FINAL EVALUATION OF SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND’S
PROJECT:

“EXPANDING THE TABLE: EMPOWERING WOMEN TO
IDENTIFY PROTECTION STRATEGIES IN SIERRA LEONE’S
INDUSTRIALISING DISTRICTS”

September 2017

Donor: US State Department

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7.1 About Evaluator (Ascendant & Company Ltd) .................................................................54
7.2 Copy of Methodology ........................................................................................................55
    7.2.1 Survey questions .......................................................................................................55
    7.2.2 Focus groups guides ...............................................................................................61
    7.2.3 Key Informant Interview Guides ............................................................................62
7.3 List of individuals interviewed ......................................................................................63
7.4 Supporting documents reviewed ....................................................................................63
7.5 Evaluation Report Quality Checklist ..............................................................................64
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Disaggregation by Age ........................................................................................................12
Figure 2: Respondents' Age Profile ..................................................................................................24
Figure 3: Indicators of Political Participation: Are you registered to vote in the next elections? ...25
Figure 4: Respondents Reporting Increased Capacity .......................................................................28
Figure 5: I now have a leadership role in my community ..................................................................28
Figure 6: Respondents reporting increase in life and financial skills ..................................................29
Figure 7: I feel confident I can now lead my own business .................................................................29
Figure 8: Which Stakeholders have been engaged through the WOEC? (In Numbers) .....................32
Figure 9: Percentage Respondents Who Created a New Business .....................................................33
Figure 10: Categories of New Businesses Built As a Result of the Project ........................................33
Figure 11: I have a more important role in the community as a result of this project .......................34
Figure 12: I think the project has reduced hostile conflict within the community ...........................35
Figure 13: I now feel confident that I can lead my own business .....................................................36
Figure 14: Will you continue to attend meetings and participate in the group after the project closes? ...38
Figure 15: Do you think the WOEC will continue after the project ends? .......................................38
Figure 16: I believe the lasting effects of this project include being able to: .....................................39
Figure 17: Has this project had a positive effect on community members, especially women, outside of the WOEC? .........................................................................................................................................................41
Figure 18: Access to further opportunities ..........................................................................................42
Figure 19: I now have a leadership position within my community ....................................................43
Figure 20: Beneficiary Respondents Current Income Bracket ..........................................................44
Figure 21: Beneficiary Respondents Previous Income Bracket ..........................................................45
Figure 22: Does your husband now consult you on household expenditure? .....................................46
Figure 23: I now have fewer complaints to take to the chiefs than before .........................................46
Figure 24: I created a new business as a result of the project's activities ............................................47
Figure 25: Types of businesses ..........................................................................................................47
Figure 26: Ascendant Service Lines ..................................................................................................54
Figure 27: FGD Guides .......................................................................................................................62
Figure 28: KII Guides .........................................................................................................................63

TABLES

Table 1: Respondent Beneficiaries by Location....................................................................................8
Table 2: Evaluation Scope ..................................................................................................................21
Table 7: Summary of Key Indicators ................................................................................................48
Table 5: Electronic Survey ................................................................................................................61
Table 6: Key Informants ......................................................................................................................63
Table 8: Quality Checklist ................................................................................................................64
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCYA</td>
<td>Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM&amp;E</td>
<td>Design Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Evaluation Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EED</td>
<td>Evaluation Enumeration Review Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMT</td>
<td>Evaluation Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSWGCA</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Search for Common Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>Standard Observation Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOEC</td>
<td>Women Owned Empowerment Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPS</td>
<td>Women Peace and Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Executive Summary

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Constitution of Sierra Leone is currently under review and a new version of the Constitution is expected to be adopted by referendum after a nationwide awareness-raising and consultation process, plus peer review and drafting by experts, in 2015.1

According to the Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter is due to be adopted, likely with reservations in relation to the banning of female genital mutilation2.

The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy is currently being drafted. This will precede the adoption of the Gender Equality Bill.

At present, despite legislative changes that have increased women’s legal protection, women continue to experience discriminatory practices. Their rights and position are largely contingent on customary law and the ethnic group to which they belong. In addition, secret (bondo or sande) societies to which many girls and women belong, serve to uphold and reinforce harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage.

The current Constitution of Sierra Leone (1991, amended 2001) provides equal rights for men and women in Article 27, but the principle of non-discrimination is not widely applied.3 Sierra Leone ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women in 1988, but has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on violence against women.4

In 2007 Sierra Leone passed a set of “gender laws”: the Domestic Violence Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, and the Devolution of Estates Act. A Child Rights Act was also enacted in 2007. These laws were followed in 2012 by the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act.

The project is designed to address the issues of violence against women, land rights, leadership, entrepreneurship and general empowerment of women. Of the 7.1 million population of Sierra Leone, more than 70% of those living below the poverty line are female. Women also do more than 65% of available work and earn a very negligible share of the national income because most of their labour is unpaid. In real terms, the women produce more than half the food produced in Sierra Leone and very few of them own the land. In addition, many more of the people who can neither read nor write (65%) are women. These women are potentially capable, but remain an untapped resource.

1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

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1 Constitutional Review committee 2014
2 Awareness Times 2014
3 CEDAW 2012 pg10
4 United Nations Treaty Collection (n.d)
Search for Common Ground (Search) is a non-governmental organization working to transform the way societies deal with conflicts. Search has acquired over 30 years of experience in peace building and is based in 59 local offices worldwide. Their vision: While conflict is inevitable, violence is not! Therefore they work to achieve social change through transforming the way people deal with conflicts – away from violent and adversarial approaches, towards collaborative problem solving.

Search for Common Ground Sierra Leone: Search has worked in Sierra Leone since 2000 supporting peace and development efforts. The primary approaches employed are the use of media and outreach as channels to foster dialogue and engagement to help find solutions to on-going and emerging conflicts. Search’s project engagement has included supporting ex-combatants’ reintegration, reinstating state and local authorities, rule of law, reducing electoral violence, promoting women and youth rights, land and natural resource rights and access, and anti-corruption campaigns. Their conflict transformation work aims to encouraging constructive and inclusive dialogue processes to increase knowledge and transform attitudes and behaviors through: interactive Town Hall Meetings, Participatory Theatre, Short Video and Mobile Cinema Screenings, Media Programming, Youth to Youth Engagements, Building Coalition and Networks.

### 1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The women owned empowerment centers aimed to create safe spaces for women to engage in dialogue enhance their skills and elevate their voices. Targeting often neglected, rural, hard-to reach women, through local ownership and wide stakeholder involvement, the project sought to make a deep impact with the targeted women associations and their respective communities. This was further amplified by the support to radio programing with a nation-wide reach.

**Project Goal:** To empower women through economic opportunities  
**Specific Objective:** Enhance the financial and leadership standing of women  
**Expected Result 1.1** Women have the leadership and financial skills to lead micro projects.  
Activity 1.1.1 Establishment of Female Enrichment Centres  
Activity 1.1.2 Women’s Leadership, Advocacy and Community Organizing Trainings  
Activity 1.1.3 Life and Financial Skills Trainings  
Activity 1.1.4 Support to Women-Driven Micro-Project  
Activity 1.1.5 FEC Exchange Visits  

**Expected Result 1.2** Communities have a greater understanding of women’s contribution to community development  
Activity 1.2.1 Town Hall Meetings  
Activity 1.2.2 Cases Studies on Lessons Learned and Success  
Activity 1.2.3 Production and Broadcast of Atunda Ayenda  
The primary beneficiaries were 180 women members of WOEC located in six communities heavily impacted by large-scale industry including agribusiness and extractives such as mining. In Foredugu however, members of the WOECL had expanded from 30 to 70, thus bringing our initial population to 220. Our sample remained 180.

The project engaged stakeholders from communities, government, and multinational corporations in Freetown and the targeted districts to gain buy-in for their participation and map the most vulnerable communities to participate in the project.
1.4 **EVALUATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this evaluation is to assess the project achievement towards its goal which is to empower women through economic opportunities as well as the extent to which the project will be sustainable after it is phased out. The study focused on effectiveness, impact, sustainability and achievement of indicators. It also explored underlying trends.

The objectives of this evaluation were to assess effectiveness, sustainability and impact. The main audience is the donor, US State department, the project designers and managers, and the community/beneficiaries. However, this report will also be useful for wider academic, gender and country research.

1.5 **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, comprising of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data collected included quantitative data from an electronic survey and qualitative data from focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII), document reviews and observations. Data from each community was analyzed separately to consider overarching and distinct findings, capturing in-depth opinions, views and experiences of beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project.

1.6 **KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A total of 164 beneficiaries were interviewed out of a total of 220 available beneficiaries in six locations as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Port Loko</th>
<th>Bombali</th>
<th>Pujehun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romeni</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foredugu</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolisokoh</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worreh Yeama</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinjo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taninahun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Respondent Beneficiaries by Location

Beneficiary focus group discussions were held with 8 to 10 members of the group to explore issues around impact, sustainability and effectiveness. Stakeholder focus groups were held with 8 to 10 members of the groups to explore issues around community support, relationship with the other stakeholders and relationships with the district council. A total of 12 direct beneficiaries were interviewed as key informants in each community, being the chairlady and the secretary. In addition, a total of 12 key informants we interviewed across the 6 communities, including staff of the district council, ministry officials, other implementers and community facilitators.

We conclude that the expected results of this project were achieved adequately as the project achieved its goal of empowering women through economic opportunity. We consider that certain internal and external factors aided the achievement of results. The partnership model worked well to encourage community engagement and participation. It also had a positive effect on conflict management in the communities.

There were marked changes in the decision-making of women, expenditure pattern of the family and awareness of rights, responsibilities and advocacy effort of the individual women and their groups. Women are considerably more involved in decisions about household purchases, household healthcare, and mobility.

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5 List of respondents available in the appendix
outside the community. Women have increased their influence in household decision-making and even more so in community decision making.

The surveys indicate that there were changes in the expenditure pattern of women, where women have notably made more prudent decisions based on the financial training they have received and the encouragement to save money and differentiate their profits from their seed money. This evaluation shows from the focus groups that women have taken action for social change by engaging in problem solving negotiations to tackle social problems. They say they are now using group pressure to encourage hygiene and cleanliness, arrest domestic violence, address provision of and repair of drinking water sources, plantation and afforestation.

The strength of the project lay in its direct participatory approach and in the depth to which it went to involve other non-direct beneficiaries and stakeholders. Working with the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) afforded the project more direct access to the participants and vice versa. The beneficiaries experienced significant up skilling, especially with financial planning, banking and income/profit recognition.

