

REPORT

Mid-Term Evaluation of the project

Expanding the Space; Socio-Economic Empowerment of
Marginalized Rural Poor Youth



Project Implemented by Centre for Coordination of Youth
Activities with funding support from Taksvärkki

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ACRONYMS

ABC	Agricultural Business Centres
BP	Boundary Partners
CCYA	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Disability Advocacy Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LA	Local Authority
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTNDP	Medium Term National Development Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
PVCA	Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) is implementing a Taksvärkki supported project titled “*Expanding the space: Socio-Economic Empowerment for Marginalized Rural Poor Youth*” in Kakua and Bumpe Chiefdoms in Bo District. The project aims to support young people between 15 to 35 years including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to prepare them to play their rightful roles and responsibilities in contributing to meaningful community development. Under this project, CCYA has been working with young women and men, including Persons with Disabilities in promoting inclusion and participation in key decision-making processes both at local and national levels. This project is geared towards strengthening and reinforcing the capacities of youth, women and PWDs in life skills to enable them to engage on right based issues that prevent their participation in decision making processes at local and national levels in post-conflict development. The project also seeks to contribute to promoting accountable government institutions, improving the wellbeing of marginalized and excluded youth, women and PWDs ensuring inclusion in decision making processes and national development. The mid-term evaluation was conducted to inform programme design, draw lessons, and best practices to promote effective and efficient project implementation.

Evaluation Objectives

The overall goal of the midterm evaluation was to assess the continued relevance of the intervention and progress made towards achieving planned objectives. The evaluation also sought to establish and document the results of the project, its efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness and draw lessons for the design of a new project. The specific objectives were to:

1. To provide an opportunity to ascertain whether the project is still coherent with its strategic objectives, its relevance and usefulness to the boundary and strategic partners and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to CCYA and donor standards.
2. To confirm whether the project is on the right path to contribute to the project outcome challenges.
3. Proffer recommendations for further or future implementation/ strategies.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods research design. Qualitative data was obtained through a review of key project documents and related literature, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) of key project strategic partners, boundary partners and key stakeholders; as well as Focus Group Discussions with staff, young women, young men, youth PWDs, peer educators and mothers clubs boundary partners and parents/ guardians of children and youth with disabilities. A mini survey was conducted to gather quantitative data from 94 project primary beneficiaries. Survey data was collected through Google Forms and analyzed electronically. The mixed methodology produced triangulated results and ensured verification of data generated from one source with data from other sources.

Findings

Relevance

- The project owes its relevance to the rigorous designing process that was inclusive and accommodated the views and experiences of staff, stakeholders, boundary, and strategic partners.
- The outcome mapping and harvesting approach empowered CCYA, its boundary and strategic partners to stay relevant and flexible enough to modify activities and implementation techniques to respond to changes in the environment or context.
- The Life Skills trainings facilitated by CCYA were found to be highly relevant in addressing the needs of boundary partners.
- Young farmers found the knowledge acquired from the Climate Smart Agriculture Training key in building resilience towards climate sensitive farming practices.
- The revolving loan scheme was also found highly appropriate in addressing needs related to unavailability of seed money, absence of friendly credit facilities for families to respond to emergencies and lack of capital.
- Exchange visits promoted under this project were relevant in promoting shared learning and influencing best practices especially in agriculture, crop production and entrepreneurship.
- The Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion Trainings were considered highly relevant in addressing lack of knowledge on human rights and responsibilities, negative attitudes towards youth, women and PWDs, limited involvement of youth including those with disabilities in decision making and governance processes.
- The study also ascertained that mentoring and coaching sessions for PWD youth were relevant in boosting their confidence, building self-assertiveness and agency.
- Advocacy and awareness raising activities were relevant in promoting public knowledge on the rights of young PWDs particularly the town hall meetings, outreach sessions in public places and policy dialogue sessions.

Effectiveness

- In future, project mid-term evaluations should be conducted one or two months before or after the middle of the project's lifespan for recommendations to influence the implementation of the project within the remaining months of project implementation. Delays in conducting mid-term evaluations result in loss of opportunities that could have been derived from lessons learnt within the first half of the project's lifespan.
- The study determined that the project was effective in contributing towards achieving its intended outcomes. The adaptive nature of the project also ensured that the project was periodically reviewed for relevance which further enhanced effectiveness.
- Results achievement shows significant effectiveness at the rate of 85% average activity completion rate.
- The study revealed that project activities were effective in developing active and vibrant youth including PWDs, able to challenge and influence duty bearers and service providers to prioritize their needs and put resources in dealing with their concerns.
- High familiarity and ownership of the project among boundary and strategic partners was a result of the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PCVA) tool employed at the onset of the project. Project strategic partners noted that the uniqueness of the project centered on the fact that they were part of the design of the project from the onset, their ideas were taken on board and helped to shape project activities.
- The project was found to be relevant and effective in addressing the pressing needs presented by COVID-19 because of its adaptive nature.

