



IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
Évaluation indépendante du développement



gLOCAL Evaluation Week

Proceedings Report

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AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

Catalyzing Sustainable Growth through Evaluative Evidence – Lessons from Sierra Leone and Liberia

3rd June 2025, Online

1. Overview

On 3 June 2025, the African Development Bank’s Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) and UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) co-hosted a dynamic online session as part of the 2025 gLOCAL Evaluation Week. Centered on the theme “*Catalyzing Sustainable Growth Through Evaluative Evidence: Lessons from Sierra Leone and Liberia*,” the event brought together experts, policymakers, and practitioners to exchange insights from recent evaluations in fragile contexts.

Moderated by Prosper Charle, Country Economist for Sierra Leone at the AfDB, the program combined presentations, panel discussions, and interactive Q&A segments to explore how adaptive programming, human capital development, resilience-building, and inclusive, community-driven approaches can translate evidence into practical, locally owned solutions for long-term impact. Participants reflected on lessons learned, highlighted success stories, and examined pathways to ensure that evaluation findings directly inform policy and practice for lasting impact.

2. Key Highlights

Opening remarks

The event opened with keynote addresses that set the stage for the discussions ahead.

Madhusoodhanan Mampuzhasseril, Division Manager, IDEV, spoke on behalf of the AfDB Evaluator General, **Karen Rot-Münstermann**. He underscored the timeliness of the event’s theme against the backdrop of global challenges such as pandemics, climate crises, and economic shocks. He stressed that evaluations are most impactful when co-created, context-sensitive, and able to capture local realities. Drawing on AfDB’s country strategy evaluations for Sierra Leone and Liberia, he highlighted how evaluation can foster adaptation, resilience, and strategic course correction.

Gilles Fagninou, Regional Director of UNICEF WCARO, followed with a perspective on evaluation as a strategic driver for transformative change in fragile contexts. He stressed the value of community-based approaches, investment in human capital, and cross-sectoral collaboration. He noted that sustainable, locally owned solutions emerge when communities are actively engaged and evaluation findings inform inclusive, equity-focused policies.

Presentations

The first set of presentations provided insights from recent evaluations:

- **Sevara Hamzaeva**, Multi-country Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF WCARO, presented findings from Country Program Evaluations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. She highlighted progress in health, education, WASH, and child protection, while acknowledging persistent challenges in equity, local ownership, and resilience. She underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, cross-sectoral integration, and systems strengthening as key enablers of sustainable development.
- **May Mwaka** and **Boubacar Ly**, Principal Evaluation Officers at IDEV/AfDB, summarized findings from 2013–2023 Country Strategy and Program evaluations in both countries. Achievements included advances in infrastructure, service delivery, and targeted youth and gender programs.

Key constraints included high debt burdens, implementation delays, weak private sector development, and risks to sustainability. The findings underscored the need for improved coordination, stronger institutional capacity, and more intentional integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, climate, and environmental sustainability.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion brought together: Hon. Jocelia Taplah, Deputy Minister for Rural Development, Ministry of Public Works, Liberia; Dr. Souraya Hassan, Regional Evaluation Advisor, UNICEF WCARO; Dr. James Edwin, Director General, National Monitoring and Evaluation Agency (NaMEA), Sierra Leone; and Alice Nenneh James, National Coordinator, Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (SLANGO).

The panelists shared how evaluation findings have influenced policy, programming, and capacity development in their respective contexts:

- **Liberia:** Evaluations informed national policy reform and the design of the *ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development*, integrated rural development strategies, strengthened local government roles, encouraged private sector engagement, and introduced continuous monitoring and evaluation to improve project relevance.
- **Sierra Leone:** Evaluation evidence was embedded in the National Development Plan (2024–2030), guided donor policies, strengthened M&E systems, and led to mandatory midterm and end-term reviews for national strategies.

Across both countries, panelists highlighted the importance of institutionalizing adaptive programming, aligning evaluations with national priorities, and investing in local capacity. Civil society perspectives stressed participatory approaches, community feedback systems, inclusivity for marginalized groups, and using evidence for advocacy, resource mobilization, and accountability.

Q&A highlights

The discussions centered on how to institutionalize adaptive programming, strengthen local ownership, foster inclusive participation in fragile contexts, and embed flexible frameworks that integrate real-time data, enabling rapid yet evidence-based responses to evolving challenges.

Lessons from Sierra Leone and Liberia reinforced the value of community-driven, cross-sectoral approaches, robust data systems, and equity-focused programming. Panelists stressed investing in local capacity and ownership to ensure sustainability, fostering peer learning, and aligning evaluation with national priorities and cooperation frameworks. Inclusive participation—especially for women, children, and persons with disabilities—was highlighted, alongside alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Funding limitations and the need for stronger partnerships with governments, civil society, and development partners, were acknowledged as ongoing challenges.

Closing message

The moderator concluded that evaluation evidence should not merely document progress, it should actively guide strategic decisions, drive reforms, and ensure development interventions are responsive, inclusive, and sustainable.

3. Key Messages and Takeaways

- Co-created and context-sensitive evaluations that engage governments, communities, civil society, and development partners from the outset are more effective in capturing local realities and fostering ownership of results.
- Human capital investment and community-driven approaches are central to building resilience and achieving sustainable development outcomes, particularly in fragile and transitional contexts.
- Adaptive programming, grounded in real-time data and strong national systems, enables timely course correction, promotes equity and inclusiveness, and ensures interventions remain relevant in dynamic environments.
- Institutional capacity building and systematic integration of evaluation into policy cycles strengthen governance, enhance accountability, and improve the sustainability and impact of development initiatives.

4. Quotes

"Evaluations are more than just mechanisms for reflection. They are essential for adaptation, learning, and strategic course correction." - *Madhusoodhanan Mampuzhasseril, Division Manager, IDEV*

"Human capital is the key to resilience and development. It is about investing in people, in children, in youth, and in communities." - *Gilles Fagninou, Regional Director of UNICEF WCARO*

5. Resources

- [Event recording](#)
- [Speech by the IDEV's Evaluator General](#)
- [Presentation of Sevara Hamzaeva Evaluation Specialist at UNICEF WCARO](#)

UNICEF Evaluations

- [Sierra Leone Country Programme Evaluation \(2020-2023\)](#)
- [Liberia Country Programme Evaluation \(2020-2024\)](#)

IDEV Evaluations

- [Sierra Leone: Evaluation of the AfDB's Country Strategy and Program, 2013-2023](#)
- [Liberia: Evaluation of the AfDB's Country Strategy and Program, 2013-2023](#)

6. Participants

Participants from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and across the region, included government officials, development partners, civil society leaders, and evaluation professionals.

7. Contact

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