A key shortcoming of the project lay in the difficulty of managing beneficiary and stakeholder expectations, such that a resounding appeal is constantly made in all of the beneficiary communities for Search and CCYA to continue the funding. In addition, the activities in which beneficiaries are involved are mostly limited to farming and petty trading. Other income generating ideas include training in fabric processing, hair dressing and baking/bread-making.

The project could be better sustained by the implementation of long term businesses created through the development of value addition to raw goods, including processing of all kinds which have the potential to develop into daily income businesses for the women.

**Attainment of M&E Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNDR3 - Proportion of females who report increased self-efficacy at the conclusion of USG supported training/programming</td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women participants who say that their participation in household and community decision-making has increased during the project</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment/upgrade of Female Enrichment Centres (WOEC)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final Evaluation | Expanding the Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Women Served</th>
<th>180</th>
<th>220</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% increase in confidence in leadership, advocacy and community organization</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women and girls trained</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase in knowledge in life and financial skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of women receiving financial support for Micro-projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of women (out of 60) who reporting increased income from the Micro-projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of WOEC exchange visits organized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of women participating in exchanges</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase in knowledge in life and financial skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of town hall meetings organized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of people attending town hall meetings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of case studies documented</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of radio segments featuring case studies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of episodes produced and broadcasted across the country</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Partnership Model

The partnership between Search and CCYA is a collaborative relationship through a mutually agreed division of labor. An inherently complex vehicle, it nonetheless delivered a practical solution on the ground
and at the strategic level. It helped both parties in the partnership build capacity and gain valuable experiences, acting as a learning mechanism for all parties. There might have been unequal balance of power or control in the field, but this was countered by common key interests, evaluation and monitoring systems.

The partnership model in use on this project is a collaboration type, where both parties have autonomy despite having no permanent organizational commitment. They therefore sharing information, coordinated efforts and may combine services, governance, resources, or programs. It can morph into a strategic alliance where decision-making power is shared or transferred, as in the case of joint programming.

**Community Engagement**

This project helped to build stronger connections across the beneficiary communities and affected positive change by coordinating events that help achieve the projects purpose. By providing opportunities for women to become more involved in their communities, training them and building on their skills, assets and ideas to develop their leadership skills, this project achieved an underlying community engagement which fostered cohesion and conflict sensitivity.

The success of women development projects is often requiring active involvement at grassroots levels. People have to work together to make the changes that will allow communities to flourish. Moreover, community engagement is grounded in the principles of community organization: fairness, justice, empowerment, participation, and self-determination.

**Conflict Management**

The three themes for advancement of women identified by the UN were equality, peace, and development. These can all be compromised by the onset and advancement of conflict. The efforts and education on conflict management in this project has a positive effect of the relationships within the community and beneficiaries reported less conflict and better resolutions as a result of negotiation in the communities.

**Lessons Learnt**

The design of this project could be altered to better enable sustainability of future projects. The business skills training which women are given shape the women groups in the mould of funded NGOs rather than as businesses. Because of this the inputs into the business do not cost the work which women do in the groups and farms. This means that when the women think they are making a profit, in many cases, this is not so. Therefore the businesses, despite the best of intentions, often struggle to survive without additional grants.

92% of respondents report increased self-efficacy at the end of the training/project. 85% of respondents say that their participation in households and community decision-making has increased during the project. 3 functioning Women Owned Empowerment Centers (WOECs) were established and 3 of the Projects upgraded existing facilities. 89% of women say they now have a leadership role in the community. There were marked changes in the decision-making of women, expenditure pattern of the family and awareness of rights, responsibilities and advocacy effort of the individual women and their groups. Women were also acting independently by themselves regarding social activity and advocacy with the industrialized peri-urban players like SOCFIN and ADDAX. There was a 45% increase in women who reported better knowledge in life and financial skills. 100% of respondents were receiving financial support from micro-projects. 93% of respondents (146 women) reported an increase in income from micro-projects. Almost 51% of respondents report that their husband now consults them on household expenditure most of the time. 100% of authority figures say that household complaints coming to them for adjudication had reduced as a result of the project.
In terms of demographics, 65% of our sample was youth or adolescents and 35% were early or middle adults.

![Figure 1: Disaggregation by Age](image)

31% of our sample was in Port Loko, 32.9% in Pujehun and 36.1% located in Bombali district. In terms of income profile, the proportion of respondents who earn nothing has reduced from 27.3% to 3.1%. The proportion of respondents who now earn up to Le200,000 has increased from 50.9% to 71.8%. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who now earn between Le200,000 and Le600,000 has increased from 17.2% to 24.5%.

In terms of political participation, 96% are registered to vote, up from 86% in the last elections. This was an unintended consequence of the project, but a significant finding nonetheless indicating slightly greater political awareness and willingness to participate in civic responsibility.

In summary, the objectives and expected results were achieved to a large extent, with women reporting increased self-efficacy, financial and leadership skills and a greater understanding of their role in relation to community development. Community members and leaders were very supportive of the project and the willingness of the community members to participate improved the outcomes of the project. This is in addition to the effort and enthusiasm the community brought to the project. Many beneficiaries were able to overcome barriers to accessing land and to political representation, although there is still some distance to cover. The women have access to use the land, but many still are unable to outrightly own the land.

The effects of the project on the community will be long lasting in terms of skills acquired, community cohesiveness and business awareness. Because the WOECs are physical structures, this can encourage the
women to continue to meet, especially if they can put the WOECs to commercial use. Their engagement of external stakeholders will also help to attract more cooperation from the agriculture and district council stakeholders. There is a plan to maintain the WOECs, as beneficiaries see this as their unique office, but the women need to be encouraged to increase the size and numbers of women involved in the WOEC and similar projects.

Many beneficiaries believe they have access to other opportunities as a result of their work in the project. They are now approached to take leadership positions within the community and at district level. Many women outside the WOEC believe that the opportunity of working in the WOEC should be expanded to more women because they believe the impact of the project is overwhelmingly positive for the women and their families. It is clear to beneficiaries and non beneficiaries alike that training received from the project has helped women make better economic decisions as well as get involved in governance at household and community level.

1.7 CONCLUSIONS

Invaluable lessons were learnt from this evaluation:

We conclude that the expected results of this project were achieved adequately as the project achieved its goal of empowering women through economic opportunity. We consider that certain internal and external factors aided the achievement of results. The partnership model worked well to encourage community engagement and participation. It also had a positive effect on conflict management in the communities.

There were marked changes in the decision-making of women, expenditure pattern of the family and awareness of rights, responsibilities and advocacy effort of the individual women and their groups. Women are considerably more involved in decisions about household purchases, household healthcare, and mobility outside the community. Women have increased their influence in household decision-making and even more so in community decision making.

The surveys indicate that there were changes in the expenditure pattern of women, where women have notably made more prudent decisions based on the financial training they have received and the encouragement to save money and differentiate their profits from their seed money. This evaluation shows from the focus groups that women have been at the forefront of social change by engaging in problem solving negotiations to tackle social problems. They say they are now using group pressure to encourage hygiene and cleanliness, arrest domestic violence, address provision of and repair of drinking water sources, plantation and afforestation.

The strength of the project lay in its direct participatory approach and in the depth to which it went to involve other non-direct beneficiaries and stakeholders. Working with the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) afforded the project more direct access to the participants and vice versa. The beneficiaries experienced significant upskilling, especially with financial planning, banking and income/profit recognition.

A key shortcoming of the project lay in the difficulty of managing beneficiary and stakeholder expectations, such that a resounding appeal is constantly made in all of the beneficiary communities for Search and CCYA to continue the funding. In addition, the activities in which beneficiaries are involved are mostly
limited to farming and petty trading. Other low hanging fruit income generating ideas include training in fabric processing, hair dressing and baking/bread-making.

A mix of production and value addition aids sustainability in entrepreneurship effort. Therefore when farmers can process their harvest and add value to it, this often gives them a daily source of income, which is important to increase liquidity in the communities. Examples are roasting groundnuts, baking break, making groundnut paste and rice flour for sale.

### 1.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the recommendations below intend to address the challenges discussed in the previous section, others respond to the issues raised during the evaluation fieldwork by the respondents.

The use of community facilitators provides a valuable linkage to the communities.

The results of this evaluation should be shared with the beneficiaries to emphasize the importance of evaluation and stakeholders working closely together. This stresses the responsibility of stakeholders for applying evaluation findings and implementing recommendations.

The following stakeholders should be more involved in program design if such a program is to be redesigned: - Government and other national duty-bearers, including the Ministries of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), The Ministry of Social Welfare, Children and Gender Affairs (MSWCGA) district councils, civil society, including Women’s Movements and networks, donor agencies, bilateral and multilateral agencies, UN agencies.

The project could have been more impactful and sustainable if the involvement of the local government was emphasized at design and implementation. The experience which groups, where they are being asked to undergo duplicate registrations at local government and central ministry levels could have been ameliorated if these agencies were involved in the design and implementation. Some women networks are more experienced in tackling the problem of unpaid labour among women and this would have helped the cost better and identify their profits more correctly.

If yes, which ones (can they be more specific as this is a very large list of stakeholders)

Because of the potential for rural-urban migration to affect beneficiary shifts, the program design should make adequate safeguards for beneficiary who may collect monies and leave the community with returning the funds.

A general recommendation is that the WOECs build on the strength of the project as designed:

- Continue the community-led approach
- Preserve the adaptable and flexible approach and emerging nature of the WOEC
- CCYA’s role in mentoring individuals and organizations is maintained.

Search and CCYA staff and contractors, volunteers, WOEC members and community members are strongly motivated to continue to support the program. They expressed confidence in its effectiveness, but raised doubts about its sustainability.

The evaluation results suggest that the program has great growth potential and the recommendations listed and developed above aim to ensure that this potential is maximized.
2. Introduction

2.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT

Women comprise 50.9% of Sierra Leone’s population. 37% of Sierra Leone’s population lives in urban areas. With annual growth rate hovering at about 2%, there is significant rural to urban migration. Women of the reproductive age group 15–49 years constitute approximately 25% of the population. Adolescents and young people represent about 55% of the population. Infants and children aged under 5 years constitute 4% and 16%, respectively. The adult literacy rate is estimated at 27% for women and 45% for men. In the context of this project, Sierra Leone has a growing peri-urban population of mostly rural people living in close proximity to urbanized or industrialized areas. These industries contribute to an average annual gross domestic product growth rate of about 7.5%, slowly recovering after Ebola. Despite the adverse effects of industrialization on small and rural communities, government is hampered to defend their access to land taken over by large companies because of the macroeconomic stability and economic growth that was expected to help reduce poverty, increase equity and enable the Government of Sierra Leone to allocate additional resources to other sectors.