- Trainings in Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights were effective in enhancing youth participation in decision making and accountability to building knowledge around human rights, advocacy and social inclusion.
- The study also discovered that mentoring and coaching sessions were effective in building assertiveness and confidence among youth including those with disabilities.
- Women in ABCs and mother's clubs promoted the culture of preventing and responding to rape and sexual assault. It was noted that mothers' clubs were active in reporting cases of rape to the Family Support Unit and providing support to victims to access the hospital and Rainbo Centre¹ Services.
- Capacity development activities targeting youth groups were effective in empowering youth for participation in governance and socio-economic activities.

Impact

- The impact of the project is a product of its responsiveness to the needs of youth including those with disability, and its ability to organise youth structures able to independently work towards enhancing their involvement in socio-economic activities.
- Mentoring and coaching activities were impactful on the lives of women in ABCs, peer educators and young PWDs. The one-on-one engagement of women by CCYA Staff as mentees empowered Women in ABCs to recognise their potentials and relevance in the communities especially around influencing young girls and building their life skills.
- The peer education programme brought young people together and supported them to share experiences, discuss issues that affect them and participate in influencing positive behaviours.
- Young people gained confidence and boldness to talk about issues affecting them including teenage pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health, STIs, HIV/AIDS, and Female Genital Mutilation that used to be sacred topics.
- Capacity development activities were impactful in terms of empowering women including those with disabilities to engage in business ventures and explore income generating opportunities. Household food security increased alongside household income. Women adopted better farming methods and improved their cassava and, groundnuts yield.
- The project positively impacted the lives of women leading to increased number of women involved in agriculture. Women were able to acquire land something that was taboo at the onset of the project.
- Young PWDs became more actively involved in governance activities thus improving their agency and activism.
- At national level, advocacy activities contributed to improved youth legislations and policies.
- The impact of Finance Management trainings was affected by the resignation of two staff members within the Finance Unit. To build up the lost capacity because of high turnover rate in the Finance Department, it is recommended that newly recruited Finance Staff be trained on financial management, including issues covered in previous trainings.

Sustainability

- The sustainability of the project is largely attributed to the outcome mapping and harvesting approaches employed in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Activities were designed to help support boundary and strategic partners in acquiring the knowledge, responsibility and power necessary for sustainable behaviour change.
- The project positively impacted on patriarchy, shifting norms and attitudes towards respect for young people including women and PWDs. These changes in perceptions and attitudes that

¹ Rainbo Centers provide free medical and psychosocial services to victims of rape and sexual abuse.

permeate society have influenced youth including young women and PWD's participation in household, community and district decision making processes.

- The evaluation also noted a positive sustainability indicator from the collaboration between youth groups and different public service providers.
- Mentorship activities promoted through this project have a high likelihood of sustainability beyond the scope of the project.
- Another indicator of sustainability is the fact that ABC women have started expanding their groups to involve other women and have assumed legal status. The two ABCs were formally registered with the Local Council; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; and Ministry of Social Welfare.

Coherence

- The evaluation established high internal coherence because project activities were seen to be logically contributing towards the achievement of the overall project vision.
- The project's internal coherence was also influenced by the outcome mapping and harvesting approach employed in the designing and implementation of this project. The positive impact of this project is a result of the interplay between and among boundary and strategic partners.
- Through adaptive programming, CCYA was able to ensure sustained coherence by responding to changing contexts and emerging issues.
- The evaluation also ascertained internal coherence because the Taksvärkki supported project was aligned to CCYA's mandate as enshrined in its Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024).
- External coherence was considered high owing to the coordinated approach used by CCYA in project design, review and adaptive programming.
- National policy coherence was also noted in as far as project objectives were well aligned with the Sierra Leone's Medium Term Development Plan, the Bo District Development Plan, the National Youth Policy and the Disability Act (2011).
- The Ministry of Social Welfare considered the project coherent with its mandate of supporting the welfare of PWDs, ensuring good parenting and mental health services.
- The Bo District Council appreciated lobbying meetings as relevant in complementing their work and supporting in promoting citizens engagement and inclusion in line with the District Development Plan and the Local Government Act.
- The representative of the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police applauded CCYA for influencing community members to report cases of rape and sexual assault. In that respect, the project was found to be complimenting the role of the police.

