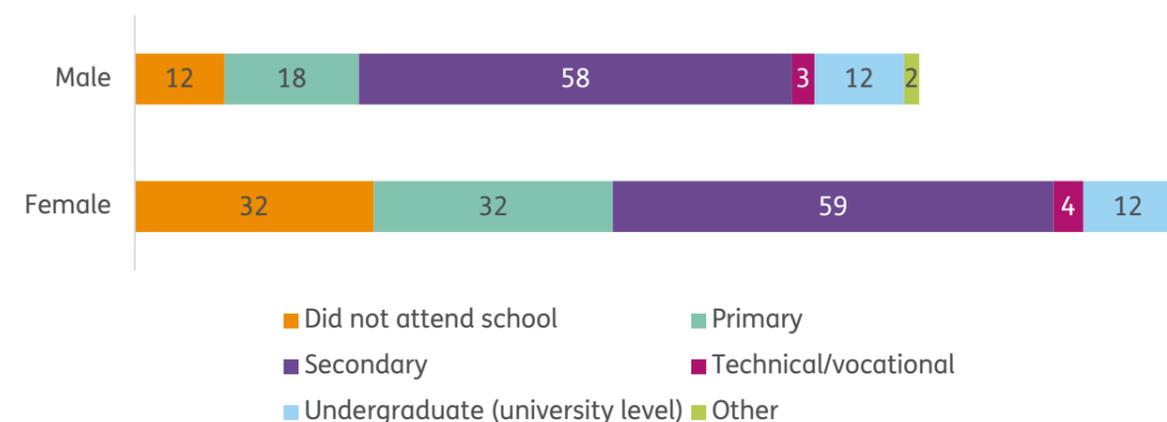
walking, seeing (even with glasses), hearing, cognition, self-care and communication – which may represent disabilities. In all, **18% of respondents reported a difficulty when performing one or more of these tasks** – 45 had ‘some difficulty’ in certain functioning(s); while 2 had ‘a lot of difficulty’.

- Education:** Overall, **almost a fifth (18%) of survey respondents reported that they had never been to school**. A further 20% reported primary school as their highest level of education, with more than half going on to **complete secondary school (48%)**, technical/vocational courses (3%) or undergraduate degrees (10%).
- Across gender, notable gaps were found in educational attainment, with a **much higher proportion of young female (46%) than male (29%) respondents having never attended school or having only completed primary education**. In addition, **remote participants typically reported lower levels of education**,

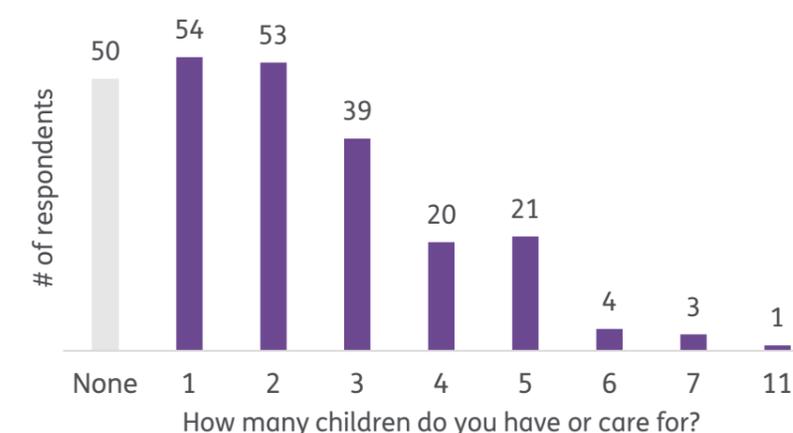
with over half (56%) having primary schooling or no schooling at all, compared to 28% of in-person respondents. These findings reflect the higher barriers to education that young women and youth in rural areas typically face compared to their male and urban counterparts.

- Household size<sup>29</sup>:** The **most common household size among respondents was 5** (reported by 41 respondents). The mean was slightly higher, at 7, skewed by several respondents with households of 15 or more members. Of note, **almost a quarter (22%) of respondents lived in households of 10 or more people**, with just 1% reportedly living alone.
- Child dependents:** **80% of all survey respondents reported that they had a child or children** in their household that they cared for. Among those with childcare responsibilities, the **average number of child dependents was 3**. A slightly higher proportion of female (84%) than male (74%) respondents reported that they had childcare responsibilities.

**Fig. 2 – Highest level of education of respondents, by gender:**



**Fig. 3 – Number of child dependents cared for by survey respondents:**



# Findings - Relevance

An assessment of the relevance<sup>30</sup> of the project was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent have the project strategy and activities **addressed the needs and aspirations** of young women and men targeted by the project?
2. To what extent has the project been **flexible and responsive** to changes in context, in order to remain relevant?

Overall, the evaluation found that the project strategy and activities have been **relevant in several important respects to the lives of targeted youth populations**. This is particularly the case for young people enrolled in the in-person project stream. In contrast, due to constraints encountered in the implementation of remote activities, the project has been less relevant to the lives of targeted rural youth.

Despite this, evidence of strong adaptive management in both streams indicates that consortium partners have been **highly flexible and have sensibly pivoted the project** to respond to shifts in context and challenges encountered during implementation. These include: the inclusion of **audio technology** in the remote training platform to accommodate youth with low levels of literacy; the provision of **face-to-face business coaching for remote stream participants**, accounting for gaps in support; and the **addition of extra workstations** at youth entrepreneurship hubs **alongside the introduction of MoPo** in Pujehun.

## Addressing skill and knowledge gaps

A central pillar of QYL was to address critical skill and knowledge gaps identified at project inception as the key barriers that young people face to securing decent livelihoods. For participants of stream one, this upskilling comprised of a **holistic training package**, covering various 'basic', 'technical' and 'core' skills<sup>3</sup>, delivered in-person across all 4 project locations.

Meanwhile, in the remote stream, the scope of activities was much narrower. This was in view of **supporting young people in hard-to-reach communities** who were unable to attend trainings in-person due to their distance from training sites. Such groups were spread across a large geographical area (namely, villages on the outskirts of Makeni and

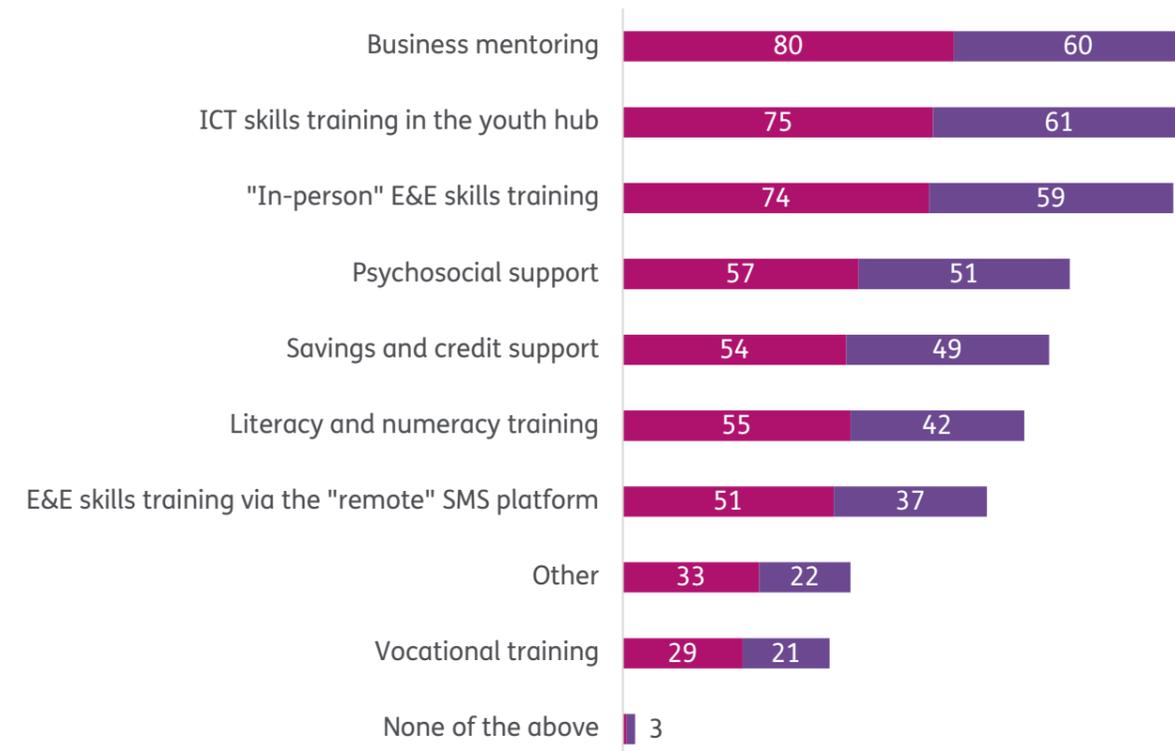
Pujehun). Within this stream, the project provided **E&E skills training through a remote SMS/audio platform**, accessible via mobile phone.

According to the project Outcome Framework (see Annex 1), the following output-level results were achieved over the lifetime of the grant:

- **469 (306F & 163M)** young women and men in Makeni and Pujehun completed **non-formal education** (i.e. literacy and numeracy) courses, delivered by GYNED-SL;
- **619 (386F & 233M)** young people completed **digital/ICT skills training** courses, following the **International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)** foundation, provided at youth hubs in Freetown, Makeni and Pujehun;
- The same **619**, spread across 66 cohorts, also received **technical skills training in E&E/business management**; alongside a further 9 participants who actively engaged with the remote E&E skills training platform;
- **474 (305F & 169M)** in-person participants received individual or group **business mentoring**, alongside a further **129 (58F & 71M)** remote participants who received mentoring and support from roaming community coaches;
- **80 (36F & 44M)** young people completed **vocational skills** courses in sectors such as engineering (mechanical, electrical and civil), catering, hairdressing and waste management, across Kenema, Makeni and Pujehun;
- **100 (51F & 49M)** young people in Pujehun completed agricultural training on new farming techniques, with **50 young women** supported into a **female farmer's cooperative**;
- **350 (233F & 117 M)** young entrepreneurs within the project's in-person stream received **start-up grants** to invest in their businesses;
- **453 (283F & 170M)** in-person participants received **psycho-social support**; and
- **438 (211F & 227M)** young people - all in the in-person stream - completed **soft skills/leadership training**.

The final evaluation youth survey sample sought to broadly mirror the numbers participating in these activities. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of survey respondents by their participation in project activities.

**Fig. 4 – Distribution of survey respondents by project activity and gender<sup>31</sup>:**



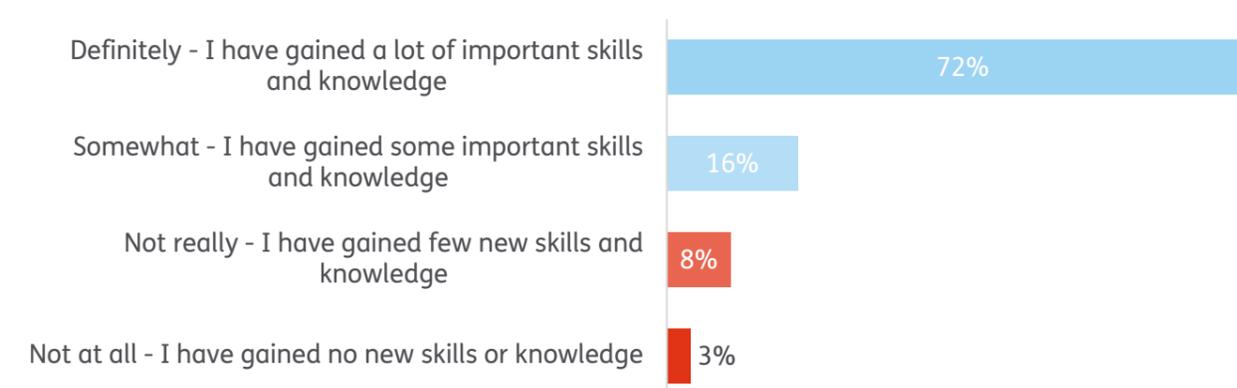
Respondents' feedback on the various services offered by the project provides some insight into their **relevance according to users**. In all, feedback from young respondents suggests that project activities were highly successful in their transfer of new skills and knowledge to project participants.

As seen in Figure 5, **almost 3/4 (72%) of respondents reported that they 'gained a lot of important skills and knowledge'** from taking part in the project, while a further 16% reported having gained 'some' new skills and knowledge.

In contrast, **11% of the young people that were interviewed reported that they gained either 'few' or 'no' new skills or knowledge** from project activities. Almost all of these were youth enrolled in the project's remote training scheme.

In all, **more than a quarter of remote survey respondents felt they had gained 'few' (20%) or 'no' (7%) new skills or knowledge** from the project. This is in contrast to just 2% of in-person respondents who shared this sentiment.

**Fig. 5 - 'Do you feel you have gained any important skills or knowledge by taking part in project activities?'**<sup>39</sup>



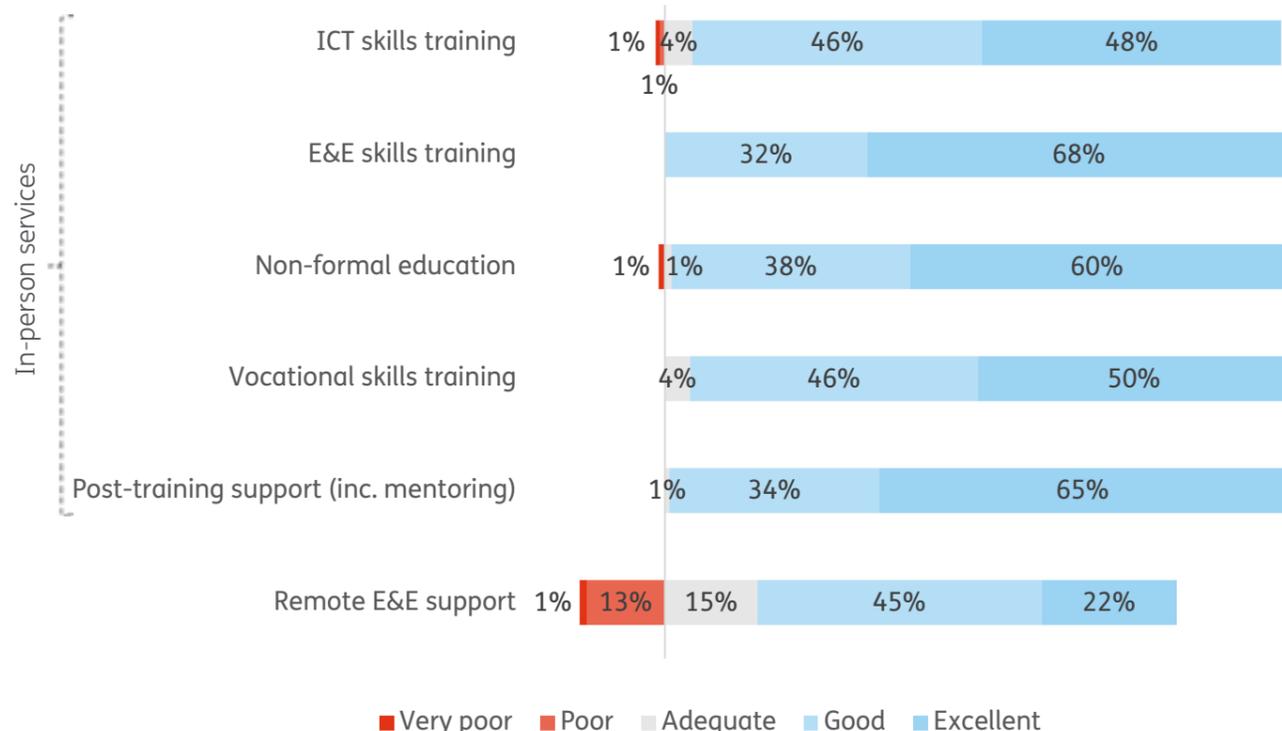
Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of individual activities in which they took part. As demonstrated in Figure 6, **all in-person services received ratings of either 'excellent' or 'good' from over 94% of users.**

Among these, **in-person E&E skills training** had the most positive user feedback, with more than two thirds (68%) of respondents rating face-to-

face business management and employment skills training, delivered by ACTB, as **'excellent'**.

In contrast, **two thirds (67%) of users rated remote E&E support** – comprising of the mobile-based skills training platform and community coaching – as either **'excellent' or 'good'**. The remaining 15% of remote stream participants rated the project's activities as 'adequate', 13% as 'poor' and 1% as 'very poor'<sup>32</sup>.

Fig. 6 - 'Overall, how would you rate the quality of project services you have taken part in?'<sup>10</sup>



**Box 1: 'What skills and knowledge, if any, do you feel you have gained by taking part in these activities?'**

"I have learnt how to operate a computer and to use Microsoft packages well. The project has helped me gain knowledge on how to start my own business and sustain it...and helped me to manage and overcome stress." – male project participant, 24, Pujehun

"[I have] increased knowledge in financial management...I am able to take records of my business and run my mechanic shop properly." – male project participant, 24, Kenema

"I gained knowledge on how to record and do daily business transactions and also learnt how to manage resources (money). I also learnt how to adjust expenditures, how to choose a business site that would be attractive to customers and bring in new customers. I also learnt how to identify goods needed in the community. I learnt how to type and also how to prepare documents and letters with a computer and also gained Excel and database management skills." – male project participant, 34, Pujehun

"I learnt so much through the SMS/audio platform which encouraged me to have an interest in business." – female project participant, 30, Pujehun

Qualitative and quantitative feedback from young respondents and KIs illuminates different stakeholders' perspectives on the project's relevance.

**(i) User feedback on ICT trainings provided at youth hubs**

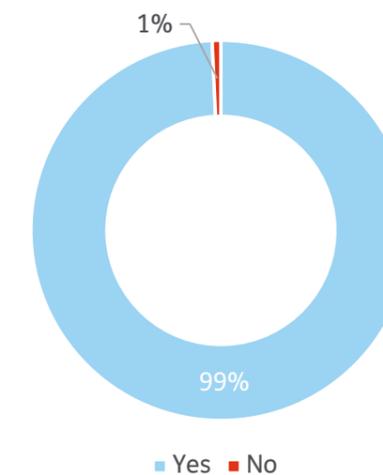
- Of the 136 youth hub users interviewed, the **vast majority rated hub-based ICT trainings as either 'excellent' (48%) or 'good' (46%)**. Only 2 (4%) users rated ICT trainings as either 'poor' or 'very poor', both of whom in Pujehun.
- A slightly **higher proportion of female (52%) than male (43%)** respondents rated ICT trainings as 'excellent'.
- Across locations, **users of the Sensi Tech Hub in Freetown were typically more satisfied** with the quality of ICT trainings provided: 69% reported them as 'excellent', compared to 46% of users in Makeni and 45% in Pujehun.
- The vast majority **(99%) of youth hub users stated they would recommend hub ICT trainings** to their friends and family.

In qualitative feedback, many young respondents shared strong praise for youth hub services. A recurring theme was that many felt the **ICDL training content was well suited** to establishing a basic foundation in computers, and that from it, they had **learnt essential skills they would never otherwise have acquired**: this being the first time, for many, that they had seen or touched a PC. This is unsurprising, as the project design identified ICT training in Sierra Leone as expensive and not widely available, and therefore selected hub users from among the poorest and most marginalised households. KIs attested to the particular relevance of the Computer Aid hub and ICT training provided in **Pujehun** – a rural, highly impoverished district in which many residents lack access to basic digital technologies.

Users were also highly appreciative of the manner in which ICT trainings were delivered – many found the **quality of instruction** to be very high, and liked the fact that trainers took the time to explain concepts and course material in detail. Several respondents also mentioned that they liked receiving an **ICT certificate** post-training, and that these were particularly helpful for bolstering CVs and supporting those searching for employment.

Users also shared **some negative feedback and recommendations** for what could be improved at

Fig. 7 - 'Would you recommend the youth hub ICT trainings to your friends and family?'



the hubs. Many users and KIs reported that hubs were **too small, sometimes uncomfortable**, and that they had **insufficient and often faulty equipment** (both PCs and power/internet facilities). In addition, a handful of users with low levels of education found that **illiteracy remained a major obstacle** to them benefiting from ICT trainings – in spite of having completed NFE trainings prior to attending hubs. A related issue, shared by participants with both low and high educational backgrounds, was that **mixed-level cohorts sometimes proved challenging**: those with lower levels of schooling felt course content was too difficult and the delivery of trainings 'rushed', while those with higher education levels wished for more advanced and accelerated trainings.

It should be noted that one of these key challenges – concerning the low number of PCs – was addressed in the lifetime of the project. Following communication of this issue from hub leads to the Freetown YMCA office, **CAI provided an additional 10 laptops at each hub** in Makeni and Pujehun, thereby doubling the number of workstations available (each initially had 10 low-consumption desktops) and in turn allowing for twice as many users to be trained simultaneously (with laptops being charged overnight and seating provided in the hub's outdoor area).

A **second instance of adaptive management** at youth hubs came in response to a **security incident** at the Makeni hub in February 2020, in which a solar panel, several PCs and other valuables were stolen. Sierra Leone YMCA responded by reporting the incident to the authorities, replacing and reinstalling the stolen items, and later strengthening security measures through the recruitment of additional security guards. The centre continued to function with no pause in services following the incident.

**Box 2: Feedback on youth hub ICT trainings and facilities**

“With no experience in ICT, during this training I have gained experience in computer software which I am using to upgrade my business.” - male project participant, 30, Freetown

“One important thing about the ICT [training] is the certificate given to us, which we use to find jobs, and it has helped me to have a broad knowledge about computers.” - female project participant, 28, Pujehun

“I liked the learning environment and the teachers also were good and encouraging.” - female project participant, 27, Pujehun

“The training was great because we had very good instructors. The only thing that I disliked was there were not enough computers.” - female project participant, 28, Freetown

“I enjoyed services in the hub, but the facility is too small for the targeted number of participants.” - female project participant, 19, Pujehun

“The training time was not enough as we had fast and slow learners.” - male project participant, 24, Pujehun

“I like the equipment in the training centre and [that it is] accessible to all, but I dislike the attitude of some participants who are not serious about the program.” - male project participant, 31, Pujehun

“Illiteracy stopped me from continuing the ICT training. We were taught well but I wasn't grasping a lot due to the fact that I am not lettered, so I quit.” - male project participant, 26, Makeni

“The seating accommodation was poor, computers were not enough for participants and computers had problems frequently. All these problems must...change for an improved service.” - male project participant, 23, Pujehun

“The solar panels were problems; during the rainy season the computers will just go off during ICT classes. A generator will be nice for the hub as a standby to provide electricity during the rainy season.” - male project participant, 27, Makeni

“Slow learners and fast learners should be separated in different sessions.” - male project participant, 26, Makeni

**(ii) User feedback on remote E&E support**

- Feedback on remote E&E support services – namely the SMS/audio training platform, and community business coaching – was solicited from **88** project participants. Of these 88, **45% rated remote services as ‘good’, 22% as ‘excellent’, 15% as ‘adequate’, 13% as ‘poor’, and 1% as ‘very poor’.**

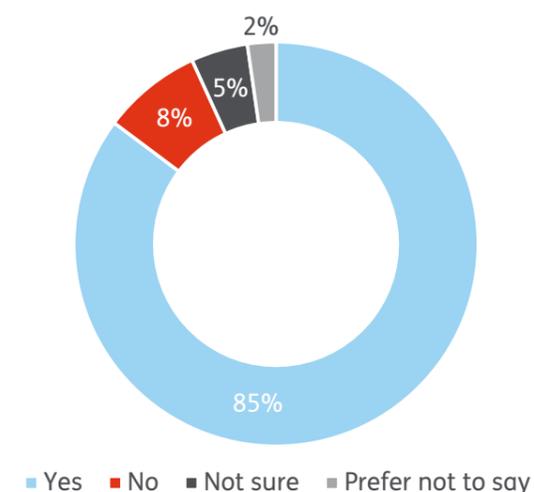
- Some differences were found across gender, with **almost a quarter (24%) of female respondents rating the services as ‘excellent’,** compared to 19% of males. In contrast, 19% of young men deemed remote services as either ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, compared to 10% of young women. In

qualitative feedback, many young women spoke of **the improved business skills, independence and self-reliance** they had developed from taking part in the scheme (see ‘Impact’ for more).

- 85% of survey respondents said they would recommend the SMS/audio training scheme, accompanied by in-person business coaching,** to their friends and family. This is fewer than the 99% of users that said they would recommend the project's in-person youth hub services (see Figure 7), but still represents a large majority<sup>33</sup>.

A review of project documents, alongside key informant interviews with staff and other stakeholders, shed further light on these findings.

**Fig. 8 - ‘Would you recommend the SMS/audio training scheme to your friends and family?’**



Initially, remote activities planned to send paper workbooks to users, who were expected to go through their content, and then test their learning via an **SMS-based question-and-answer (Q&A) system**. However, and as explored in more detail in the ‘Effectiveness’ section of this report, project partners faced several major operational constraints in the development and roll-out of this platform. These included technical challenges – namely, frequent power outages, poor mobile network and limited internet connectivity in target locations – as well as issues with long-term staff illness, and budgeting (see pp.56-57 for more details). These led to a **severe delay in the delivery of the remote skills training** to remote participants – with the system only being rolled out in April 2020.

However, in order to maintain relevance within this project stream, consortium partners introduced several important adaptations. First, Sierra Leone YMCA and ACTB **incorporated face-to-face business coaching and mentoring services** for remote participants. These were implemented in Year 2 of the project following budget reallocations, and were intended to **complement learning done via the mobile-based training platform**.

Secondly, OOR introduced a major pivot to the system's technology itself, by **adding an audio training component to the mobile platform**. This was done in response to pilot results in late 2018, which found that a high number of users struggled with SMS due to low levels of literacy. As heard from OOR's Head of Technology, going from an SMS to an SMS-and-audio-based platform was “a big pivot point in the project” that posed many challenges, both in terms of resources (with budget allocations only initially intended for SMS), as well as technical

limitations and challenges of working within a largely monopolised telecommunications sector. Different solutions – like international voice calling – were explored, but ultimately proved cost-prohibitive. These led OOR to eventually construct **a custom piece of hardware and bespoke software, capable of playing back voice recordings (in English and Krio) to users without cost**.

A third important adaptation within this stream was **OOOR's recruitment, in Year 2 of the project, of a Technical Support Officer in Freetown**. While OOR staff were previously all UK-based, providing remote technical support accompanied by occasional international visits, the decision to hire and train a member of staff in Sierra Leone proved a key project pivot and an important piece of learning. Although entering the project late, this person came to serve a key role in addressing in-country challenges with hardware installation, system troubleshooting, and communication with Sierra Leonean partners.

Several themes also emerged in qualitative feedback from remote participants. Primarily, while many **liked the course content, found it relevant to business management, and enjoyed its delivery** through the dual channels of SMS/audio and face-to-face coaching, **a high proportion of respondents provided negative feedback** on this approach and shared their general disappointment with the scheme.

The most common issues reported by remote participants included: a **lack of clarity and instruction** on how to use the SMS/audio system to access training content; b) the **lengthy delays** between training messages, and generally **poor communication** with them about the project (many respondents felt ‘in the dark’ as to when the scheme would start and training messages would arrive); and c) the fact that **many illiterate users could not make sense of the training platform – even with the introduction of OOR's audio solution**. In addition, several respondents shared stories of community **coaches being unprofessional and unhelpful** – in one instance, reportedly laughing at a participant when they did not understand whether an SMS they had received was from the YMCA – while also being frequently unavailable when support was needed.

Such issues were reinforced by the many **practical constraints young women and men in targeted rural communities face** to actually using their mobile phones. For instance, **poor phone network** was frequently cited as a reason for not receiving training messages; meanwhile, **high cost and limited access to electricity** meant many could not keep their



phones regularly charged as required (in some cases, users would have to travel to other villages to charge phones); and **shared mobile ownership** (typically with older male family members or husbands) restricted the amount of time young female participants could spend on their phones. All of these reflect the realities that **technology in targeted rural areas is highly dependent not only on users' access**

**to phones themselves, but also to a host of other factors - including electricity and mobile network.** Finally, several respondents noted that, perhaps underpinning many of these issues, was a **general lack of monitoring of remote trainees' progress** by the YMCA. All of the above issues reflect the need for better planning of key project components among organisations involved in the scheme.