In the Sierra Leonean districts of Bombali, Port Loko and Pujehun, the increase in large scale industrial development, including growth in the mining and agri-business sectors, has destabilized rural societies. While these growing sectors have contributed to jobs and economic development in these very poor regions, women have largely been excluded from these opportunities; yet, women are disproportionately vulnerable to the risks associated with this growth. With women comprising 50.9% of Sierra Leone’s population, it is critical to ensure that this segment of the population has access to economic opportunities and is able to address and overcome specific challenges present in the Sierra Leonean context.

Large-scale land acquisition has displaced many women from their traditional agricultural sources of livelihoods, making them more financially dependent on husbands, fathers, and boyfriends. The migration that has come with these growing industries has eroded traditional social protection mechanisms. Urbanization and men’s access to additional cash has increased rates of alcohol abuse, gambling, and the growing sex trade, each of which is linked to violence against women.

These challenges risk setting back the progress made by Sierra Leone’s women in pressing for peace after the civil war. While the war has drawn to a close, women and girls are still suffering the long reaching effects, including latent tensions, negative gender norms, and ineffective justice and accountability systems. These risks leave women continually vulnerable to rape, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and further marginalization. While women’s empowerment has been a strong point of emphasis by international donors, international organizations, and civil society, the efforts have not adequately reached the rural areas, arguably where these challenges are most entrenched.

2.2 PROJECT CONTEXT

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7 Sierra Leone health and demographic survey, 2008: key findings. Calverton, Maryland, Statistics Sierra Leone and ICF Macro, 2009
In September 2015, Search for Common Ground (Search) and the Center for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) to implement a 24 month project titled: “Expanding the Table: Empowering Women to identify Protection Strategies in Sierra Leone’s Industrializing Rural Districts”.

The project’s goal was to empower women through increased economic opportunities by increasing the financial and leadership standing of women in three targeted districts: Bombali, Port Loko and Pujehun that have been heavily impacted by large-scale industry including agribusiness and extractives. This was supported by one specific objective: to enhance the leadership standing of women in Sierra Leone’s rural communities. Several activities were implemented under this project including the establishment of women owned empowerment centers, trainings, exchange visits, and communications events.

The expected results for this project were for:

1) women to have the leadership and financial skills to lead micro projects

2) for communities to have a greater understanding of women’s contribution to community development.

WOECs were designed to create a safe space where women can learn about and explore challenges and opportunities linked to women’s empowerment in their communities, to enhance their skills in leadership and business and to increase women’s voices in their communities.

Activities implemented in this project include:

- Establishment of Women Owned Empowerment Centers
- Trainings in Women’s Leadership, Advocacy and Community Organizing;
- Life skills training for women & girls to undertake micro projects;
- Support to Women-Driven Micro-Projects;
- Community Town Hall Meetings where members of the Women Owned Empowerment Centers (WOEC) narrated the progress they have made and the challenges they encountered in the implementation of the project;
- Exchange visits were organized for cross fertilization of ideas among groups;
- Case studies on lessons learned and successes were also conducted;
- Production and Broadcast “Atunda Ayenda” - A radio program produced and broadcast by 27 Search radio partners stations across the country for wider dissemination of information on the activities undertaken by the WOECs so that women in other communities could hear about what the groups are doing to be economically empowered.

Women-Owned Empowerment Centres (WOEC)

Each WOEC across the 6 communities was provided with a lump sum for a group project, whose income generating activities could then also provide micro-grants for small businesses owned by members of the WOEC. Each group included a secretary who was given a monthly stipend by the project and may or may not be a grantee member of the group. Based on the secretary’s performance, the group can decide to incorporate her when she no longer receives monthly stipend from the project.
2.3 **EVALUATION OBJECTIVES**

The project is being evaluated at this particular point because the project funding is ending and there is need to ascertain relative impact and sustainability. The final evaluation aimed to assess the project’s achievements towards its goal which is to empower women through economic opportunities. It also assesses achievements made towards the project objectives, as well as the extent to which the project will be sustainable after funding stops. The evaluation will also measure indicators linked to the logframe and will identify lessons learned and best practices that will be applied to improve on the design and implementation of similar projects in the future.

The goal of this evaluation was to assess the project achievement towards its goal as well as the extent to which the project will be sustainable after it is phased out. The study focused on effectiveness, impact, sustainability and achievement of indicators. It also explored underlying trends.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Assess if the expected results were achieved adequately
- Assess the project’s achievements towards its goal which is to empower women through economic opportunities.
- Investigate which internal and external factors facilitate or hinder the achievement of expected results
- Explore the sustainability of the project
- Review attainment of the indicators as per the M&E plan
- Understand underlying trends on the partnership model, community engagement, and success of the partnership model, participation and effects of conflict management in the community.
- Identify lessons learned and best practices that will be applied to improve on the design and implementation of similar projects in the future.

2.4 **PRIMARY AUDIENCE AND EVALUATION USERS**

The intended primary audience is Search for Common Ground, CCYA and the US Department of State. The evaluation report will be published on [Search’s website](http://www.searchforcommonground.org) and [DME for Peace](http://www.dmeforpeace.org). This report will also be shared with other parties, including donors, beneficiaries, and partners. However, the research is also useful for wider academic research. The results of this evaluation will be shared more widely in order to contribute to projects with a similar focus and continuing the collective dialogue about WPS design, implementation and evaluation.

2.5 **KEY PARTNERS**

Working with Search, the key partner in this intervention was the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA). CCYA is a non-political, non-profit making organization. Established in September
1998, CCYA had the over-arching goals of serving as an agency working towards the empowerment of youths through effective and efficient coordination of youth activities within Sierra Leone. The Centre also strives to enhance the capacity of youth groups and organizations throughout the country to promote the rights of all young people. CCYA works on women programs which focus on leadership and community development training, counseling and trauma therapy, youth and adolescent sexual and reproductive health, human rights, good governance and democracy and gender research programmes.

*Group Discussion Session with Community Stakeholders in Taninahun Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun District*
3. Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Objectives and Questions

The evaluation was carried out in the six project communities of Romeni, Foredugu, Kolisokoh, Worreh Yeama, Sinjo and Taninahun. Evaluation data was gathered over eight days in September 2017. The evaluation carries out an in-depth diagnosis of three different criteria, these include: effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

Effectiveness

This measured the extent to which the project’s objectives were achieved and highlighted the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives.

Sustainability

The sustainability assessment was concerned with measuring whether the benefits of the activities are likely to continue following the close of the project.

Impact

The impact assessment explored the long term effects produced by the intervention, including those that were intended or unintended. Since there is such a short time lag, we concentrated on how the project has changed community dynamics, and we explored if a real difference has been made to the beneficiaries. We also looked at how people outside of the community have been affected.

Given the objectives of this evaluation, the following questions determined the scope of the study:

| Extent to which the objectives and expected results were achieved | ➢ How many women report increased self-efficacy as a result of the project?  
| | ➢ Do women have increased financial and leadership standing in their community?  
| | ➢ Do women have the leadership skills to lead micro-projects?  
| | ➢ Do communities have a greater understanding of women’s contribution to community development?  
| Which internal and external factors facilitated or hindered the achievements of expected results / specific objectives? | ➢ To what extent were community members, especially men and community leaders, supportive of this project?  
| | ➢ What factors have strengthened the results/outcomes of the project?  
| | ➢ Did beneficiaries overcome barriers specific to their communities (i.e. access to land, political representation, etc.) within the context of this project? If yes, how?  

What are expected to be the lasting effects of the project?

- What sustainability mechanisms have communities adapted to ensure they continue benefiting from the project activities?
- To what extent has the WOEC engaged external stakeholders?
- How are beneficiaries using their knowledge to build a sustainable income for the WOEC?
- Is there a plan (by communities) to maintain the sustainability of the WOEC?
- What plans are in place to include other women as members of the WOEC?

How are beneficiaries better positioned within their communities?

- Do women in the group feel that they now have access to further opportunities?
- Do beneficiaries report taking positions of leadership within their communities?
- What effect has this project had on community members, especially women, outside of the WOEC?

How did this project achieve the goal of empowering women through economic opportunities?

- Do women report feeling able to make decisions based on an economic level?
- Is there increased participation of women at the household and community level?
- How many women report feeling more respected at the household and community level?
- How many new businesses led by women have been created as a result of the project’s activities? And what type of businesses?
- To what extent do community members, including men and community leaders, see the role of women changing in their communities?

### Table 2: Evaluation Scope

#### 3.2 The Methodology

This evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising of both qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition to a comprehensive document review, in each district the evaluation team carried out two focus group discussions (FGD), two key informant interviews (KII), and an Incic(c) mobile survey built on google forms. Data from each community was analyzed to consider overarching and distinct findings. The methodology captured in-depth opinions, views and experiences of beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project.

**Qualitative Data**

**A. Document Review**
The document review comprised of an analysis of the available project documents listed below. The documents provided a good background on the project context, as well as data collected during monitoring visits. This information provided a basis for designing the evaluation tools and they included:

- Outcome monitoring by DM&E
- Pre- and post-tests
- Project Tracker
- Radio Program Production
- Quarterly Reports
- Success Stories
- Work Plans
- WPS Project Impact
- Attendance lists of different meetings and events
- The Project Proposal

**B. Key Informant Interviews**

KIIs targeted stakeholders directly and indirectly affected by the project. Direct beneficiaries include the WOEC chairwoman, and indirect beneficiaries included community leaders, youth leaders, representatives from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), community members and government agencies. A total of 18 key informant interviews were held.

**C. Focus Group Discussions**

The team conducted semi-structured discussions to generate input from beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Using local languages, we introduced the groups to the themes being explored and ensured participation and the exploration of ideas by the respondents using a participatory and inclusive approach. Between 7 and 10 persons attended the focus group sessions. A total of 12 focus groups were conducted, 2 per community, with one targeting a variety of stakeholders including non-beneficiaries, community leaders, business owners, farmers and family members in each community.
Focus Group Discussion: Romeni WOEC Beneficiaries

The other FGD was held with beneficiaries to triangulate and strengthen the findings from the survey. The discussions were recorded for analysis after due confirmation from the beneficiaries. FGDs for stakeholders were mixed gender sessions in which open ended questions were utilized in sessions lasting between 90-120 minutes.

Quantitative Data

A. Survey

The majority of participants in the WOEC were targeted by the survey. In most cases, 2 or 3 members were missing in each location, however the team was able to include 26 - 29 members in each location. The surveys focused on collecting data in order to analyze the key indicators that refer to the economic empowerment of women and its contribution to the local communities. The survey was conducted electronically for purposes of speed, efficiency and accuracy. Our electronic survey method took less time to analyze, was more selective, prescreened and flexible.

