

**Investing in Human Capital for Sustainable  
Futures: Evaluative Insights from Liberia and  
Sierra Leone**

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## WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE (WCARO)

UNICEF WCARO supports 24 countries, including fragile settings like Liberia and Sierra Leone, to advance children's rights and equitable development.

UNICEF's approach integrates sectoral and cross-sectoral programming, equity, gender inclusion, and systems strengthening.



# INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT



**Health & Nutrition:** Maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (MNCAH+N), immunization and cold chain systems, nutrition (including stunting and wasting prevention), and integrated community health systems.



**Education & Early Learning:** Early Childhood Development (ECD), pre-primary education, primary and secondary school access and quality, teacher training and capacity building, and digital learning and education innovations.



**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation, hygiene promotion and behavior change (e.g., handwashing), and climate-resilient WASH infrastructure.



**Child Protection and Social Welfare:** Protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation (e.g., FGM, GBV), birth registration and legal identity, social protection systems for vulnerable children, and justice systems for children and adolescents.



**Gender Equality and Social Inclusion:** Gender-transformative programming (e.g., life skills, ending child marriage), disability-inclusive education and services, and equity-focused approaches to reach the most marginalized.



**Community-led initiatives and Capacity Development:** Social and behavior change (SBC) to shift norms and practices, community-led initiatives and capacity building, and partnerships with local governments, CSOs, and youth organizations.



**SIERRA LEONE & LIBERIA: COUNTRY  
PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS (2020-2025)**

# COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS

## The Value of Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs)

- CPEs are critical tools for assessing UNICEF's **institutional effectiveness**, focusing on how well the organization's strategies, partnerships, and systems deliver results for children and communities.
- Unlike thematic evaluations, which assess specific programmatic areas, CPEs provide a **comprehensive analysis of overall performance**, offering insights into cross-sectoral integration, adaptive learning, and alignment with national priorities. They inform strategic decisions, foster accountability, and drive improvements in both programming and systems to support sustainable development.

## Evaluation Approaches and Methodology

### Mixed-Methods, Theory-Based Design

Combined qualitative (e.g., FGDs, KIIs) and quantitative (e.g., household surveys) methods. Grounded in **theory of change frameworks** to test change pathways and assumptions.

### Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Lenses

Examined sector-specific (e.g., health, education, WASH) and cross-sectoral themes (e.g., equity, gender, resilience, sustainability). Integrated analysis of systemic enablers and barriers.

### Sampling and Tools

**Sierra Leone:** KIIs, FGD participants, household surveys +UNICEF - WG Module

**Liberia:** KIIs, FGDs, mini-surveys, 10-day field visits.

Participants: government officials, UNICEF staff, development partners, community members, adolescents, and caregivers.

## SIERRA LEONE & LIBERIA: COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION FINDINGS



**Health & Nutrition:** Strong gains in neonatal health, HIV, stunting reduction, and birth registration. Challenges in exclusive breastfeeding, dietary diversity, anemia, and immunization gaps.

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**Child Protection:** Expanded birth registration and social services, but gaps in workforce, case management, and community-level protection.

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**Education:** Improved transition and literacy rates, but OOSC rates and school infrastructure deficits persist.

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**WASH:** Expanded access to water, sanitation, and hygiene; rural-urban disparities and sustainability issues remain.

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## SIERRA LEONE & LIBERIA: COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION FINDINGS



**Cross-Sectoral Insights:** Promising integrated programming (e.g., Child-Friendly Communities, SBC, linking health with nutrition and protection), but limited scale, planning coherence, and monitoring.

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**Data & Evidence:** Data systems improving, but gaps in disaggregated data limit evidence-based programming.

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**Equity & Inclusion:** Persistent gender, disability, and rural-urban equity gaps require targeted strategies and resources.

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**Enabling Environment:** Strong political will and partnerships drive progress, yet operational capacity, sustainable financing, and cultural norms challenge scale-up.

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# Key Lessons Learned – Liberia & Sierra Leone CPEs

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED



### Community Engagement & Local Ownership

Community-led initiatives strengthen impact and sustainability, as seen through inclusive programming in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Integrating local voices from design to delivery is essential for relevance, scalability, and long-term resilience.



### Adaptive Programming & Cross-Sectoral Integration

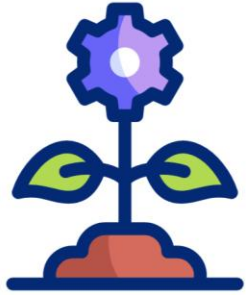
Integrated, multi-sectoral approaches enhance impact and resilience. UNICEF's experience during COVID-19 showed how **adaptive programming**—flexible and integrated—enables rapid response and sustained progress in fragile settings.



### Equity & Gender

Inclusive and gender-responsive programming drives participation and impact. Prioritizing marginalized groups, especially girls and children with disabilities, is essential to achieving equitable results.

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED



### **Sustainability & Systems Strengthening**

Sustainability and scale require embedding interventions into national systems and building government capacity, with Sierra Leone showing progress and Liberia facing challenges. Strong operational capacity, including procurement, logistics, and coordination, is essential for ensuring reliable service delivery and stakeholder trust in fragile settings.



### **Policy-Making & Strategic Partnerships**

Tailored technical support, diverse partnerships, and collaboration with governments strengthen policy relevance and resilience. Working together—leveraging each other's strengths and supporting government capacity development—ensures adaptive, evidence-based policies and more effective programming.



**The Strategic Value of Country Programme  
Evaluations: Inspiring Action, Promoting  
Learning, and Driving Transformative  
Change**





## Human Capital Development is Foundational for Sustainable Futures

- Investing in **health, education, WASH, protection, and social systems** builds the resilience and capacity of children and communities to thrive.
- In fragile contexts, **human capital is not optional—it's essential** for inclusive, equitable growth.





## Evidence and Evaluation Drive Adaptive Learning and Impact

- Evaluations provide **rigorous, actionable insights** that help refine policies, strategies, and programs.
- **Adaptive programming**, informed by real-time evidence, enables effective responses to shocks and evolving needs.



## Cross-Sectoral Integration Unlocks Greater Impact

- Integrated approaches (e.g., combining health, WASH, education, protection) deliver **multidimensional benefits**.
- Investing in **systemic integration and coherence** is key to scaling impact.

## Community Engagement and Local Capacity are Key for Sustainability

- **Community-led initiatives** show that local ownership drives long-term impact.
- **Youth participation and leadership** strengthen social cohesion and accountability.
- Capacity building of local actors ensures **resilience beyond project timelines**.



## The Path Forward: Learning, Collaboration, and Commitment

- The evaluations show that while progress has been made, **transformative change requires continued learning and adaptation.**
- **Collaboration across MDBs, UN agencies, governments, CSOs, and communities** strengthens systems and enhances human capital development.
- **Sustained investment and political commitment** are essential to deliver lasting impact in fragile contexts.
- **Evidence based planning and resourcing**, with adequate human and financial capacity, are critical for operationalizing strategies in transitional settings.
- **Adaptive programming** is crucial to maintain essential services and drive impact.
- **Cross-sectoral impact** demands consistent engagement, sound analysis, and sufficient resources across sectors.
- **Working with governments on capacity strengthening and partnerships** are foundational for sustainable and inclusive systems that serve all.

*In sunlit fields and classrooms bright,  
Their laughter echoes, bold and light.  
With dreams in hand, they shape the skies—  
The future lives behind their eyes.*

***Thank you***