### Box 3: Feedback on remote E&E training scheme

"What I like about the SMS training was the time and care the community coaches used to explain training modules sent to us via SMS - this helped me better understand the training modules. I also liked especially the business training given, which was a good experience to my knowledge. What I dislike was the poor internet, which limited us from accessing the platform most of the time. Also, there was a delay in the sending out of modules which overall delayed the entire program." – female project participant, 27, Pujehun

"The business ideas that were given to me were great. Now I can check my income and expenditure." – male project participant, 27, Makeni

"I cannot read so it was hard for me to notice the training messages." – male project participant, 29, Pujehun

"I can't read and the community coaches were not always there for me, so it was a challenge. Sometimes when I received an SMS from the mobile network, I thought it was from the YMCA. If I took my phone to the community coaches to help me out they ended up laughing at me." – male project participant, 27, Pujehun

"The people that were interpreting the SMS were very helpful to me because I cannot read and write." – female project participant, 25, Pujehun

"The SMS was not consistent; it takes over a month to receive the next SMS." – male project participant, 25, Pujehun

"The program was not interesting to me because they only messaged me twice and since then it's only now that I have received a call from you." – female project participant, 28, Pujehun

"I am sharing the phone with my husband so to access the phone when he is not around is difficult." – female project participant, 25, Makeni

"We have problems with electricity in this community; airtime is also difficult to get." – male project participant, 24, Makeni

"I disliked the fact that I was not adequately informed on the use of the text message. [There was] not much guidance." – female project participant, 22, Pujehun

"The topics that were taught are relevant to business. I disliked the improper directives on how to make sense of the messages." – male project participant, 26, Pujehun

"What I like about the audio/SMS training is that it's very simple and easy to understand. My dislike is that we have poor network facilities in my community." – female project participant, 22, Pujehun

"We don't receive the messages frequently and most of the time I don't understand the messages. The idea was great but the implementation was not good." – female project participant, 25, Pujehun

Table 6 – Participant feedback on the project's two 'technological solutions':

Feedback on youth hub ICT services	Feedback on remote SMS/audio E&E skills training (& business coaching)
<p>Likes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Generally high quality of instruction</b> – trainees felt trainers were professional, well-versed in course content, and patient in their delivery.</li> <li>• <b>Useful training content</b> – course curriculum was well suited to the majority of participants' wishes and requirements, and for establishing fundamentals of ICTs. It covered an introduction to computers, 7 different pieces of software (including Microsoft Office), how to surf the internet, as well as other core PC skills like typing.</li> <li>• <b>Certification</b> – trainees showed strong appreciation for the certificate received at the end of trainings, particularly those seeking formal work and wishing to bolster their CVs.</li> </ul>	<p>Likes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Useful training content</b> – for those who successfully accessed and followed the remote platform, many found its content useful and relevant to starting/managing a business.</li> <li>• <b>Some preference for distance learning</b> – some participants enjoyed being able to learn business techniques on their phones, on-the-go or from the comfort of their homes.</li> <li>• <b>Added value of community coaching</b> – several respondents found the in-person community coaching to be the most useful aspect of the remote scheme, and something that was needed to navigate the SMS/audio platform.</li> </ul>
<p>Dislikes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hub size too small</b> – trainees mentioned there was not enough space at all 3 hubs to accommodate every student.</li> <li>• <b>High trainee : trainer ratio</b> – trainees felt they did not get enough 1-to-1 support, or had difficulties concentrating due to large/cramped cohort sizes.</li> <li>• <b>Too few computers/faulty equipment</b> – PC units sometimes broke or malfunctioned, leaving trainees to share workstations.</li> <li>• <b>Hub power and internet were poor</b> – making training difficult, particularly during rainy season.</li> <li>• <b>Challenges with mixed-level cohorts</b> – some felt course content was too difficult and delivery of trainings 'rushed'; others wished for more advanced training and felt that trainings were too slow.</li> <li>• <b>Illiteracy a continuing barrier</b> - despite prior NFE training, some ICT trainees were not literate enough to benefit from ICT course content.</li> <li>• <b>Limited scope for trainees to practise skills</b> – many trainees only have access to ICTs at the hub, so there are limited options for them to reinforce/embed learning (particularly for those living far from hubs).</li> <li>• <b>Transportation</b> - several trainees reported challenges in physically reaching the centre, leading to absenteeism or late arrival at trainings.</li> </ul>	<p>Dislikes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of clarity/guidance in training messages</b> – many found the SMS/audio platform to be non-user-friendly and the training content difficult to understand; only a handful found the platform and its training content clear and easy to follow.</li> <li>• <b>Infrequency of SMS shots</b> – many cited a long delay between project enrolment and the first and then subsequent training messages, explaining how this inhibited effective learning and contributed to their drop-out/loss of interest in the scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Illiteracy a continuing barrier, despite audio</b> – even with the implementation of the audio solution, many users did not know how to recognise a training message from the platform and so did not understand how to launch and access the audio training.</li> <li>• <b>Practical constraints to phone usage</b> – many reported poor phone network, shared phone ownership (notably young women), cost of phone credit, lack of electricity to charge phones, and some phones not having audio capability, as practical constraints to learning via the platform.</li> <li>• <b>Poor quality community coaching</b> – many reported issues with community coaches who were supposed to facilitate the remote E&amp;E learning, including unprofessionalism and unavailability.</li> <li>• <b>General dislike of distance learning</b> – several trainees did not like the medium of the training, and wished for a comprehensive in-person training course.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of monitoring/follow-up on trainees' progress</b> – several felt that, without a proper monitoring system, the onus of learning was very much on users, and that the project was not actively concerned for their learning.</li> </ul>
<p>Requests/recommended areas for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase the physical space</b> available at hubs.</li> <li>• <b>Improve seating and ventilation</b> to make hubs more comfortable.</li> <li>• <b>Reduce cohort sizes/increase number of trainers</b> and training assistants.</li> <li>• Have <b>support staff</b> on hand to troubleshoot technical problems during trainings (otherwise trainers must do so).</li> <li>• <b>Separate cohorts</b> based on existing capacities (e.g. 'slow' and 'advanced' stream learning).</li> <li>• Install <b>additional computers</b> to accommodate more students.</li> <li>• Improve hub <b>internet</b> quality.</li> <li>• Install <b>back-up generators</b> to provide power when solar panels fail.</li> <li>• Provide trainees with (temporary) <b>PCs/tablets to take home</b> so they can continue learning outside of labs.</li> </ul>	<p>Requests/recommended areas for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Notify illiterate users</b> when trainings will begin either through a direct phone call or recorded voice message.</li> <li>• <b>Reduce delays</b> between training messages.</li> <li>• Effectively <b>train and monitor community coaches</b>.</li> <li>• Provide <b>multi-lingual liaison staff</b> (Krio, Mende, Temne, English) in targeted communities.</li> <li>• Have project staff (independent of community coaches) conduct <b>regular monitoring visits</b> in communities.</li> <li>• Strengthen <b>remote beneficiary feedback and response mechanisms</b>, so that complaints and grievances can be aptly dealt with.</li> <li>• Establish <b>remote beneficiary groups</b>, including local business owners, for users to share issues and learning.</li> <li>• <b>Effectively communicate</b> to potential participants at selection the expectations and practical requirements of the remote skills training platform.</li> <li>• Install (solar-powered) <b>charging points in targeted communities</b> to tackle electricity challenges.</li> <li>• Provide users with <b>phone credit</b>.</li> <li>• Translate SMS/audio messages into <b>other languages and dialects</b> (workbooks were provided in Krio only).</li> <li>• Complement technological solution and community coaches with <b>other inputs</b> (e.g. business start-up grants).</li> </ul>

**(iii) User feedback on other 'in-person' services: E&E, vocational, NFE and soft skills/leadership training, and post-training support (inc. business mentoring)**

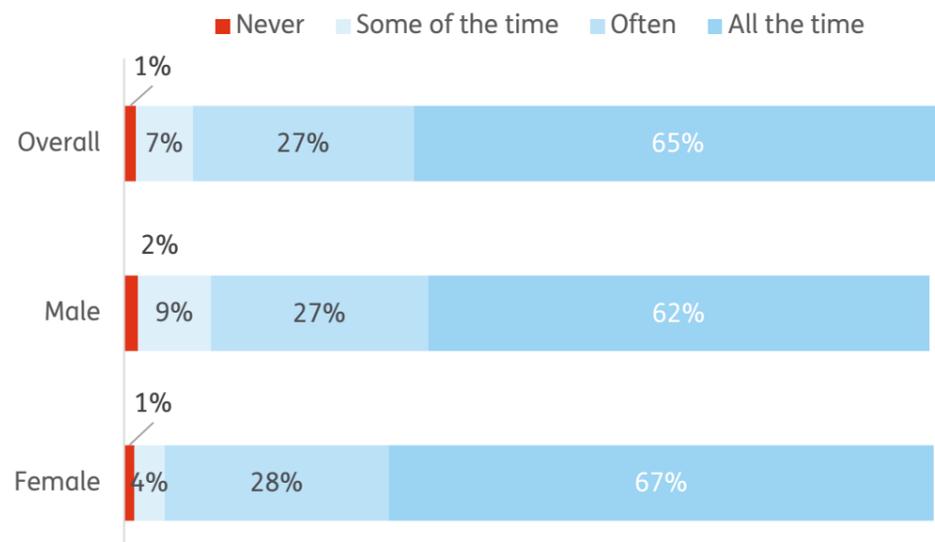
- Of the 133 in-person E&E trainees interviewed, **over two thirds (68%) rated E&E skills training as 'excellent', while the remaining 32% rated it as 'good'**. The highest trainee satisfaction rate was in **Pujehun**, with 76% of respondents rating the training as 'excellent'. No significant differences were noted across gender.
- Of the 50 vocational skills trainees interviewed, exactly **half (50%) rated the project's vocational training courses as 'excellent'**. A further 46% rated them as 'good', while 4% deemed them 'adequate'. As with other services, a higher proportion of female (55%) than male (43%) trainees rated vocational courses provided by the project as 'excellent'.
- Of the 97 **non-formal education (NFE)** trainees interviewed, **more than half (60%) rated them as 'excellent', 38% as 'good', 1% as 'adequate', and 1% as 'very poor'**. Comparing responses across locations, trainees in Pujehun typically provided higher ratings than those in the other locations, with 70% of respondents rating NFE courses as 'excellent'.
- Of the 140 survey respondents who received **post-training E&E support, like business mentoring, almost two thirds (65%) rated the quality of this support as 'excellent'**. A further 34% deemed post-training support services

'good'. A marginally higher proportion of female (66%) than male (63%) respondents rated these services as 'excellent'. Meanwhile, **Pujehun** again stood out with the highest satisfaction rate, with 74% of respondents from the district rating post-training inputs as 'excellent', compared to 59% in Makeni and 46% in Freetown.

- Finally, as depicted in Figure 9, when asked **how often mentees apply the advice given by business mentors in their day-to-day life, 65% reported they do so 'all the time', 27% 'often', 7% 'some of the time', and just 1% 'never'**. Many spoke of how **mentors' advice was essential to reinforcing the learning** gained from trainings, well tailored to their individual needs, and critical to further developing their businesses.
- In Makeni and Pujehun, over two thirds (69% and 68%, respectively) of respondents said they apply mentors' advice 'all the time', compared to **fewer than a third of respondents (31%) in Freetown**. Across all 4 locations, young women typically applied advice from their business mentors more frequently than young men. In follow-up, female respondents more commonly spoke of how **mentors' advice was relevant to their businesses**, and that they appreciated having a support figure/role model from whom they could turn to for **on-the-job business support**.

In qualitative feedback, participants listed a range of benefits from the various (non-hub-based) project services. Among E&E trainees, many cited the particular utility of developing business management skills, including **book-keeping, financial management, market research and marketing**

**Fig. 9 - 'How often do you apply the advice given by your mentor in your day to day life?', by gender:**



**Box 4: Feedback on other in-person services provided to participants**

- “The computer training is useful to my business because I do all my record-keeping on my computer.” – male project participant, 25, Pujehun
- “The business skills training fosters self-reliance and gives you know-how on how to run your business. A computer gives you the key to opportunities.” – male project participant, 22, Makeni
- “In business, I’m a tailor: I can use the internet to see recent styles.” – male project participant, 26, Makeni
- “I have been going to trainings but this training done by YMCA is quite different from all others, as it teaches me a lot when it comes to business. All the trainings I received are very much useful to my life because I am practising them now.” - female project participant, 30, Pujehun
- “The training I received on stress management is presently helping me overcome challenges; from the leadership/soft skills training I received, I feel very confident to always take the lead and become successful. The ICT skills are already helping me grow my business, while the training I got on savings and credit is helping me save some of my income.” – female project participant, 22, Pujehun
- “Business mentoring [has helped me] build a pathway towards establishing a successful business.” – female project participant, 25 Kenema
- “I can properly price my goods which prevents me from losses.” – male project participant, 23, Pujehun
- “I was unable to read and write before I took part in the project but now, I can boast of plenty of knowledge in counting and other business skills.” – female project participant, 25, Makeni
- “Absolutely, for the leadership program, it has changed my attitude, behaviours and improved my level of understanding and analysing of issues and policies. [I’m] able to accept others’ views as relevant and give them a platform to express themselves.” – young female beneficiary, 35, Pujehun

**skills.** Others mentioned **the value-added of understanding their customer bases, identifying high-value goods and services, optimally pricing products, and knowing how to develop and execute a business plan.** In addition, many of the 469 young people who completed NFE courses prior to other activities deemed these to be an effective and necessary pre-condition for them to benefit from other in-person courses. Moreover, many trainees - across location, gender and educational background - noted the importance the project had engendered in them towards **developing savings:** both as a means to creating personal safety nets, and for re-investing in their businesses. Lastly, many young participants - and particularly young women - shared how the project’s psycho-social support and soft skills/leadership training were critical to **developing interpersonal skills, overcoming personal challenges, and building their self-confidence.**

As seen in Box 4, one finding that stands out

in feedback from respondents is the **inter-connectedness of in-person support services.** The evaluation found many participants were **applying their newly-acquired ICT skills to develop their business aims,** for instance, using Microsoft Excel to track personal and business finances; using Publisher to design business cards, banners and leaflets; and browsing the internet to research product trends, market prices, and opportunities. For those seeking employment, ICT skills and hub PCs have also been used to **find vacancies and apply to jobs online.**

KIs echoed several of these sentiments, reflecting, for instance, on how NFE courses enabled many young people to **become the first in their families to read and write.** They also spoke of how psycho-social support and soft skills activities were **highly needed following the 2014-16 Ebola virus outbreak,** with many young participants having been deeply affected by the virus, and the project serving as a “bridge” for many to rebuild in the aftermath of such trauma.

## Identifying priority needs among marginalised youth

What the findings above indicate is that, on the whole, the **project has provided a large number of young people with important skills**, which they deem highly relevant, frequently apply now in their lives, and which they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to obtain.

That a **large proportion of young participants were selected from among the most marginalised and poorest households** in their communities (themselves, among some of the poorest in Sierra Leone) is **testament to partners having identified priority youth needs** in the target locations and having sought measures to alleviate these.

This is attested to by community leaders and other KIs involved in participant selection, who also reported the **high number of youth-focused actors that were consulted** at project inception to help consortium partners better understand the needs of young people in target locations, as well as the opportunities available for E&E-focused services.

As Table 5 shows, the participant selection exercise **deliberately targeted young people from a range of backgrounds**, with the majority being either **unemployed or earning a subsistence income** from irregular and precarious informal employment prior to taking part in the project. Of the 'Existing business owners' that took part in the project, many reported that their businesses had collapsed or declined prior to enrolling in trainings, and that (as hub leads and training providers verified), many in this group actually had **poor knowledge of formal business management** before entering the project.

Among the 'Educated but unemployed' category, the evaluation spoke with many participants who had **obtained university degrees that failed to provide them with relevant professional skills**, leaving them out of work and facing even greater pressures from expectant family members and spouses.

That there was excess demand for almost all of the trainings provided, both at participant selection stage, and throughout their implementation, is testament to the **high level of need for the types of services the project offered in the target areas**.

The extent to which project activities have contributed to positive **impacts** among these groups and their wider communities is explored in the next section.



# Findings - Impact

An investigation of the high-level changes – or impacts<sup>34</sup> – generated by the project was guided by three research questions:

1. What **high-level changes** (both positive and negative) has the project brought about (directly or indirectly, intendedly or unintendedly)?
2. What have been **the most significant changes** in the lives of the project's direct beneficiaries, families and local communities since the project began, **from the perspective of these stakeholders**? To what extent do they consider that **the project, as opposed to other factors**, has contributed to these changes?
3. **Have impacts varied** for different target areas, groups or individuals? If so, how and why?

In all, the evaluation found that the project has **directly contributed to several positive, high-level changes** in the lives of targeted youth populations and their communities. This is particularly true for those who took part in the **in-person** project stream.

From the perspective of survey respondents and KIs, the most significant changes the project helped foster pertain to major improvements in the **quality and number of livelihood opportunities available to young people**, the **subsequent growth in their incomes and savings**, and **increased levels of self-confidence and wellbeing**. In addition, the project has contributed to broader changes benefitting members of young people's households and wider communities. These include the **increased contributions young people make towards household costs**, the **onward transfer of new skills and knowledge to others**, and the **creation of extra jobs** in enterprises supported by the project.

## Helping young people secure livelihood opportunities

Findings from the participant survey indicate that the project has been broadly **successful in supporting young people into paid economic activities and, in particular, into enterprise and self-employment**. This outcome is in line with partners' greater emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship, a deliberate strategy in response to the lack of formal, well-paid jobs available for young people in almost all project areas. Given that when many

young participants enrolled in the project, they were unemployed, running struggling businesses, or in states of precarious employment, the following findings demonstrate a marked improvement in young people's access to livelihood opportunities:

- **Almost three quarters (73%) of survey respondents were self-employed or running their own business** at the time of data collection. This was by far the most common work status. A further 9% were in the process of setting up a business.
- The next most common status of young respondents was 'looking for work'<sup>35</sup>, comprising of **6% of all respondents**.
- A number of respondents were also in formal or informal employment, with **3% working full-time for someone else**, 2% working occasionally as day labourers, and 1% in part-time employment.
- The remaining respondents were in other forms of economic activity including **studying (4%), unpaid (3%) and paid (1%) volunteer roles**, and working as trainees, apprentices or interns (1%).
- Just 6 (2%) of respondents were **out of the labour force** (i.e. neither working nor seeking work). Five of these were young women.

Some important **differences in work status were noted across gender, location and project stream**:

- A slightly **higher proportion of young women (86%) were running or setting up a business** than young men (78%). In contrast, **young male respondents were more likely to be looking for a job (8%)**, working occasionally as day labourers (4%) and in unpaid volunteer roles (6%), compared to female counterparts (4%, 0% and 1%, respectively). This perhaps reflects the higher barriers young women face to securing employment in the informal and formal sectors.
- Across locations, **Pujehun had the highest rates of youth entrepreneurship**: with **90%** of respondents either running (79%) or setting up a business (11%). Meanwhile, roughly three quarters of respondents in both Makeni (76%) and Kenema (75%) were self-employed, compared to 62% of respondents in Freetown.

Fig. 10 – Work status of survey respondents at time of data collection<sup>15</sup>:



- **In Freetown, a much higher proportion of respondents were found to be working full-time for someone else (23%)**, compared to 13% in Kenema, 3% in Pujehun and 0% in Makeni. This likely reflects the greater availability of employment opportunities in the Sierra Leonean capital, versus smaller towns and cities.
- All survey respondents that reported they were out of the labour force (6) were from **Makeni**.
- When comparing work statuses of in-person and remote participants, a **slightly higher proportion of remote (86%) than in-person (80%) participants were found to be running or setting up a business**, with no notable differences in employment rates.
- However, 13 of the 14 respondents that were looking for a job were from the project's in-person activity stream.

Further analysis of these sub-categories highlights some important findings concerning young participants' work status:

### Young entrepreneurs

- **Half of the 202 young business owners surveyed reported that they began their business after taking part in the project**. The remaining 40% already had businesses before taking part in QYL. Data was unavailable for the remaining 10%.

- Concerning business types, many young entrepreneurs were **wholesalers or retailers running provision shops and market stalls** – trading in food, cooking items, household goods, clothes, cosmetics and mobile money transfers, among other goods and products. Additionally, many ran service businesses as **hairdressers, electricians, tailors, caterers, welders, farmers, commercial tricycle-riders and mechanics**.
- A large majority (90%) of young entrepreneurs were **sole owners** of their businesses. Of the 8% that reportedly shared their business with someone else<sup>36</sup>, the number of co-owners ranged from between 1 and 4, with an average of 1.8.
- Approximately **13% of young entrepreneurs employed other people in their businesses**; those that did **employed an average of 2.04 others**. That is, of the 202 young business owners surveyed in the final evaluation, participants created 51 additional jobs, employing 18 female and 33 male non-project-participants. Extrapolating this finding would suggest that, **for every 1 young person the project supported into enterprise, this created an average of 1.26 jobs through knock-on job creation**.

### Young people in employment

- Of the 28 survey respondents in employment and volunteer roles, just **over half (54%) reported that they had started their current role since taking part in the project**.

- Sectors and types of employment varied widely. Frequently, young people were formally employed in **schools, NGOs and government bodies**, while others had informal work statuses, such as **working for family members and private individuals**.
- In KIIs, staff and other stakeholders shared **testimonies of young people obtaining jobs directly linked to the project's vocational trainings**, in sectors including catering, hairdressing, mechanical and electrical engineering, agriculture, and waste management.
- While vocational trainees secured jobs following apprenticeships organised by the project, several young people also found work by making use of their new ICT skills. Notable stories that were shared with the evaluation included a young man in Pujehun who secured work as a **data entry clerk** at a government hospital, and young participants in Freetown employed to run **social media updates** during the 2018 presidential election.

**Young people with other statuses:**

- Students:** A total of 10 (4%) survey respondents were studying at the time of data collection (1 of whom was simultaneously running a business). Subjects varied widely, including Development Economics, Business Administration, Nursing and Plumbing. When asked whether participating in the project had benefited them in any way in their studies, **8 of 10 said it helped them significantly**. In particular, students mentioned that the **hub-learnt ICT skills** served them in their assignments, and that E&E courses provided a helpful foundation and inspiration for pursuing further business studies.
- Job-seekers:** Of the 14 (6%) survey respondents who were seeking work at the time of data collection, 4 were simultaneously working. The majority of these 14 had been looking for work for over a year. When asked whether the project had helped them in any way to find a job, **9 of the 14 said it had helped them either significantly or slightly**, citing course certificates provided by the project as helpful CV-boosters, and the newly-acquired ICT skills as very practical when searching and applying for jobs online. 3 out of 14 job-seekers said the project had not helped them in any way to find a job.

- Young people out of the labour force:** Limited data was collected on the 6 respondents that said they were not looking for work. All 6 were from Makeni, 5 of whom were young women, and 3 of whom had never attended school. 1 among them said they were a full-time housewife. Of note, all lived in above-average household sizes, with 5 out of 6 respondents living in households of thirteen or more members.

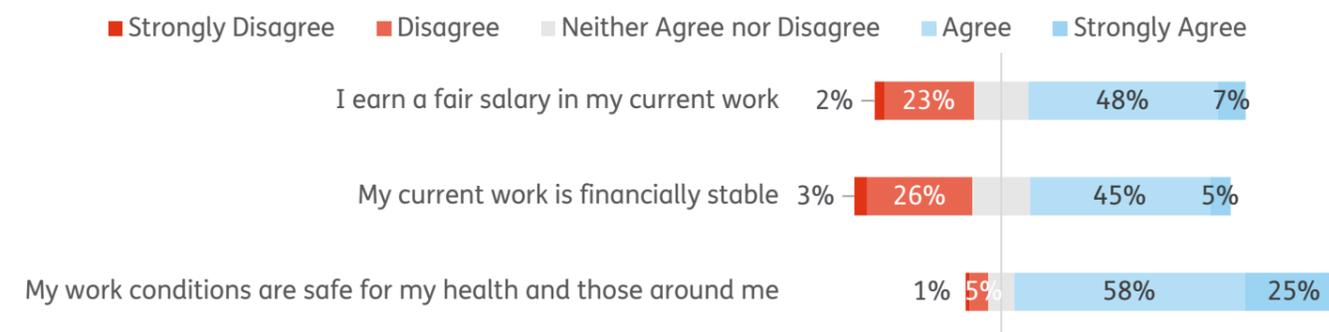
**Supporting youth into 'decent work'**

In addition to measuring attainment of work opportunities, the evaluation also sought to assess the **quality of these opportunities** - that is, the extent to which they represent **decent, safe and sustainable livelihood options for young participants**.

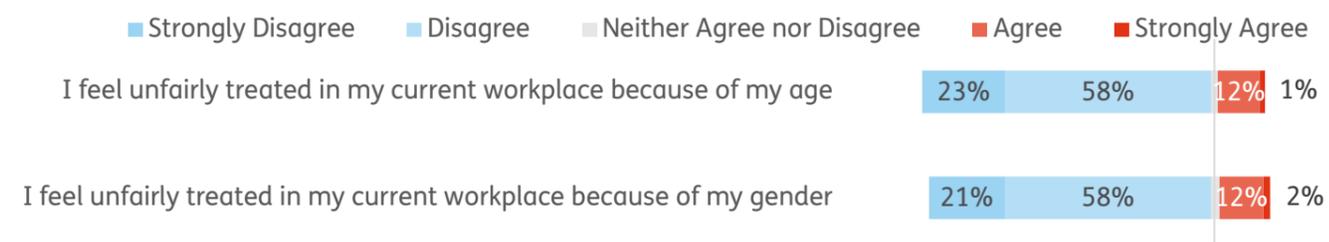
It did so in part by investigating survey respondents' perceptions of the quality of their work, and asking them the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements about their current livelihood sources. Findings are demonstrated in Figures 11 and 12:

- A **large majority (83%) of economically active young people felt that their working conditions were safe** for both themselves and those around them, with a quarter or respondents strongly agreeing with this statement. In contrast, 6% of respondents disagreed with this statement.
- Meanwhile, **just over half (55%) felt they earned a fair salary in their current work**; of concern, a quarter of participants believed they did not. The latter group included young women and men from all 4 locations, and across participant stream, work status and sector.
- Mirroring the above finding, **half of respondents believed their current work to be financially stable**, compared to 29% that did not. As explored further in the 'Sustainability' section of this report, many of those that felt their current livelihoods were unstable shared stories of being adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related transmission prevention measures. At the time of the evaluation, many voiced concerns around the economic uncertainties and future effects of the virus on their incomes and livelihoods.

**Fig. 11 – 'Decent work' measures: Extent to which survey respondents agree with the following statements<sup>37</sup>:**



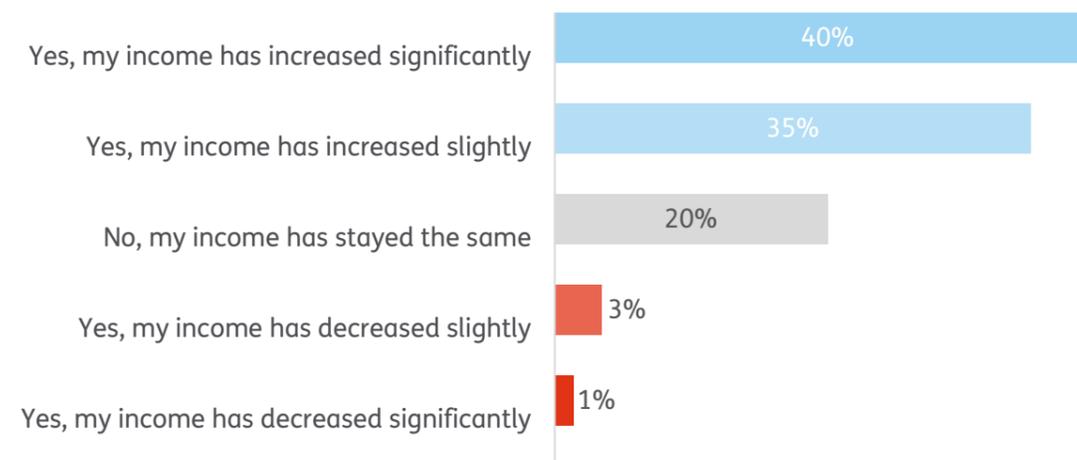
**Fig. 12 – 'Decent work' measures (continued):**



- Moreover, **13% and 14% of respondents felt they receive unfair treatment at work due to their age and gender, respectively**. For those in employment, this pertains to treatment by employers and colleagues; for those running their businesses, it concerns interactions with suppliers, customers and potential investors.
- On average, **young women were more likely than young men to report unfair workplace**

**treatment** on both accounts, but particularly with regards to gender-based discrimination. Indeed, **17% of female respondents in work reported receiving unfair treatment based on their gender** - 7 percentage points higher than the figure for their male counterparts. This reflects the pervasive gender-based norms, practices and dynamics that continue to disproportionately hinder young women seeking work and business opportunities in the targeted locations.

**Fig. 13 – 'Has your income changed since taking part in the project?'<sup>12</sup>**



### Livelihoods driving higher incomes

While having the skills, resources and networks to obtain decent work are ends in themselves, the project primarily sought to promote these as **a means to enhancing young people's incomes** and, ultimately, their standards of living. The evaluation found that many young participants were now **generating regular incomes higher than those they earned before taking part in the project**. In addition, the vast majority identified completion of trainings and other project inputs as key factors driving growth in their incomes:

- Among the 238 survey respondents for whom income data was available, **209 (88%) had one or more regular sources of income** as of the data collection period. The evaluation also found some degree of **livelihood diversification**, with 13% of respondents having at least two regular sources of income<sup>38</sup>.
- As seen in Figure 13, **40% of respondents reported that their income had 'increased significantly' since taking part in the project**. A further **35% reported that it had 'increased slightly'**, while 20% said it had 'stayed the same', and 4% said it had decreased.
- Data collected on young people's average incomes before and after taking part in the project verify these findings: **83% of respondents experienced an increase in their incomes over the project lifetime**.

Fig. 14 - 'How many regular sources of income do you currently have?'<sup>11</sup>

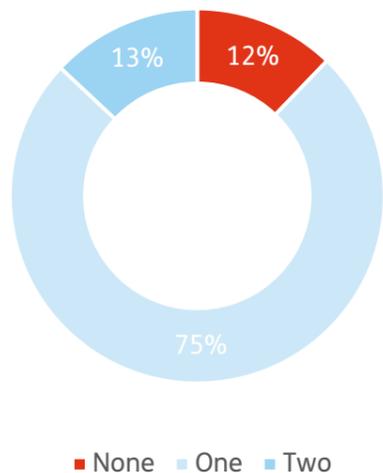


Fig. 15 – Monthly incomes of survey respondents, by gender, before and after taking part in the project:



- The **average monthly income** for young respondents as of the data collection period was **Le 516,147** (approximately £51<sup>6</sup>). Typically, **young men earned more than young women**: average male monthly incomes were Le 603,010 (£59), compared to average female incomes of Le 454,281 (£44).

As Figure 15 and Box 5 show, both female and male participant groups experienced broad positive income shifts since taking part in project activities.

- **Overall, incomes rose on average by a factor of 2.16** (the equivalent of a 116-percentage point increase). **For young women, earnings increased by a factor of 2.06; for men, by a factor of 2.27.**
- Meanwhile, **median monthly incomes across both groups rose by a factor of 3**, from Le 100,000 (£9.80) before the project to Le 300,000 (£29.40) following it.
- Before the project, **50% of all participants earned Le 100,000 or less per month**. As of May 2020, that proportion was significantly lower, at 21%.

- At the upper end of income ranges, **almost a third (31%) of respondents were earning Le 500,000 or more per month, compared to 13% before the project**. Furthermore, **30 (13%) survey respondents reported current earnings of Le 1 million or more per month**. Just 9 of these were earning above that threshold pre-project, demonstrating the value-added of project inputs for those both with and without existing livelihoods.

Box 5: Key income statistics before and after the project<sup>6</sup>

**Le 239,410 (£23) → Le 516,417 (£51)**

Average Monthly Income

**Le 100,000 (£9.80) → Le 300,000 (£29.40)**

Median Monthly Income

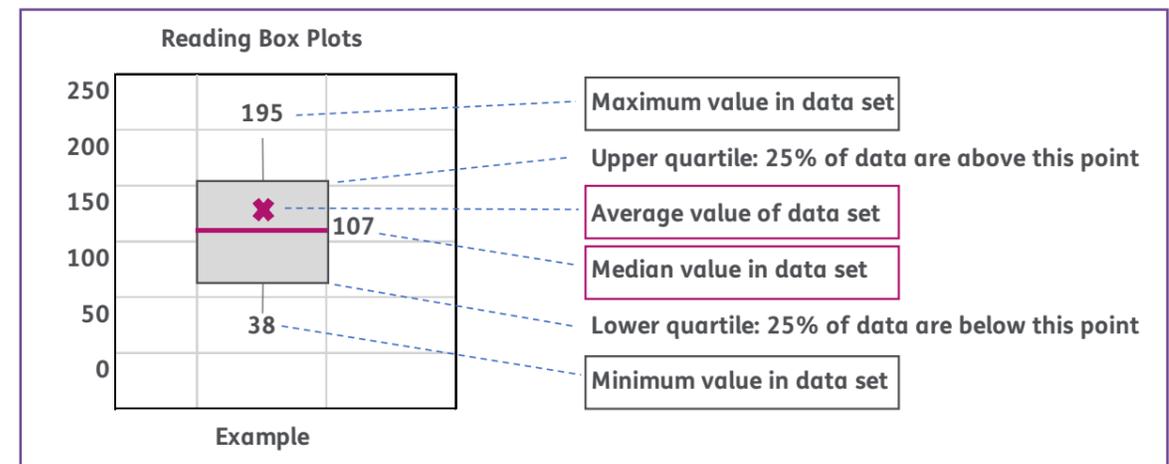
**50% → 21%**

Survey Respondents Earning Le 100,000 or Less per Month

**13% → 31%**

Survey Respondents Earning Le 500,000 or More per Month

- Of concern, however, is that while incomes rose, so too did the **gap between male and female average earnings**. Pre-project, young men earned on average Le 45,000 more than young women each month; as of the evaluation period, this gap had more than doubled to a nearly Le 150,000 difference in earnings.



### Incomes generating regular savings

In parallel to enhancing young people's incomes, the project also had explicit activities and objectives focused on promoting youth savings. These were centred around 3 core exercises.

First, partners sought to **inform and train participants in the two project streams on the importance of regular savings** – both as a source of investment in youth enterprises, and as personal safety nets, providing individuals and households with essential buffers in the face of shocks and setbacks. This was done through a specific **savings and credit training course**, and reinforced in E&E skills trainings and via business mentoring and coaching.