Electronic Data Capture: Sinjo Beneficiary Survey
3.3 SAMPLING

A. Target populations and sample
All of the 6 project communities were targeted in this evaluation. The survey included a total of 164 participants across the 6 communities, which were conducted solely with members of WOECs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Total Beneficiaries Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pujehun</td>
<td>Sinjo</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taninahun</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Loko</td>
<td>Romeni</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foredugu</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombali</td>
<td>Kolisokoh</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worreh Yema</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Demographics

Age Profile

Our respondents’ age profile was as follows:

![Figure 2: Respondents’ Age Profile](image-url)
In terms of political participation, 96% are registered to vote, up from 86% in the last elections.

![Figure 3: Indicators of Political Participation: Are you registered to vote in the next elections?](image)

The increase in number of persons registered to vote is 10%. This is an unintended but significant consequence of the project, indicating that there is increased awareness of civic responsibility among project beneficiaries.

### 3.4 Evaluation Team

The evaluation provided updates and received feedback from Search and the Evaluation Reference Group. Our Evaluation Enumeration and Review Team (EED) led the design and methodology, provided overall evaluation supervision, training, tool design, data analysis, and drafted the evaluation report.

Ascendant’s lead researcher for this evaluation was Olufela Adeyemi who was assisted by Simon Tsike Sossah and Alberto Swaray. Patratu Conteh and Joseph Karimu led the field teams and worked across all the districts with a team of trained electronic data collectors.
3.5 **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Through careful discussions and agreement with the WOEC leaders, we were careful to secure necessary permissions to conduct interviews and record discussion sessions after assuring respondents of the confidentiality of their data. We also considered the gender dimensions of the process and the effect of the evaluation on the normal lives of the women, the stakeholders and the youth in the community. We emphasized that our data collection and research methods will not subject participants to harm in any way and their dignity is prioritized. We took care to avoid misrepresentation or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research. Our methods strove to avoid any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way. We took care to avoid the use of discriminatory language. We maintained objectivity in discussions and analyses throughout the data collection.

3.6 **MAJOR LIMITATIONS TO METHODOLOGY**

The data collection was conducted on time and schedule. Because of limited time available, the consultants had to increase the number of enumerators to ensure that time overruns did not disturb the planned time budget.

As envisaged, the total number of respondents could not be accessed in all the locations, but the enumerators interviewed as many as were available in the given time frame. In Taninahun and Sinjo, enumerators waited extra time for beneficiaries to mobilize and return from community events which were taking place outside of the community. The team experienced some delays as a result of stakeholders not receiving the correct message around timing, which also led to the possible absence of some would-be respondents. It is possible from our observations that some WOEC members were being represented by other community members and efforts should be made for Search to provide some sort of ID for beneficiaries when they will have to work with independent evaluators who have not way of confirming their identity.

In addition to this, weather and road conditions, while not contributing to additional time requirements, meant that enumerators had to take extra care with their data collection equipment during the exercise. This definitely limited the use of audio visual equipment in the data collection exercise as many of the venues were open sided roofed centers, where rain water could easily blow into the building.

The presence of many project staff, though ordinarily not disruptive on the evaluation, may have provided reason for reticence with some of the respondents, especially because much of the sessions were routinely recorded in audio and video. Project staff went along with the team to conduct quality assurance on the process and capture audio, video and pictorial evidence of the evaluation process. However, this can easily make respondents hesitant about fully expressing themselves. In addition, participants treated the evaluation visit as another Search scoping visit and took the opportunity to solicit for more project funds.
4. Key Findings

This section explores the evaluation questions using evidence and data collected through our quantitative and qualitative methods. It highlights the key findings of the evaluation study using the evidence data we collected from the field and from project documents. Overall, the data suggests that the project was effectively implemented, has the potential to be sustainable and made a huge impact on the economic and social lives of the members of the community.

4.1 Effectiveness

This section highlights to what extent the project achieved its expected results, which are:

Expected Result 1: Women have the leadership and financial skills to lead micro projects.
Expected Result 2: Communities have a greater understanding of women’s contribution to community development.

In addition to this, this section also underlines which internal and external factors facilitated or hindered the achievements of the project’s expected results and specific objectives.

As a result of the significant skills acquired by women in the project, the community leaders and stakeholders consider that there is a greater understanding of the role of the woman in community development. Community stakeholders opine in the key informant interviews that the projects effect on the women has been key to reducing gender inequality, providing for their own needs and those of their families, and confronting discrimination. According to the district council representative, the women are well acquainted with the needs of the community, and are therefore in a good position to advice how best to bring improvements to the community.

From the community focus groups, community leaders consider that the women are processing information in a way that is beneficial to the community and their families, as opposed to me who are constantly thinking first about themselves. This results in community improvement for everyone.

The community members also believe that women work better as project collaborators and are better at organising the community. Therefore, increasing their role in community development is creating more cooperation, less friction and less strife, which improves life for all citizens.

A community stakeholder from one of the industries said it has taken the strong, vocal, and persistent female participation to adress the issue of women empowerment. In the past, it used to be viewed unfavourably for women to risk active participation in community development. But as the project progressed, it became clearer to community leaders that gender inequality must be addressed as a critical factor.

Data from the electronic survey shows that women experienced increased capacity as a result of the project: Also from the pre and post-test on leadership training, there was a 65% improvement in leadership capacity tests, a 71% improvement in business skills capacity and a 78% increase in financial skills capacity.
94% of respondents report increased capacity in leadership, business and organizing as a result of the project. The results are similar in each of the 6 communities with 92% reporting increased capacity in Pujehun and 95% reporting increased capacity in Bombali and Port Loko.

89% of women stated that they now have a leadership role in the community. Similarly 80% of respondents is Pujehun reported that they now have a leadership role in the community, compared to 93% of respondents in Port Loko and Bombali.
48% increase in women who reported an increase in knowledge in life and financial skills; and

88.4% of respondents say they now have the leadership skills to lead micro-projects.

In beneficiary FGDs\(^9\), women report that they now understand how to multiply their profits and they say the project has given them business and finance skills, made them less dependent on men for sustenance and helped them raise further funds and finish their center. It has also made them more independent. The community now asks for their opinion.

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\(^9\) Beneficiary focus group discussions point to improved business, financial and advocacy skills for fundraising.
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FGDs with WOEC members clearly indicated that communities have a greater understanding of women’s contribution to community development following the project activities. Respondents concluded that before the project increased awareness among community members, there was less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. A stakeholder noted that when women are ignored in business and in society this can lead to a negative effect on the economy. Their rationale was that the WOEC participants made a valuable contribution to businesses in the community since they had been trained and understood businesses better. Several women in the FGDs also recognized that schooling for girls produced more income growth in the community. In the specific case of one the WOEC leaders her experience is that because they are financially empowered to keep their children in school, the product is more empowered girl child who is better able to generate responsible income after completing school. A respondent said ‘Previously, our children were denied education and our girls kept getting pregnant and dropping out of school. Now that we have money, our children are going to school. They are also healthier. Our future looks better. When the girls leave school, they do better business and bring income to the community’.

While it is tempting to attribute this improvement in girls contribution solely to the project, we feel that the emergence of the subject in the focus groups indicate that the women believe that there has been at least a significant contribution from the project to this particular result.

A number of factors facilitated the achievement of expected results. These included the readiness of the women to work and provide their own labor, men’s support for this project and access to human capital and productive inputs like farming tools and seeds. Women were ready to work on the project, before they even involved the men in providing manual labor. The men say they actively support this process and also give the women access to tools, time and land.

Early gains were recorded with increases in household income. These increased financial flows are held by the women. In addition, the women are a cheaper source of labour because even though the men help out, they are often paid in cash, goods and food for their labour. Women’s unpaid work, as a reliable, productive and cheaper source of labor facilitated the achievement of expected results.

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10 FGD Stakeholders Notes  
11 FGDs beneficiaries report  
12 The project has been on for only two years
However, other factors also acted as hindrances in this project, these included the feminization of poverty, the dominance of husbands over women and a deprivation of capabilities present in the communities. With capability deprivation\(^{13}\), women can often not function as effectively to convert commodities or characteristics into resources which are useful to maintain an improved living standard or quality of life. This can severely constrain the degree of choice or freedom to lead a desired lifestyle. Thus when they express the desire to have more choice in determining, for example, choice of work to do, number of children to have and consultation on household decisions.

Poverty is often feminized as demonstrated earlier in the reluctance to pay women for their labor while men are always paid in cash goods and food. Women would often not even cost their own labor and would often not cook for themselves when they do field work.

We conclude that this demonstrates an inadequacy of business skills, promoted by the fact that business skill training is often supported by an NGO type model, which is often inherently unprofitable. This means that when NGOs lead entrepreneurship training, the beneficiaries often come away with a grantee mindset and not a profit making mindset. This is why much of the business input is not costed, and therefore, when the women harvest and sell their produce, they are often unaware that they have spent more on labour than they can recoup from their harvest.

Social obstacles were also very evident and are very hard to overcome. Men and other community members often decide if and when women can access social opportunity. Many beneficiaries say they ask for permission from their spouses to do business, socialize and exploit any other opportunities. Inherently, the men say they are conditioned to request for rewards and payments, something which the females do not do quite as well. This then means that the woman is more susceptible to poverty as these social obstacles limit their access to education, work and a social life.

Community members were very supportive of the project in all of the project communities. 55.3% of WOEC members interviewed indicated that men and youth from the community had participated and been engaged throughout the project. Participants in the community stakeholder FGD confirm that the community supports the project by providing labor, advice, assistance and necessary permissions to women involved in the project. They also provided land where necessary for the women to plant—a key program deliverable. Politicians (14.9%) and government officials (6.8%) have also been engaged in the projects evolution. 18.6% of our sample said no stakeholders have been engaged in the project, which could suggest that they either did not understand the definition of stakeholders or that they were not aware who the WOEC had engaged.

\(^{13}\) Udaya Wagne. School of Public Affairs, Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, 2014
Certain factors have strengthened the results/outcomes of the project. They include the scope for increasing donor investments in women’s economic empowerment, the new gender laws and the awareness created by government policy, the long-term commitment from development actors. According to a district council player in one of the beneficiary districts, many donors are investing in women’s economic empowerment. In addition, the government has passed several gender laws which should help women to seek and get justice, property and independence. Government is also very vocal about gender and empowerment and about the need to treat women fairly. We have seen constant attention from the development actors in the area of women’s development’ As a result of the awareness generated in women by the project, they now have more access to assets like land, clean water and services like mobile technology, financial services, banking and credit services.