Lessons Learnt

- The project designers were strategic in working with youth including those with disabilities, stakeholders, council and MDAs and community groups to define community needs and collaboratively design the project. Given the success of this approach, particularly in addressing the needs of young people, promoting agri-business and entrepreneurship, shifting norms and attitudes towards inclusivity, it is recommended that this approach be considered in future designs.
- Participatory methods used in this project yielded results and enhanced youth inclusion in socio-economic activities, governance and policy making. The PVCA and outcome harvesting with their associated outcome mapping, adaptive programming, participatory progress review and participatory bench marking ensured that resources and efforts were directed where they were needed the most. Thus, it is suggested that similar approaches be considered in the future.

- The town hall meetings, lobbying meetings and policy dialogue sessions among other approaches proved to be simple and user friendly participatory social accountability mechanisms for the boundary and strategic partners. Monitoring processes as well as lobbying meetings empowered youth to confront authorities with evidence on key issues affecting them. It is recommended that similar innovative approaches that connect young people to duty bearers be considered in future programming.
- This project targeted chieftom and community levels and this brought it closer to the people and made it more impactful than focusing on a district or province. Ownership and knowledge of the project was high among both boundary and strategic partners and results were appreciated chieftom wide. It is recommended that future projects with community-centered approach, should also consider strongly working at chieftom and community level systematically with a holistic approach that brings benefits to a wide range of the target populations within the same district.
- Project activities were designed to help support boundary and strategic partners in acquiring the knowledge, responsibility and power necessary for sustainable behaviour change. As a result, primary project actors saw themselves as active project participants rather than recipients of development interventions.
- The project owes its success to a strong implementation team that integrated capacity development into activity implementation. Project implementers improved the management of CCYA, as an organisation, while also strengthening activity implementation, accountability, monitoring and reporting. This is something commendable and worth emulating in organisational strengthening.
- CCYA's interaction with Taksvärkki was key in transferring key skills especially on the outcome harvesting approach, monitoring, data collection, narrative and financial reporting. Working closely with the donor enhanced effectiveness and efficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) is implementing a Taksvärkki supported project titled “*Expanding the space: Socio-Economic Empowerment of Marginalized Rural Youth*” in Kakua and Bumpe Chiefdoms in Bo District. The project aims to support young people between 15 to 35 years including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to prepare them to play their rightful roles and responsibilities in contributing to meaningful community development. Under this project, CCYA has been working with young women and men, including Persons with Disabilities in promoting inclusion and participation in key decision-making processes both at local and national levels. This project is geared towards strengthening and reinforcing the capacities of youth, women and PWDs in life skills to enable them to engage on right based issues that prevent their participation in decision making processes at local and national levels in post-conflict development. The project also seeks to contribute to promoting accountable government institutions, improving the wellbeing of marginalized and excluded youth, women and PWDs ensuring inclusion in decision making processes and national development. The mid-term evaluation was conducted to inform programme design, draw lessons and best practices to promote effective and efficient project implementation.

1.2. Evaluation Objectives

The overall goal of the midterm evaluation was to assess the continued relevance of the intervention and progress made towards achieving planned objectives. The evaluation also sought to establish and document the results of the project, its efficiency, effectiveness, and appropriateness and draw lessons for the design of a new project. The specific objectives were to:

4. To provide an opportunity to ascertain whether the project is still coherent with its strategic objectives, is relevant and useful to the boundary and strategic partners and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to CCYA and donor standards.
5. To confirm whether the project is on the right path to contribute to the project outcome challenges.
6. Proffer recommendations for further or future implementation/ strategies.

1.3. Scope of the Evaluation

A mid-term evaluation exercise was conducted for the project entitled “*Expanding the space: Socio-Economic Empowerment of Marginalized Rural Poor Youth*” implemented by Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) in Kakua and Bumpe Chiefdoms in Bo District with funding from Taksvärkki. In terms of methodological scope, the evaluation interfaced with CCYA staff, boundary and strategic partners, stakeholders and project beneficiary groups including women in ABCs; beneficiary youth, women, and youth PWDs and well as beneficiaries of revolving loan schemes. The interaction was guided by a set of quantitative (survey) and qualitative (Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Desk Review) data collection tools designed to respond to the evaluation criteria.