Secondly, Sierra Leone YMCA partnered with CODOHSAPA to **establish savings and credit groups based on CODOHSAPA's group mobilisation model**. Over the lifetime of the project, a total of 16 savings groups (32% of the 50 targeted<sup>39</sup>) were established, in which 182 young participants were enrolled across the 4 target locations. As the organisation's Founder explains:

"The CODOHSAPA model uses financial mobilisation as a group mobilisation tool – based on the idea of where your treasure is, is where your heart is also. And so it was a way to bring young innovators or entrepreneurs together. By putting their resources together, they are going to stick together, bond together, and be able to plough back into a sort of cooperative, in order to expand and grow their business...It creates a sense of commitment and... responsibility." – Founder & Director, CODOHSAPA, Freetown

Thirdly, the project sought to **network and establish formal agreements with banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs)**, to enable young people to open bank accounts and apply for business loans. According to the end-of-project narrative report, 17 participants received support from project staff in small loan applications. 10 of these were also recipients of project start-up capital. It was not stated whether they were successful in their applications.

Despite the project falling short of its savings group targets, the evaluation found that its activities had contributed to **important improvements in young people's saving patterns and behaviours:**

- As seen in Figure 16, **almost three quarters (73%) of respondents were regularly saving** at the time of data collection.

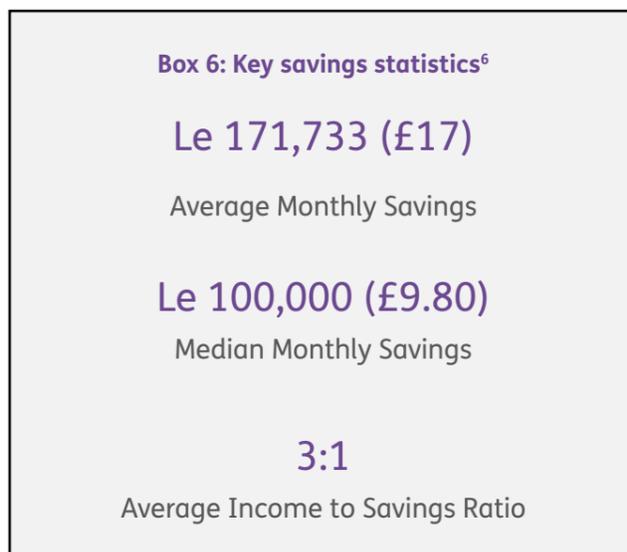


Fig. 16 – 'Do you currently save any money?'<sup>13</sup>

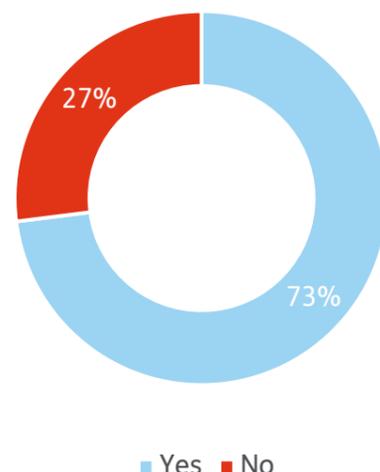


Fig. 17 – 'Are you currently a member of a savings group?'<sup>40</sup>

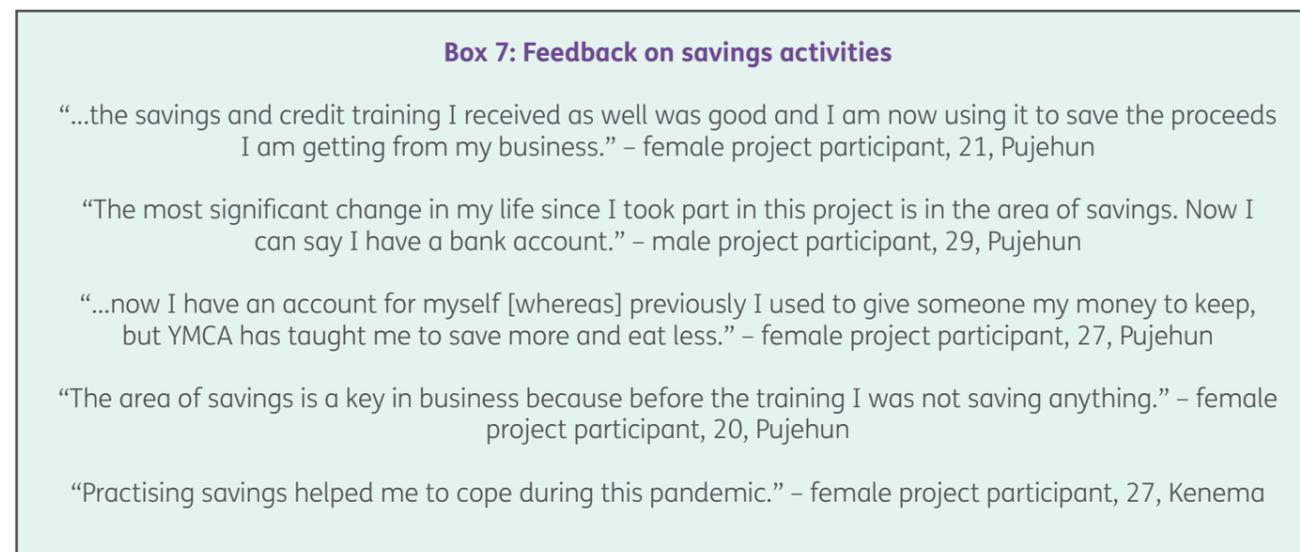
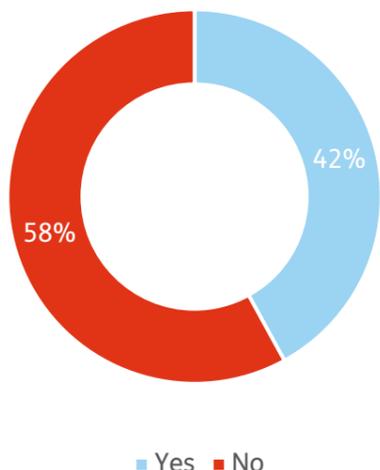
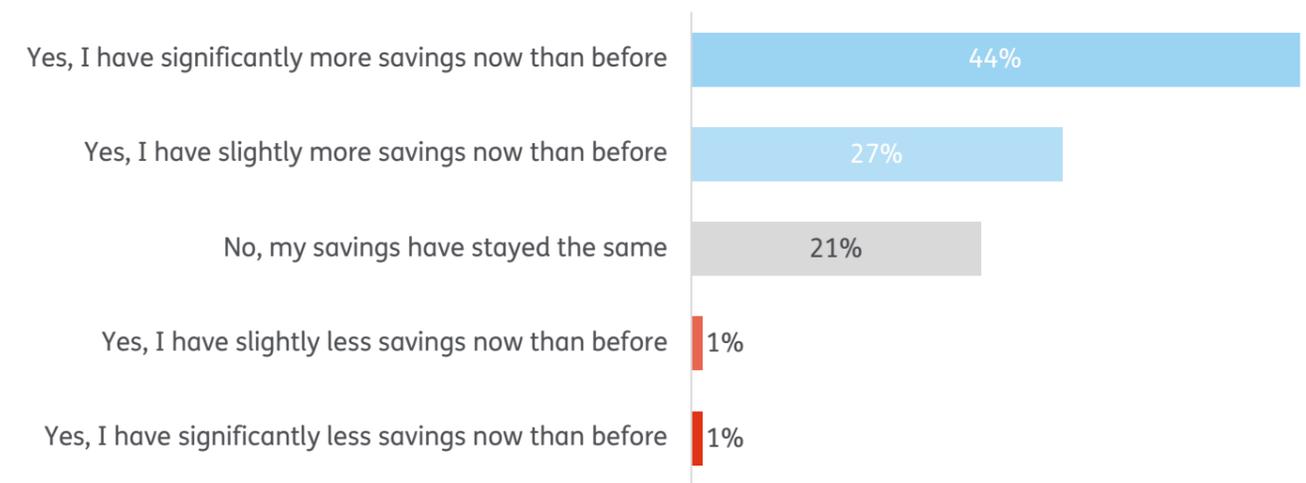


Fig. 18 – 'Have your savings changed since taking part in the project?'<sup>14</sup>



- While baseline data on young people's savings was not available, **71% of survey respondents reported that they had higher savings now than before they took part in the project.**
- As shown in Figure 18, **44% of survey respondents reported they had 'significantly more savings now than before'** participating in project activities. A further 27% had slightly higher savings, while 21% reported their savings had not changed, and 2% reported lower savings now than before taking part in the project.
- The most common reason provided by respondents for **not** saving was having **insufficient or irregular income** (cited by 85% of non-savers).
- As seen in Figure 17, less than half (42%) of all survey respondents said they were members of savings groups. The evaluation found a notably higher proportion of young women (46%) than young men (36%) reportedly in savings groups.
- Among all respondents, the **median monthly savings were Le 100,000 (£9.80).**
- Meanwhile, **average monthly savings were Le 171,733 (£17, representing roughly one third of average incomes).**
- No notable differences in savings levels were found across gender, location, or participant stream.

## Effects on wellbeing and self-confidence

In addition to understanding changes in young people's work status, incomes and savings, the evaluation also explored the extent to which these factors and project inputs had contributed to **shifts in young people's wellbeing**:

- As seen in Figure 19, **two thirds of respondents believed their life 'has improved significantly' since taking part in the project.**
- In all, **92% of young women and 91% of young men surveyed said their lives have improved either 'significantly' or 'somewhat'.**
- A slightly higher proportion of male (10%) than female (6%) respondents reported no life changes resulting from the project.

An open-ended question was asked in follow-up to this (see Box 8), seeking to explore life changes further and understand how and whether – from participants' perspectives – these related to project inputs. The most common responses invoked a sense of **pride and value in new skills** acquired through the project's trainings, **enhancements in job prospects**, substantial **shifts in young people's incomes and savings**, and improvements in their ability to support others both financially and through onward skill and knowledge transfer.

These results are supported by discussions with field staff and other stakeholders who highlight the

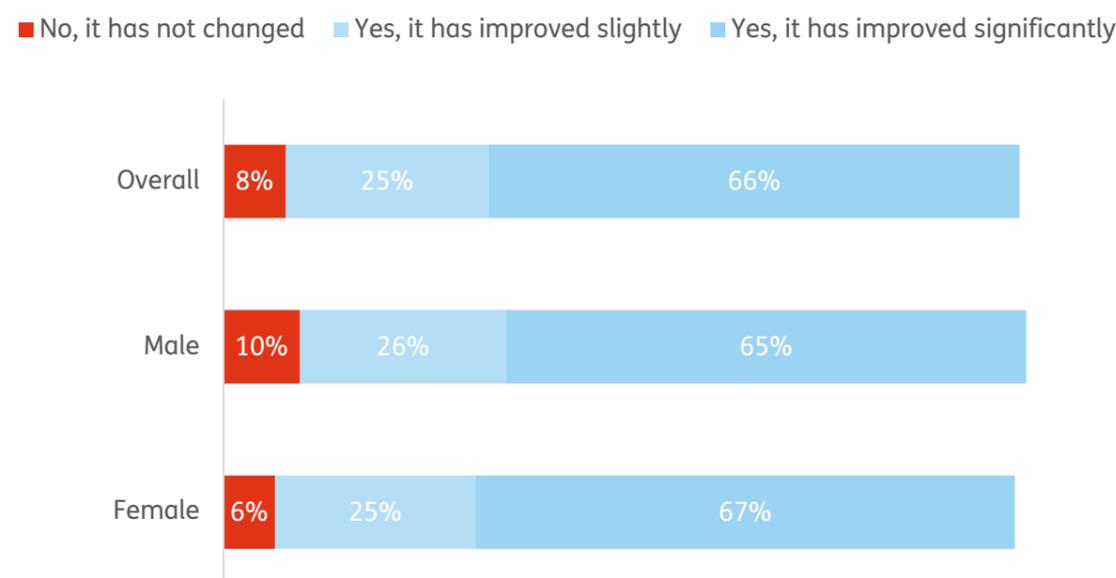
project's strong positive impacts on the individual wellbeing of many young participants. Before enrolling in QYL, many participants were in situations of **financial instability, lacking opportunities for decent work, facing social marginalisation, and having feelings of low self-worth and lack of voice.** KIs spoke of selected youth being "idle", "wallowing", having "feelings of failure", and "lacking in self-belief" prior to joining the project.

Now, for many, and as a product of participating in QYL, this has turned into "self-reliance" – with many young respondents citing **feelings of strong personal development, higher levels of confidence and self-esteem, and improved communication and interpersonal skills** as among the most significant impacts of the project. Securing work, earning higher incomes, and developing savings are all critical factors that have enabled many young participants to **be more economically independent, address their needs and, ultimately step closer to achieving their goals and aspirations.** KIs echoed these findings, noting the positive behavioural transformations they and other members of communities had noted among many young participants.

"...before now most of them were outcasts in this community, but now they are pace-setters for other young people." – PSC Member/YMCA branch chairman, Pujehun

"...even their looks and choice of words have changed – the way they think and do things are now different to before." – PSC Member/Community Leader, Pujehun

Fig. 19 – 'Do you feel your life has changed in any way since taking part in the project?', by gender<sup>7</sup>



### Box 8: 'What has been the most significant change in your life since you took part in the project?'

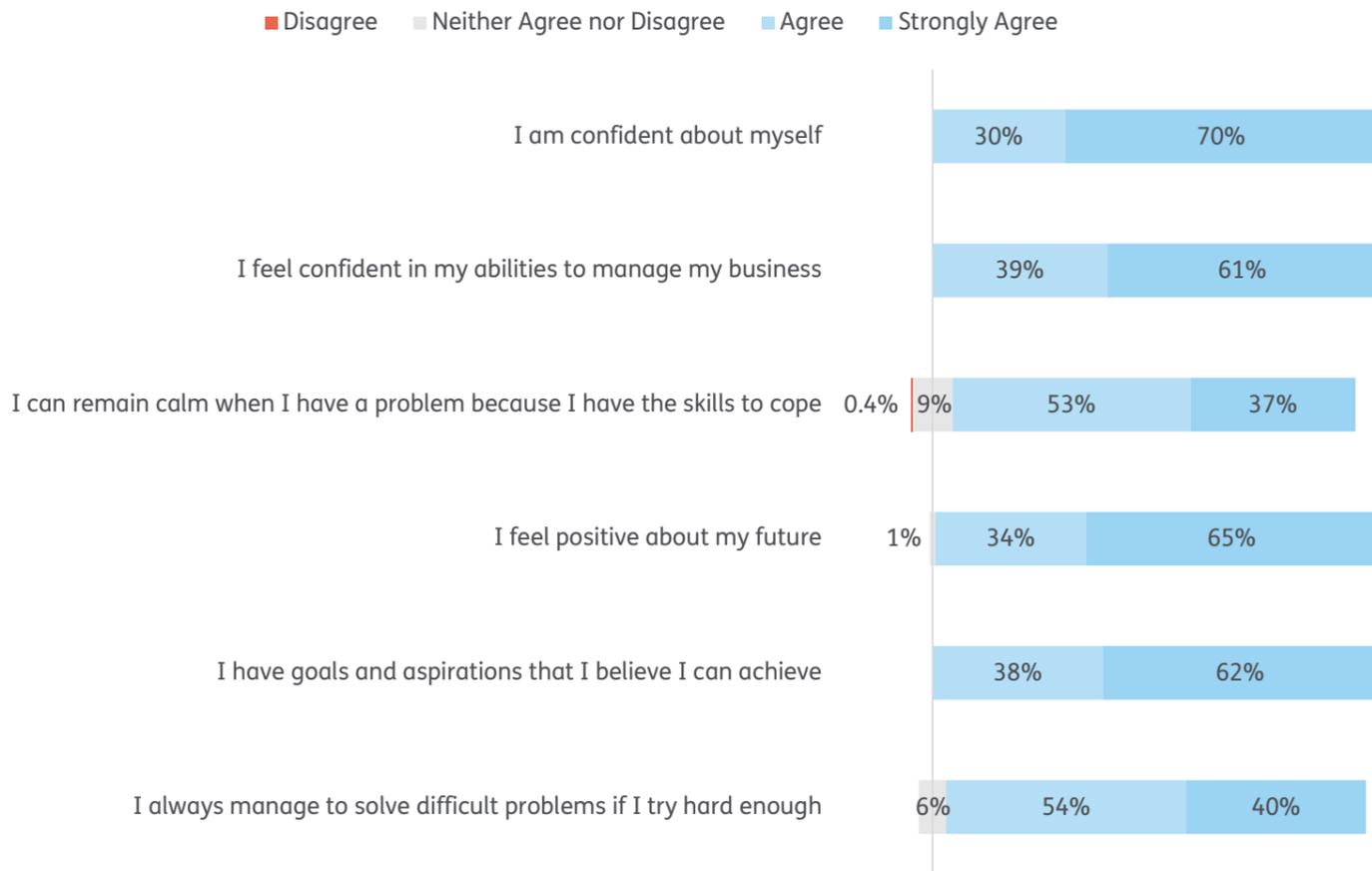
- "I can operate a computer now, which has been my dream." – male project participant, 25, Makeni
- "Because of the computer skills I have I was employed at Pujehun government hospital wherein my duty is to input vaccines distributed to the clinic." – male project participant, 28, Pujehun
- "Before now, I lacked the requisite skills to handle a business. This training has helped a lot in that respect." – female project participant, 31, Pujehun
- "Before, I was unable to take care of myself and family, but with the little money given to me by the YMCA, it has changed my entire life. Now I have my own business and I can take care of myself." – female project participant, 33, Makeni
- "The electrical installation [training] has been a breakthrough for me. I have been able to make money out of it. I have gained knowledge and I can now train other people in those areas." – male project participant, 33, Makeni
- "My market has become bigger and it's booming. This is due to the numerous techniques I was taught during the training." – female project participant, 33, Makeni
- "I am now self-employed, financially stable and able to meet my financial needs." – female project participant, 26, Freetown
- "Now me and my family survive through my business. I can now take care of my family's health and also help other relatives." – female project participant, 30, Kenema
- "My savings have helped me to acquire a plot of land for my family." – male project participant, 34, Pujehun
- "The significant change the SMS training has given me is that I have the technical know-how in managing my own business." – male project participant, 27, Pujehun
- "The project is important to me in so many ways: it has helped me to take very good care of my family without any stress and also reduce the idleness in my life." – female project participant, 27, Pujehun

As demonstrated in Figure 20, almost all of the 245 respondents interviewed scored strongly across measures of individual wellbeing<sup>16</sup>.

- Concerning feels of self-worth and resilience, **100% of respondents reported feeling confident about themselves**, while **90% believed they can remain calm when there is a problem** because they have the skills to cope.
- Among young entrepreneurs, **100% of business owners reported that they feel confident in their abilities to manage their business**<sup>41</sup>.
- Regarding future aspirations, **99% and 100% of respondents agreed with the statements 'I feel positive about my future' and 'I have goals and aspirations that I believe I can achieve'**, respectively.

- Some discrepancies were found between male and female responses. **Male respondents typically 'Strongly agreed' with all statements, 10- to 20-percentage points higher than young women**; for example, 72% of male respondents said they 'Strongly agree' with the statement 'I feel positive about my future', compared to just 60% of females.
- One of the largest gender discrepancies was in the statement 'I feel confident about my abilities to manage my business': **73% of young male business owners strongly agreed with this statement, compared to just 53% of young women.** This finding, however, is at odds with qualitative responses to other evaluation questions, in which many young women voiced pride in their new-found self-confidence, business know-how and personal independence.

Fig. 20 – Individual wellbeing measures - Extent to which survey respondents agree with the following statements<sup>16</sup>:



**Amplifying youth voices**

Building on improvements in wellbeing and self-confidence, the project also sought to amplify youth voices and to enhance young people’s participation in household and community decision-making.

- As shown in Figure 21, respondents generally felt well treated by members of their families and households, as well as by wider members of their communities. While **92% of respondents said they feel respected by other members of their family/household, 90% echoed this sentiment with regards to other members of their communities.** Just 3% of respondents felt that they were unfairly treated in some way by members of their families and communities.
- Of importance, however, is the finding that **just 7% of young respondents felt treated as equals by other household members**, while a slightly higher proportion (13%) felt treated as equals in their communities.

- Exploring perceptions of voice further, as seen in Figure 22, **81% of respondents said that they feel other household members listen to them either ‘all of the time’ or ‘often’** when it comes to household decision-making. Just 3% of participants said they feel listened to ‘rarely’ or ‘never’. Some differences were found across gender, with 64% of male respondents feeling listened to ‘all of the time’ within their households, compared to 59% of females.
- With regards to levels of wider social involvement and engagement in community decision-making, findings were less positive. As seen in Figure 23, **25% of respondents said they felt ‘barely involved’ in community decision-making; a further 21% said they felt ‘not involved at all’.** Critically, there were **large gaps between female and male respondents:** with 65% of young men reporting that they feel either ‘very involved’ or ‘involved’ in community decision-making, compared to **just 35% of young women.**

Fig. 21 – ‘In general, how do you feel treated by your family and other members of your household, and by other people in your community?’<sup>42</sup>

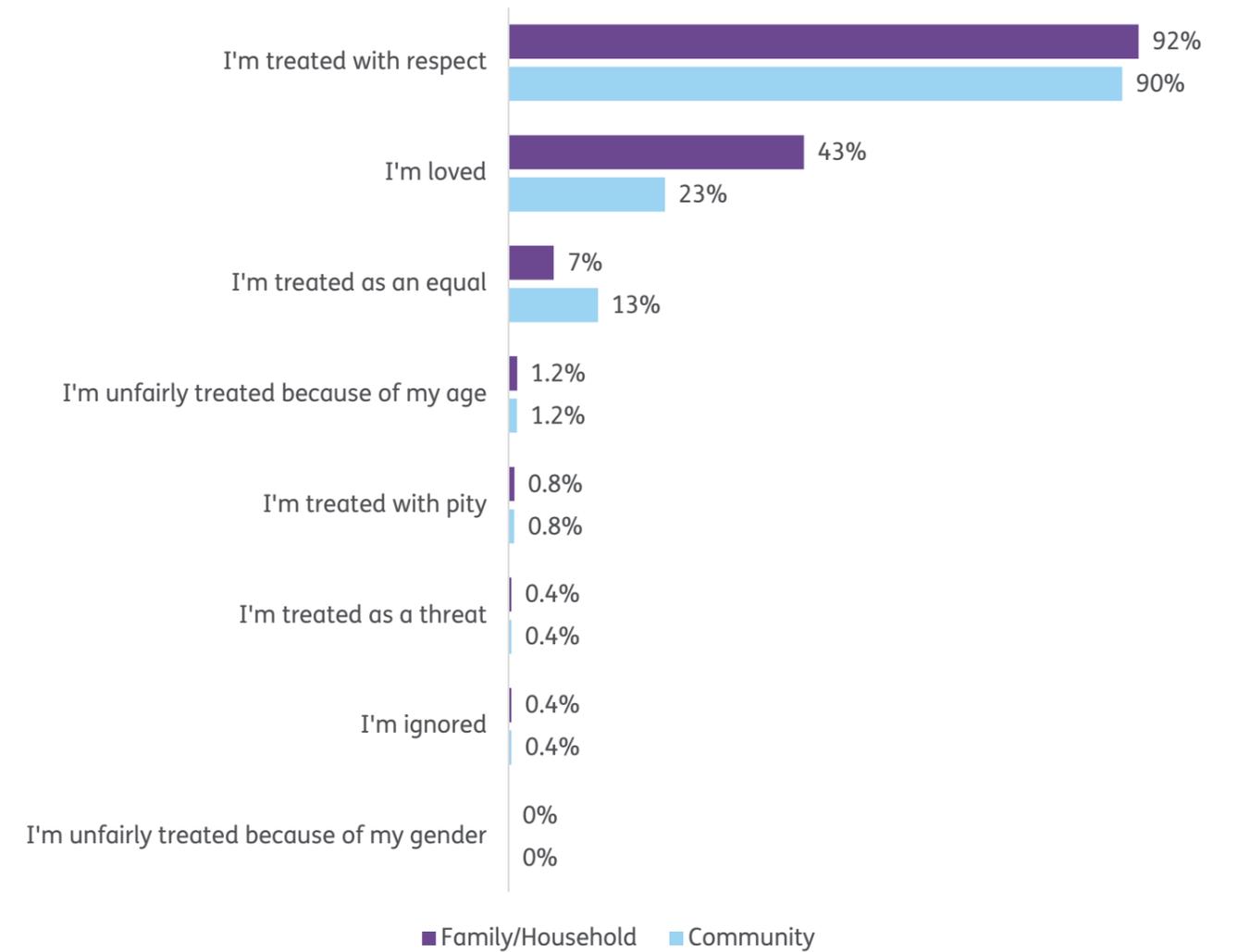


Fig. 22 - ‘How often do other people in your household listen to your opinions when it comes to making decisions?’

- All the time
- Often
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

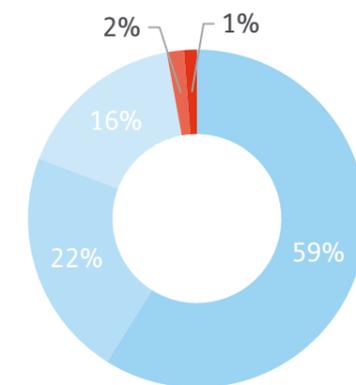
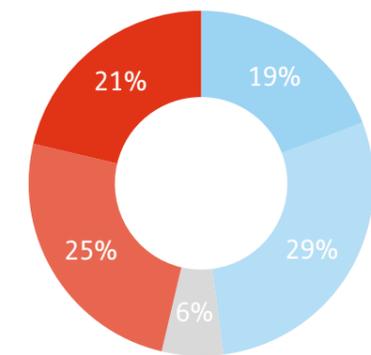


Fig. 23 - ‘How involved do you feel in making decisions in your community?’

- Very involved
- Involved
- Neither involved nor excluded
- Barely involved
- Not involved at all



- When asked about the barriers respondents face to more active involvement in community decision-making, **47% said they had 'No interest'**. Meanwhile, 13% said they 'Do not know enough about the subjects' and 11% that they 'Do not understand decision-making processes'. Commonly, respondents also noted that they are 'Too busy with work', and that 'People with power don't allow us to participate'. Of concern, 6% of female respondents said that their 'Spouse or partner will not allow it'. The above findings signal that the **project has not been as successful as hoped in promoting youth - and particularly female youth - participation and voice.**

In discussions with KIs, however, several testimonies were shared of **young people taking up important leadership roles in their communities.** As one training provider stated, many participants are "gradually becoming examples to other young people in the community - they are leading by example". In particular, KIs attributed young people's greater involvement in community matters to the project's **soft skills and leadership training.**

"I could remember very recently when we held our community elections...some vied for positions, meaning some young people are no longer scared to take decisions and to lead. Their presence in community meetings is increasing - all because of the various training and support given to them by the project." – PSC Member/Community Leader, Pujehun

Another important finding was the contribution of the project to **breaking down some of the traditional gender barriers to work faced by young women.** KIs noted the effects the project had, both through its vocational training courses and promotion of women's businesses, of encouraging young women into traditionally male-dominated sectors and of challenging community gender norms.

"Among the 20 YMCA trainees that we provided training for, the most outstanding change for me was when 2 female trainees opted to enrol for Mechanical Engineering, while another decided to enrol for Electrical Works. Initially this was something most people in the community, even their colleagues, saw as very strange because they carry the perception that such disciplines are for men, and if women dare, the possibility of them succeeding will be low. But now as I am talking, those 3 female trainees completed their trainings and are now employed and earning incomes for themselves." – Training Provider, Sierra Leone Opportunities Industrial Centre, Makeni

### Wider impacts for communities

Finally, in discussions with KIs and survey respondents, several **"positive spill-over effects"** of project activities were highlighted.

First is the **knock-on job creation** generated by young entrepreneurs that are now employing others outside of the project. As seen on p.42, approximately **13% of young business owners were employing others** at the time of data collection, while those that did **employed an average of 2.04 others.** Extrapolating this suggests that, **for every participant the project directly supported into enterprise, an average of 1.26 jobs were created through indirect job creation.**

Secondly are the direct contributions of young people, now generating higher incomes, towards household costs. As seen in Figure 24:

- Almost all (95%) participants that had at least one regular income source reported that they contributed some of this income towards household costs,** such as food and medical costs for other household members, and school fees for children.
- Most commonly, **respondents spent between a quarter and a half of their monthly incomes on expenses for other members of their households.** Almost a third (30%) of respondents said that they contributed more than half of their monthly incomes towards such costs.
- Combined with data showing that the average household size of respondents was 7 (see p.26), this finding indicates the **widespread, indirect benefits of increased incomes of young participants for others close to them.**

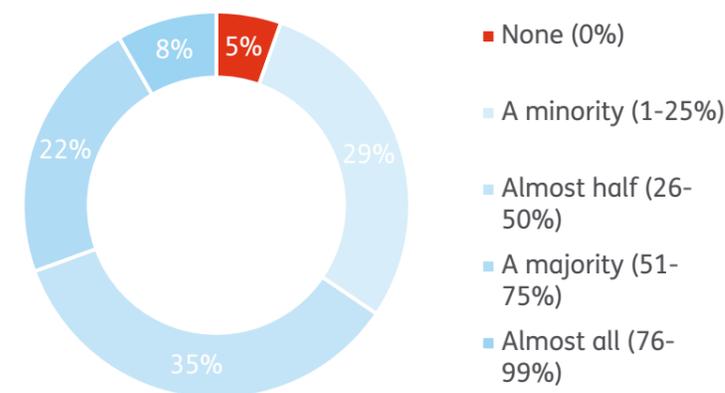
Thirdly, as reported by both young respondents and KIs, many participants are now **sharing their skills with other vulnerable young people in their communities.** While some are sharing their new-found ICT skills with friends and family members at youth hubs, others have taken on mentoring roles, providing friends with business support and supporting others to start their own enterprises; others still have become informal trainers, upskilling non-project-participants in technical/vocational areas like hairdressing and tailoring.

Finally, there are indications that young businesses and workers are contributing important new services to their communities. These are compounded by the **multiplier effects of higher incomes and savings, and stimulation of local markets** that young workers promote.

Lastly, it is worth noting the **transformative positive impacts of MoPo** - the solar-charged mobile power service - implemented as part of the youth hub sustainability plan in Pujehun. This is discussed in more detail in the 'Sustainability' section of this report.

"The...community was lacking most of the services the beneficiaries are now providing with the skills and start-up grants given to them by the project, and the emergence of the new businesses and other services provided by the beneficiaries are helping the Pujehun community a lot." – Training Provider, ACTB, Pujehun

Fig. 24 – 'Approximately how much of your income do you contribute towards household costs?'



Participants in the Queen's Young Leaders project learning trades such as electrical engineering:



# Findings - Effectiveness

An assessment of the effectiveness<sup>43</sup> of the project was guided by the following research question:

1. Has the project **achieved its intended results**, according to its implementation schedule and planned timeline? Why or why not?

Primarily, this assessment followed a review of the end-of-project narrative report and **Outcome Framework**<sup>44</sup> (see Annex 1). Overall, the framework signals that **the project has been largely successful in its achievement of key results** and has met many of the intended targets. It has done so according to budget and within the additional time allocated by the 6-month no cost extension.

As seen in previous sections, project partners have been more effective in their achievement of results for young people in **the in-person, rather than the remote, activity stream**. Nevertheless, and despite limited results for the project's remote platform, **the development of the SMS/audio technology in the lifetime of the grant lifetime remains a positive and important achievement**, as explored here and in later sections.