Women report being able to use technology to access financial services, and being able to demand for land and receive it for their agricultural projects and sustenance projects. As a direct result, there is an increase in agricultural productivity and a consequent reduction in hunger. This would also contribute to successful outcomes.
Women experienced a lot of barriers in the community, but also overcame many of these barriers in the course of the project. This is because the skill sets they acquire help them with advocacy, business development and generation of cash flow.

According to the community facilitators, there was marked increase in employment opportunities in the beneficiary communities.

92.5% of respondents say they created a new business as a result of the project. These new businesses
created employment opportunities in the trading, agriculture and food processing areas. In addition, increased cash flows in the community contributed to the growth of other businesses and therefore the creation of other opportunities for community members. From the Stakeholder FGDs, it was clear that respondents identified the following as clear employment opportunities for women. The project helped in ensuring the active participation of women, ownership of projects and the promotion of resilience amongst community members. It promoted the development of small and middle scale businesses from informal to formal businesses. Another respondent said ‘At the district in our council, women are appointed to lead or chair committees such as Social Welfare, Child Protection issues and other gender related issues. Nationally, the district council says that women now hold both political and administrative positions in governance.’ In governance\textsuperscript{18}, specifically, the district council ensures that women’s participation in governance is maximized. This assertion is slightly contradicted by the percentage of women employed in non-gender-nuanced roles.

There has also been greater recognition of the value of women’s physical and mental contribution in improving the communities’ economic development. 87% of respondents believe they have a more important role in the community as a result of this project.

Apart from leading and participating in the WOEC, women are now routinely consulted on issues in the community and at the district councils. The stakeholder FGDs also identified the value they believe women have brought to the communities as a result of their involvement in the project. Stakeholders identified that the increased participation of women in the communities has modernized their community and changed their lives positively. The communities now have more businesses and more people are getting involved in agriculture and cultivating large farms.

Stakeholders identified improved decision making at community level, and serious progress especially in communities like Sinjo and Taninahun, where the traditional chiefs are also women. These WOEC leaders and community chiefs has improved the community mobilization activities and are now increasing their advocacy power in order to make changes at the community level. In the other four communities, where

\textsuperscript{18} KII with district council officials
the chiefs are men, women have also been involved in decision making much more than previously.

Frequent community tension and conflicts were a key barrier which women were able to overcome. They did this through a social and innovative approach to negotiation and problem solving. This led directly to reduction in hostile conflict within the community by creating opportunities for negotiation, discussion and the display of problem solving skills. Respondents say that men in the community now understand that negotiating through a conflict is the better approach and the women have acquired that skill and are sharing it with the community.

87.6% of respondents agree the project has reduced hostile conflict within the community. Beneficiaries recall that there was significantly more violence in households prior to the project. The approach which Search shared with beneficiaries and stakeholders improved the communication and negotiation power of respondents. When conflicts arose therefore, it is now customary to approach it from a problem solving perspective and seek to arrive at a consensus.

This combined with the pressure that was lifted off community breadwinners when women were also able to generate an income, achieved this goal. In addition, women’s improved standing in the community also contributed to conflict reduction. Many women also now hold positions of responsibility in their communities because of the fact that they also have material property, access to land and greater inheritance rights.

4.2 **Sustainability**

This section measures the potential for the results and outcomes of this project to continue following the withdrawal of Search and CCYA activities from the communities. Although the project was only 24 months, one of the underlying assumptions of the project was that creating more economically independent women is not a short-term fix. The choice of beneficiaries, therefore concentrated not just on picking vibrant,
charismatic women, but on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable.

Figure 13: *I now feel confident that I can lead my own business*

88.4% of respondents now feel confident they can lead their own business (with 55.7% who strongly agree and 30.7% who agree with this statement). Confidence is slightly higher in Foredugu, and this may be because it is located on a major highway (the Lunsar-Makeni Highway) closer to the road. However, 9.2% of women also indicated that they did not feel confident with running their own business. This suggests that there is still a need to ensure that all women across the WOECs have the ability to sustain their livelihoods and be economically independent.

The FGDs indicate that some of the women still lack the confidence to manage their businesses on their own, and require group support. Community facilitators believe that the shadow system, where a grantee is shadowed by another person is a good way of providing support and applying pressure on beneficiaries to perform well in their businesses. The shadow system is a revolving loan scheme, which operates either with cash or goods, where beneficiaries take turns to use the initial capital after a fellow beneficiary had repaid.

*A Basket of Bread. Product of WOEC Bakery, Taninahun*
FGDs and KIIs identified key sustainability issues, including the need for local people to assist donors in improving donor practice and the need to build sustainability into project design by using adaptable mechanism. For example, business skills training should be done by business people who have had the experience, and monitored by resources persons who are able to measure performance over time.

Community facilitators believe the design of the project should put measures in place to reduce donor dependence syndromes. They should also clarify expectations of continuity ahead of field implementation and take every opportunity to encourage sustainability discussions throughout the life cycle of the project. In specific examples in Kolisoko, the agricultural inputs needed for the project came late, resulting in late plowing and waste of seedlings because the rains had started before the major ploughing work was completed. However, having made a not so impressive yield on the groundnuts, the center went on to build a bakery, which served as a recovery mechanism for the business. Having done this, they might have been better served to channel the profit into seedling for the next planting season, rather than wait for a seed donation might also come late again. The key issue here is that the community did not take advantage of the opportunity they had to acquire their seed bank out of the proceeds of the bakery, which would have been a sustainable mechanism for the project itself.

A representative of SOCFIN, the oil palm producing company which took over most of the community and in Pujehun district, observed in key interviews that enabling women to have access to these markets would allow them to increase their business activities. Even though SOCFIN activity had an inherently negative effect on livelihoods in the community, their efforts in women’s development was significant in helping women develop in business.

Opportunities identified in the FGDs included the cultivation of larger parcels of lands, which can help upscale the projects and increase harvest and income opportunity. Those income opportunities can be better sustained if infrastructure projects are designed to directly address poverty by incorporating thinking about how to increase access to water, sanitation and better health facilities. Even though this was not a project with an infrastructure element, program design often benefits from putting these issues in the planning discussions with beneficiaries. When they therefore begin to realize gains from the project, they are also better aware of the need to achieve these requirements, resulting in them spending less of their income on health related expenses.
88.3% of respondents say they will continue to attend WOEC meetings and activities when the project closes. Members understandably raised questions about members’ time constraints and their ability to devote time to the WOEC in addition to their everyday responsibilities at home (which include childcare, housekeeping and domestic responsibilities). A number of beneficiaries say they have time to attend WOEC meetings now because their men see the economic benefits associated with the centre. We can presume that as long as the WOEC stays economically viable that this support will remain consistent.

When the project closes, it is hoped that members will still have the same level of commitment when donor support is no longer an incentive. FGD questions raised these issues to understand this in further depth.

Women were asked to assess whether their center will continue to be profitable and therefore continue to rally support from the community. 76.1% believe the centers will continue. Some participants believed the commitment to continue may dwindle when Search and CCYA withdraw. Almost 13% believe the WOECs will not continue after the project closes and 11% say they are not certain.
When asked what some of the last effects of the project would be, the survey indicated that:

- **33.7% of respondents are able to mobilize other women**;
- **27% of respondents pointed to the elimination of violence against women**;
- **19% of respondents stated that they can now run their own businesses successfully**; and
- **14.1% of respondents indicated that they could make decisions at the household level**; and
- **6.1% indicate they could now make decisions at the community level**; and
- **4.3% say they now contribute to the household**

These findings were further emphasized by the key interviews and focus group discussions. Stakeholders point to the possibility of sustainable gains from the project on the basis of the following:

- Many women are breadwinners, and they are the main income earners in their families
- The WOEC members have been trained and interacted with Search/CCYA and have more awareness and knowledge to share with other community members.\(^{19}\)
- Women beneficiaries have become busier in farming, baking bread and selling; therefore more useful to the community and there is much less idle time observed now in the community.
- The changing role of women as a result of the assistance, training and money that Search gave them means they can now use the land in a more productive way, even teaching the community how to conserve natural resources like water and wood.
- Greater self-esteem means women are motivated to go after big goals and make themselves happier and more fulfilled with a new world view.

This project has improved employment opportunities for women. Stakeholders interviewed during FGDs and KII highlighted that the training women received from the project made them more marketable and more employable allowing some beneficiaries to move into formal employment as a result of their increased skills and confidence.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) KII Stakeholder Report  
\(^{20}\) FGDs with beneficiaries and KII report
In addition, the use of negotiation, dialogue and communication and commercial skills have increased in their use among the communities. Women are now able to speak for themselves, advocate for change and take responsibility for the care and sustainability of their environment. For instance, FGDs and KIIs indicated that WOEC members have approached industrial players like Addax and SOCFIN, demanding from them the safe disposal of effluent and wastes. These efforts are obviously on going, but community facilitators note that previously, they would have had to make these requests and presentations on behalf of the women.

As a result of the project, women and men are now working in greater partnership to engender economic advancement in the communities. Men supported WOEC members when they approached SOCFIN to request for assistance in expanding the center. They supported the coordination between different stakeholders, specifically the private sector, who were interested in helping the communities scale up their successful approach to community development. This provided a crucial crutch for supporting women’s associations and collective action and essentially contributed to the sustainability of the project.

The key crutch to the sustainability of the project hinges on WOEC members’ engagement in the long term. However, with the support from community members, the private sector, local authorities and politicians, the WOEC could explore different sources to work with, which could be key to ensuring the sustainability of the project’s outcomes.

From the data collection, it was identified that the lasting effects of this project were largely visible based on the improved social cohesion, better community relations and greater economic independence of the beneficiaries and their communities.

**Improved Social Cohesion**

The communities agree that there is greater social cohesion in the communities. This is mostly because the enhancement in women’s skills has promoted their involvement, participation and negotiation skills. The project helped the community to assess the way women are organizing themselves and responding to development priorities in the district. Community facilitators say they have seen a lot of progress from when Ebola ravaged the country, when the communities became scattered and disjointed as a result of people fleeing diseased areas. The project gave the women something to work on and look forward to. Women and men also have good interaction between themselves and they now hold meetings.

**Better Community Relations**

Respondents say relationships within the community have benefitted from the project in terms of greater communication efforts between community members, less friction and better opportunities for problem solving through dialogue, discussion and negotiation. “There is peace in the community and in our homes. I know we can never have total absence of conflict but we now know how to negotiate and dialogue” – FGD in Romeni. In Sinjo and Taninahun (Pujehun District), where a large oil industrialized oil mill leased most of the community land, the community rights were infringed by the loss of their lands. Without any visible source of income, they had virtually lost control over their resources for the future. This created internal conflict and conflict with the companies. They could not exert influence on their communities, their future and their families. This project changed that by introducing them to new approach to peace building and conflict resolution.
In addition, the project strengthened the community. Most members became involved in farming work and this increased communal understanding. They opened bank accounts, banked their money and watched it grow.