## Attainment of key results, by project outcome

As seen in Table 5, the project reached a **total of 748 young women and men – representing 61% of its original target of 1,230 youth, or 80% of the revised target of 930**. Participant reach was significantly higher within the in-person project stream, which supported 619 individuals – or 98% of the 630 it initially targeted. This is contrasted with 129 individuals supported through remote services (just 22% of the original target of 600, or 43% of the revised target of 300).

### Outcome 1 - Youth Entrepreneurship hubs and mobile services are established and benefitting vulnerable young people

In reference to the Project Outcome Framework, the project has had **success against all but one of its planned Outcome 1 indicators**. With youth hubs, despite delays in implementation (a result of challenges in the manufacturing and shipment of ZubaBoxes), the project successfully established 2 new solar learning labs in Makeni and Pujehun. These

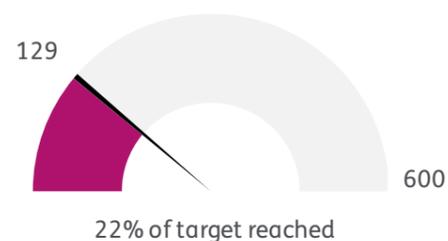
were used to provide 569 young people with ICT skills training, in tandem with 50 others trained at the existing Sensi Tech Hub in Freetown.

As seen in the 'Relevance' and 'Impact' sections of this report, these ICT training courses were regarded very highly by trainees, and deemed **extremely valuable in enhancing their livelihood opportunities**. Despite some practical issues with the hubs themselves – including their limited size, shortage of PCs, and poor internet (see 'Relevance') – many of these were addressed in the lifetime of the project, leading to an overall high attainment of results for in-person, digitally-trained youth.

Fig. 25 - Number of young people accessing services from youth hubs



Fig. 26 - Number of young people benefitting from mobile (remote) services



In parallel, the 2 new labs in Makeni and Pujehun have also **filled important service gaps for youth and non-youth populations** in these communities. They have provided PCs with internet access and – in the case of Pujehun – affordable mobile power facilities to people who would otherwise not have them.

As seen in this report's 'Participation' and 'Sustainability' sections, there is **evidence of strong levels of community engagement and local ownership of hubs**, with implementing partners successfully developing locally-tailored sustainability

plans at each site. Although it is difficult at the time of writing to foresee project results' sustainability – particularly in light of COVID-19 – the project has built strong foundations for both hubs to continue serving under-served and digitally-excluded communities for several years to come.

In contrast, the project has had significantly poorer results with regards to remote services. **Only in April 2020 – 40 months after the project began – was the mobile-based remote training platform finalised and rolled out**. In May 2020, 296 out of 300 remote participants were contacted by the system, with only 9 responding – representing **an engagement rate of 3%**. Although partners adapted activities in Year 2 to offer face-to-face community coaching to remote participants, **only 58 young women and 71 young men were reached through this scheme**. This represents slightly more than a fifth (22%) of the 600 originally targeted, and less than half (43%) of the revised target of 300.

From KIIs and secondary data sources, under-achievement of remote stream results is attributed to several factors. First were the **major technical challenges** encountered in the system's development, which led to its roll-out only eventually taking place in April 2020. Power and telecommunications infrastructure in Sierra Leone are severely underdeveloped, making **power outages frequent and lengthy**, and meaning that the equipment on which the remote solution was based – reliant on a stable power source – had to be moved and trialled in several locations before it became functional. Additionally, **phone reception and internet connectivity are limited, particularly in rural areas** – leading to difficulties in identifying and maintaining contact with participants.

Secondly was a **major pivot to the system's technical mandate** introduced in late 2018. Following a pilot of the original SMS platform, partners deemed exclusive **use of SMS no longer suitable due to low literacy rates** among target populations. In its stead, and after partners explored various options, OOR developed **a low-cost, custom piece of hardware and software, capable of providing E&E training modules via SMS and audio channels**.

This pivot to building a new bespoke system itself encountered a host of obstacles – prime among which was the constraint of working through the telecommunications market-leader in Sierra Leone at the time, which did not allow for easy deployment of audio technology. Finally and critically, the system was set back by a long-standing sick absence of a key

member of staff involved heavily in its development.

Such barriers ultimately led to a downwards revision of the remote participant target, from 600 to 300. Still, once finally deployed, the system encountered several further obstacles. First were the critical challenges – known at project inception, and reaffirmed through community scoping – around **phone network, mobile ownership, and access to electricity** (needed to keep phones charged), which restricted many remote participants from engaging with the platform. Secondly, as seen in the 'Relevance' section, **even with the audio component, many users with low literacy still struggled to benefit** from the platform – signalling faults in its design, user interface, and a lack of supporting elements.

Thirdly, and as recognised by OOR staff who were interviewed, the technical solution ultimately suffered from falling behind the pace of other activities, and principally the decision to ensure that remote participants received some form of support and training content while the remote platform was still under development. In turn, **the introduction of roaming community coaches before the remote platform went live meant it became a substitute rather than a complement to the platform**: participants had already received much of the content in-person, rendering the technology's roll-out in 2020 more or less void as a stress-test of the system.

Furthermore, it is likely that initial delays and setbacks in the remote stream – and the perception of there being greater value in the comparable, tangible infrastructure of ZubaBoxes – led to **diminishing local buy-in and loss of momentum** among the project's other implementing partners.

“The frustration was that, by the time we'd been ready to deploy the mobile technology, they often had had the content already, served in a way that is not scalable and not ideal, but done to serve populations at the time.” – Founding Director, On Our Radar

Such issues with the remote system were compounded by the fact that late deployment meant **many young people who were originally selected lost interest or changed phone numbers** and so either dropped out or became uncontactable.

Lastly, as seen in feedback from remote users in this report's 'Relevance' section, there remains the question of whether remote communities in chosen locations **actually want distance learning**. This

viewpoint, while voiced by several staff members and KIs during evaluation interviews, remains a point of contention:

“Here in this country, people do not appreciate long-distance learning. They appreciate 1-on-1, face-to-face learning. ...the system set up...was completely different from what the local communities were actually looking for. It was a very good initiative, but the learning environment, the ecosystem of learning differs from that of the UK, the US, and other parts of the world.” – Programme Manager, Sierra Leone YMCA, Freetown

“There are young people who are outside of digital spaces, needing information and wanting to engage attractively with that information.” – Founding Director, On Our Radar

For the reasons outlined above, when measured against the project’s own benchmarks, the remote platform did not achieve many of the objectives it set out to accomplish. In spite of this, the creation of this bespoke piece of technology – **enabling voice playback, in any language, via phone call, alongside Q&A testing through SMS** – in the lifetime of the grant is an important achievement. The solution is **the first non-commercial and affordable technology of its kind**: something never before achieved in the humanitarian and development space. With some important tweaks – principally, addressing issues of audio for the illiterate – and with genuinely complementary inputs – namely, *simultaneous* community coaching – it has the potential to be a useful tool for education in future.

The evaluation team would like to emphasise the importance of this result – of the project having produced **an asset capable of removing literacy and distance as barriers to learning**, and able to **serve last-mile, remote communities that would otherwise be excluded** from the benefits of a project like this one. With remote learning becoming ever more essential in a world of COVID-19, the project may have furnished a resource that can be recycled, adapted and deployed anywhere in the world where there is need – the only barrier to entry being access to a basic mobile phone with charge and reception.

Indeed – and unlike the ready-made and pre-existing ZubaBox – the remote project component was **always intended to be an “iterative” part of the project**. The first phase of the project was expected to map needs in target communities and to scope solutions, with technological development taking place thereafter. Finally, although not receiving a proper stress-test following its roll-out in April 2020, the

remote solution’s potential is supported by positive feedback received by this evaluation from KIs and remote survey respondents who did engage with it.

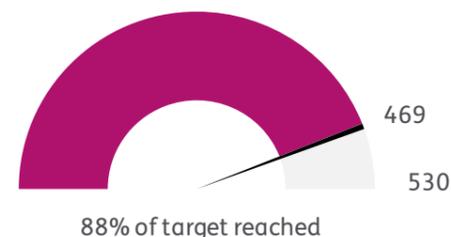
“I learnt so much through the SMS/audio platform which encouraged me to have an interest in business.” – female project participant, 30, Pujehun

“...from our own assessment as project steering group members, we realised that the SMS business training had some good impacts on the few young people that partook... – because of this, some of these young people now understand about doing business, and some have established small businesses while others are trying to.” – Community Leader, Pujehun

**Outcome 2 - Young people have improved personal skills and personal resilience**

Returning to the project Outcome Framework, the project has been **largely successful in achieving its intended results under Outcome 2**. First, 469 (88%) of the 530 young people targeted with NFE demonstrated **improvements in their literacy and numeracy** following course completion. Secondly, and as demonstrated in the ‘Impact’ section of this report, a high proportion of participants across both streams scored strongly on self-reported **individual wellbeing** metrics. This is supported by the finding in relation to Outcome indicator 2c, in which a high proportion of participants reported feeling supported by their families and communities.

**Fig. 27 - Number of young people demonstrating improvements in basic literacy and numeracy**

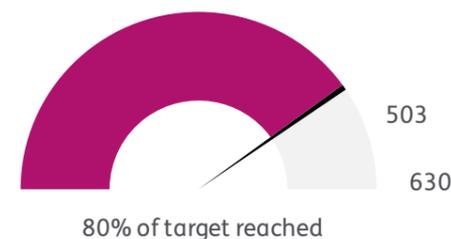


Due to the inclusion of both in-person and remote **results** in this framework (and the seeming exclusion of remote participants from several indicator **targets**), the project over-achieved on several quantitative Outcome 2 indicators. However, the **absence of baseline figures against which to compare these results should be noted as a significant fault in the project MEL system**, and something to be remedied in any future interventions.

**Outcome 3 - Young women and men have the skills and capacity to develop and manage their enterprises and go into employment**

Under Outcome 3, and as presented in Figure 10, a **high proportion of young people have secured livelihood opportunities** – most commonly self-employment – with the support of project inputs. Additionally, as seen in Figure 5, many survey respondents feel they gained important skills and knowledge from the various project trainings, with qualitative feedback affirming that most perceive the project as having a strong effect on their livelihoods.

**Fig. 28 - Number of young people demonstrating competence in basic ICT and E&E skills**



**Fig. 29 - Number of young people that complete vocational training**



While the project fell short on certain indicators within Outcome 3 – notably, 80% of participants demonstrating competence in basic ICT and E&E skills, and 69% of participants developing/improving business plans – these likely reflect **misplaced targets** in the original Outcome Framework. This is seen, for instance, in the fact that the project always intended for a portion of the 630 in-person participants to enter employment rather than enterprise after trainings – reflecting groups that were never likely to develop business plans.

Finally, implementing partners and training providers involved in **vocational trainings** were successful with a 100% achievement rate of indicator 3b – an accomplishment that reflects either the quality and relevance of trainings on offer, or the relative

perceived importance of vocational skills courses to young participants (or, more likely, some combination of the two).

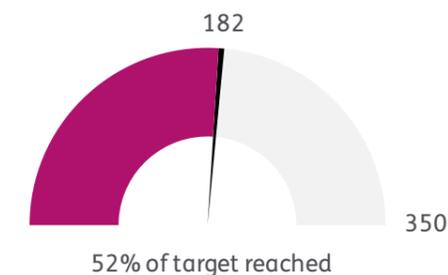
**Outcome 4 - Young women and men have increased access to assets and networks to develop their enterprise opportunities**

For Outcome 4, the project has again been successful in all but one indicator target. While it achieved strong results in terms of young participants receiving and benefitting from **business coaching and mentoring** (see Figure 9), it also attained its target for the number of **start-up grants distributed** (see Box 9).

**Fig. 30 - Number of applications funded for the start-up capital grants scheme**



**Fig. 31 - Number of young people enrolled in project savings groups**



However, the project fell short of its **savings group targets** – supporting just 182 (52%) of 350 young people targeted into savings groups. As justification, the final narrative report notes that “34 savings groups had been established earlier and been used by the parents or guardians of beneficiaries so there was much trust in those savings groups compared to newly established groups”.

**Outcome 5 - Young women and men are more economically resilient and secure**

Finally, several indicators under Outcome 5 have been achieved to a high standard. For instance, the project supported 90% of its targeted 308 participants to earn incomes over 50 USD/month in Freetown and Makeni, and over 30 USD/month in Pujehun.

That a lower rate (23%) was achieved for numbers of young people in employment earning monthly incomes over 40 USD/month (across all locations) is in part a result of **overall lower numbers entering employment**, as well as perhaps **weaknesses in the project’s promotion of formal partnerships with job/apprenticeship providers**. What this, and a low score for indicator 5f – the number of young people able to meet their basic needs – signal are the persisting challenges of helping vulnerable youth to escape the traps of poverty within the timeframe of the project. The use of USD in the target itself is also challenging, given the high levels of exchange rate volatility, and the evaluation team noted that national or regional poverty lines, adjusted to purchasing power parity, may provide more relevant income thresholds in future.

When considering Outcome 5 as a whole, the finding that 71% of participants had higher savings at the time of data collection compared to before the project (see Figure 18) should be kept in mind, as savings serve as a crucial safety net, which help young people to be more resilient in the face of shocks and setbacks. The long-term viability of young people’s livelihoods, and the effects of COVID-19 on their economic security is explored in more detail in the ‘Sustainability’ section of this report.

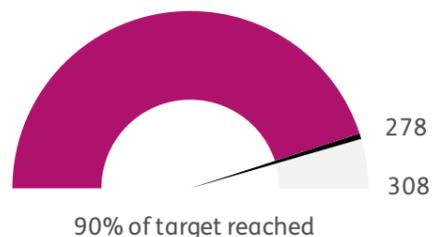
### Drop-out - a limit to effectiveness across the board

A final challenge which limited the project’s effectiveness and overlapped outcomes was that of participant drop-out. KIs involved in participant mapping and selection (and later re-selection) reported that **attrition rates were high throughout the project and across many activities**. This has been noted previously for the remote stream – resulting from delays, poor communication and weak follow-up with participants – but was also a challenge within the in-person stream.

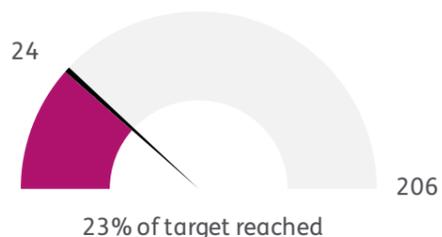
Although many in-person indicator targets were eventually reached, providers of the various trainings and services had to work closely with the YMCA to limit drop-outs and identify replacement participants when they occurred. Some of the major reasons cited by KIs that drove participant drop-outs included:

- **Literacy** persisting as a barrier to learning other course content, despite prior NFE;
- Distance and limited **transport options** to get to training sites, noted particularly by participants in Pujehun;
- The need among young **breadwinners** - both female and male - to continue working, in place of learning, to earn a basic income for themselves and their families;
- The pressures on some young participants - and, most commonly, young women - from other household members to **fulfil traditional labour roles**, such as childcare, cooking and domestic work; and
- The **expectation** among trainees that they would receive immediate **cash support**, or that they would be guaranteed start-up capital.

**Fig. 32 - Number of young people running a business who are registering an income of above \$50 per month in Freetown and Makeni; and above \$30 per month in Pujehun**



**Fig. 33 - Number of young people in employment/ in apprenticeships who register an income of above \$40 per month**



# Findings - Efficiency

Dimensions of efficiency<sup>45</sup> were explored through the lens of two research questions:

1. Have project staff had **enough time, resources and support** to implement project activities to a level of quality as intended? Why or why not?
2. Have the implementation strategies been **resource-efficient** (i.e. has input of resources achieved the desired outputs, without waste or duplication)? What could be improved?

A limited assessment of the project's efficiency was conducted, focusing on key themes that emerged in discussions with staff and other stakeholders.

## Staff reflections on time, resources and support

Staff at various levels of partner organisations reported that, on the whole, they **had sufficient resources and support** to implement project activities.

- Some difficulties were noted in budget allocations, with **initial budgets for some partners, proposed at design stage, escalating significantly once the project began**. This led to a major budget revision exercise and partner reallocations in the early stages of the project.
- While staff agreed that the overall project timeframe (36 months) was adequate, they noted that **key activities – in particular, the various in-person training courses – were rushed** and would have benefited from more time.

“...almost all the implementing partners complained that training durations were not enough for them to really hammer home certain aspects of the training.”

– Head of Entrepreneurship Training, Sierra Leone YMCA, Freetown

- Several other resource constraints were noted with regards to training activities. First, a KI at ACTB said that, since breakfast and lunch were not provided at intensive (all day) trainings, this was “eating up [trainees’] concentration and rushing the trainers to end sessions earlier than planned”. The KI recommended **staggering courses across days, or providing refreshments**

**or food stipends** if longer training sessions are necessary in future.

- KIs also mentioned that trainees often arrived late to training, citing poor transport, and complaining that **travel costs made it difficult for them to attend**. In turn, they recommended **providing transport allowances** to participants living far from training sites, so that distance is not a barrier to attendance in future interventions.
- In addition, hub leads and community coaches in Makeni and Pujehun noted the **challenges of working with remote trainees spread over a large distance**, stating that it took a very long time to visit participants when required, with travel to remote villages sometimes being impossible, particularly during rainy seasons.
- Several other resource constraints - such as **lack of PCs and limited space at youth hubs, and challenges with remote platform users’ devices** - are explored in more detail in the ‘Relevance’ and ‘Effectiveness’ sections of this report.

## A recipe for entrepreneurship?

The second theme explored was whether central project inputs delivered the expected results in terms of skill and knowledge transfer, and promotion of youth livelihoods, in an efficient manner compared to available alternatives.

Overall, despite the challenges above, findings in the ‘Relevance’ section signal that project trainings and other inputs have been **largely successful in skill and knowledge transfer** (with 88% of survey respondents believing they gained new skills from the project). Meanwhile, as seen in the ‘Impact’ section, this has contributed in many cases – particularly among in-person participants – to **young people setting up businesses or securing jobs**. In particular, the evaluation found the **content of ICT training** was highly efficient at establishing a foundation in digital literacy - with testimonies heard that many respondents have gone on to develop these skills through independent learning, and to apply them in their work.

Another crucial barrier identified at project design was the lack of capital and resources available to young people who wish to start a business. Indeed,

a theme that emerged in feedback from in-person youth and KIs was the sufficiency of start-up grants provided by the project. In total, the project disbursed start-up grants amounting to **Le 1,650,401,400 (approximately £161,630)<sup>6</sup>, to 350 participants (233F & 117M)**. Their allocation took place only after young people had: a) completed (in-person) E&E skills training; b) developed and submitted business plans meeting ACTB’s quality assurance criteria; c) formally registered their businesses; and d) opened a bank account. All of these were done with the support of project partners. When successful, grants were then delivered via the established bank accounts.

Feedback from hub Leads on this model was very positive, as it **diverged from what other organisations – principally, MFIs – had done in the past** to address lack of capital in their communities (namely, distributing micro-loans or cash grants without complementary skills training or business support). Furthermore, the transfer of grants through bank accounts allowed for them to effectively monitor allocations, while also serving to promote savings among young business owners.

“For us to pay the money directly into the bank was a good system. It was almost like a cultural system. It also helped that the officers from ACTB duly monitored that the money was sent into their accounts, making sure [young entrepreneurs] were doing the correct thing.” – Hub Lead, Sierra Leone YMCA, Makeni

In addition, the project organised a **business competition** as part of the grant distribution process. This proved to be a very useful event for generating attention around the project and youth entrepreneurship, placing 25 young entrepreneurs in the limelight and allowing them to hone and present their business ideas in front of external parties. Representatives from banks, MFIs and other private sector bodies sat on decision panels. This competition was hailed a great success, and it is recommended that such events be repeated in future entrepreneurship-focused interventions.

Despite this, the evaluation received **mixed feedback on the adequacy of start-up grants**, for the ends of promoting youth businesses. On the one hand, many grant recipients who were interviewed reported that these provided them with essential capital they would not otherwise have had access to, which has helped them to establish or re-start their businesses. On the other hand, as seen in the ‘Impact’ section, many young business owners have yet to establish high-value businesses, in spite of capital injections.

This indicates that start-up grants were either too small or insufficient in themselves to help many fledgling businesses (at least within the timeframe evaluated). In addition, staff from YMCA and other organisations said they received many participant testimonies that **start-up grants were too small, and reflected that the overall number of businesses they could support was limited** – with many strong business ideas meeting the minimum criteria going unfunded (the scheme received 436 applications, 350 of which were funded). Recommendations to remedy this in future included providing larger individual grants, and **organising young business owners into collectives that can benefit from economies of scale and receive joint start-up investment**.

“And there are a lot of good initiatives that some of them brought up in their business plans, but unfortunately with the start-up capital we had in the project, we cannot fund that. So that was a limitation. If I was to do that again, I would ensure that I’d build in capital, but then bring [young people] into cooperatives so that they can be something bigger, and then become co-partners and they can all own it.” – NGS, Sierra Leone YMCA, Freetown

Finally, there were several challenges in distribution of the grants themselves, with KIs in Makeni reporting **large delays in their disbursement** to beneficiaries. In addition, allocation of start-up grants by Sierra Leone YMCA also appears to have been **poorly communicated** with participants: a handful of respondents to the final evaluation said they were still expecting to receive their grants or top-up grants from the project many months after this activity had finished.

### Box 9: Project start-up grant information<sup>6</sup>

**Le 1,650,401,400**  
(£161,630)

Total Grant Allocations

**350**  
(2/3 women)

No. of Young Entrepreneurs  
Directly Funded

**Le 4,715,433**  
(£462)

Average Grant Allocation per  
Entrepreneur

# Findings - Partnerships

The project brought together 8 organisational partners and sub-contractors and worked with a range of other actors. The evaluation sought to assess the partnerships among them. This was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent has collaboration among the project's partner organisations **supported or hindered the implementation and impacts** of the project?
2. How can organisational partnerships be **strengthened** for future collaborations?

## Communication as a 'blocker'

In discussions with project staff, **communication was consistently identified as a principal challenge to better ways of cross-organisational working** in the project. Staff from almost every partner organisation raised this as a concern - with the 3 UK partners in particular raising SLYMCA's irregular communications and information sharing as a 'blocker' to better partnerships. Three key issues emerged in those discussions.

First was the problem of **high staff turnover**, particularly within certain partner organisations. The Programme Manager and National General Secretary (NGS) at Sierra Leone YMCA highlighted the real challenges that arise when staff of partner and donor organisations who are involved in the project leave part-way through its implementation. Changes in organisational focal points mean **information** (both tacit, and information contained in documents and emails) **gets lost; lags in recruitment lead to gaps in support and work being delayed**; poor internal handovers mean incoming staff **struggle to understand the project's aims** and in turn ask many questions, "questions that have already been dealt with"; while existing staff must **double efforts to re-establish working relationships** and common understandings of the project.

Changes in personnel were noted as an issue at the project's outset - with staff involved in the project design departing, being **replaced by others with different understandings or even ambitions for the project** - and continued throughout implementation. YCI was among those with a high staff turnover - having 2 Programme Coordinators and 3 MEL Coordinators within the grant lifetime.

"...most of those guys that institutions initially sent to be part of the process, by the time we started implementing the project, they were no longer part of that, and...those that came to represent them then did not fully understand the project, based on what we designed...and when that person comes, you have to start from explaining the entire project to that person." - NGS, Sierra Leone YMCA, Freetown

Secondly were challenges, particularly at the start of project implementation, around communication and **organisational roles and responsibilities**. In KIIs, some staff noted it was months into project roll-out before they clearly understood their organisation's responsibilities, and the functions and activities of other organisations in the consortium. In one instance, it was unclear whether OOR or ACTB was responsible for the design of remote E&E training assets and mentoring plan content. This was in part due to a breakdown in communication between OOR and Sierra Leone YMCA, which ultimately contributed to delays in implementation. A second instance was around the role of CODOHSAPA in the project's savings activities. Such challenges do not appear to have been remedied by an **explicit R&R document produced in August 2016**.

Lastly were several **missed opportunities for collaboration**. In terms of opportunities for *internal* collaboration, staff noted the missed opportunity for the project to **draw on Sensi Tech Hub's in-country expertise and networks** as an established hub, in the roll out of the Makeni and Pujehun hubs. Similarly, the evaluation found evidence of a **communication gap between YMCA and MoPo** - the latter repeatedly requesting and waiting months to receive the former's bank details, in order to transfer funds generated by the mobile power service in Pujehun.

"I think MoPo has great potential, if we really are able to really establish communication between Mopo and YMCA - that's the situation we have at the moment.



Again, there is a problem of communication, because Mopo needs, for example, to pay YMCA back, and it's been 10 months now; they still haven't given them the bank details." - Head of Programmes, CAI, UK

In terms of *external* opportunities, KIs noted the **absence of effective private sector partnerships** as a significant weakness of the project. Although strong partnerships were established, for example, with some mobile phone companies, staff felt that more could have been done across the consortium to strengthen links with banks and MFIs, as well as potential job/apprenticeship providers. As YCI's Head of International Programmes and Partnerships noted, despite this being laid out as an explicit aim in project design, there was "a whole component of working with the private sector that probably didn't take off as well as it should have done".

Some degree of miscommunication is perhaps expected given the nature of the project: the high number of partners and sub-contractors involved; the fact that for many, this was the first time working together; and that there were also firsts for Sierra Leone YMCA, as grant-holder of a project of more than 5 organisations, and for YCI, with staff noting difficulties in adjusting to a technical support role in a YMCA collaboration. Yet, despite such challenges, staff reflected that a great deal of learning had taken place, and that **cross-organisational communication and collaboration had improved significantly over the course of the project**. A key strength was also seen in the relationship with Comic Relief, and the grant manager's flexible and available support, for which YMCA and other partners were highly grateful.

Overall, that the consortium was able to respond to numerous operational challenges - such as pivoting to SMS-and-audio technology, and bringing MoPo into the fold (see 'Sustainability') - is testament to the consortium's strong partnerships, and signals that **barriers to communication did not notably hinder achievement of project objectives**.

## Recommendations to strengthen consortium working

Some solutions introduced in the project and suggestions from KIs may serve to enhance organisational partnerships in future:

- **Establish, from the outset, regular channels of communication** - staff reflected that, in the No Cost Extension from January 2020, coordination between OOR, YMCA and YCI improved drastically, with the introduction of weekly Skype meetings.

- **Agree upon different modes of communication** - though often the default means of communication, emails are not always the best way of communicating and solving issues; informal WhatsApp and Skype groups, and ad-hoc telephone/Zoom calls was preferred by many members of staff in both countries.
- **Budget for more cross-country visits** - staff across UK and Sierra Leonean partners noted that visits to each other's countries, offices and project sites were essential to building working relationships, breaking down barriers, and identifying and addressing issues. This is something that, in the near future at least, will be impacted by COVID-19.
- **Understand different organisation's working cultures and contexts** - Sierra Leone staff noted that UK partners were at times unaware of the challenges of poor internet, regular power cuts and weak phone network, and how these construct a very different working environment in Sierra Leone compared to the UK.
- **Establish a cloud-based shared drive** - a suggestion not implemented in the project, but one recommended for improved file sharing in any consortium.
- Keep all partners informed of any **personnel changes**, ensure **strong internal handovers**, and make **out-of-office email responses** mandatory when staff are on field visits or on leave.

"...going forward, I would go in for a blend, both international and local. Because everybody has got their own strength: there are things that we might need to learn from the international partners, like what CAI did - no local partner would have done that...[but] I cannot have an international partner do software training in Sierra Leone when there are lots of local-based youth-serving organisations that can roll out similar training courses. So for me, where we think we don't have the skills in-country, then I think we can go with an international [partner]." - NGS, Sierra Leone YMCA, Freetown



# Findings - Participation

The evaluation also explored levels of stakeholder participation in the project. This was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent have project beneficiaries and other stakeholders been **actively involved in the design, implementation, management, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** of the project, rather than simply being recipients of aid?
2. To what extent do beneficiaries and other stakeholders **feel a sense of 'ownership'** of the project?

In general, findings from KIIs and the respondent survey indicate that the project has been **largely successful in actively engaging young participants and other local actors** in its activities. It has explicitly sought to **cultivate a strong sense of ownership** of activities, resources and aims, and has succeeded in doing so among a range of local external stakeholders.

## Active stakeholder engagement

From the outset, project implementers sought high levels of community engagement. At project design, this was achieved through **multi-stakeholder consultations** - with youth-focused organisations, the Sierra Leone youth commission, government officials, community leaders, and others - to inform the project's scope, strategies and objectives. In roll-out, it manifested in the **inclusion of representatives of different groups** in the 4 project steering committees (PSCs), M&E activities, youth mentorship and motivational speaker roles, business competition panels, and participant selection exercises.

One example that the evaluation found to be a model for community engagement was **OOR's community scoping exercise**. This was used to inform the development of the remote technological solution, with 3 possible solutions drawn up to address the needs and barriers identified in communities. Unlike traditional scoping exercises, the process sought to be highly participatory, non-extractive and community-led. It was built on the organisation's 'citizen reporter' model, in which grassroots insights are gathered from communities concerning their needs, preferences, opportunities and contexts. It is highly recommended that such a model be replicated by partners in future exercises where appropriate.

Overall, many non-staff KIIs who were interviewed felt strongly involved in the design, implementation and M&E of the project, and **attested to high levels of community engagement and a strong sense of ownership of project results** among others in their communities. The two **solar learning labs** installed in Makeni and Pujehun stood out in this regard, being project components that communities really took ownership, pride and care of - the hubs themselves being well-designed, aesthetic and tangible assets, provided for the benefit of communities.

"The aims and objectives of the project were explained to us in detail from the very start and were re-echoed in some of the meetings we attended - as a community we were really included." - Community Leader, Pujehun

"I am one of the chiefs in this community and I would tell you that YMCA involved us as a community in the planning and implementation of this project. They consulted and included us in the decision-making processes in this community. And even with the project ending, we are planning with them on how we as a community should take over and see that project beneficiaries become...successful at the end of the day." - Kabuwabu Community Chief, Kenema

## PSCs as a key component of community participation

Furthermore, the evaluation found PSCs to be a key factor in the project successfully **establishing and maintaining community participation, and developing exit and sustainability plans**. Typically, PSCs in each location comprised of voluntary members, including community leaders, district councillors, local YMCA board members and youth leaders, among others. These groups met regularly with young participants and project staff to discuss the progress of the project, provide community feedback, and identify challenges and potential solutions to improve project outcomes.

**PSCs were found to be a largely effective feedback and response mechanism** within the project, supporting transparency and sharing of information around project activities. In discussions with PSC members, it was evident that they create an important intermediary between project staff and communities. Members of PSCs have a strong

understanding of views in their communities and serve an important function in **decentralising decision-making** away from implementing partners while enhancing the responsibility of community members. This in turn helps to create local buy-in, improve accountability, develop locally tailored solutions, and improve the sustainability of results. It is manifest in the handovers of solar learning labs to communities as part of the project's sustainability plans (see 'Sustainability').

## Limitations and recommendations to enhance community participation

Despite overall participation levels and feelings of ownership around the project being deemed high, the evaluation identified some areas in which stakeholder engagement could be improved.

One weakness was the **limited extent to which young people were involved in project M&E**. Indeed, aside from initial stakeholder consultations, few M&E activities were youth-led in their design or implementation. This is a major weakness given the high capacity and enthusiasm of many young people connected to the project, and the **wide-ranging benefits of youth-led M&E**.

A second shortcoming was that the project at times seemed to **lack effective feedback and response mechanisms**. This was noted, for instance, in the fact that several survey respondents wished to raise complaints during the evaluation, concerning expectations of start-up capital or missing course certificates. In particular, **such mechanisms appear to have been especially weak in remote communities**, as demonstrated by the high number of remote respondents that felt "left in the dark" and reported issues with community coaches to the evaluation team (see 'Relevance'). While the challenges of working with geographically remote, rural communities with poor phone network are not easily overcome, future projects should seek to construct more effective feedback and response mechanisms, tailored to communities through stakeholder consultations at project inception.

Finally, although deemed broadly effective, one PSC member noted that not all members in their locality were fully committed to the project, and that the success of PSCs was largely down to a handful of individuals. This KI recommended that more thorough screening be done of PSC members to ensure their active commitment, and suggested that committees have a system of **rolling, elected chairpersons** to ensure their effective coordination and equal share of responsibilities among members.

### On Our Radar's community scoping exercise in the villages surrounding Makeni and Pujehun:



# Findings - Sustainability

Finally, the evaluation sought to assess the sustainability<sup>46</sup> of the project's results, guided by a single research question:

1. To what extent are the results achieved so far by the project, especially the positive impacts, **likely to continue** after the project ends?

This question was approached through two lenses. The first aimed to understand the likelihood of the project's **two 'technological solutions'** – youth hubs<sup>47</sup> and the SMS/audio training platform – continuing to provide services for young people and communities after the project ends, in a way that is both locally-owned and financially sustainable for delivery partners. The second sought to anticipate how far the positive effects – pertaining to **young peoples' livelihoods, incomes and wellbeing** – fostered by the project will endure, particularly in light of COVID-19 and an uncertain economic outlook.

## Two paths for youth hub sustainability

In October 2019, the project's implementing partners took part in a **2-day sustainability workshop** in Freetown. The objective of this was to discuss key learnings from the project and to identify sustainability plans that would allow for key project elements to continue after the project ends. This was accompanied by efforts from all partners throughout the grant lifetime to embed sustainability into activities, working with government representatives, youth-focused organisations and other actors to reinforce project impacts through locally-led solutions.

Much of these efforts focused on identifying paths to sustainability for the **Makeni and Pujehun hubs**. Indeed, given the relatively high initial investment, significant positive impacts already achieved, and the fact that the hubs' physical structures and equipment are expected to last for many years, identifying routes to sustainability for these assets was a central project aim.

### Makeni – ICDL-accreditation

The result of such efforts were two separate sustainability plans, one at each hub. In Makeni, the lab has become **one of Sierra Leone's first ICT testing centres accredited by the International Computer Driving License (ICDL)**. Through this body, 8 YMCA staff completed a training of trainers

(ToT), enabling them to deliver ICDL-certified ICT foundation courses. Now, the plan is for these staff to identify the **highest performing young students from earlier cohorts** and train them alongside local council members and others, so that they may cascade ICT training to others through courses at the hub. Based on market research conducted in February 2019, the Makeni hub aims to mainly **target working professionals and university and secondary school students**, with the offer of high-quality and internationally certified ICT training at a low fee. In partnership with the Makeni mayor's office, the physical hub itself will also be relocated to a more secure and central location in the city. In this way, the hub hopes to become **commercialised and be financially sustainable** for the YMCA and partners, so that it may continue to provide ICT services in the community. In doing so, it will remain **non-profit-making**, with user fees only offsetting running costs.

This plan was initiated in the final stages of the project. Despite high levels of interest among target groups found in the market research, and partners' success in negotiating a significant reduction in ICDL course fees, **initial uptake in post-project trainings has been low**. As of June 2020, just 29 trainees had enrolled in Makeni hub ICT courses. In KIIs, however, staff at CAI and YMCA believe the approach is still valid, that uptake so far has been limited by COVID-19, and that **with additional time and marketing**, the centre will become financially sustainable through this model.

“In Makeni...I think the sustainability plan would work, depending on the investment – I'm a bit more worried there because, for example, they still haven't finalised the testing of some of the teachers, the trainers...And the sustainability plan is really dependent on them making the effort to look for potentially new trainees, people who would be interested to come to the lab to be trained in ICDL... The great thing about ICDL is it's a standardised, international certification, recognised all around the world. Once you have the certification...[it] can really help you get a job. So, they need to market that for it to work, to generate income. Without the marketing there won't be any income.” – Head of Programmes, CAI

A key proposal for how this might be achieved is through **strengthening the partnership between Sierra Leone YMCA and ICDL Africa**, based in Kigali, Rwanda. In doing so, the YMCA would be better

placed to draw on ICDL's experience, resources and networks – all of which could significantly support with marketing and on-boarding of new trainees at the hub.

Finally, there was acknowledgement and concern among staff that, since the model is fee-paying, **the hub will no longer serve the most vulnerable**, as it has done throughout the project. As noted by the hub lead, “[f]rankly it will be difficult to reach the less privileged, because they will be unable to pay even the little that is charged...only those that have a higher income will be able to be equipped in ICT.” One suggestion that was proposed in response to this was for hub managers to **subsidise courses for low-income and unemployed students** by charging higher fees to higher earners.

### Pujehun – MoPo (mobile power)

In contrast, the Pujehun hub has taken a radically different path post-project. While the hub was always expected to continue providing walk-in services to customers wishing to use PCs and browse the internet, partners **recognised early on that the ICDL model pursued in Makeni would not work in Pujehun**. As CAI's Head of Programmes explains: “[v]ery quickly, it appeared it was not a good idea for Pujehun because the community was too remote, and the city is not big enough to make sure the plan would work.”

In its stead, in June 2019, **the YMCA and CAI partnered with MoPo to install an innovative mobile power solution at the hub**, capable of providing solar-charged power and electricity to users. This has **demonstrated consistent and growing uptake** since then – even with the onset of COVID-19. As Figures 34 and 35 below show, this service has had more than 2,400 users renting solar-charged battery packs, generating steady sales (at an average of 1,964 packs per month). In turn, these have created **revenues for locally employed agents, the YMCA and MoPo totalling Le 72,932,067 (£7,142)** between June 2019 and the end of April 2020. With the price for a 24-hour rental set at Le 4,000 (£0.40), the demand for such a service is incredibly high and well-suited to a rural district like Pujehun, in which many residents lack access to regular, affordable electricity.

“Mopo has not only provided or added value to the project, but it has...freed the community from darkness.” – Hub Lead, Sierra Leone YMCA, Pujehun

One important point noted by the Pujehun hub lead was that **demand for MoPo packs far outstrips supply**. His recommendation was for YMCA to

**reinvest a portion of profits from sales into new battery packs** – in order for more community members to benefit from the service.

“Mopo, of course, as I actually mentioned, if we could have what we have now 10 times, it would not be enough. Because people are now coming from the nearby communities; coming, taking it, because we normally charge them for 4 hours.” – Hub Lead, Sierra Leone YMCA, Pujehun

Of note was that this was the first time CAI and MoPo have collaborated together – with MoPo having approached CAI part way through the project's implementation. It is expected that this partnership will be furthered strengthened and that the technological combination will be rolled out at solar learning labs in similar CAI programmes in future.

### Locally-owned solutions

Despite the different paths taken, what is apparent from KIIs was that **community engagement and ownership by local stakeholders was strongly encouraged in the design and implementation of hub sustainability plans**. The YMCA explicitly requested that local government representatives sit on PSCs in Makeni and Pujehun and worked closely with district councils in the development of hub handovers “because we want the entire project to be owned by communities” (NGS, Sierra Leone YMCA). This seems critical, given the high demand and widespread need for accessible ICT services in both districts.

Indeed, in both locations, that hubs have been continuously used by young participants and others since project activities ended – with hub leads reporting **an average footfall of 40-50 users per day at each hub (pre-COVID)** – is testament to their continued relevance and the strong likelihood of many of their impacts being sustained well into the future.

“In the implementation of this project, YMCA made it clear to us community members that we should take the lead and so it has been always. Even as I am talking, over the past couple of months we are in discussions with YMCA and the council here on how the project should be handed over to us safely. And YMCA has promised to keep providing their support of further guidance and mentorship once the project ends. And they also plan to provide training for those community people we will appoint to oversee post-project activities.” – PSC Member, Pujehun

Fig. 34 – Number of MoPo battery pack rentals at the Pujehun youth hub, June 2019 - April 2020

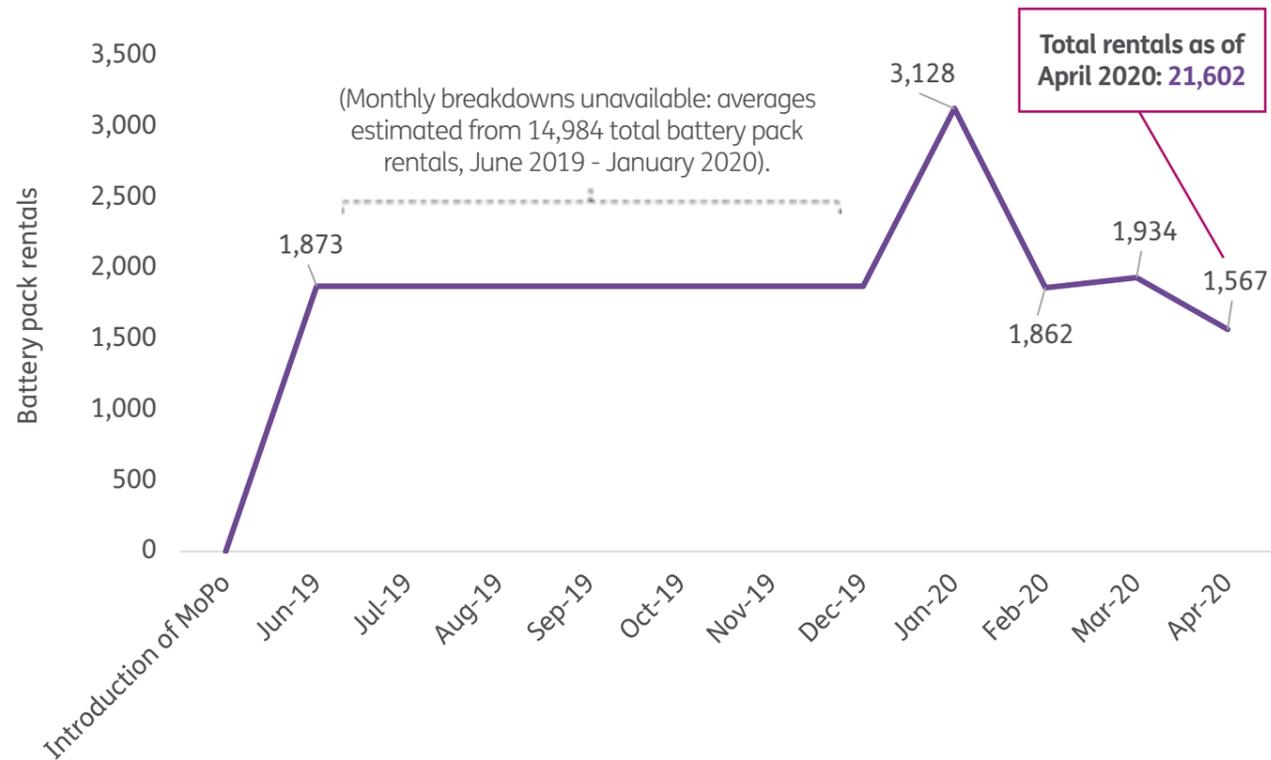
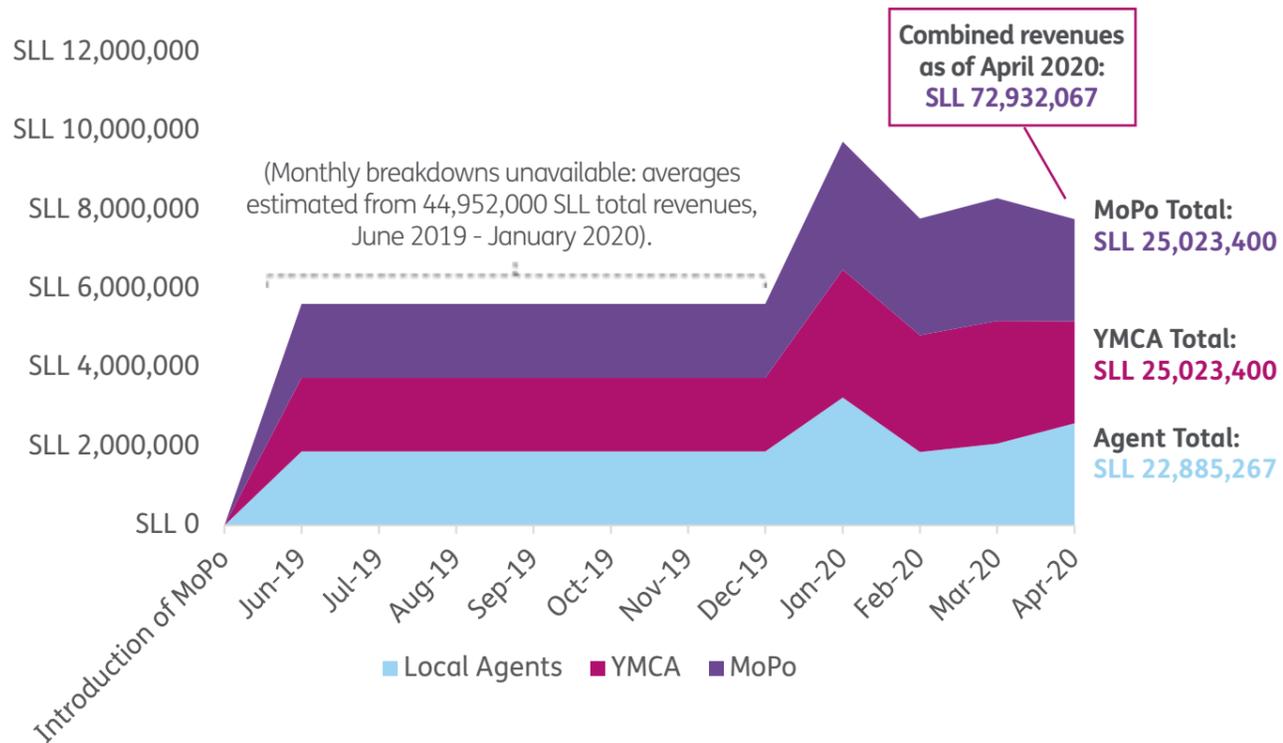


Fig. 35 – Revenues generated for different actors through battery pack rentals, June 2019 - April 2020



### Extending impacts from the remote skills training platform

Unlike youth hubs, the project's remote training platform did not achieve many of its intended results. The reasons for this are explored in earlier sections. Seeking to understand the sustainability, and its potential impacts after the project ends, the evaluation team found its **discussions with different staff members of particular insight:**

"I think, talking from a Radar perspective, if we measure it simply on the numbers reached, it's been a really challenging project but, as I said, if you focus as we were in our heads on creating something that would have far wider impacts for remote communities...then a great deal of successful development has been done...instead of just seeing it as a training platform, really, this coupled with the other code that we freely share, is a piece of engagement and insight technology that can be adapted to any different context...And Y Care really, I think, should be leading the way in deploying it, now it's been built and now you own it essentially, along with us and all the other licensees that are in the mix...The value for money or the kind of social return on investment would be best judged once it's started to be deployed as a kind of piece of shared code by Comic Relief, by YCI, certainly by YMCA - we'd love to see that happen." - Founding Director, On Our Radar

"The business platform has been a serious challenge, and something we have experienced since day one...For OOR, the challenge was so huge, and again, one we had very little or no control over what OOR does or how they implement projects...in a later context, we also looked at our eco-system of learning. Here in this country, people do not appreciate long-distance learning. They appreciate 1-on-1, face-to-face learning. So having a business platform transmitted to local and vulnerable communities, the impact was very much minimal." - Programme Manager, Sierra Leone YMCA

"Among areas for improvement is the project's offer to remote beneficiaries. This was always designed to be an iterative component, where we would be using the project's first phase to design a technical solution with OOR, YMCA and local communities. In part, challenges arose due to delays in the development of the solution, but also in part due to limited local buy-in. Local partners were able to see the value in the Youth Hubs, as they were tangible, physical structures. However, there was less support for the technical solution, as it was more intangible and required a novel approach. This was compounded by beneficiaries' connectivity and literacy challenges. Nevertheless, the technical solution is an important achievement and one which we have ambition to adapt and deploy with OOR in other contexts." - Head of International Programmes and Partnerships, Y Care International

The quotes above demonstrate **disagreement between key consortium partners around the challenges, achievements and long-term potential of the project's remote training platform.**

On the one hand, OOR staff see **an opportunity for the platform to be scaled post-project and for it to evolve into "an asset for the sector"**. For them, it is something that could radically change the way education is delivered: a sector 'first' and a technology capable of providing educational content at-distance, to remote and digitally-excluded communities anywhere, where the only requirement is access to a basic mobile phone. This is something that staff believe can - and should - now be reapplied in a range of settings and sectors beyond youth E&E, including humanitarian work, research, and information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns - **all perhaps more relevant now than ever with COVID-19** and the closure of many traditional education facilities.

On the contrary, staff at Sierra Leone YMCA **remain demonstrably sceptical of the technology's value and its impacts for young people in the contexts where they work.** While recognising it as an important innovation, they are cautious of reusing the technology in light of the struggles encountered in its implementation, its limited results in the grant lifetime, and the **continued barriers that must be addressed around user literacy and genuine access to technology.**

While OOR staff have ensured the system is well documented for others to adapt and re-deploy in new settings, it is uncertain whether this will come to light with current consortium partners. For it to do so, explicit efforts would be needed to generate the traction and technical know-how in key partner organisations. YCI staff involved in the evaluation recommended a **dedicated session be held for OOR and other partners to discuss the future of the platform** in light of these findings.

## Long-term viability of youth livelihood gains

Lastly – and, arguably most importantly – the evaluation investigated the **extent to which QYL's positive impacts on young participants' lives are likely to persist** once the project ends. From KIIs and participant survey feedback, it is evident that the sustainability of the project's high-level results – namely, on young people's incomes, savings and wellbeing – is highly dependent on **participants' ability to maintain, develop and adapt current livelihood options**. This itself is contingent on several factors, prime among which are the social, political and economic effects of COVID-19.

Despite the spread of COVID-19 being relatively contained in Sierra Leone to date – as of 31 May 2020, the country had recorded a total of 852 cases and 46 deaths from the virus<sup>48</sup> – as in many other parts of the world that have seemingly curtailed the virus' negative effects on health outcomes, it is **the economic fallout** of national and international containment measures that are creating widespread harms.

Indeed, the finding, as seen in Figure 11, that over a quarter (29%) of young respondents believed their current work to be financially unsustainable is a strong indication that **many feel uncertain of their future**. This was supported in qualitative feedback from respondents on the effects of COVID-19 on their lives, in which several themes emerged:

- First and foremost were the **widespread disruption and stagnation of young entrepreneurs' business operations**, alongside a **decline in young employees' and job-seekers work prospects**.
- Primarily, many young business owners have been **unable to travel to buy and trade** at their regular markets, as a result of inter-district movement restrictions and bans on public gatherings. This has particularly affected those based further from urban centres, with many either ceasing trading, or resorting to more expensive local suppliers in order to get inputs for their businesses.
- Compounding such issues is the fact many businesses have been affected by government-imposed curfews between April and June, which have led to **restricted business hours**. Many young entrepreneurs reported that their **sales have fallen substantially** as a result of reduced customer footfall, as more people have stayed at

home during this period in respect of public health guidance.

- Fourthly, many young people in formal or informal employment reported that they have either **lost jobs, or been sent home unpaid**, and told they will resume work when the pandemic subsides and the economy picks up.
- Meanwhile, many **young job-seekers** reported that **work opportunities have become even scarcer**, as employers scale back recruitment.
- Finally, as a result of slow-down in international and regional trade, Sierra Leone has experienced **high levels of inflation in certain goods**, with many young respondents suffering through price increases in basic commodities and food items, now struggling to make ends meet.
- Together, these factors are contributing to many young people **losing income, seeing business revenues decline, and in turn resorting to emergency coping strategies**, like spending savings to cover basic needs, taking on additional household debt, and foregoing meals.
- Importantly, and as noted in the wider research, such **adverse impacts are acutely felt by young women**, who already earn and save less than their male counterparts and bear the burden of unpaid domestic care work<sup>24</sup>.

Despite this, the evaluation found evidence that the project - and particularly its face-to-face psychosocial support and life skills activities - has **helped to prepare many young people to cope with such a setback**. In qualitative feedback, a split was found between respondents who felt unprepared to cope with this pandemic, and others that said they have been shaken by its effects, but are confident in their ability to adapt and sustain their incomes, often through innovative **livelihood diversification**.

Moreover, the majority of activities were completed before COVID-19 was declared in early 2020. While **youth hubs have continued to operate**, they have restricted the numbers of users at any one time, enforced social distancing measures, made face masks compulsory, and postponed (post-project) trainings. Meanwhile, the YMCA has offered **counselling** to young participants throughout this period, both online and via telephone, in order to share helpful coping strategies and support those most struggling with the psychological effects of the lockdown. Finally, project mentors have continued to

remotely support young entrepreneurs, encouraging them to **pivot their business models** to goods and services now in high demand, like the production and trade of face masks, soap and hygiene products. Discussions with KIIs provided mixed feedback on the value of such services.

“Some of the young people who went through your project are now at home, sitting, because there are no jobs at the moment and businesses are stagnating.” – Kabuwabu community chief, Kenema

“With the skills they have learned from the QYL intervention they know how to look for new ideas and provide solutions to maintaining their businesses.” – Training Provider, ACTB, Freetown

While the future of the virus and its long-term consequences are uncertain and highly contingent on further transmission and responses from local authorities, what is known is that the effects to date on young people's lives are immeasurable and likely to grow only more pernicious in time. Given that the World Bank predicts economies in the region will lose \$37-\$79bn in the same year, triggering the region's first recession in a quarter of a decade<sup>49</sup> – the potential negative impacts on affected populations are unparalleled.

Now, it is essential that the YMCA and its partners **find ways to continue providing essential services to young people and their families, targeted in particular at those most struggling with the fallout of this pandemic**.

### Box 10: What effects, if any, is the current Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic having on you, your family, your income or your job?

“The pandemic has seriously affected my business and I am not making much profit now. But I am still running my shop to cope.” – male project participant, 25, Kenema

“The pandemic has affected my job search because there are no jobs.” – female project participant, 27, Makeni

“Prices of food commodities have gone up; we now spend more on food. My business has greatly been affected: sales are very low so we are making less profit. But I am still doing my business though not in a large scale to cope.” – male project participant, 30, Pujehun

“Meanwhile, it's paused my business because of the restriction of movements, since I go out of the country to fetch business. It's eating up on my savings massively.” – female project participant, 30, Pujehun

“Because of the inter-district lockdown, we barely have nowhere to go or to do business. So on the whole, my business has collapsed.” – female project participant, 23, Makeni

“So far, it has reduced my income. The family can no longer have two meals. I am definitely not prepared for this.” – female project participant, 34, Pujehun

“This pandemic has seriously affected my business; we only have a few customers to buy from us. I now make little profit from my tailoring shop. I am still doing my business to survive by making face masks.” – male project participant, 34, Pujehun

“Unavailability of raw material for production has dropped my business effectiveness; to manage this...I have decided to run another business as needed.” – male project participant, 32, Freetown

“The profit is very low; I have changed my business now to survive this pandemic so that I will not eat my capital.” – female project participant, 30, Pujehun

“Like everyone doing business the world over, the persistent lockdown has led to an abrupt reduction in sales. I am prepared to paddle my family through the trying times with the little I have been saving.” – female project participant, 31, Pujehun

# Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Below is a summary of the **key lessons learned and recommendations** drawn from this evaluation:

1) A **package of in-person skills training** – including E&E, ICT, literacy and numeracy, and soft skills – with post-training inputs, can be highly effective at youth empowerment and youth livelihoods promotion.

Future youth livelihood interventions should seek to build on this holistic package and to further tailor support to individuals' needs.

2) Providing marginalised youth with **digital skills** and promoting their **access to ICTs** has important benefits in the framework of a youth livelihoods intervention. Many go on to apply these ICT skills to run businesses and to apply for job vacancies online.

Partners should continue offering ICT courses as part of future youth livelihood interventions - and explore providing online classes where face-to-face trainings are not feasible, as may be the case in the short- to medium-term with COVID-19. Where youth hubs are used, service quality may be improved by increasing their size, reducing training cohorts, and installing back-up power generators (see p.35 for more).

3) Any and all components of in-person trainings, however, are undermined if not bolstered by cross-cutting support. Such support is needed to address the **short-term constraints** that vulnerable youth face that prevent them from participating in activities, like the need to work to earn a daily income, and pressures from others (most commonly on young women) to fulfil traditional household/care roles.

Efforts to mitigate drop-outs – like family sensitisation visits, provision of transport allowances and food stipends, and flexible activity scheduling – should be bolstered in future interventions, with new measures piloted and extra support provided to individuals most at risk of dropping out of activities.

4) When working with the most marginalised, a **minimum level of literacy and numeracy** are necessary preconditions for trainees to benefit from E&E courses. This is true of both in-person and remote training schemes. In this project, **low literacy levels remained an acute barrier to mobile phone-based learning**, even with the introduction of audio technology, as participants could not understand SMS alerts on how to access audio trainings.

Future interventions should seek to strengthen NFE activities, extend these to remote trainees, and ensure participants only enrol in E&E trainings once sufficient literacy and numeracy levels are reached. For remote training platforms, further investment is needed in increasing accessibility for participants with low literacy.

5) Access to technology in rural areas is highly dependent, not only on users' physical access to devices like mobile phones, but also on a host of other factors. In turn mobile-phone based training platforms, like OOR's SMS/audio system, require additional supporting inputs in order to be effective. These should address the **practical constraints that remote populations face** to actually using phones, such as poor network, limited access to electricity, shared ownership of devices, and poor literacy.

It is recommended that consortium partners convene to discuss the future of the SMS/audio training platform post-project. Any redeployment should seek to build on the user feedback outlined on p.36.

6) As seen in OOR's hiring of a Technical Support Officer in Freetown, international technical partners based outside of countries of implementation can benefit a lot from **recruiting in-country personnel** - in areas like hardware installation, tech troubleshooting, and liaising with national partners.

Where appropriate, international technical partners that do not have existing staff in countries of implementation should consider budgeting for national staff positions in future interventions.

7) The **combination of MoPo mobile power units and Computer Aid International's solar learning labs** is highly pertinent and can generate widespread positive impacts for rural, off-grid communities that lack access to regular, affordable electricity.

MoPo and CAI should seek further opportunities for collaboration, and expand this technological combination where appropriate in future.

8) Community-based **steering committees** can be highly effective at ensuring engagement in, and ownership of, a project from many stakeholders. In addition, they are invaluable in the development and implementation of sustainability plans, and serve essential monitoring and accountability functions.

Future interventions should seek to establish PSCs in all project locations, each with a minimum of 2 youth representatives. When working across a wide geographical scope – like with remote communities – PSCs must include representatives from these communities to ensure no voices go unheard. In larger projects, community-level PSCs may also be used to feed into regional/national PSCs.

9) The absence of **effective feedback and response mechanisms** can significantly weaken a project's results and accountability - particularly when working with geographically distant, remote communities.

Through stakeholder consultations at project inception, future interventions should co-design and tailor feedback and response mechanisms to all communities in which participants reside. This is more critical than ever in contexts where physical travel to project sites is limited by COVID-19.

10) More generally, **youth-focused interventions are much stronger when they have youth-led MEL systems**. As seen from OOR's community scoping exercise, the benefits of participatory, youth-led MEL are wide-ranging, as they place the voices of affected populations at the heart of an intervention.

Partners should enhance youth involvement in the design and implementation of future MEL activities. This could be done, for instance, by establishing 'youth MEL groups' at inception, and inviting these groups to project design workshops; methodology design workshops; and in leadership, data collection and analysis roles of different MEL activities.

11) The **absence of baseline measures for Outcome Framework indicators** is a critical flaw in a project. Here, the lack of data on young people's savings at the project's start meant no comparison could be made to quantify the project's effects on savings.

YCI and MEL leads of any future interventions must ensure that all Outcome Framework indicators are clearly defined and have baseline data collected.

12) **Business mentoring and coaching** can be very useful and cost-efficient methods to provide support to young business owners and job-seekers. Their value lies in both the technical business/career support, which helps reinforce skills and competencies taken from trainings, as well as the support provided to individuals' broader personal development (namely, motivation and encouragement of young people to overcome challenges).

Future interventions should seek to bolster and systematise mentoring efforts, and embed feedback from mentors in the design of activities. For example, information collected on an ongoing basis by mentors should be used to tailor follow-up support such as refresher trainings, trade fairs and motivational talks for young participants. In addition, mentoring and coaching systems should be used to help project staff identify and target the lowest-performing individuals, to ensure that no participants are left behind.

13) Interventions that exclusively promote individual businesses may miss out on the **advantages of group business models**. Primarily, organising young entrepreneurs into cooperatives/collectives means they may benefit from economies of scale, sharing of business networks, receipt of joint investment, and mutual development of working practices, which can ultimately lead to higher profits and better outcomes.

Future entrepreneurship-focused interventions should explore group business models, like cooperatives, alongside individual businesses. This should be done in recognition of the different challenges that come with cooperatives, and the fact that some entrepreneurs will always prefer to 'go it alone'.

14) **Business competitions** can be useful events for generating attention around youth entrepreneurship, particularly when they include successful entrepreneurs as judges and role models.

Partners should repeat and scale up business competitions in future E&E-focused interventions.

15) Transparent **information sharing and communication** are essential to consortium working. Failure to effectively communicate from the outset – at project design stage – can lead to challenges in project implementation later on, for instance, with initial budget allocations later needing revision.

In future, consortium partners should explicitly seek to build cross-organisational partnerships and effective channels of communication from the start. Establishment of a cloud-based shared drive, regular meetings, and agreement on standard operating procedures – such as communication trees, and processes for informing others of personnel changes, when staff are out-of-office, etc. – would all help to improve collaboration. In addition, there is need for strong leadership and clear organisational mandates understood by all members. Such efforts are perhaps more relevant than ever while international travel and cross-country staff visits are limited due to COVID-19.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, after 41 months of implementation, the 'Fostering innovative, resilient, and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship' project - led by Sierra Leone YMCA - has **attained many of its expected outcomes and contributed meaningfully towards its overall goal of enhancing the economic resilience of targeted youth populations** in Sierra Leone. From the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this final evaluation, the project was found to have performed to a high level across the five OECD DAC criteria and two further criteria that were investigated.

Overall, the evaluation found that the project strategy and activities have been **relevant in several important respects to the lives of targeted youth populations in Sierra Leone and their wider communities**. While the needs profiling and participant selection exercises were successful in identifying priority needs among target populations, the project strategy and activities have been largely relevant in responding to the needs and aspirations of many from the most marginalised youth groups in these locations.

This is seen in feedback from project participants, which signals that project activities have been **highly successful in equipping young people with important skills, knowledge and capacities**, that participants deem pertinent and now frequently apply in their lives and livelihood activities. This is demonstrated by the finding that 88% of project participants believe they have gained important new skills and knowledge from the project.

Of note, many respondents shared particular praise for ICT courses provided at the project's 3 youth hubs, which have helped to establish a **foundation in digital literacy** for over 600 individuals. Meanwhile, young people who took part in the project's in-person E&E trainings frequently cited the **importance and value-added of developing business management skills**, which many are now using to run their own businesses.