**Greater Economic Independence**

Women in particular and the larger community benefitted from greater economic independence. The project skills and knowledge helped them to carefully handle and manage small micro businesses, reducing total dependency on men and others. The influence of female breadwinners is now trickling down to the men, so the society is benefiting. Respondents say the project has brought out the economic potential of women and complements existing effort, giving a new angle to women development in the district. “Through the training they know how to make one into two economically to multiply profit” – KII in Foredugu.

The project created avenues for income generation and skills to enable women use that money productively. It also brought to them the realization that, even though many of them are uneducated, they have the power to ensure that their children do not remain similarly uneducated. “Previously, our children were denied education. Now that we have money, our children are going to school.” – Worreh Yeama FGD with beneficiaries.

“The projects contribution to women’s financial literacy and business skills help to improve the market environment for businesses as well, providing a bridge between poverty, want and financial Independence, which, while still a distance away, is an achievable ideal now”. 21

The sustainability mechanisms adopted by the project include the training and the networking instituted by the project. The imbibing of new skills is a long lasting effect, and combined with the networking sills which the women are now demonstrating; this is bound to have a positive effect on the sustainability of the project.

*Figure 17: Has this project had a positive effect on community members, especially women, outside of the WOEC?*

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21 KII’s stakeholder report
Many of the WOECs are now examining future revenue sources, including renting out the WOEC and chairs for functions as well as establishing bakeries and poultry businesses. When we asked about their plans for sustaining the WOEC, the beneficiaries were not clear about a definite strategy, as they say they rely heavily on support from Search and CCYA. However, this discussion has at least led them to consider how to sustain the process following donor withdrawal, if it happens.

Several beneficiaries say they are now being approached with positions of responsibility at the district and local government level as well. In addition 98.2% of respondents say the project has had a positive effect on community members, especially women.

In terms of positive impact, beneficiaries feel that the main contribution the project has made in their lives is the financial backing to launch into business and increase their opportunities to earn an income. Respondents (both men and women) are of the opinion that, when the women make money, they spend more of it on the greater good and their families, than on themselves. This helps the community greatly. The business activities are providing money which circulates in the community. Respondents also say that women’s’ economic power helps them to contribute to their children’s’ education, nutrition and health. The training that women have received has helped them to increase their social interaction, communication skills, problem solving power and improved self-esteem.

Respondents say the women have succeeded in forming a social support system that can help them when they feel powerless. In addition, respondents say women are implementing little projects which are making a big impact. Eg, repairing the water well so the village can have clean water again. There is less idle time, opined a community leader, because the women are busy, waking up early and going to bed earlier, to ensure they can maximize their productivity.

Women believe that they have access to further opportunities, with 55.6% strongly agreeing.

These opportunities include the potential to lead other projects, expand on the current projects, be exposed to various economic opportunities and trading and to advocate for community advancement. Because women are very much more active, a WOEC chairlady noted that ‘…women’s opinions are now accepted and acted upon..’ Women are better able to influence things. This gives them unprecedented opportunity as they are also holding positions of authority in the community. The women say they are able to depend
Final Evaluation | Expanding the Table

on themselves to solve community problems. Communication is better in the community and they can now mobilize themselves very well.

Large scale farming is also giving women an opportunity to explore further agribusiness ideas and connect to other funding opportunities.

90.1% of WOEC respondents say they now have a leadership role in their communities.

![Figure 19: I now have a leadership position within my community](image)

The leadership skills include mobilizing other women, other community members and relevant stakeholders, demonstrating critical influencing and advocacy skills, organizing events and project deliverables for results and managing the diversity of personalities in the communities.

In addition, by teaching women how to trade, bank and account for their profits, the project has made visible impact in the personal profile of beneficiaries, who can now improve livelihoods in the community. The fact that WOEC members are generating income means that they can increase spending and cash flow in the communities. Increased cash flow provides more economic opportunities for the rest of the community. However, during FGDs with men, a community member highlighted that the inadequacy of formal skills are a hindrance to women’s economic empowerment, as many beneficiaries now see the project as the single future direction, and even though the community has tried to get young women to seek formal education, many feel that the project has given them enough to concentrate upon.

To ensure sustainability, program design has to develop the ability to continue engaging the WOEC and its beneficiaries to meet the needs of the community, through potentially changing circumstances and sources of support. This means that Search and its donors should at design stage conscientize its beneficiaries to view its grants as investments, expected to yield results significantly beyond those attributable to the specific funds provided. Suggestion for achieving this include the diversification of WOEC project revenue sources from inception, partnerships and collaborative strategies with the community, the private sector and other NGOs, organizational and community capacity building, and the strategic use of community volunteers. With the current design, beneficiaries see the grants as gift monies that do not necessarily have to turn a profit, since there may always be another grant around the corner, or at worst, the project could take a break until another funding opportunity presents itself.
The fact that the WOECs are designed to address critical local needs means that Search and CCYA need to begin developing strategies early for how beneficiaries will build on the specific activities supported by the main project grant.

4.3 **Impact**

This section will explore how this project achieved the goal of empowering women through economic opportunities. This was achieved by funding small businesses, trainings and providing basic mentoring and financial support services for the centers. One of the underlying assumptions of the project was that women play a key role in sustainable economic change, especially in post conflict societies. After having been left behind and suffered poverty and violence, many members of the WOECs found new opportunities to strengthen themselves, their families, and their communities. The immediate impact observable is grouped into four primary key areas, observable from the community discussions and key interviews:

1. **WOEC beneficiaries earn and save money**

These savings help them to provide for their family’s needs and invest in the future. As a result of the project, their income has grown and many members have used their earnings for feeding better, caring for their family’s health and investing in micro businesses. In addition, WOEC members report feeling able to make economic decisions in the household, including loaning money to their husbands and getting repaid with interest.

![Figure 20: Beneficiary Respondents Current Income Bracket](image-url)
The percentage of respondents who earned nothing decreased by 24.5%, from 27.6% to just 3.1% since the project implementation. Additionally, the percentage of beneficiaries earning between Le10,000 (≈$1.3) and Le200,000 (≈$26) increased by 11.9%. The proportion of respondents earning between 200,001 and 600,000 increased from 17.2% to 24.5%.

2. **WOEC beneficiaries pay more attention to health and well-being:**

Respondents say belonging to the WOEC helps them to protect themselves and their families’ wellbeing, nutrition and demonstrate good health seeking behaviors. Beneficiaries say they are now able to seek out better nutrition, health care and pay school fees to keep their children in school because they now earn money. Respondents say having an income source gives women confidence to incur necessary expenses to take care of their families. They say if they have to take a loan from someone, they are confident they can repay because they have an income source.

3. **WOEC beneficiaries are influencing decisions in their homes and in their communities:**

Respondent beneficiaries say that the fact that they have undergone training means that they are better aware of their rights. They recognize that they do not always get the leverage to claim their rights, but they say they now know what is possible and what is legal. Many women say they now know they have a right to demand land inheritance and speak up in community meetings. They are also more confident about speaking out for themselves on issues affecting their communities, families, livelihoods and businesses. Community stakeholders also confirm that women are participating increasing within the households and the communities.
50% of respondents say their husbands now consult them on household expenditure most of the time. 34.6% say their husbands now consult them on household expenditure some of the time and their participation has increased at the household and community level. Obviously, with greater interaction at household level, the contribution of beneficiaries to decision making is increased.

4. **WOEC members have created a strong network to connect with and help each other:**

Respondents say the WOEC network provides them with a source of strength, mentorship and advice. It also provides opportunities for social and economic growth. Some of the benefits they gain from this group and the project are sharing of information about their rights, educating each other and encouraging each other. From the beneficiary focus group, respondents say there is now unity in the group and they mentor and advice one another and they listen to each other’s opinion. They point to meetings, where mentoring and monitoring goes on continuously. They meet frequently and exchange ideas and assign tasks to people. They believe unity and participation is important and their cooperation helps them to build successful businesses.

The networking which is happening and the cooperation with each other all contribute to better problem solving and respondents say they now have fewer complaints to take to the chiefs than before.

Many participants in the FGDs say there is greater peace in their homes, even though they recognize that
there can never be a total absence of conflict. A respondent noted ‘since we learnt to negotiate instead of argue and fight, we have had more peace’. 86.5% of respondents report feeling more respected (at least to some extent) at the household and community level. ‘When we are confident like this, we are happy, because we also get a lot of things accomplished. The community is also afraid to ignore us, because they know we will speak out’. WOEC members say they have greater confidence that they are able to deliver responsibilities given to them. They also say they are more self-confident because they know things now, including some laws and the extent of their rights.

Some community members however say they are not direct beneficiaries and their family members are not included in the WOEC. If they had been, they say they would have been more supportive.

WOEC members created a number of businesses in the communities as a result of this project.
45.9% of new businesses specialized in agriculture (29.8%) and farming (16.1%), 44.7% of those businesses were in trading and selling and 16% were in food processing.

### 4.4 SUMMARY TABLES DISPLAYING PROGRESS ON KEY INDICATORS, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of respondents report increased self-efficacy at the end of the training/project.</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of respondents saying that their participation in households and community decision-making has increased during the project.</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functioning Women Owned Empowerment Centers (WOEC) upgraded existing facilities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning Women Owned Empowerment Centers (WOEC) were established</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage increase in women who reported an increase in knowledge in life and financial skills.</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of respondents receiving financial support from micro-projects.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women reporting an increase in income from micro-project.</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their husband now consults them on household expenditure most of the time.</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority figures say that household complaints coming to them for adjudication had reduced as a result of the project.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Table 3: Summary of Key Indicators*

### 5. Recommendations

Some of the recommendations below intend to address the challenges of data collection as well as issues identified by data collectors during the evaluation. The evaluation results suggest that the program has great growth potential and the recommendations listed below aim to ensure that this potential is maximized.

1. The use of community facilitators both in project implementation and in the data collection for the evaluation provides a valuable linkage to the communities and should be continued and enhanced. The results of this evaluation should be shared with the beneficiaries to emphasize the importance of project managers and community stakeholders working closely together. This stresses the responsibility of stakeholders for applying evaluation findings and implementing recommendations.

2. The following stakeholders should be more involved in program design if such a program is to be redesigned: Government and other national duty-bearers including Ministries of Finance, MSWGCA (Gender) district councils, civil society (including Women’s Movements and networks), donor agencies, bilateral and multilateral agencies and UN agencies.

3. A general recommendation is that the WOECs build on the strength of the project by:
   a. Continuing using the community-led approach
b. Preserving the adaptable and flexible approach to the emerging nature of the WOEC. This means that the ability of the WOEC to adapt their working style to suit their particular circumstances should be encouraged. Ie while some WOEC build their center, others adopted an existing center for their own use. The nature of each WOEC is dependent on the members and leadership, so there isn’t a cast in stone design for running them. This helps flexibility and future planning, even though it can also mean that some WOECs appear to have made much more progress than others

c. Maintaining CCYA’s role in mentoring individuals and organizations. This is a useful model that can be replicated with other partners as well, although CCYA has been successful in maintaining this community linkage over time. The impression we got is that CCYA is the local mentor and Search does more of providing the program management structure and funding. CCYAs local offices for instance are much more in touch with the communities.

4) Search should gather WOEC baseline information as the project wraps up. This would be useful for tracking the progress of the WOEC as independent entities in the future. Such data can also be important in evaluating the WOECs as independent entities after their funding has ended.

5) Formalizing the collaborative relationships between Search, CCYA, the WOECs and the external stakeholders, to manage the risk of over-reliance on personal relationships and of their potentially transitory nature. A good example is the situation in which the WOECs have relied on one person to assist in delivering the registration papers with the district council. This did not progress for a long time and WOEC activities were stalled because of it. The community should be able to escalate and/or deescalate such issues as appropriate. Just after the data collection the chairlady of the WOEC in question called the Country Director of Search to tell him that their money for the registration has been refunded as the individual was asked to do so.

6) Designing a growth module after the donors exit to create a revolving fund. In exploring this model, shadow system of rotating of funds can help ensure that cash assistance circulates and is monitored in the community by beneficiaries and safeguarded by the community leadership. The community facilitator in Bombali described a pilot of 90 persons in 3 groups, where a set of 5 persons receives refundable cash assistance for six months and hands over the repayment to the shadow 5, who have been monitoring and waiting in the wings, while an additional set of 5 are appointed to shadow the new set. This way the fund revolves and grows with the community and is managed by them with period checks by an external auditor. The Fund would normally be a source of money from which loans are made for multiple beneficiaries in a microcredit scheme, repayable over an agreed period, after which the principal paid is advanced to another member of the group who had been saddled with the responsibility of monitoring the first recipient. The fund gets its name from the revolving aspect of loan repayment, and the fact that a close community member serves as a shadow. As individual women pay back their loans, they create the opportunity to issue other loans to new women.

7) Investigating the opportunities for youth specific engagement strategies and activities (example, training of young activists as role models and support persons specifically for young women, local art clubs, backyard gardens, and creating employment opportunities).
8) Investigating the feasibility of each one train one to multiply the impact of the WOEC. Similar to the revolving fund, WOEC beneficiaries can be mandated to provide training for at least an equal number of beneficiaries within a given time span. For example, within 6 weeks of being trained, each beneficiary should train an addition person who can be independently verified. This will multiply the impact of the WOEC.

9) WOECs should investigate options regarding support for market opportunities for women’s crafts such as sewing, bead work, knitting, baking as well as for garden produce. Search can choose to help the WOECs implement this.

10) Investigate the options for further mentoring WOEC leadership and members in order to acquire additional skills that are necessary for sustainable operation.

11) Examine the option of extending the engagement of male community members, focusing on areas where they are unsupportive or questioning. This would mainly be among male community members whose family members are not beneficiaries. For male community members whose spouses and/or family members are not direct beneficiaries, there are often questions around the exclusivity of the WOEC membership. So some male community members say they would have supported the project if more of their own people were also beneficiaries.

12) WOECs can, with community and district council participation, explore a branding strategy to ensure that program activities and achievements are associated with Search and CCYA.

13) Project design and implementation should more accurately identify the needs of rural women. WOEC members can benefit from greater access of rural women to managerial skills and greater participation. There should be greater promotion of risk taking and group expansion. There should be an attempt to reduce migration of rural households.

14) Since all the groups are involved in agriculture in some form or other, the tangible effects of climate change needs to be incorporated into their rural development planning. Otherwise the real risk of exacerbating water insecurity and suffering harvest losses from unexpected floods can affect the project negatively. So can the late of arrival of tools, implements and seedling for farming.
6. Conclusions

6.1 Lessons Learnt

The project has afforded some very valuable lessons in project design and implementation of women economic empowerment projects.

A. Team building and Team working

WOEC members and leaders had to adjust their team working style. Many WOEC chairpersons point out that managing people is not easy and they themselves have had to change their approach to team management. They now emphasize a situation where the WOEC leaders help guide members rather than act as overlords to be obeyed. This helped them build personal relationships with WOEC team members to improve morale and productivity, while reflecting on their own contributions as a team.

B. Adaptability

WOEC members understand that the program needed to be flexible and adaptable in order to keep pressing forward and getting results. For instance, when they got their planting inputs late, they still went ahead and planted, even though the rains had started and some of the seeds were lost, they recognized the importance of still pressing on and using this knowledge to plan for the next planting seasons.

C. Appreciating each other as women

WOEC members cite the importance of appreciating fellow women. They note that fear can make women work against each other rather than with each other. This is why it is important for women to mentor each other and to create positive relationships in the WOEC and with members outside of the center.

D. Effectiveness

There were marked changes in the decision-making of women, expenditure pattern of the family and awareness of rights, responsibilities and advocacy effort of the individual women and their groups. Women are considerably more involved in decisions about household purchases, household healthcare, and mobility outside the community. Women have increased their influence in household decision-making and even more so in community decision making. The surveys indicate that there were changes in the expenditure pattern of women, where women have notably made more prudent decisions based on the financial training they have received and the encouragement to save money and recognize their profits.

E. Sustainability

This evaluation shows that women have taken action for social change by engaging in problem solving negotiations to resolve social problems. They are now using group pressure to encourage hygiene and cleanliness, arrest domestic violence, provision and repair of drinking water sources and plantation and afforestation. However, other actions that required technical skills and resources (such as increasing the number of women in the groups through technical training) were less popular.

Project design and implementation should more accurately identify the needs of rural women. WOEC members can benefit from greater access of rural women to managerial skills and greater participation.
There should be greater promotion of risk taking and group expansion. There should be an attempt to reduce migration of rural households.

F. Impact

Women were also acting independently by themselves regarding social activity and advocacy with the industrialized peri-urban players like SOCFIN and ADDAX. Many non-beneficiary stakeholders asked for literacy classes before and then economic enterprise. Respondents were very happy with the WOEC, which they saw as an innovation in development effort. Rural women for the first time had an ‘office’ where they went to discuss about social and community changes, personal business or to discuss about physical construction and environment. Cash based interventions for women groups are extremely helpful on a short term emergency stimulus basis. The non-monetary benefits were also significant, and included improved morale, greater confidence and greater participation in local governance.

There was a lot to be said about the sustainability of this approach, seeing that it was an emergency injection of funds to aid communities whose primary means of income generation were negatively affected by industrialization and large-scale agribusiness.

Community stakeholders identified lack of formal education and inadequate skills, the inability to create more group members without recourse to Search, CCYA and financial uncertainty brought about by the short term nature of the project. Climate change risk means that WOEC members must learn more about conservation of natural resources and the environment.

The changing knowledge, attitude and values (strengths of empowerment) can be harnessed into a strategy to better identify further needs of the WOECS, increase their participation in public and private life.

Dynamism and creativity of WOEC members will result in empowerment and create a kind of new stimulus for rural development.

In conclusion, Search and CCYA staff and contractors, volunteers, WOEC members and community members are strongly motivated to continue to support the program. Members expressed confidence in its effectiveness, but raised doubts about its sustainability.

6.2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF THE INTERVENTION

The main strengths of the intervention lay in the increasing knowledge, attitudes and values in the beneficiaries, as well as their increasing power, confidence and self-esteem. There was a positive view to the work of rural women and increasing creativity in the communities and a sense of progress. Social justice was promoted by the project as well as a sense of belonging to group. The project improved the welfare of rural families, reduced poverty and increased facilities and opportunities. The strength of the project lay in its direct participatory approach and in the depth to which it went to involve other non-direct beneficiaries and stakeholders. Working with CCYA afforded the project more direct access to the participants and vice versa. The beneficiaries experienced significant upskilling, especially with financial planning, banking and income recognition.

Another strength of the project was in community cohesiveness. The evaluation team noted that since this was a coalition of the willing, held together by an obligation to Search and CCYA, this could have been attributed to being part of a beneficial group. It could also be an organic characteristic of the groups.

The main weaknesses lay in the relative lack of flexibility in rural women, combined sometimes with poor decision-making power, shyness, inadequacy of education and lack of ability in independent group creation.
A key shortcoming of the project lay in the difficulty of managing beneficiary and stakeholder expectations, such that a resounding appeal is constantly made in all of the beneficiary communities for Search and CCYA to continue the funding. In addition, the activities in which beneficiaries are involved are mostly limited to farming and petty trading. Other low hanging fruit income generating ideas include training in fabric processing, hair dressing and baking/bread-making.

The business skills training needs to advance beyond the elementary stage to help groups properly value their inputs, especially labour, in helping them recognize their profits.

All of the WOECs want to include other women in the project, but they all want to receive additional grants from Search and CCYA in order to do so.

### 6.3 Evaluation Constraints and Resource Limitations

The evaluation team travelled with the Project staff to most locations. This could sometimes have the effect of creating some shyness in the beneficiary respondents. While it is beneficial to have project staff conduct introductions for the evaluation team, there was an overwhelming presence of project managers on the field, which in our opinion may have contributed to some reticence on the part of beneficiary respondents.

Being a program funded over a two year period, there were expectations built up in the beneficiary communities, which no effort was made to manage. The fact that the beneficiary communities, right up to the end of the project were expecting some sort of expansion of the project from Search means either that the expectations were not properly managed, or someone gave the group members the impression that this would be the case. In two key interviews the issue came up and the impression was that Search would repeat the process for other groups if the project went well. This meant that the evaluation team spent more time explaining the evaluation process and distinguishing it from a funding scoping meeting.

These beneficiary communities kept requesting for more funding for the sustainability of the project, even as the project was drawing to a close. This conversation crept up in most of the discussions and a lot of time was spent on explaining the current situation.
7. Appendix

7.1 ABOUT EVALUATOR (ASCENDANT & COMPANY LTD)

Ascendant & Company is a boutique professional services provider, specializing in helping clients realize their potential and impact their clients. We have a team of consultants who pride themselves on delivering superior professional management consulting services and offering the best services available. Ascendant has been solving complex organizational and management problems for our clients for over twenty years.