In parallel, other in-person activities - including NFE, vocational training, savings and credit promotion, soft skills/leadership training and start-up grant disbursement - were all found to be strongly interconnected and complementary, and to have provided a **holistic package of support for young people towards the ends of livelihoods promotion**.

In contrast, due to several challenges encountered in the implementation of the project's remote activities, partners' efforts have been **less relevant at addressing the needs of young people in hard-to-reach areas** around Makeni and Pujehun.

Despite this, **evidence of strong adaptive management in both streams** indicates that consortium partners have been flexible and have sensibly pivoted the project to respond to shifts in context and obstacles encountered during implementation. These include: the provision of face-to-face business coaching for remote participants, accounting for gaps in remote support; the addition of extra workstations at youth entrepreneurship hubs in Makeni and Pujehun; and the introduction of MoPo at the Pujehun hub.

The complementarity of project inputs is manifest in the effects they have had on young people's lives and access to livelihood opportunities. In all, the evaluation found that **the project has directly contributed to several positive, high-level impacts in the lives of targeted youth populations and their wider communities**.

First, findings from the participant survey with 245 young women and men indicate that the project has been broadly successful in **supporting youth into paid economic activities and, in particular, into enterprise and self-employment**, with many young people now working in sectors like tailoring, catering, farming and mechanics, among others. Almost three quarters (73%) of survey respondents reported that they were running a business, compared to just 8% who were looking for work or were out of the labour force, at the time of data collection in May 2020.

Secondly, the evaluation found that many young participants were now **generating regular incomes higher than those earned before taking part in the project**. Out of 238 survey respondents for whom income data was available, 88% reported having one or more regular sources of income as of the data collection period, with **three quarters reporting increases in their income since taking part in the project**. Both female and male participant groups across the 4 locations experienced broad positive income shifts following project inputs, with **average monthly incomes more than doubling from Le 239,410 (£23) before the project to Le 516,417 (£51) in May 2020**, and **median monthly incomes**

**tripling from Le 100,000 (£9.80) to Le 300,000 (£29.40)**.

In parallel to driving incomes, project activities have also contributed to **important changes in young people's savings levels and behaviours**: almost three quarters (73%) of young survey respondents were found to be regularly saving at the time of data collection, with **average monthly savings of Le 171,773 (£17; approximately one third of average incomes)**. In all, 71% of participants reported higher savings now than before they took part in the project.

Ultimately, the end-product of improved livelihood opportunities, and higher incomes and savings are improvements in young people's wellbeing and living standards. Of the 245 young participants that were interviewed, **the vast majority scored strongly across all individual wellbeing metrics** that were assessed: 100% reported feeling confident about themselves, 99% reported feeling positive about their future, and 90% believed they have the skills to cope when faced with challenges and setbacks to their lives.

Although data was not available to compare these results to findings at the start of the project, **two thirds of respondents did report that their life has 'improved significantly'** since taking part in QYL. In qualitative feedback, many respondents cited **feelings of strong personal development, higher levels of confidence and self-esteem, and improved communication and interpersonal skills** as among the most significant impacts of the project. Being able to secure work, earn higher incomes, and develop savings are all critical factors that have enabled many young participants - both female and male - to escape situations of unemployment and financial instability. This in turn has contributed to many feeling more economically independent and secure, now better able to address their needs and ultimately stand closer to achieving their goals and aspirations.

In discussions with young participants, field staff and other stakeholders, **several "positive spill-over effects" of project activities** were also revealed. First is the **knock-on job creation** generated by young entrepreneurs who now employ others outside of the project. Approximately **13% of young entrepreneurs were employing others in their businesses** at the time of data collection; with those doing so employing an average of 2.04 others. Secondly are the **direct contributions of young people, now earning higher incomes, towards household costs**. Almost all (95%) participants with a regular income source reported that they were contributing some or

most of this towards household costs, like food and medical costs for family members, and school fees for children and younger relatives.

Thirdly, as reported by both young respondents and KIs, many participants are now **sharing their skills with others** in their communities, for instance, introducing friends to youth hubs to impart their ICT skills, and providing support to others to develop their own businesses or find work. Finally, young business owners and workers are contributing **important new services to their communities**, and generating several positive multiplier effects through higher incomes and local market stimulation, which economically active youth help to promote.

While helping foster these changes, the project Outcome Framework (see Annex 1) signals that partners have **achieved many of their key intended results and attained many targets** according to budget and within the 6-month no cost extension to the project's original timeframe. Nonetheless, a comparison of results for young people across the project's remote and in-person streams signals that partners have been significantly more **effective** in their achievement of the latter.

Arguably, the in-person stream's success and relative effectiveness can be attributed to three key factors. First is that, unlike remote activities, **all in-person activities were completed within the project lifetime** and indeed before the no cost extension that began in January 2020 - allowing for their results to be duly examined at the final evaluation stage. Secondly, the package of in-person support was significantly more comprehensive than that expected of the E&E remote training platform. While the remote training platform was exclusively focused on E&E upskilling, **in-person activities were intended to be holistic and to address the multiple barriers** - that marginalised young people in Sierra Leone face to securing decent livelihoods - including barriers: to basic, core and technical skills; physical and financial assets; and networks for entrepreneurship and employment.

Thirdly - and perhaps underpinning these other factors - was that **in-country partners and particularly Sierra Leone YMCA had extensive historical experience of implementing similar in-person activities prior to this project**. For the ICT trainings at youth hubs - which was new for Sierra Leone YMCA - the consortium lead could rely on pre-existing models and expertise that was at-hand at CAI and Sensi Tech Hub. In contrast, the remote **technological solution did not exist prior to project**

**inception**; rather, it was intended to be developed iteratively during the project lifetime, and as such was new to all consortium partners including OOR.

More generally, **under-achievement of remote results**, as seen in the project Outcome Framework and throughout this report, is due to a multitude of factors. Prime among these are several major constraints encountered in the development and roll-out of the remote skills training platform. These included technical challenges – including **frequent power outages, poor mobile network and limited internet connectivity** – as well as issues around **staffing, budgeting and communication** (principally, communication between ACTB, OOR and Sierra Leone YMCA, as well as between those partners and remote stream participants). A major setback to the stream also came from a long-standing sick absence of a key member of staff at OOR involved in the platform's development.

These and other factors led to **severe delays in the delivery of remote training activities to participants – with the system only being rolled out in April 2020 (40 months after the project began) and receiving a user uptake rate of 3%**. In this evaluation, user feedback that was gathered also signals several lasting faults in the platform, with low literacy in particular continuing to limit usability and uptake. This is in spite of OOR's introduction of audio training modules to the platform, which were intended to remove literacy as a barrier to participation.

However, despite being relatively ineffectual when measured against the project's own benchmarks, **completion of the remote training platform within the project lifetime remains an important achievement of the grant**. The custom technology developed by OOR and ACTB is capable of removing distance as a barrier to learning, in turn serving last-mile, remote communities that would otherwise be excluded from traditional training programmes like those delivered through the project's in-person activity stream.

**With some important modifications** – principally, addressing issues of audio for the illiterate – and with genuinely complementary inputs, like simultaneous community coaching, it has **the potential to become an important tool for education and an “asset for the sector”**. With remote learning growing ever more essential in a world of COVID-19, there is a strong case for **consortium partners to now look to build on this opportunity and to extend and amplify the systems' nascent results** to hard-to-reach and

digitally-excluded communities both in Sierra Leone and beyond.

While recognising it as an important innovation, however, the authors of this report acknowledge the **caution of staff at Sierra Leone YMCA and other partner organisations toward revisiting the technology in future**. This is in light of the many struggles encountered in the remote platform's implementation, its limited results in the lifetime of this grant, and the enduring technical barriers that must be addressed around user literacy and genuine access to technology for the platform to foster meaningful impacts for youth.

The evaluation also conducted a limited assessment of the project's **efficiency**. Staff at various levels of partner organisations reported that, on the whole, they felt they had sufficient resources to implement project activities to the standards desired. Despite challenges encountered in initial budget allocations, and the limited time allocated to certain training activities, **the project was found to have delivered the majority of its results in a largely resource-efficient manner**.

With regards to project **partnerships**, discussions with project staff highlighted **poor communication, staff turnover, and some missed opportunities for collaboration** (in particular with private sector actors), **as key obstacles to better ways of working across board**. Despite these challenges, staff reflected that a great deal of learning had taken place, and that cross-organisational communication and collaboration had improved significantly over the lifetime of the project.

Indeed, **evidence of strong adaptive management** in response to challenges in both the in-person and remote project streams – like incorporating MoPo into sustainability plans in Pujehun, and providing roaming community coaches to fill gaps in services for remote participants – is testament to the consortium's effective partnerships, and demonstrates that barriers to communication were not a principal hindrance to achievement of project objectives.

Moreover, findings from KIIs and the respondent survey indicate that **the project has been largely successful in engaging young participants and other local actors** in its activities. It has explicitly sought to cultivate a strong sense of **participation** and local ownership of its activities, resources and aims, and has succeeded in doing so among a range of external stakeholders.

Overall, many non-staff KIIs that were interviewed felt strongly involved in the design, implementation and M&E of the project, and attested to **high levels of community engagement and a strong sense of ownership of the project** among others in their communities. The two solar learning labs in Makeni and Pujehun stood out in this regard, as project components that communities really took ownership, pride and care of. Despite this, some important lessons learned and recommendations were noted in this regard, including the importance of partners **doing more to involve youth in the design and implementation of M&E activities in future projects** (and the authors of this evaluation noting this recommendation as well).

Finally, the evaluation found mixed results regarding the **sustainability** of project outcomes. At youth hubs, consortium partners have developed two distinct and locally-tailored sustainability plans, and worked closely with government bodies and other stakeholders to ensure **continuation of hub services for several years to come**. In Makeni, the introduction of ICDL-accredited ICT courses – given they receive the correct marketing, investment, and collaboration with strategic partners like ICDL Africa – have the potential to continue serving under-served and digitally-excluded populations in the long-term, in a financially sustainable manner.

Meanwhile, in Pujehun, YMCA and CAI's partnership with MoPo has led to the establishment of an innovative mobile power solution at the hub, which has demonstrated **consistent and growing uptake since mid-2019**, providing low-cost, solar-charged electricity to rural, largely off-grid populations. That both hubs have been continuously used by young people and others since project activities ended – with hub leads reporting an average footfall of 40-50 users per day – is testament to their enduring relevance and the likelihood of many of their impacts extending well into the future.

In contrast, partners are yet to collectively identify an opportunity to use the project's SMS/audio training platform post-QYL. This is of concern, given that **the platform's potential to achieve widespread positive impacts** well beyond the reach of traditional activities. The technology is a resource that can now be recycled and reapplied in a range of contexts and sectors beyond youth E&E, and marks an opportunity to alter the way education is delivered to remote populations everywhere.

However, this opportunity will only come to light if the platform's technology and its reapplication

are embraced by consortium partners outside of OOR, and if Sierra Leone YMCA lead investment in sustainability plans for the platform. This is something that **must be actively worked towards in the months following project closure**, if partners are authentic in their desire to support remote and digitally-excluded communities in future interventions. Staff at YCI involved in the evaluation recommended a **dedicated session be held for OOR and other partners to discuss the future of the platform** in light of these findings.

Ultimately, though, the durability of all project results has been rendered uncertain by the onset of COVID-19. In seeking to understand how far the positive effects fostered by the project might endure, evidence from KIIs and participant feedback signals that the **project's impacts for young people – in terms of improvements to their livelihoods, incomes and wellbeing – are highly dependent on participants' ability to maintain and adapt current livelihood activities**, in light of a new and uncertain world of COVID-19.

While the future of the virus and its long-term consequences are unknown and highly contingent on further transmission and response measures from national authorities, the evaluation found evidence that **the effects of the virus to date on young people's lives are unparalleled and likely to grow only more pernicious** in time. The finding that **over a quarter (29%) of young respondents believe their current work to be financially unsustainable** is of major concern and a strong illustration of how many young people now feel about their futures.

In turn, it is perhaps more critical than ever that Sierra Leone YMCA and other consortium partners **find ways to continue providing services to vulnerable youth populations and their communities**. These should take on board the findings, lessons and recommendations in this evaluation and be **targeted in particular at groups that are most struggling** with the fallout of this pandemic.

“The business skills training fosters self-reliance and gives you know-how on how to run your business. A computer gives you the key to opportunities.”



Table 6 – Project Outcome Framework: Comparison of achieved results against indicator targets:

Outcome 1: Youth entrepreneurship hubs and mobile services are established and benefitting vulnerable young people.								
#	Indicator	Baseline	Overall project target	Achievements over lifetime of the project			% of overall target achieved	Comments
				Female	Male	Total		
1a	Number of hubs created for the first time	0 (pre-existing hub in Freetown)	2 (Makeni & Pujehun)	NA	NA	2 (# of new hubs)	100%	With minor delays in implementation, the project successfully established 2 new youth entrepreneurship hubs, the vehicles in which ICT training courses and PC and internet facilities were provided to communities.
1b	Number of young people accessing services from the hubs	No data	630	386	233	619	98%	ICT skills training provided to 619 vulnerable young people at youth hubs in Makeni, Pujehun and Freetown. Total achievement figure stated here does not include (the unknown number of) other young members of those communities that use hub services, namely ICT and internet facilities and MoPo mobile power charging points in Pujehun.
1c	Number of community members accessing services from the hubs	No data	1,200 (700 in Makeni & 500 in Pujehun)	310	597	907	76%	Total achievement figure stated here excludes the 2,429 individual non-youth community members reported to have benefitted from MoPo mobile power charging services in Pujehun (see 'Sustainability' section).
1d	Number of young people benefitting from mobile services	0	600 (300 in Makeni & 300 in Pujehun; target later revised to 300 overall)	58	71	129	22% (43% of revised target)	Initial project target was revised down to 300, due to challenges in skills platform roll-out and maintaining large number of hard-to-reach beneficiaries. Of the 129 figure achieved, all 129 received in-person community coaching introduced mid-way to the project. Of 296 initially enrolled remote participants, just 9 responded to business module Q&As on the SMS/audio platform, representing a 3% overall engagement rate.
1e	(Qualitative indicator) Extent to which hub sustainability plans reflect good practice in: i) community ownership and ii) sustainability	The project has developed and tailored 2 different sustainability plans for the hubs in Makeni and Pujehun. In both locations, hubs have continued to be used by young participants, other young people, and wider community members, following the end of project activities, with an average footfall reported of 40-50 users per day at each hub (pre-lockdown). In Makeni, the centre has become one of Sierra Leone's first ICDL-accredited testing centres, providing users high-quality and internationally certified ICT training at a small fee. In Pujehun, a MoPo mobile power solution has been established at the hub, and has demonstrated consistent and growing uptake since its set up. See 'Participation' and 'Sustainability' sections.						
1f	(Qualitative indicator) Level of community involvement and participation in defining and planning the long term future of the hubs	Findings from the final evaluation highlight high levels of community engagement with both hubs. Key Informants interviewed reported that Project Steering Committees and YMCA's engagement with local authorities in both locations has been critical to high levels of local buy-in and ownership of the hubs, and subsequent participation in defining their sustainability plans and long-term uses. See 'Participation' and 'Sustainability' sections.						
Outcome 2: Young women and men have improved personal skills and personal resilience.								
2a	Number and proportion of young people demonstrating improvements in basic literacy and numeracy	0	530	306	163	469	88%	Overall achievement figure stated pertains to young people completing NFE courses (a higher number enrolled and participated, but did not complete courses and show improvements in test scores).
2b	Number of YP registering positive responses for the following wellbeing proxies: • I feel confident about myself • I can remain calm when there is a problem because I have the skills to cope	0	630	444	304	748	119%	Original indicator target seems to pertain exclusively to in-person participants, and does not account for 129 remote participants also supported through the project. Hence the higher achievement rate.
		0	630	400	273	673	107%	
2c	Number of young people who report feeling supported by their family and community	0	630	404	277	681	108%	As in 2b, original indicator target only pertains to in-person participants. Remote participant changes also included as achievements.
2d	(Qualitative indicator) Extent to which young people have established life goals and actions to undertake.	Qualitative data highlights that many young people have developed livelihoods as a result of project activities, which support them in the achievement of their life goals. In case studies, many report how the project has helped them to feel confident in themselves, to establish goals and to undertake realistic action plans to achieve these. See 'Impact' section.						

Table 6 – Project Outcome Framework: Comparison of achieved results against indicator targets (continued):

Outcome 3: Young women and men have the skills and capacity to develop and manage their enterprises and go into employment.								
#	Indicator	Baseline	Overall project target	Achievements over lifetime of the project			% of overall target achieved	Comments
				Female	Male	Total		
3a	Number and proportion of young people demonstrating competence in: basic computer skills; entrepreneurial competence; marketing; finance and budgeting	0	630	328	175	503	80%	The indicator itself and overall achievement figure pertain exclusively to in-person participants, and do not include remote participants that may have experienced improvements in E&E/business management skills as a result of remote business coaching and the SMS/audio skills training.
3b	Number of young people that complete vocational training	0	80	36	44	80	100%	100% of young participants that enrolled completed vocational training courses.
3c	Number of young people developing/improving business plans	0	630	287	149	436	69%	Indicator target is likely misplaced, given that the project explicitly intended for some of the 630 in-person participants to go into employment, rather than enterprise (hence they would not have been expected to complete business plans). Project should be amended for the high proportion of female entrepreneurs (65% of 436 total) it has enabled.
3d	Number and proportion of business plans meeting quality assurance criteria	0	350	233	117	350	100%	Overall achievement figure reflects the 350 business plans that were approved and funded (possible that more out of the 436 met quality assurance criteria, but that a decision was made not to increase the number of grant allocations). Distribution of 100% of intended start-up grants was achieved, equating to 1,650,401,400 SLL total grant allocations. Some exchange rate gains made during the course of the project meant individual grant allocations were higher than initially budgeted.
3e	(Qualitative indicator) Extent to which young people report feeling confident in developing/managing a business			100% of young business owners interviewed as part of the final evaluation agreed with the statement 'I feel confident in my abilities to manage my business'. Qualitative data highlights that the young business owners feel confident in establishing, managing and adapting their businesses. See 'Impact' section.				
3f	(Qualitative indicator) Level of adaptation of business plans and approaches by young people			Many young beneficiaries who have been supported into enterprise through the project have had to adapt their business plans in light of COVID-19 preventative measures. Case studies demonstrate how young people have changed their business models and services in response to inter-district lockdowns (switching in the short-term to local suppliers/buyers), increased demand of certain goods (producing/trading soap/hygiene products/face masks) and lower customer footfall (limiting working hours). See 'Impact' and 'Sustainability' sections.				
Outcome 4: Young women and men have increased access to assets and networks to develop their enterprise opportunities.								
4a	Number and proportion of young people reporting that they are applying the advice received from their Business Coaches/Mentors to grow their networks or business	0	385	359	235	594	154%	Original indicator target seems to pertain exclusively to in-person participants, and does not account for 129 remote participants also supported through the project. Hence the higher achievement rate.
4b	Number of applications for start-up capital grants scheme	0	385	287	149	436	125%	See overlap with indicators 3c and 3d.
4c	Number and proportion of applications funded for the start-up capital grants scheme	0	350	233	113	350	100%	See overlap with indicators 3c and 3d.
4d	Number of savings groups established and number of young people	0 groups (0 young people)	50 groups (350 young people)	(111)	(71)	16 groups (182 young people)	32% (52%)	16 savings groups were established during the project lifetime. It was noted that 34 savings groups were established (by CODOSAPA/YMCA) prior to project implementation, and were used by parents and guardians of young QYL participants. As there was more trust in the existing groups compared to newly established ones, many young people are reported to have used these rather than the new groups. Final evaluation found that 42% of survey respondents were savings group members.

Table 6 – Project Outcome Framework: Comparison of achieved results against indicator targets (continued):

4e	(Qualitative indicator) Extent to which young people report being able to access credit	The project provided business start-up capital to 350 young people. In addition, it supported 17 participant in loan applications to banks and MFIs (7 of whom did not receive project start-up capital).					Limited data collected for this indicator.	
<b>Outcome 5: Young women and men are more economically resilient and secure.</b>								
#	Indicator	Baseline	Overall project target	Achievements over lifetime of the project			% of overall target achieved	Comments
				Female	Male	Total		
5a	Proportion and number of young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In process of establishing a business</li> <li>Running a business</li> </ul>	50	385 (composite of the two)	364: 40 (9%) 324 (73%)	249: 27 (9%) 222 (73%)	613: 67 (9%) 546 (73%)	159%	Original indicator target seems low, given that a total of 1,230 in-person and remote participants were expected to receive E&E skills training.
5b	Number of young people running a business who are registering an income of above \$50 per month in Freetown and Makeni; and above \$30 per month in Pujehun	0	308 (composite of the two)	165: 65 100	113: 44 69	278: 109 169	90%	Based on an exchange rate of 1 USD = 10,000 SLL.
5c	Number of young people that are in employment/in apprenticeships	0	112	49	33	82	73%	-
5d	Number of young people in employment/in apprenticeships who register an income of above \$40 per month	0	106	14	10	24	23%	Based on an exchange rate of 1 USD = 10,000 SLL. Low achievement rate in part due to lower achievement of numbers attaining employment (see indicator 5c), as well as the fact that many young people in employment were either poorly paid or in voluntary/unpaid roles.
5e	Number of young people saving on a regular basis	No data	327	324	222	546	167%	Baseline figure needed to measure change over project lifetime.
5f	Number of young women and men are able to meet their basic needs (food security, health, education, basic goods)	No data	504	131	112	243	48%	Baseline figure needed to measure change over project lifetime. Many young people reportedly experiencing improvements in ability to meet their basic needs, but 68% still reporting that their families/households cannot meet all of the basic needs listed.
5g	(Qualitative indicator) Capacity levels of young people to respond to shocks in their lives	Findings from the final evaluation signal that young people's capacity to respond to shocks has, on average, improved as a result of project activities. First, 94% of beneficiaries reported that they agree (55%) or agree strongly (39%) with the statement: "I can remain calm when I have a problem because I have the skills to cope". Secondly, 80.48% of participants were found to have significantly (50%) and slightly (30.48%) higher savings than before taking part in project activities, with savings being crucial financial safety nets helping young people and their families cope with shocks and setbacks. However, the final evaluation also noted that COVID-19 was having widespread effects on young people's lives, with several resorting to emergency coping mechanisms to deal with price inflation and shortages of certain goods, such as foregoing meals, spending savings on consumables and taking on more household debt. See 'Impact' and 'Sustainability' sections.						
5h	(Qualitative indicator) Extent to which young people are creating jobs for other young people in their community	The final evaluation found some evidence of indirect job creation through QYL youth businesses. For every 1 entrepreneur the project helped to set up a business, this created on average 1.26 jobs. Roughly 13% of young entrepreneurs employed others after 6-12 months of having established their business; those that do were found to employ an average of 2.04 others (non-project participants). See 'Impact' section.						

## Y CARE INTERNATIONAL

### Terms of Reference Impact Evaluation 20/04/2020 – Version 4

#### 1. Executive Summary

<b>Country of Intervention</b>	Sierra Leone	
<b>Project Name</b>	Fostering innovative, resilient and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone – Queen's Young Leaders (QYL)	
<b>Project Code</b>	SL2	
<b>Project Timeframe</b>	Project start date: 01/01/2016 Project end date: 31/12/2019 (31/05/2020 including no cost extension) Project duration: 36 (+ 5) months	
<b>Organisations Involved</b>	<a href="#">Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Sierra Leone</a> <a href="#">Y Care International (YCI)</a> <a href="#">A Call to Business (ACTB)</a> <a href="#">Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODHSAPA)</a> <a href="#">Computer Aid International (CAI)</a> <a href="#">Global Youth Network for Empowerment and Development (GYNED-SL)</a> <a href="#">On Our Radar (OOR)</a> <a href="#">Sensi Tech Hub</a>	
<b>Project Donor(s)</b>	Comic Relief	
<b>Overall Project Budget</b>	£1,521,927	
<b>Evaluation Budget</b>	£10,000 <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Type of Evaluation</b>	Impact Evaluation	
<b>Overall Research Timeframe</b>	07/02/2020 to 30/06/2020	
<b>Detailed Research Timeframe<sup>2</sup></b>	1. Research design: 07/02/2020 to 30/04/2020	5. Data analysis: 13/05/2020 to 15/05/2020
	2. Data collection: UK: 04/05/2020 to 08/05/2020 SLE: 04/05/2020 to 08/05/2020	6. Output drafting: 13/05/2020 to 22/05/2020
	3. Data processing and cleaning: 11/05/2020 to 12/05/2020	7. Output review/finalisation: 25/05/2020 to 12/06/2020
	4. Stakeholder validation workshop: SLE: TBD UK: TBD	8. Dissemination of findings: 15/06/2020 to 30/06/2020

<sup>1</sup> Given adaptations made to the evaluation in response to the COVID-19, it is unlikely that the full evaluation budget will be required.

<sup>2</sup> Timeframes adjusted in light of COVID-19 measures and switch to remote evaluation methods.

	Audience Type	Dissemination
<b>Audience Type &amp; Dissemination</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Donor(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Beneficiaries <input type="checkbox"/> Project Steering Committee(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report Shared via Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results Summary Shared via Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation of Findings (at SLE and UK partner/stakeholder meetings) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Website Dissemination (YCI & Partners)
<b>Research Objectives</b>	i) To assess and reflect on the results – and, in particular, the highest-level changes, or 'impacts' – the project has contributed to; ii) To improve our understanding of youth enterprise, employment and consortia working, in the Sierra Leonean and UK contexts; iii) To develop lessons learned and recommendations that will inform improvements to the design and implementation of similar interventions in Sierra Leone and other locations in the future.	
<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Impact:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What high-level changes (both positive and negative) has the project brought about (directly or indirectly, intendedly or unintendedly)?</li> <li>What have been the most significant changes in the lives of the project's direct beneficiaries, families and local communities since the project began, from the perspective of these stakeholders? To what extent do they consider that the project, as opposed to other factors, has contributed to these changes?</li> <li>Have impacts varied for different target areas, groups or individuals? If so, how and why?</li> </ul> <b>Relevance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent have the project strategy and activities addressed the needs and aspirations of young women and men targeted by the project?</li> <li>To what extent has the project been flexible and responsive to changes in context, in order to remain relevant?</li> </ul> <b>Sustainability:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the results achieved so far by the project, especially the positive impacts, likely to continue after the project ends?</li> </ul>	
<b>Geographic Coverage</b>	Freetown, Kenema, Makeni and Pujehun	
<b>Secondary Data Sources</b>	Project Start-up Form and Theory of Change Project monitoring & evaluation data Project Baseline Survey Report Project Mid-term Review Report Annual and bi-annual project narrative reports	
<b>Data Collection Tool(s)</b>	Mixed Methods : [1] Structured (Quantitative) [2] Semi-structured (Qualitative)	
	<b>Sampling Method</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>
<b>Structured Data Collection Tool # 1</b>	<i>Probability Sampling:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stratified (by beneficiary type (online/remote), location and gender)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ind. Questionnaire with young beneficiaries (via telephone) (Target #): 211

<b>Semi-structured Data Collection Tool # 1</b>	<i>Non-Probability Sampling:</i> [X] Purposive	[X] Key Informant Interview with UK and Sierra Leone project staff (via telephone/video call) (Target #): 10-12
<b>Semi-structured Data Collection Tool # 2</b>	<i>Non-Probability Sampling:</i> [X] Purposive	[X] Key Informant Interview with other project stakeholders (via telephone) (Target #): 8-10
<b>Target Level of Precision if Probability Sampling</b>	90% confidence level	5 +/- % margin of error
<b>Visibility</b>	Sierra Leone YMCA, YCI, ACTB, CODOHSAPA, CAI, GYNED-SL, OOR, Sensi Tech Hub	

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Project Overview

As of March 2020, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Sierra Leone, in partnership with Y Care International (YCI) and several other Sierra Leonean and UK-based organisations, have implemented 38 out of a total of 40 months<sup>3</sup> of the 'Queen's Young Leaders (QYL)' project<sup>4</sup>, funded by Comic Relief.

The project aims to enhance the economic resilience and security of **930 young women and men**<sup>5</sup> in 4 cities of Sierra Leone – Freetown, Kenema, Makeni and Pujehun – and their peripheral villages. It does so by providing them with access to skills training, assets and networks needed to establish small enterprises or enter employment. This approach involves directly supporting 630 young people across 3 locations through 'Youth Entrepreneurship Hubs' – solar-powered, IT-equipped learning labs, based on Computer Aid International's [ZubaBox](#) model – as well as reaching a further 300 hard-to-reach young people through a **remote SMS training platform**, designed by On Our Radar and A Call to Business.

The expected outcomes of the QYL project are as follows:

- **Impact:** Young women and men in Sierra Leone have increased economic resilience and security.
- **Outcome 1:** Youth Entrepreneurship hubs and mobile services are established and benefitting vulnerable young people.
- **Outcome 2:** Young people have improved personal skills and resilience.
- **Outcome 3:** Young women and men have the skills and capacity to develop and manage their enterprises and go into employment.
- **Outcome 4:** Young women and men have increased access to assets and networks to develop their enterprise opportunities.
- **Outcome 5:** Young women and men are more economically resilient and secure.

The specific results are as follows:

- **Result 1:** Improved knowledge of 930 vulnerable young people in entrepreneurial/business skills in order to enable them to engage in viable business activities.
- **Result 2:** 350 viable business plans developed by young people funded and successfully established by young people.
- **Result 3:** Increased levels of confidence of target beneficiaries to adapt and manage the challenges/decisions they face in life more effectively.

<sup>3</sup> The original project duration was 36 months, running until 31 December 2019. A no-cost extension of 5 months was agreed, with the project now ending on 31 May 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Formally entitled: 'Fostering innovative, resilient and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone'.

<sup>5</sup> The original overall target figure was 1,230. This was revised down in Year 2, following a reduction in the target number of 'remote' beneficiaries, from 600 to 300.

### 2.2 Evaluation Rationale

With project implementation ending, and in light of the current COVID-19 global pandemic, YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI will undertake a remote impact evaluation of the project. This will serve as an assessment of the high-level changes – or impacts – that the project has generated or contributed to, and seek to measure the extent to which the project has achieved its overall goal and the results outlined above.

The overall research objectives of this impact evaluation are:

- 1) To assess and reflect on the results – and, in particular, the highest-level changes, or 'impacts' – the project has contributed to;
- 2) To improve our understanding of youth enterprise, employment and consortia working, in the Sierra Leonean and UK contexts;
- 3) To develop lessons learned and recommendations that will inform improvements to the design and implementation of similar interventions in Sierra Leone and other locations in the future.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The specific research objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- To evaluate the impacts generated by the project for participants, their families and communities, using participatory, mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methodological approaches;
- To identify, collate and reflect on lessons learned from the project– i.e. analysing what has worked well and less well, and why – and share this learning among a range of stakeholders.

### 3.2 Use of Evaluation Findings

YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI will use the information generated through this evaluation:

- To help YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI to better plan and design future work in Sierra Leone;
- To improve all partners' knowledge on what works and does not work for young women and men in relation to enterprise, employment, and consortia working in this context;
- To report to project staff, beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders on what has been achieved through the project life cycle.