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<td>• M&amp;E Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact: Olufela Adeyemi. P. +23276 300299. E. olufela.adeyemi@ascendantandcompany.com

Figure 26: Ascendant Service Lines
## 7.2 COPY OF METHODOLOGY

### 7.2.1 Survey questions

“Expanding the Table: Empowering Women to Identify Protection Strategies In Sierra Leone’s Industrializing Districts”

Demographics  
Enumerators Name  
Respondents Name  
2. Respondents Community  
   a. Worrey Yema  
   b. Kolesoko  
   c. Sinjo  
   d. Foredugu  
   e. Taninahun  
   f. Romeni  
3. Respondents District  
   Pujehun  
   Port Loko  
   Bombali  
   Other…  
4. Highest Educational Attainment  
   a. None  
   b. Primary  
   c. Secondary  
   d. Tertiary  
   Other…  
5. Your Sex  
   Female  
   Male  
   Prefer not to say  
   Other…  
6. Your Employment Status  
   a. Unemployed  
   b. Self Employed  
   c. Employed by Other  
   d. Unemployed disabled  
   e. Retired  
   Other…  
7. Were you registered to vote in the last elections?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Are you registered to vote for the upcoming elections?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Your current Income Bracket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. None</td>
<td>b. Less than 200,000 Leones a month</td>
<td>c. 201,000 Leones to 600,000 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 600,001 to 1 million Leones a month</td>
<td>e. Between 1,000,0001 to 2m Leones a month</td>
<td>f. More than 2 million Leones a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Your Income Bracket before this project started</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. None</td>
<td>b. Less than 200,000 Leones a month</td>
<td>c. 201,000 Leones to 600,000 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 600,001 to 1 million Leones a month</td>
<td>e. Between 1,000,0001 to 2m Leones a month</td>
<td>f. More than 2 million Leones a month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. Which of These Activities Have You been Involved in?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Establishment of Women Owned Empowerment Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Trainings in Women’s Leadership, Advocacy and Community Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Life skills and financial skills training for women &amp; girls to undertake micro projects;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Women-Driven Micro-Projects;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Community Town Hall Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Exchange visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Other…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12. Do you agree with the following statement: “WOEC has increased economic opportunities for me personally”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Neither Agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 13. Do you agree with the following statement: “I now feel confident that I can lead my own business” |
14. Please choose which choice is more relevant to you: My business skills...

1. Have allowed me to set up a successful business
2. Have improved my skills in business
3. Are the same as before the project
4. Are worse than before the project

15. Do you agree with the following statement: “As a result of the training I received as a result of this project, I now have a more important role in community development”

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Project Evaluation

16. Do you agree with the following statement: “I believe that the project has achieved its goal of giving members access to further economic opportunities”

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

17. Will you continue attending meetings and participating in the group after the project closes?

Yes
No
Maybe

18. Please choose which is more relevant to you Before this project:

I did not attend meetings
I did not get involved in community development
I was not consulted by members of the community
My views were not valued by the community
I did not participate at all

19. Please choose which is more relevant to you: As a result of this project:
a. I now participate in all community meetings  
b. I now participate in most community meetings  
c. WOEC consults me on my views and represents me at community meetings  
d. I do not participate at all  

Effectiveness  
20. Do you agree with the following statement: “I feel more economically independent now as a result of this project:”  
I strongly agree  
I agree  
I neither agree nor disagree  
I disagree  
I strongly disagree  

21. As a result of this project I have addressed specific barriers linked to ...[choose as many as you deem relevant]  
Land rights  
Access to finance  
Political Participation  
Community participation  
Household Participation  
None of the Above  
All of the Above  
Other…  

Sustainability  
22. I believe that the lasting effects of this project include being able to: [chose as many as relevant]  
Mobilise other women on issues that affect us  
Eliminate violence against women in the household  
Make decisions at the household level  
Make decisions at the community level  
Run my own business successfully  
Contribute to the household  
None of the Above  
Other Please specify  

23. Do you agree with the following statement: “When the project closes, I feel confident that I will be able to continue growing my business”  
1 Strongly Agree  
2 Agree  
3 Neither Agree nor disagree  
4 Disagree  
5 Strongly Disagree  

24. When the project closes, do you feel confident that the WOEC will continue?
a. Yes  
b. No  
c. I’m not certain  
d. Other

25. How does the WOEC aim to ensure it can continue growing with the community?

Expand business opportunities  
Include other women  
Collaborate with stakeholders  
Levying membership dues  
Raising fund by training others  
Applying to other donors

26. Have you received financial support for micro-projects (for your small business)?

Yes  
No  
I don’t know

27. Has your income increased from your small business?

Yes  
No  
I don’t know

28. Does your husband now consult you on household expenditure?

Most of the time  
Some of the time  
Neutral  
Rarely  
Not at all

29. Do you agree with the following statement: “I now have fewer complaints to take to the chiefs than before?”

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neutral  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

30. Which stakeholders have been engaged through the WOEC? (chose as many as relevant)…

None  
Politicians  
Ministry and Government  
Community Men and Youth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Authorities</th>
<th>Banks</th>
<th>Other communities</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Other…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

31. Do you agree with the following statement: “I now have a leadership position within my community”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. Has this project had a positive effect on community members, especially women, outside of the WOEC

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. Neutral
- d. To a little extent
- e. Not at all

Underlying Trends

33. I think this project has improved solidarity among women in this community

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. Neutral
- d. To a little extent
- e. Not at all

34. I think this project has reduced hostile conflict within the community

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. Neutral
- d. To a little extent
- e. Not at all

Participation

35. As a member of the WOEC, I feel that I am able to participate in this program:

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. Neutral
- d. To a little extent
- e. Not at all
36. Before this project: I felt more respected at the household and community level
   a. To a great extent
   b. To some extent
   c. Neutral
   d. To a little extent
   e. Not at all

36b. Now that this project has happened, I feel more respected at the household and community level
   a. To a great extent
   b. To some extent
   c. Neutral
   d. To a little extent
   e. Not at all

37. I created a new businesses as a result of the project’s activities
   Yes
   No
   I don’t know

38. My new business specializes in...
   a. Agriculture
   b. Food Processing
   c. Fabric Processing
   d. Crop Farming
   e. Livestock Farming
   f. Trading/Selling
   Other…

Table 4: Electronic Survey


7.2.2 Focus groups guides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FGDs Beneficiaries</th>
<th>FGDs Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having gone through this project, what do you see in the future for women in this community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you think can stop the progress that women are experiencing today as a result of this project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you think the training you received has contributed to your development economically? How has your increased participation affected you personally?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How have you come together to build a successful business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do different skills contribute to the center, even the quiet and shy ones, business savvy, extroverts, introverts, technical skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Having been involved in and witnessed this project, how do you see the role of women changing in your community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What can prevent the gains from this project from being consolidated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. As a community, how did you support this project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you think different community stakeholders should men be involved in sustaining the gains of this project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How are women contributing to the community economically?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How has the project brought more external stakeholder attention to your community? Negative and Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 7.2.3 Key Informant Interview Guides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KII Beneficiaries</th>
<th>KII Stakeholder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Project</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Why do you think the Projects are relevant? (Talking points Financial Skills, Leadership skills, Micro Project Management, Participation, Sustainability). <em>Which results have you seen from this project?</em></td>
<td>1. As a community stakeholder, why do you think the Project is relevant? <em>(Ask about Financial Skills, Leadership skills, Micro Project Management, Participation, Sustainability)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. After the Project phases out, do you think women will continue to organize and train others? Why do you think so/not?</td>
<td>2. How have they used the stories of empowerment to promote women’s empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you think women are more active in decision-making now as a result of this project?</td>
<td>3. How has the changing status of women affected the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you know of anything hindering results from this project? What are those?</td>
<td>4. What has been the effect of this project on participation in decision-making by women?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are community members, especially men and community leaders, supportive of this project? What has made the project achieve results? (In terms of stakeholder participation and involvement, expanded knowledge and understanding of women’s roles, and financial independence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you look back five years from now, what would you say this project has achieved?</td>
<td>9. Will your organization get involved with sustaining the project after it phases out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is there a plan by beneficiaries to maintain the financial viability of the WOEC?</td>
<td>10. To what extent have the results generated effective partnerships and capacity strengthening locally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are you planning to bring on other women as members of the WOEC?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How are women beneficiaries better positioned within their communities?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How did this project achieve the goal of empowering women through economic opportunities?

11. Do you now feel confident that this group will continue to be led towards success? How do you feel you can lead this group towards success?

Figure 28: KII Guides

### 7.3 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.S. Bangura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prince Boima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brima Kargbo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvester Lagao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Belmoh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Fawundu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tijani Ayuba Joaque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady, Kolisoko WOEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady WOEC Romeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady Sinjo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady Foredugu WOEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady Taninahun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady Worreh Yeama WOEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairlady Kolisoko</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Key Informants

### 7.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Outcome Assessment by DM&E
2. Pre and post tests
3. Project Tracker
4. Radio Program Production
5. Quarterly Reports  
6. Success Stories  
7. Work Plans  
8. WPS Project Impact  
9. Attendance lists of different meetings and events  
10. The Project Proposal itself

### 7.5 Evaluation Report Quality Checklist

The checklist below is used to determine whether the evaluation report has met the standards required by Search:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the <strong>language</strong> of the report in line with Search language (this document and the DME Glossary)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all parts of the <strong>Terms of Reference</strong> been followed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the <strong>main report</strong> plus annexes comply with the reporting guidelines in terms of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structure and content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the report contain a comprehensive and clear <strong>executive summary</strong>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all the major <strong>documents</strong> been reviewed, and the contents adequately reflected in the report?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the <strong>methodology</strong> clearly described and adequate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the method of <strong>selecting respondents</strong> for the evaluation credible?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have all the major <strong>stakeholders</strong> been consulted, and their views adequately reflected in the report?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the extent of <strong>participation</strong> been adequate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the <strong>conclusions</strong> clearly supported by the evidence presented?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the <strong>Recommendations</strong> relevant, feasible, useful and linked to conclusions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the report contain a <strong>clear assessment</strong> (incl. scores if appropriate) of the evaluation criteria?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the following <strong>cross-cutting issues</strong> been adequately addressed in the evaluation process and the report:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children and Youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the overall <strong>quality</strong> of the evaluation process and the report acceptable? Is it:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• useful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• accurate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• independent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• credible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ethical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have <strong>comments</strong> received on the draft report been adequately taken into account?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: Quality Checklist*