### 3.3 Evaluation Scope, Focus and Criteria

The impact evaluation will focus on identifying and assessing the high-level changes brought about by the project. In order to do so, it will seek to evaluate the project according to the following [OECD/DAC criteria](#) and research questions, with a focus on assessing the **impact, relevance** and **sustainability** of the project. In addition, it will seek to answer questions concerning the project's **effectiveness, efficiency, participation** and **partnerships**, while recognising the limitations in assessing these given the remote methodology in use and the timeframe and resources available.<sup>6,7</sup> Finally, it will seek to identify a set of lessons learned and recommendations that can be used to inform similar interventions in future.

#### Primary criteria:

##### Impact:

- What high-level changes (both positive and negative) has the project brought about (directly or indirectly, intendedly or unintendedly)?
- What have been the most significant changes in the lives of the project's direct beneficiaries, families and local communities since the project began, from the perspective of these stakeholders? To what extent do they consider that the project, as opposed to other factors, has contributed to these changes?
- Have impacts varied for different target areas, groups or individuals? If so, how and why?

<sup>6</sup> This impact evaluation will not be concerned with assessing all results achieved so far by the project. Its objectives will be to identify key high-level results that have materialised out of project activities, to understand why these have happened, and to identify key learning around them.

<sup>7</sup> The project Outcome Framework (Annex 3) will be used as a key reference point in this evaluation as the basis for measuring achievement of the project's intended results.

Relevance:

- To what extent have the project strategy and activities addressed the needs and aspirations of young women and men targeted by the project?
- To what extent has the project been flexible and responsive to changes in context, in order to remain relevant?

Sustainability:

- To what extent are the results achieved so far by the project, especially the positive impacts, likely to continue after the project ends?

**Secondary criteria:**Effectiveness:

- Has the project achieved its intended results, according to its implementation schedule and planned timeline? Why or why not?

Efficiency:

- Have project staff had enough time, resources and support to implement project activities to a level of quality as intended? Why or why not?
- Have the implementation strategies been resource-efficient (i.e. has input of resources achieved the desired outputs, without waste or duplication)? What could be improved?

Participation:

- To what extent have project beneficiaries and other stakeholders been actively involved in the design, implementation, management and monitoring and evaluation of the project, rather than simply being recipients of aid?
- To what extent do beneficiaries and other stakeholders feel a sense of 'ownership' of the project?

Partnerships:

- To what extent has collaboration among the project's partner organisations supported or hindered the implementation and impacts of the project?
- How can organisational partnerships be strengthened for future collaborations?

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

- What are the key lessons and promising practices identified by the project that can be used to guide future strategies and/or projects of organisations working in youth enterprise and employment?

**3.4 Evaluation Process and Methodology**

The impact evaluation will be conducted internally and jointly by staff of YCI and YMCA Sierra Leone and will be led by the Project MEL Officer of YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI's Senior MEL Coordinator. The research team will be engaged in remote primary data collection, secondary data review and data analysis activities specific for the purposes of this evaluation. In addition, staff and stakeholder validation workshops will be conducted in Sierra Leone and the UK<sup>8</sup>, in order to share and discuss key findings, lessons learned and recommendations of the evaluation.

**3.5 Primary Data Collection**

In order to meet its objectives, the impact evaluation will use mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods, with a focus on participatory, stakeholder-led approaches. As a result of movement restrictions and social distancing measures in place in response to COVID-19 at the time of data collection, all primary data collection activities will be done remotely. Enumerators will be recruited and trained remotely (with use of training manuals, video calls and WhatsApp groups), and will conduct surveys and interviews remotely (via telephone and video calling).

<sup>8</sup> These will either be conducted remotely (via video call) where internet connection permits, or postponed until COVID-19 measures are lifted (likely after the evaluation and project timeframe ends).

The evaluation will comprise of:

- **Individual surveys/questionnaires** – 211 individual questionnaires administered remotely (via telephone) with online and remote direct project beneficiaries. Respondents will be randomly selected, after stratification by beneficiary type (online/remote), location and gender. Data will be collected by trained enumerators, working from home, and entered and stored on the ONA mobile data collection platform.
- **Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs)** – in-depth interviews conducted remotely (via telephone and video call) with:
  - 10-12 project staff of Sierra Leonean and UK-based partner organisations – selected on the basis of their involvement in the design, implementation and M&E of the project;
  - 810 other key project stakeholders (e.g. community leaders, business mentors/coaches, government/municipality officials, etc.) – selected on the basis of their expertise and knowledge in particular thematic areas relevant to the project evaluation;
- **[Validation and learning workshops** – 2 workshops will be conducted with project staff and key stakeholders; 1 in Sierra Leone and 1 in the UK. These will focus on sharing, reflecting on, and interpreting findings generated from the above exercises among a wide range of stakeholders involved in the project.<sup>9</sup>]

Data collected through the above activities will be triangulated with available data collected as part of YMCA Sierra Leone's regular monitoring and evaluation of the project. As such, this impact evaluation will also provide a chance to review, test and verify the quality of data collected throughout the project by YMCA Sierra Leone.

**3.6 Populations of Interest**

To ensure that the evaluation is conducted in a participatory and representative manner, the process will seek to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- Direct online and remote beneficiaries reached by the project;
- Family and household members of direct beneficiaries;
- Local community leaders in project locations;
- Community steering groups involved in monitoring the project;
- Government/municipality officials in project locations;
- YMCA Sierra Leone staff, who have been directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the project;
- Staff of other partner and donor organisations involved in the project.

**3.7 Geographical Locations**

Data for this impact evaluation will be collected by YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI staff in their respective countries. Primary data collection will take place remotely with beneficiaries and key stakeholders situated in the following project locations: Freetown, Makeni, Pujehun and Kenema. Key informant interviews and a staff validation workshop will also be conducted remotely with project staff based in the UK.

**3.8 Secondary Data Review**

In addition to primary data collection activities, the research team will conduct a desk review of available secondary data. The key sources that will be used include:

- Project Start-up Form and Theory of Change;
- Data collected as part of the regular monitoring and evaluation of the project, via the ONA mobile data collection platform, and Mopo data collected by CAI;
- Project Baseline Survey Report;
- Project Mid-term Review Report;
- Annual and bi-annual project narrative reports.

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 7.

### 3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

- **Data entry** – data for individual surveys/questionnaires conducted with 211 young beneficiaries will be collected using the ONA App, with enumerators entering data via smartphones or the ONA web platform, stored on YCI's ONA server. Data for KIIs and validation/learning workshops will be collected by YMCA Sierra Leone enumerators manually using paper forms, following questionnaire/discussion guides. These will then be typed and transferred to a Microsoft Excel database, with missing information be added from audio recordings of discussions.
- **Data cleaning and processing** – the research team will check and clean submissions for duplicate and missing entries, internal inconsistencies, outliers and data entry errors. Any issues will be followed up with enumerators and, where necessary and possible, original sources of information.
- **Data analysis** – once data sets are cleaned and finalised, the research team will analyse them according to analysis plans developed for respective tools. Key calculations carried out on quantitative data will include aggregates, averages, proportions of totals, and most common responses across entries at different levels. Key principles of content analysis will be used to interpret open-ended qualitative data generated through the different tools. This entails organising and codifying participants' responses by key themes, seeking to draw out common themes repeated throughout discussions as well as outlying or dissenting views of respondents. As far as possible, comparative analysis of data will be made, disaggregating findings by respondents' location, type (online/remote beneficiary), gender, age, disability and other factors.

### 4. Timelines and Deliverables

The overall timeframe allocated to the impact evaluation process is 145 days, covering research design; methodology and tool development; data collection, processing and analysis; preparation and finalisation of the report and action plan; and dissemination of findings.

- **Report:** A report will be drafted by the YCI Senior MEL Coordinator and the YMCA Sierra Leone Project MEL Officer and will be submitted to YMCA Sierra Leone, YCI and partners' staff electronically in Microsoft Word format by 12 June 2020. The report should be written clearly and without jargon in English to a standard suitable for publication. Annexes should include summary table of stakeholders interviewed; examples of evaluation tools used; and available photos of key project sites (taken prior to the evaluation).
- **Results Summary:** A 4-page results summary will be drafted by the YCI Senior MEL Coordinator, highlighting key findings and lessons learned from the evaluation in a more user-friendly and shorter format.

### 5. Roles and Responsibilities

YMCA Sierra Leone and YCI will conduct the impact evaluation in close collaboration. Below is an outline of the roles and responsibilities of parties to the evaluation:

#### Roles and responsibilities of YCI:

1. To develop the methodology and data collection tools to be used for the evaluation, share these with YMCA Sierra Leone and other partners for review, and incorporate their feedback prior to finalisation;
2. To develop training materials for the training of enumerators on this evaluation's data collection tools;
3. To support YMCA Sierra Leone in conducting and facilitating data collection activities, field work, and any workshops, in line with the agreed methodology;
4. To securely store all data collected as part of the evaluation and shared by YMCA Sierra Leone;
5. To co-analyse the findings of the evaluation with YMCA Sierra Leone;
6. To draft a report in line with this Terms of Reference, share this with YMCA Sierra Leone and other partners for review, incorporate their feedback and approve the final report in line with quality standards and within the agreed deadlines;
7. To ensure all ethical standards are followed to a high standard throughout the evaluation process.

#### Roles and responsibilities of the YMCA Sierra Leone:

1. To review the tools and methodology designed by the YCI and provide feedback prior to finalisation;
2. To deliver enumerator training;
3. To lead remote data collection activities, in line with the agreed methodology;
4. To digitally upload and securely store all data collected as part of the evaluation, and share this with YCI;
5. To collate relevant and available monitoring data, and share this with YCI;
6. To co-analyse the findings of the evaluation with YCI;
7. To support YCI in the production and finalisation of a report in line with this Terms of Reference;
8. To ensure all ethical standards are followed to a high standard throughout the evaluation process.

### 6. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation will comply with Y Care International's '**Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures**', taking particular note of the code of conduct and procedures relating to confidentiality, consent and soliciting information from young people.

The research team will ensure that this evaluation is conducted in an ethical and sensitive manner. Vulnerable children and young people should be protected and potential harm from the research tools, methodology, or researchers should be avoided. All parties involved in the impact evaluation will ensure that:

- Respondents are respected by the researchers and research tools;
- Researchers seek informed consent from all respondents;
- The participation of local community representatives in planning and conducting the survey is sought;
- As far as possible, community representatives and researchers work together to make sure that research is conducted in the most appropriate way;
- Communities are informed of the research, possible outcomes (positive and negative), and the results of the research.

Given the remote nature of this evaluation, participants will be required to give verbal consent to use of their data. Enumerators will ensure that all of the aforementioned ethical considerations are upheld to a high standard and that particular consideration is given to safeguarding, participant confidentiality and data protection.

Queens Young Leaders – Final Evaluation – Young Participant Survey					
<b>1. Assessment Information</b>					
1.1 Enumerator code: <i>(Please specify)</i>	EN - __				
1.2 Date of data collection: <i>(Please specify: dd/mm/yyyy)</i>	__ / __ / ____				
1.3 Respondent type: <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Freetown Online	Makeni Offline	Pujehun Offline		
	Kenema Online	Makeni Online	Pujehun Online		
<b>2. Tool Introduction (To be read to respondent)</b>					
<p>Hello and thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey conducted by YMCA Sierra Leone. My name is [enumerator name]. This survey has been designed to collect information and feedback on the YMCA's Queens Young Leaders (QYL) project, as part of a final evaluation of the project. The questionnaire should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. You were invited to participate because you have been involved in the project's activities, and because we would like to hear your opinions on these activities.</p> <p>Please note, your personal data and responses will be anonymised when we report on the findings from this survey – that is, they will not be shared in a way where you could be identified personally. We will do our best to inform you of the assessment findings once data collection is completed. I would like to inform you that there are no right or wrong answers to questions, and I encourage you to be honest and frank in your responses. At the end of this survey you will be given a small amount of phone credit as compensation and thanks for your time. We really value your participation, and you should know you can stop the survey, ask me any questions, or choose not to respond to a question, at any point. If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let me know or speak with any staff member working on the project. If you have concerns after the survey ends, you can withdraw your responses at a later date by contacting Sierra Leone YMCA on: +232 78 952818.</p> <p>By agreeing to proceed with this survey, you acknowledge that you consent for your data to be used by YMCA Sierra Leone and their partners in the ways explained. Do you agree to proceed?</p>					
Do you agree to proceed? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Yes	No		
<b>3. Respondent Information</b>					
<i>(Section Intro)</i> – Thank you. Let's begin. The first section asks about you and other members of your household. I'd like to remind you that all personal information will remain completely confidential and only used for the purposes of this evaluation.					
3.1 What is your name? <i>(Please specify first and last name)</i>					
3.2 Where do you live? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Freetown	Makeni	Pujehun		
	Kenema	Other			
<i>(If 'Other' to Q 3.2)</i> – 3.2.1 Other town/village: <i>(Please specify)</i>					
3.3 How old are you? <i>(Please specify no. of years)</i>					
3.4 What is your gender? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Female	Male	Other identity	Prefer not to say	
3.5 What is your highest level of education? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Did not attend school	Primary	Secondary	Technical/vocational	
	Undergraduate (university level)	Postgraduate (university level)	Other		
<i>(If 'Other' to Q 3.5)</i> – 3.5.1 Other level of education: <i>(Please specify)</i>					
3.6 How many people are there in your household? (This includes parents, children, siblings, relatives and any other women and men that share the same living space as you and share meals and other resources.) <i>(Please specify no. of household members)</i>					
<i>(If response to Q 3.6 is greater than zero)</i> – 3.6.1 Who currently lives with you? <i>(Please circle all applicable options)</i>	Spouse/partner	Your children	Your partner(s) children	(Single) parent	Both parents
	Grandparents	Brothers/sisters (siblings)	Other relatives	Others (non-relatives)	

<i>(If 'Others (non-relatives)' to Q 3.6.1)</i> – 3.6.2 Other cohabitants: <i>(Please specify)</i>			
3.7 Do you have any children or care for any children? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
<i>(If 'Yes' to Q 3.7)</i> – 3.7.1 How many children do you have or care for? <i>(Please specify no. of children)</i>			
<i>(Section Intro)</i> – The next set of questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH problem. Please answer as honestly as you can. If you did not wish to respond to any questions, that is also OK.			
3.9.1 Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.2 Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.3 Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.4 Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.5 Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.6 Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	No - no difficulty		
	Yes - some difficulty		
	Yes - a lot of difficulty		
	Cannot do at all		
	Prefer not to say		
3.9.7 Do you have any other health problems or concerns you would like us to be aware of? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Yes	No
<i>(If 'Yes' to Q 3.9.7)</i> – 3.9.7.1 Other health problems/concerns: <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<b>4. Project Participation</b>			
<i>(Section Intro)</i> – The next section asks about the activities you have participated in with YMCA Sierra Leone as part of this project.			
4.1 Which activities have you taken part in as part of this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to all applicable options)</i>	Business mentoring		
	Business skills training via the 'Offline' SMS/Audio platform		
	Business skills training		
	IT (computer) skills training in the youth 'hub'		
	Literacy and numeracy training		
	Psychosocial support		
	Savings and credit support		
	Vocational training		

	Other		
	None of the above		
<i>(If 'Other' to Q 4.1) –</i>			
4.1.1 Other activity/activities: <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<i>(If any activity selected in Q 4.1) –</i> 4.2 Do you feel you have gained any important skills or knowledge by taking part in these activities? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Definitely - I have gained a lot of important skills and knowledge		
	Somewhat - I have gained some important skills and knowledge		
	Not really - I have gained few skills and knowledge		
	Not at all - I have gained no skills or knowledge		
	Not sure		
<i>(If 'Definitely' or 'Somewhat' selected to Q 4.2) –</i>			
4.2.1 What skills and knowledge do you feel you have gained by taking part in these activities? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<i>(If any activity selected in Q 4.1) –</i> 4.3 Do you feel your life has changed in any way since taking part in the project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Yes, it has improved significantly		
	Yes, it has improved slightly		
	No, it has not changed		
	Yes, it has gotten slightly worse		
	Yes, it has gotten a lot worse		
	Not sure		
4.3.1 What has been the most significant change in your life since you took part in the project? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<b>Section 4.4.1 (A) – 'Hub' Beneficiaries</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 4.4.1 – Q 4.4.1.3) only if 'IT (computer) skills training in the youth "hub" selected in Q 4.1)</i>			
4.4.1 Overall, how would you rate the quality of ICT trainings provided in the 'youth hub' by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		
	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
4.4.1.1 Please can you share a little more about your experience with the hub training courses? For example, what did you like and dislike most about using the hub and the ICT trainings provided? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
4.4.1.2 Would you recommend the hub to your friends and family? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Yes	No
4.4.1.3 We're really interested in making the hubs better in future. In your opinion, how can the hubs be improved, to better meet your needs and the needs of other young people in your area? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<b>Section 4.4.1 (B) – Other 'Online' Beneficiaries (business skills, vocational or literacy &amp; numeracy training – NOT via SMS/audio platform)</b>			
<i>(If 'Business skills training' selected to Q 4.1) –</i> 4.4.1.4 Overall, how would you rate the quality of business/entrepreneurship skills trainings provided by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		
	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
<i>(If 'Vocational training' selected to Q 4.1) –</i> 4.4.1.5 Overall, how would you rate the quality of vocational skills trainings provided by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		

	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
<i>(If 'Literacy and numeracy training' selected to Q 4.1) –</i> 4.4.1.6 Overall, how would you rate the quality of literacy and numeracy trainings provided by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		
	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
<i>(If 'Business skills training', 'Vocational training' or 'Literacy and numeracy training' selected to Q 4.1) –</i> 4.4.1.7 Please can you share a little more about your experience with the other training courses you took part in? For example, do you think they have been useful to your life and work? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<b>Section 4.4.2 – Business Mentees</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 4.4.2 – Q 4.4.2.1) only if 'Business mentoring' selected in Q 4.1)</i>			
4.4.2 Overall, how would you rate the quality of business mentoring and other business support provided by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		
	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
4.4.2.1 Do you apply the advice given by your mentor in your day-to-day life? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		All the time	Often
		Some of the time	Rarely
			Never
<b>Section 4.4.3 – 'Offline' Beneficiaries</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 4.4.2 – Q 4.4.3.4) only if 'Business skills training via the "Offline" SMS/Audio platform' selected in Q 4.1)</i>			
4.4.3 Overall, how would you rate the quality of the offline SMS/audio training provided by this project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Excellent		
	Good		
	Adequate		
	Poor		
	Very poor		
	Not sure		
	Prefer not to say		
4.4.3.1 Please can you share a little more about your experience with the SMS/audio platform? For example, what did you like and dislike most about the SMS/audio training? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
4.4.3.2 Do you have any difficulties using the SMS/audio platform? For example, do you share your mobile phone with other people, or ever have problems with phone charging (electricity) or credit? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
4.4.3.3 Would you recommend the SMS/audio training scheme to your friends and family? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Yes	No
4.4.3.4 We're really interested in making the SMS/audio training scheme better. In your opinion, how can the scheme be improved, to better meet your needs and the needs of other young people in your village? <i>(Please specify)</i>			
<b>5. Enterprise and Employment</b>			
<i>(Section Intro) – The next section asks about your current work situation.</i>			
5.1 What is your current work status? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to the option(s) that best fit your current situation. Mark ALL options that apply.)</i>	I am working full-time for someone else		
	I am working part-time for someone else		
	I am a trainee/apprentice for someone else's business		
	I am an intern for someone else's business		

	I work occasionally as a day labourer		
	I am setting up my own business		
	I am running my own business/I am self-employed		
	I am looking for a job		
	I am a paid volunteer		
	I am an unpaid volunteer		
	I am a student		
	I am not looking for a job		
	Other		
<i>(If 'Other' to Q 5.1) – 5.1.1 Other current work status: (Please specify)</i>			
<b>Section 5.2 – Enterprise/Business Owners</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.2.1 – Q 5.2.4.1) only if 'I am setting up my own business' or 'I am running my own business/I am self-employed' selected to Q 5.1)</i>			
5.2.1 When did you start your business(es)? <i>(Please circle one option. If the respondent has more than 1 business, please select the option for their EARLIEST established business, which is still running at the time of data collection)</i>	Before you participated in the YMCA project	After you participated in the YMCA project	Not sure
5.2.1.1 How long have you been running your current business(es) for? <i>(Please circle one option. If the respondent has more than 1 business, please select the option for their EARLIEST established business, which is still running at the time of data collection)</i>	Less than 1 month	More than 1 month but less than 3 months	More than 3 months but less than 6 months
	More than 6 months but less than 1 year	More than 1 year but less than 2 years	More than 2 years but less than 5 years
	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	10 or more years	Not sure
5.2.2 What type of business(es) do you have? <i>(Please specify. If the respondent has more than 1 business, please enter information for ALL businesses they currently have)</i>			
5.2.3 Do you share (i.e. co-own) the business(es) with anyone else? <i>(Please circle one option. If the respondent has more than 1 business, and shares ANY of these businesses, circle 'Yes'.)</i>	Yes		No
<i>(If 'Yes' to Q 5.2.3) – 5.2.3.1 How many other people do you share the business(es) with? (Please specify no. of co-owners. If the respondent has more than 1 business, please enter the TOTAL number of people they share their businesses with)</i>			
5.2.4 Do you currently employ anyone else in your business? <i>(Please circle one option. If the respondent has more than 1 business, and employs people in ANY of these businesses, please circle 'Yes'.)</i>	Yes		No
5.2.4.1 How many other people do you employ in your business? <i>(Please specify no. of female and male employees. If the respondent has more than 1 business, please enter the TOTAL number of people they employ in their businesses)</i>	Women		
	Men		
<b>Section 5.3 – Young People in Employment</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.3.1 – Q 5.3.3) only if any of the following are selected to Q5.1: 'I am working full-time for someone else', 'I am working part-time for someone else', 'I am a trainee/apprentice for someone else's business', 'I am an intern for someone else's business', 'I work occasionally as a day labourer', 'I am a paid volunteer', 'I am an unpaid volunteer')</i>			
5.3.1 Who do you currently work (or volunteer) for? <i>(Please specify. If the respondent works or volunteers for more than 1 employer, please enter information for ALL current employers)</i>			
5.3.2 What is your role? <i>(Please specify. If the respondent works or volunteers for more than 1 employer, please enter information for ALL current roles)</i>			
5.3.3 How long have you worked (or volunteered) for your current employer? <i>(Please circle one option. If the</i>	Less than 1 month	More than 1 month but less than 3 months	More than 3 months but less than 6 months

<i>respondent works or volunteers for more than 1 employer, please enter information for the work role they started the EARLIEST, and which they are still doing at the time of data collection. Please prioritise information for paid work roles over unpaid work and volunteer roles).</i>	More than 6 months but less than 1 year	More than 1 year but less than 2 years	More than 2 years but less than 5 years
	More than 5 years but less than 10 years	10 or more years	Not sure
<b>Section 5.4 – Economically 'Active' Young People (A)</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.4 – Q 5.8) if any of the following are selected to Q5.1: 'I am working full-time for someone else', 'I am working part-time for someone else', 'I am a trainee/apprentice for someone else's business', 'I am an intern for someone else's business', 'I work occasionally as a day labourer', 'I am a paid volunteer', 'I am an unpaid volunteer', 'I am setting up my own business', 'I am running my own business/I am self-employed')</i>			
5.4 How many sources of income do you currently have? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	None	One	Two Three or more
5.5 Has your income changed since you took part in the YMCA Sierra Leone project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>	Yes, it has increased significantly		
	Yes, it has increased slightly		
	No, it has stayed the same		
	Yes, it has decreased slightly		
	Yes, it has decreased significantly		
Not sure			
5.6 Approximately how much do you currently earn per month (in Leones)? (This is your personal income from ALL current income sources) <i>(Please specify in leones)</i>	Minimum		
	Maximum		
	On average		
5.7 Approximately how much did you earn (on average) per month before you participated in the YMCA project? <i>(Please specify in leones)</i>			
5.8 Approximately how much of your current income do you contribute towards household costs (for example, food for family members, children's school fees, etc.)? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	None (0%)	A minority (1-25%)	Almost half (26-50%)
	Almost all (76-99%)	All (100%)	A majority (51-75%)
Not sure			
<b>Section Break – All Respondents</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.9 – Q 5.9.3) to all respondents, regardless of work status.)</i>			
<i>(If response to Q 3.6 – 'How many people are there in your household?' - is greater than zero)</i>			
5.9 Approximately what is your current total household income per month (on average)? <i>(Please specify in leones)</i>			
5.9.1 Is your total household income enough to meet your basic needs (such as food, basic household items, medical costs, etc.)? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to all applicable options)</i>	We have enough to cover all of our basic needs		
	We do not have enough for basic food items (e.g. cassava, rice, etc.)		
	We do not have enough for clothes and basic household items (e.g. cooking tools)		
	We do not have enough to cover household medical costs		
	We do not have enough to cover school and other education fees		
	We do not have enough to cover household debts		
Not sure			
5.9.2 How many meals do you usually eat per day? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	None	One	Two Three or more
5.9.3 In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Yes	No	Prefer not to say Not sure
<b>Section 5.10 – Economically 'Active' Young People (B)</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.10 – Q 5.14.5) if any of the following are selected to Q5.1: 'I am working full-time for someone else', 'I am working part-time for someone else', 'I am a trainee/apprentice for someone else's business', 'I am an intern for someone else's business', 'I work occasionally as a day labourer', 'I am a paid volunteer', 'I am an unpaid volunteer', 'I am setting up my own business', 'I am running my own business/I am self-employed')</i>			
5.10 Do you currently save any money? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Yes	No	
	I don't have enough income	I don't know where I can save my money	I am investing my savings in my business

<i>(If 'No' to Q 5.10) – 5.10.1 Why don't you currently save any money? (Please circle all applicable options)</i>		I am not sure how to save	I don't have access to a bank	Other		
<i>(If 'Other' to Q 5.10.1) – 5.10.2 Other reason for not saving: (Please specify)</i>						
5.11 Are you a member of a savings and credit group? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Yes	No	Not sure		
5.12 Have your savings changed since you took part in the YMCA Sierra Leone project? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to one option)</i>		Yes, I have significantly more savings now than before				
		Yes, I have slightly more savings now than before				
		No, my savings have stayed the same				
		Yes, I have slightly less savings now than before				
		Yes, I have significantly less savings now than before				
5.12.1 Not sure						
<i>(If 'Yes' to Q 5.10) – 5.13 Approximately how much do you currently save per month (on average)? (Please specify in leones)</i>						
5.14 The next set of questions asks you to what extent you agree with different statements about your current working conditions. Please be honest in your answers. <i>(Please mark one 'X' in each row, corresponding to your level of agreement with that row's statement)</i>						
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
5.14.1 I earn a fair salary in my current work.						
5.14.2 My current work is financially stable.						
5.14.3 My current working conditions are safe for my health and those around me.						
5.14.4 I feel unfairly treated in my current workplace because of my gender.						
5.14.5 I feel unfairly treated in my current workplace because of my age.						
<b>Section 5.15.1 – Young People not in E&amp;E: Students</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.15.1.1 – Q 5.15.1.3) if 'I am a student' selected to Q 5.1)</i>						
5.15.1.1 You mentioned that you are currently a student. What are you studying? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
5.15.1.2 Where are you currently studying? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
5.15.1.3 Has participating in the YMCA Sierra Leone project helped you in any way in your current studies? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Yes, it has helped significantly	Yes, it has helped slightly	No, it has not helped at all	Not sure		
5.15.1.4 In what ways has the project helped you in your studies? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
<b>Section 5.15.2 – Young People not in E&amp;E: Job-seekers</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.15.2.1 – Q 5.15.2.3) if 'I am looking for a job' selected to Q 5.1)</i>						
5.15.2.1 You mentioned that you are currently looking for a job. For roughly how long have you been looking for a job? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Less than 1 month	More than 1 month but less than 3 months	More than 3 months but less than 6 months		
		More than 6 months but less than 1 year	More than 1 year but less than 2 years	More than 2 years but less than 5 years		
		More than 5 years but less than 10 years	10 or more years	Not sure		
5.15.2.2 Has participating in the YMCA Sierra Leone project helped you in any way to find a job? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>	Yes, it has helped significantly	Yes, it has helped slightly	No, it has not helped at all	Not sure		

5.15.2.3 In what ways has the project helped you in your job search? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
<b>Section 5.15.2 – Young People not in E&amp;E: Economically 'inactive'</b> <i>(Ask the next section (Q 5.15.3.1 – Q 5.15.3.2) if 'I am not looking for a job' selected to Q 5.1)</i>						
5.15.3.1 You mentioned that you are not currently looking for a job. For roughly how long have you been unemployed? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Less than 1 month	More than 1 month but less than 3 months	More than 3 months but less than 6 months		
		More than 6 months but less than 1 year	More than 1 year but less than 2 years	More than 2 years but less than 5 years		
		More than 5 years but less than 10 years	10 or more years	Not sure		
5.15.3.2 Please can you tell me a little about why you are not currently looking for work? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
<b>6. Family and Community</b>						
<i>(Section Intro) – The next set of questions ask about the ways you engage with other people in your household and community.</i>						
<i>(If response to Q 3.6 – 'How many people are there in your household?' – is greater than zero) –</i> 6.1 In general, how do you feel treated by your family and other members of your household? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to all applicable options)</i>		I'm treated with respect				
		I'm treated as an equal				
		I'm treated with pity				
		I'm treated as a threat				
		I'm ignored				
		I'm loved				
		I'm unfairly treated because of my age				
		I'm unfairly treated because of my gender				
6.1.1 Other way people in your household treat you: <i>(Please specify)</i>		Other				
6.1.1.1 None of the above						
6.2 How often do other people in your household listen to your opinions when it comes to making decisions? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		All the time	Often	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
6.3 In general, how do you feel treated by other people in your community? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to all applicable options)</i>		I'm treated with respect				
		I'm treated as an equal				
		I'm treated with pity				
		I'm treated as a threat				
		I'm ignored				
		I'm loved				
		I'm unfairly treated because of my age				
		I'm unfairly treated because of my gender				
6.3.1 Other way people in your community treat you: <i>(Please specify)</i>		Other				
6.3.1.1 None of the above						
6.4 How involved do you feel in making decisions in your community? <i>(Please circle one option)</i>		Very involved	Involved	Neither involved nor excluded	Barely involved	Not involved at all
6.4.1 What, if anything, prevents you from participating in community decision-making? <i>(Please mark an 'X' next to all applicable options)</i>		No interest				
		Don't understand the processes				
		Don't know enough about the subjects				
		Spouse/partner won't allow it				
		Family won't allow it				
		People don't listen to my views				
		Other				
6.4.1.1 None of the above						

<i>(If 'Other' to Q 6.4.1) – 6.4.2 Other reason for not participating in community decision-making: (Please specify)</i>						
<b>7. Individual Wellbeing</b>						
<i>(Section Intro) – The final set of questions asks you to what extent you agree with different statements about yourself. (Please mark one 'X' in each row, corresponding to your level of agreement with that row's statement)</i>						
Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
7.1 I am confident about myself.						
<i>(Only if respondent is a business owner)</i> 7.1.1 I feel confident in my ability to manage my business.						
7.2 I always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.						
7.3 I feel positive about my future.						
7.4 I have goals and aspirations that I believe I can achieve.						
7.5 I can remain calm when I have a problem because I have the skills to cope.						
7.6 Finally, I'd like to turn to the current Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. What effects, if any, is this pandemic having on you, your family, your income, or your job? How well prepared do you feel to cope with these effects? <i>(Please specify)</i>						
<b>8. Additional Feedback</b>						
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Are there any additional comments or feedback on the project you would like to share with YMCA Sierra Leone? <i>*Please remember to share phone credit with the respondent and thank them for their time.*</i>						
Additional Feedback:						
<b>9. Interviewer Observations</b>						
The next section is for the interviewer to make note of any additional observations or reflections they have about the interview. It should be completed after the interview has ended. If there is nothing to add, please skip this section and review and upload the form.						
Interviewer Observations:						

**YMCA Sierra Leone/YCI Queen's Young Leaders Final Evaluation  
Project Stakeholder – Key Informant Interview Guide**

**Overview:** This document is an interview guide, intended for use in the final evaluation of the YMCA Sierra Leone 'Queen's Young Leaders' (QYL) project. It provides a list of key themes and questions to be explored during Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with **knowledgeable, independent people** that have been involved in the project. Interviews should be led by an **Interviewer**, with or without the help of a **Note-taker**.

**Target Groups:** KIIs should be conducted one-to-one, via telephone or video call. Key Informants (KIs) should be people who are highly knowledgeable of their communities, and who have a good understanding of the QYL project. These may include: community leaders; project steering group members; government, municipality or ministry officials; training providers; business mentors/coaches; youth group leaders; among others. Where possible, you should aim to have an equal representation of female and male KIs.

**Instructions:**

- **Section 1** asks for details of the assessment itself. It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 2** introduces the discussion. The Interviewer should read this aloud to the respondent before the interview begins.
- **Section 3** ask for information on the respondent(s). It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 4** provides a list of 10 guiding questions and supporting prompts, which the Interviewer should use to lead the discussion. Responses to these should be recorded in the 'Discussion Notes' sections beneath each question. Please note that **not all prompts need to be asked** – they are simply meant to help support the flow of the discussion and encourage responses. The Interviewer should use them as s/he sees fit.
- **Section 5** provides a conclusion. This should be read aloud by the Interviewer, with any additional feedback being recorded.
- **Section 6** allows for the Interviewer and/or Note-taker to record their own reflections or observations of the interview. This should be completed immediately after the interview finishes.

<b>1. Assessment Information</b>			
<b>1.1 Name of Interviewer (circle one option):</b>		<b>1.3 Date of data collection (please specify – dd/mm/yy):</b>	
Jessy Kpagoi	Steven Amara		
<b>1.2 Name of Note-taker (please specify, if applicable):</b>		<b>1.4 How is the interview being conducted? (please specify):</b>	

**2. Introduction**

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. **Thank you** for agreeing to take part in this interview. **My name is [interviewer name]** and assisting me is [assistant name], and we work for **YMCA Sierra Leone**. We are doing interviews with several people and organisations that are knowledgeable, independent sources of information of the **'Queen's Young Leaders' (QYL) project** run by YMCA Sierra Leone. This interview will last **approximately 30-35 minutes**. It has been designed to **assess your opinions on QYL**, and the results will be used as part of a final evaluation of the project to help us better understand the project's achievements, shortcomings, strengths and weaknesses, and allow us to make improvements to our work in future.

We will be on a first name basis tonight, but we will not use your name when we report on the responses collected in this interview. Your personal information and responses will be anonymised – that is, not shared in a way where you could be identified. We will endeavour to inform you of the assessment findings once data collection is completed. I would like to inform you that there are no right or wrong answers to questions. We encourage you to be honest and frank in your responses. Please note, there will be no compensation for participating in this interview. Your time and participation are valued, and you can stop the interview, ask me any questions, or choose not to respond to a question, at any point. If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know or call +232 78 952818. If you have concerns after the interview ends, you can withdraw your responses at a later date by contacting the offices of YMCA Sierra Leone.

By agreeing to proceed with this interview/survey, you acknowledge that you consent for your data to be used in the ways explained. Do you agree to proceed? (circle one option – if 'No', please end the interview). Yes / No.

**3. Respondent Information**

<b>3.1 Name of Respondent (please specify):</b>		<b>3.4 Respondent Location (circle one option):</b>			
		Freetown	Kenema	Makeni	
		Pujehun		Other (specify):	
<b>3.2 Gender of Respondent (circle one option):</b>		<b>3.5 Key Informant Type (circle all that apply):</b>			
Female	Male	Business Mentor / Coach	Community Leader	Training Provider	Project Steering Group Member
Prefer not to say	Other	Youth Group Leader	Government / Municipality / Ministry Official	Other (specify):	
<b>3.3 Age of Respondent (please specify – no. of years):</b>		<b>3.6 Organisation of Respondent (please specify):</b>			

**4. Interview Questions**

**\*All KI types\*** - Guiding Question:

1. I'd like to start by hearing your thoughts on the Queen's Young Leaders project in general. Please could you tell me what you know about the project, it's aims and activities, and how you have been involved in it? (2 minutes)

- Prompts:
- 1.1 Have you been personally involved in any project activities? What are these?

Discussion Notes:

**\*All KI types\*** - Guiding Question:

2. The project's overall aim is to improve the lives of vulnerable young women and men by providing them with access to the skills, assets and networks to support them into employment or to set up their own businesses.

**Have you noticed any changes (positive or negative) among young people in your community that you know have participated in the project? What are these changes? (4 minutes)**

- Prompts:
- 2.1 In your opinion, what have been the most significant changes among these? If possible, please share concrete examples of any changes you have seen.

Discussion Notes:

**\*All KI types\*** - Guiding Question:

3. What changes, if any, have you seen in the socio-economic situations of young people that have participated in the project? To what extent do you think these changes are a result of the project itself, rather than other factors? (4 minutes)

- Prompts:
- 3.1 We are particularly interested in changes in young people's incomes, savings, employment and business rates, and living standards. Do you have evidence of changes in any of these?
  - 3.2 Which specific project activities, if any, would you say have affected young people in the ways you describe?

Discussion Notes:

**\*All KI types\*** - Guiding Question:

4. What changes, if any, have you seen in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of young people that have participated in the project? To what extent do you think these changes are a result of the project, rather than other factors? (4 minutes)

- Prompts:
- 4.1 We are particularly interested in changes in young people's self-confidence, and communication and leadership skills. Do you have evidence of changes in any of these?
  - 4.2 Which specific project activities, if any, would you say have positively affected young people in the ways you describe?

Discussion Notes:

**\*All KI types\*** - Guiding Question:

5. Have you noticed any changes in the wider community (e.g. among young people's family members, friends, and other community members), that you believe the project has contributed to? What are these changes? (4 minutes)

- Prompts:
- 5.1 In what ways would you say the project has contributed to these changes?
  - 5.2 Have you seen any evidence of young people creating jobs for others, or stimulating trade in their communities?

Discussion Notes:

**\*Business mentors/coaches only\*** - Guiding Question:

6. In your opinion, how successful or unsuccessful has the business mentoring part of this project been? Please give concrete examples to support your argument. (4 minutes)

<p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 What have been the main strengths of business mentoring?</li> <li>6.2 Do you believe that young people you have mentored have applied your advice?</li> <li>6.3 What have been the main weaknesses of business mentoring? What hasn't worked as you expected?</li> <li>6.4 What could be done to improve business mentoring in this project?</li> </ul>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*Training providers only*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>7. How successful or unsuccessful were the trainings that you participated in? Please give concrete examples to support your argument. (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 What could be done to improve the way trainings are delivered to young people in your community?</li> </ul>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*Project steering group members only*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>8. In your opinion, how successful or unsuccessful have project steering groups been in this project? What have been their main strengths and weaknesses? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.1 What could be done to improve project steering groups?</li> </ul>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*All KI types – Freetown, Makeni and Pujehun only*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>9. Are you aware of the project's 'youth entrepreneurship hubs' and 'SMS training platform'? If so, what is your overall assessment of how useful these are? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9.1 In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a 'youth entrepreneurship hub' in your community?</li> <li>9.2 In your opinion, do you think young people in hard-to-reach villages benefit from having access to an SMS skills training platform?</li> </ul>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*All KI types*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>10. Turning now to communication. How well have YMCA Sierra Leone and other project partners communicated with you about the project's aims and activities, and involved you in decision-making around these? Do you think they have done a good job of building a sense of community 'ownership' around the project? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10.1 How, if at all, have communities been involved in deciding and planning the long-term future of youth entrepreneurship hubs, and other project activities?</li> <li>10.2 Are you aware of any challenges the project has faced in its implementation?</li> </ul>

<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*All KI types*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>11. Turning now to sustainability and the peculiar world we face at the moment with the COVID-19 global pandemic. What do you think will be the main effects of COVID-19 on young people in your community? How well do you think QYL has prepared young people and communities for these effects? (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.1 How sustainable do you think the positive impacts of the project are, that we've discussed so far?</li> <li>11.2 How can the benefits of the project be sustained after the project has ended?</li> <li>11.3 In your opinion, are there any elements of the project that could potentially be scaled up in future? How and where would you like to see these activities scaled up?</li> </ul>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>*All KI types*</b> - Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>12. Finally, what is your overall assessment of the Queen's Young Leaders Project? Do you have any recommendations on how we can improve projects and activities like this in future? What direction do you believe YMCA Sierra Leone and its partners should take in future in the area of youth empowerment? (3 minutes)</b></p>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>5. Concluding Remarks</b></p> <p>Thank you for participating in this interview. I really appreciate the time and feedback you have given today. This has been a very useful discussion for me, and I hope that you have found the discussion interesting and useful as well.</p> <p><b>Before we wrap up, is there anything else you would like to share with us about the project, which we have not already discussed?</b></p> <p>If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know.</p>
<p>Discussion Notes:</p>
<p><b>6. Additional Observations</b></p> <p>[Please note here any additional observations or reflections you have about the interview].</p>

**YMCA Sierra Leone/YCI Queen's Young Leaders Final Evaluation  
Sierra Leone-based Project Staff – Key Informant Interview Guide**

**Overview:** This document is an interview guide, intended for use in the final evaluation of the YMCA Sierra Leone 'Queen's Young Leaders' (QYL) project. It provides a list of key themes and questions to be explored during Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Sierra Leone-based staff involved in the project. Interviews should be led by an **Interviewer**, with or without the help of a **Note-taker**.

**Target Groups:** KIIs should be conducted one-to-one or one-to-two, via telephone or video call. Key Informants (KIs) should be staff of Sierra Leone-based QYL partner organisations, selected on the basis of their knowledge on QYL and their involvement in the design, implementation and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) of the project. These may include organisational heads, project managers, hub leads, and M&E staff, among others.

**Instructions:**

- **Section 1** asks for details of the assessment itself. It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 2** introduces the discussion. The Interviewer should read this aloud to the respondent before the interview begins.
- **Section 3** ask for information on the respondent(s). It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 4** provides a list of 10 guiding questions and supporting prompts, which the Interviewer should use to lead the discussion. Responses to these should be recorded in the 'Discussion Notes' sections beneath each question. Please note that **not all prompts need to be asked** – they are simply meant to help support the flow of the discussion and encourage responses. The Interviewer should use them as s/he sees fit.
- **Section 5** provides a conclusion. This should be read aloud by the Interviewer, with any additional feedback being recorded.
- **Section 6** allows for the Interviewer and/or Note-taker to record their own reflections or observations of the interview. This should be completed immediately after the interview finishes.

1. Assessment Information	
1.1 Name of Interviewer (please specify):	1.3 Date of data collection (please specify – dd/mm/yy):
1.2 Name of Note-taker (please specify, if applicable):	1.4 How is the interview being conducted? (please specify):

**2. Introduction**

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. **Thank you** for agreeing to take part in this interview. **My name is [interviewer name]** and assisting me is [assistant name], and we work for [Y Care International/YMCA Sierra Leone]. We are doing interviews with staff of UK- and Sierra Leone-based partner organisations as part of the **final evaluation of the Queen's Young Leaders project**. We will be drawing the results of this evaluation into a report and sharing these back with you near the end of May. Findings will be used to help us better understand the project's achievements, shortcomings, strengths and weaknesses, and will allow us to make improvements to our work in future.

You were invited to participate because you and your organisation have been involved in the design, implementation, and/or Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) of the project. As a 'Key Informant' or 'KI', your name and personal details will be anonymised and kept confidential, and we will refer to you in any reporting by your role, e.g. "[Example Role, Organisation Name]".

What we're most interested in hearing from Sierra Leone partners are your **reflections on the project's impacts** for the young people and communities you have worked with; whether these are the impacts you expected; where the project has maybe fallen short of your expectations; and what key take-homes you have from working on QYL that can be used to improve future work. I'd like to let you know there are no right or wrong answers to questions. I encourage you to be honest and frank in your responses. Your time and participation are valued, and you can stop the interview, ask me any questions, or not to respond to a question, at any point.

This interview will last **approximately 30-35 minutes**. If you have any feedback at the end of this, if there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know. By agreeing to proceed with this interview/survey, you acknowledge that you consent for your data to be used in the ways explained. Do you agree to proceed? (circle one option – if 'No', please end the interview). Yes / No

**3. Respondent Information**

**3.1 Name(s) of Respondent(s) (please specify):**  
 Respondent A: \_\_\_\_\_ Respondent B: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.2 Gender(s) of Respondent(s) (circle option(s)):**

Respondent A:		Respondent B:	
Female	Male	Female	Male
Prefer not to say	Other	Prefer not to say	Other

**3.3 Respondent(s) Organisation (please specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

**3.4 Respondent Role(s)/Job Title(s) (please specify):**  
 Respondent A: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Respondent B: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Interview Questions**

Guiding Question:  
**1. I'd like to start by hearing a little about your involvement in the Queen's Young Leaders project. Please can you tell me about your organisation's role in the project, and what your personal role and responsibilities have been in it? (2 minutes)**

Discussion Notes:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Guiding Question:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>2. When you began working on QYL, what did you have in mind as the project's main goals or objectives? Reflecting on those now, how successful or unsuccessful do you think the project has been in meeting these goals? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections can be about the overall project goals, or the goals of specific project activities you have worked on.</li> <li>• 2.1 Can you give any concrete examples to justify your argument?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>3. In your opinion, what have been the most significant changes you have noticed in the lives of the young people you have worked with as part of QYL? If possible, please share concrete examples of the changes you have seen. (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.1 Have you noticed any specific changes in young people's skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviours?</li> <li>• 3.2 Has the project created any positive impacts that you did not expect?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>4. Have you noticed any changes for wider groups, such as young people's family members, friends, and wider community members? (4 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>5. Turning to challenges now, what have been the main 'blockers' you've encountered in QYL? What have been the most significant challenges and obstacles you've faced in your work? (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5.1 What have been the project's main weaknesses? What hasn't worked as you expected?</li> <li>• 5.2 Can you give any examples of where you had to change the way you did something, following a change in context, to ensure the project remained relevant?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>6. Have you and your organisation had enough time, resources and support to implement your project activities to the standard you expected? Why or why not? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.1 What would be needed to make the impacts of the project components you worked on 'go further'?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>7. Thinking now in terms of wider consortium work, how have you found working with other QYL staff and partners? What could be strengthened in terms of cross-organisational partnerships if you were to collaborate again in future? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.1 How have you found communication with YMCA Sierra Leone head office, Y Care, and other QYL technical partners?</li> <li>• 7.2 Do you feel you have had enough support from these partners?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>8. Turning now to sustainability and the peculiar world we face at the moment with the COVID-19 global pandemic. What do you think will be the main effects of COVID-19 on the populations targeted by QYL? How well do you think QYL has prepared young people and their communities for this? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.1 How sustainable do you think the positive impacts of the project are, that we've discussed so far?</li> <li>• 8.2 What could be done to make these impacts more sustainable, in your opinion?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>9. I know we are still waiting for results and this evaluation will hopefully bring some useful learning to the table – but what have been the key take-homes for you from your involvement in QYL? Are there any important lessons, promising practices or recommendations that stand out for you from this experience? (3 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>10. Lastly, if you could take yourself back to the beginning of the project – you're in the project design workshop – what, if anything, would you do differently? Why? (2 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:

5. Concluding Remarks	
Thank you for participating in this interview. I really appreciate the time and feedback you have given today. This has been a very useful discussion for me, and I hope that you have found the discussion interesting and useful as well.	
<b>Before we wrap up, is there anything else you would like to share with us about the project, which we have not already discussed?</b>	
If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know.	
Discussion Notes:	
6. Additional Observations	
[Please note here any additional observations or reflections you have about the interview].	

**YMCA Sierra Leone/YCI Queen's Young Leaders Final Evaluation  
UK-based Project Staff – Key Informant Interview Guide**

**Overview:** This document is an interview guide, intended for use in the final evaluation of the YMCA Sierra Leone 'Queen's Young Leaders' (QYL) project. It provides a list of key themes and questions to be explored during Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with UK-based staff involved in the project. Interviews should be led by an **Interviewer**, with or without the help of a **Note-taker**.

**Target Groups:** KIIs should be conducted one-to-one or one-to-two, via telephone or video call. Key Informants (KIs) should be staff of UK-based QYL partner organisations, selected on the basis of their knowledge on QYL and their involvement in the design, implementation and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) of the project. These may include organisational heads, technical leads, project coordinators, and M&E staff, among others.

**Instructions:**

- **Section 1** asks for details of the assessment itself. It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 2** introduces the discussion. The Interviewer should read this aloud to the respondent before the interview begins.
- **Section 3** ask for information on the respondent(s). It should be completed by the Interviewer or Note-taker.
- **Section 4** provides a list of 9 guiding questions and 6 supporting prompts, which the Interviewer should use to lead the discussion. Responses to these should be recorded in the 'Discussion Notes' sections beneath each question. Please note that **not all prompts need to be asked** – they are simply meant to help support the flow of the discussion and encourage responses. The Interviewer should use them as s/he sees fit.
- **Section 5** provides a conclusion. This should be read aloud by the Interviewer, with any additional feedback being recorded.
- **Section 6** allows for the Interviewer and/or Note-taker to record their own reflections or observations of the interview. This should be completed immediately after the interview finishes.

1. Assessment Information	
<b>1.1 Name of Interviewer (please specify):</b>	<b>1.3 Date of data collection (please specify – dd/mm/yy):</b>
<b>1.2 Name of Note-taker (please specify, if applicable):</b>	<b>1.4 How is the interview being conducted? (please specify):</b>

2. Introduction			
Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. <b>Thank you</b> for agreeing to take part in this interview. <b>My name is [interviewer name]</b> and assisting me is [assistant name], and we work for <b>[Y Care International/YMCA Sierra Leone]</b> . We are doing interviews with staff of UK- and Sierra Leone-based partner organisations as part of the <b>final evaluation of the Queen's Young Leaders project</b> . We will be drawing the results of this evaluation into a report and sharing these back with you near the end of May. Findings will be used to help us better understand the project's achievements, shortcomings, strengths and weaknesses, and will allow us to make improvements to our work in future.			
You were invited to participate because you and your organisation have been involved in the design, implementation, and/or Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) of the project. As a 'Key Informant' or 'KI', your name and personal details will be anonymised and kept confidential, and we will refer to you in any reporting by your role, e.g. "[Example Role, Organisation Name]".			
What we're most interested in hearing from UK partners are your <b>overall reflections on the success and shortcomings of the project</b> ; whether you think it has had impacts; whether these were the impacts you expected; where the project has maybe fallen short of your expectations; and what key take-homes you have from working on QYL that can be used to improve future work. I'd like to let you know there are no right or wrong answers to questions. I encourage you to be honest and frank in your responses. Your time and participation are valued, and you can stop the interview, ask me any questions, or not to respond to a question, at any point.			
This interview will last <b>approximately 30-35 minutes</b> . If you have any feedback at the end of this, if there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know. By agreeing to proceed with this interview/survey, you acknowledge that you consent for your data to be used in the ways explained. Do you agree to proceed? <i>(circle one option – if 'No', please end the interview)</i> . Yes / No			
3. Respondent Information			
<b>3.1 Name(s) of Respondent(s) (please specify):</b>			
Respondent A:		Respondent B:	
<b>3.2 Gender(s) of Respondent(s) (circle option(s)):</b>			
Respondent A:		Respondent B:	
Female	Male	Female	Male
Prefer not to say	Other	Prefer not to say	Other
<b>3.3 Respondent(s) Organisation (please specify):</b>		<b>3.4 Respondent Role(s)/Job Title(s) (please specify):</b>	
Respondent A:		Respondent A:	
Respondent B:		Respondent B:	
4. Interview Questions			
Guiding Question:			
<b>1. I'd like to start by hearing a little about your involvement in the Queen's Young Leaders project. Please can you tell me about your organisation's role in the project, and what your personal role and responsibilities have been in it? (2 minutes)</b>			
Prompts:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.1 Have you been able to visit any project sites in person?</li> </ul>			
Discussion Notes:			

<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>2. I'd like to hear your reflections on goals and expectations for the project. For you, what were the main aims of the project components you and your organisation worked on? From your perspective, how successful or unsuccessful has the project been in meeting these? (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Can you share any examples of positive/negative impacts (from field visits, reports, etc.) to justify your argument?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>3. Thinking more broadly now about the project as a whole, what have been the main 'blockers' you've encountered in QYL? What have been the most significant challenges and obstacles you've faced? (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 How did you overcome these?</li> <li>3.2 What have been the project's main weaknesses? What hasn't worked as you expected?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>4. Have you and your organisation had enough time, resources and support to implement your project activities to the standard you expected? Why or why not? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 What would be needed to make the impacts of the project components you worked on 'go further'?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>5. On the flipside now, what have been the main strengths of the project? This can be in reference to anything (e.g. intended or unintended impacts, collaborating with certain partners, etc.). (5 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>6. Thinking now in terms of wider consortium work, how have you found working with other QYL partners? What could be strengthened in terms of cross-organisational partnerships if you were to collaborate again in future? (4 minutes)</b></p>

Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>7. Turning now to sustainability and the peculiar world we face at the moment with the COVID-19 global pandemic. What do you think will be the main effects of COVID-19 on the populations targeted by QYL? How well do you think QYL has prepared young people for this? (4 minutes)</b></p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 How sustainable do you think the positive impacts of the project are, that we've discussed so far?</li> </ul>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>8. I know we are still waiting for results and this evaluation will hopefully bring some useful learning to the table – but what have been the key take-homes for you from your involvement in QYL? Are there any important lessons, promising practices or recommendations that stand out for you from this experience? (3 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:
<p>Guiding Question:</p> <p><b>9. Lastly, if you could take yourself back to the beginning of the project – you're in the project design workshop – what, if anything, would you do differently? Why? (2 minutes)</b></p>
Discussion Notes:
<b>5. Concluding Remarks</b>
<p>Thank you for participating in this interview. I really appreciate the time and feedback you have given today. This has been a very useful discussion for me, and I hope that you have found the discussion interesting and useful as well.</p> <p><b>Before we wrap up, is there anything else you would like to share with us about the project, which we have not already discussed?</b></p> <p>If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please let myself or my colleague know.</p>
Discussion Notes:
<b>6. Additional Observations</b>
<p>[Please note here any additional observations or reflections you have about the interview].</p>

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The original overall target figure was 1,230 young participants. This was revised down to 930 in Year 2 of the project, following a reduction in the target number of 'remote' participants from 600 to 300.

<sup>2</sup> The project initially only targeted young people in Freetown, Makeni and Pujehun. However, upon receipt of a project 'Impact Grant' from Comic Relief, the project's scope was extended to include young people in Kenema, with grant funds also used to extend in-person activities to new communities in Makeni and Pujehun.

<sup>3</sup> Definitions of these follow the [International Labour Organisation's \(ILO\)](#) classification of skills required for enterprise or employment (see: [ILO, Measuring Decent Jobs for Youth](#)): i) 'basic' skills are the necessary preconditions for learning further skills, i.e. literacy and numeracy; ii) 'technical' skills are skills required to perform specific occupational tasks, e.g., ICT, book-keeping, or carpentry skills; iii) 'core', 'life' or 'soft' skills comprise the capacity to acquire more skills ('learning to learn'), problem-oriented thinking, as well as social skills like communication and team-work skills.

<sup>4</sup> Two new solar learning labs – 1 in Makeni and 1 in Pujehun – were established as part of the project. In Freetown, digital/ICT skills training and access to ICTs were delivered at an existing lab run by Sensi Tech Hub.

<sup>5</sup> As a result of challenges in the roll-out of the SMS/audio training platform, the number of remote participants targeted by the project was revised down in Year 2 of the project from 600 to 300.

<sup>6</sup> Based on an average exchange rate between 1 June 2019 and 1 June 2020 of Le 10,211 (SLL) = £1.00 (GBP).

<sup>7</sup> Two survey respondents (both female) reported 'Not sure'.

<sup>8</sup> Readers should be aware of important limitations when interpreting this finding. Primarily, although enumerators were trained to not read option answers aloud, such questions carry a high possibility of self-reporting bias and of respondent answers being influenced by enumerators.

<sup>9</sup> One survey respondent reported 'Not sure'.

<sup>10</sup> 1% of survey respondents answered 'Not sure' for post-training support. 3% answered 'Not sure' and 1% answered 'Prefer not to say' for Offline E&E support.

<sup>11</sup> Data was not available for 7 survey respondents.

<sup>12</sup> Data was not available for 28 (12%) survey respondents, while 1 respondent (0.42%) was 'Not sure'.

<sup>13</sup> Data was not available for 7 survey respondents.

<sup>14</sup> Data was not available for 16 (9%) survey respondents, while 15 (7%) respondents were 'Not sure'.

<sup>15</sup> Respondents could select multiple answers, reflecting the fact that several have more than one economic activity.

<sup>16</sup> This is based on an adapted version of the [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#). No baseline data was available against which to compare these findings.

<sup>17</sup> As such, the project is internally known and referred to in this report as the 'Queen's Young Leaders (QYL)' project.

<sup>18</sup> See Annex 1 for the full [Project Outcome Framework](#).

<sup>19</sup> [UNDP, 2019, Human Development Reports – Sierra Leone](#)

<sup>20</sup> [World Population Review, 2020, Sierra Leone, Access Date: 01/07/2020](#)

<sup>21</sup> [OPHI, 2019, Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019 \(est. 2017\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Wilton Park, 2019, Turbocharging youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa: a new approach](#)

<sup>23</sup> [ILO, 2018, InfoStories: What stands between youth and decent jobs?](#)

<sup>24</sup> [UN Women, 2020, Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Y Care International & Institute of Development Studies, 2019, The Future of Work – Research in Sierra Leone and Liberia \(forthcoming\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [OECD, DAC, 1991, Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance; OECD, DAC, 2002, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#)

<sup>27</sup> This means that we are able to say with 90% assurance and within a range of 5 points above or below the reported value that a given result is accurate. For example, if 74% of respondents across all locations report that their incomes increased as a result of project inputs, we can be confident that, in 9 out of 10 samples of a similar size, between 69-79% of project participants would report rises in their incomes. Readers should note that all information should be considered as reflective of the situation of young participants in the project at the time of data collection, and that this is subject to change, given the dynamic situation in target communities and the particular uncertainties around COVID-19.

<sup>28</sup> In total, 3 KIIs were conducted face-to-face, with project staff and stakeholders based in Freetown.

<sup>29</sup> A 'household' was defined in this evaluation (with definition provided to respondents) as "all people – including parents, children, siblings, relatives and any other women and men – that share the same living space as you, as well as meals and other resources".

<sup>30</sup> The OECD DAC defines 'relevance' as "the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies". Assessments of relevance seek to answer the question: 'is the intervention doing the right things?'

<sup>31</sup> Three survey respondents stated that they took part in no project activities (2 in Pujehun, 1 in Makeni). When asked, they said they were selected for the project but never received confirmation or communication on the remote training platform.

<sup>32</sup> 3% of remote survey respondents answered 'Not sure' and 1% answered 'Prefer not to say'.

<sup>33</sup> No significant differences were found in user feedback across the two districts where remote services were provided.

<sup>34</sup> The OECD DAC defines 'impacts' as the "positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended". Assessments of impact seek to answer the question: 'what difference does the intervention make?'

<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that this category includes respondents who are both unemployed (out of work, actively seeking work, and able to start), as well as respondents that currently have one or more other statuses but who are simultaneously looking for new work opportunities.

<sup>36</sup> Data was not available on co-ownership for 2% of business owners.

<sup>37</sup> As a proportion of survey respondents that were economically active at the time of data collection and provided responses to these questions (212). Figures 11 and 12 also do not show respondents that stated 'Not sure', namely: 'I earn a fair salary in my current work' (14), 'My current work is financially stable' (11), 'My work conditions are safe for my health and those around me' (10), 'I feel unfairly treated in my current workplace because of my gender' (9), 'I feel unfairly treated in my current workplace because of my age' (9).

<sup>38</sup> It is also worth noting that many business owners operated in more than one sector and location, and traded in various goods and services.

<sup>39</sup> The project Outcome Framework states: "It was noted that 34 savings groups were established (by CODOHSAPA/YMCA) prior to project implementation, and were used by parents and guardians of young QYL participants. As there was more trust in the existing groups compared to newly established ones, many young people are reported to have used these rather than the new groups."

<sup>40</sup> Data was not available for 7 survey respondents.

<sup>41</sup> Data was available for 196 business owners only.

<sup>42</sup> Respondents could select multiple answers.

<sup>43</sup> The OECD DAC defines 'effectiveness' as "the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance". Assessments of effectiveness seek to answer the question: 'is the intervention achieving its objectives?'

<sup>44</sup> A general comment on this framework is the lack of available baseline data, making it difficult to assess changes generated by the project. This is in addition to the framework's exclusion of remote participants from several relevant indicators.

<sup>45</sup> The OECD DAC defines 'efficiency' as "a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results". Assessments of efficiency seek to answer the question: 'how well are resources being used?'

<sup>46</sup> The OECD DAC defines 'sustainability' as "the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time". Assessments of sustainability seek to answer the question: 'will the benefits last?'

<sup>47</sup> The sustainability of the Freetown hub was not explored in this evaluation, as it was a pre-existing and independent hub that will continue to be run by Sensi Tech Hub after the project lifetime.

<sup>48</sup> [WHO, 2020, Coronavirus Disease Situation Report - 132, 31 May 2020; BBC News, 2020, Coronavirus in Africa: Outbreak 'accelerating' across continent, 11 June 2020](#)

<sup>49</sup> [The World Bank, 2020, For Sub-Saharan Africa, Coronavirus Crisis Calls for Policies for Greater Resilience, 9 April 2020](#)



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“I can say I am independent now all because of the training I had from YMCA.”

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## Project Overview

<b>Name:</b>	Queens Young Leaders: Fostering innovative, resilient, and socially responsible youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone (+ Impact Grant)
<b>Implementing Partners:</b>	Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Sierra Leone Y Care International A Call to Business Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA) Computer Aid International Global Youth Network for Empowerment and Development - Sierra Leone On Our Radar Sensi Tech Hub
<b>Goal:</b>	To enhance the economic resilience and security of 1,230 vulnerable young women and men (aged 15-35) across the 4 cities of Freetown, Makeni, Pujehun and Kenema and their surrounding areas.
<b>Donors:</b>	Comic Relief Big Give Endemol Shine Hoffnungszeichen (Sign of Hope) Germany One YMCA YMCA Metropolitan Region Trust Fund
<b>Timeframe:</b>	January 2016 - June 2020
<b>Budget:</b>	Original Grant: £1,531,953 Impact Grant: £249,214

This material has been funded by Comic Relief and other donors listed above; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of donor bodies or their official policies.

## Y CARE INTERNATIONAL

The Davenant Centre,  
179 -181 Whitechapel Rd.,  
London, E1 1DN

t: +44 (0) 207 549 3150

e: [enq@ycareinternational.org](mailto:enq@ycareinternational.org)

[www.ycareinternational.org](http://www.ycareinternational.org)

[www.startherenterprise.org](http://www.startherenterprise.org)



[facebook.com/YCareInternational](https://facebook.com/YCareInternational)



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Registered company no: 3997006

Charity no: 1109789



Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.