The evaluation covered all the project activities. Information generated from the mid-term evaluation exercise was meant to inform implementation of the remaining activities including highlighting lessons for future programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of geographical scope, the study collected data from the project targeted chiefdoms of Bumpeh and Kakua. The mid-term evaluation report outline followed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland’s Outline of an Evaluation Report².

The project mid-term evaluation exercise was conducted two months prior to the completion of the implementation period. Despite this unusual impact of COVID-19, findings and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation report are valuable for the upcoming project phase and future project design.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a mixed methods research design. A mixed methodology produced triangulated results and ensured data generated from one source was verified with data from other sources. While quantitative data focused on statistics; qualitative data revealed attitudes and perspectives, behaviours and norms that can hardly be assessed through a traditional quantitative approach that is essentially designed to measure and quantify. The mixed methods research design was therefore most appropriate in gathering relevant information from available project documents, boundary partners, strategic partners and stakeholders who participated in the project activities.

2.2. Methods of Data Collection

2.2.1. Desk Review

To understand progress in the implementation of project activities, project documents were reviewed including the proposal document, project baseline report, quarterly and annual reports, activity progress monitoring reports and related documents produced by project staff as part of project implementation. This provided insight into progress made in terms of activity implementation and supported the triangulation of results with data obtained through other data gathering processes.

2.2.2. Semi-Structured Open Ended Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Semi Structured, open ended KIIs were administered to relevant strategic partners, key informants and institutions who participated in the project and interacted with project activities. Below is a list of the Key Informants interviewed:

Table 1: KII Participants

#	Beneficiary Category	Total Interviews	Interviews per Chiefdom
1.	Traditional leaders / Chiefs	4	2
2.	Councilors	2	1
3.	Religious Leaders	2	1
4.	Youth Leader	2	1
5.	Women Leaders	2	1
6.	Media representative	1	
7.	Disabled Peoples’ Organisation	2	1
8.	Local Council Representative	1	
9.	Ministry of Youth	1	

² Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Development Evaluation Unit (2018). Template: Outline of an Evaluation Unit. [Template Outline Evaluation report 181122.docx](#)

10.	Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs	1	
11.	Ministry of Agriculture	1	
12.	Disability Commission	1	
13.	Mothers Club	1	1
14.	Peer Educators	1	1
Total		22	9

*MDAs and Strategic Partners were interviewed at District level

2.2.3. Focus Group Discussions

The purpose of FGDs in this study was to probe, explore and identify any changes in behaviours and generate data regarding facts and attitudes from boundary partners, strategic partners and stakeholders. Additionally, the FGDs were meant to facilitate a closer interaction with project participants to understand their own perspective of how the project unfolded, successes, perceived challenges, gaps and lessons learnt. Two sets of FGDs were conducted as follows:

i. Focus Group Discussion/ Engagement Meeting with Project Staff and Implementation Team

Two meetings were held with project implementing team members, who are essentially CCYA staff members. The first meeting was held in CCYA's Bo District Office with CCYA Animators responsible for on-the-ground mobilisation and coordination of project participants among other roles. The second meeting was held at the CCYA Head Office and involved the Finance Department, Programmes Department and M&E Department. These meetings provided an opportunity for staff to self-evaluate the implementation process and assess the project based on the evaluation criteria, challenges and areas that needed strengthening.

ii. Focus Group Discussions with project boundary partners

The second sets of FGDs targeted four groups of participants per FGD as follows:

- One young women FGD
- One young male FGD
- One youth PWDs FGD including parents/ guardians of children and youth with disabilities

Each of the FGDs was composed of 12 to 14 members who participated in project activities and fit within the group category. The separation of beneficiary groups was done to ensure that issues relevant for each group were discussed; and members were free to participate. In each group, except for the PWD group; there were 12 to 14 members with at least two participants being PWDs. The PWD groups were made up of at least 60% female members and 40% male.

2.2.4. Mini Survey

The mini survey sought to generate data from a sample frame³ of 310 primary beneficiaries (boundary partners) of the project, which are:

- 60 young women members including young women with disabilities located in two chiefdoms (Kakua and Bumpe) i.e., 30 young women per ABC group in each chiefdom.

³ A sample frame is the total of all those who can be sampled and in this case it includes the total population of primary beneficiaries. A sample frame is the source from which a sample is drawn.

- 250 young women, youth with disabilities and youth group beneficiaries of rights-based advocacy trainings. The other beneficiaries are covered under the FGDs and the KIIs.

The survey targeted a sample size of 30% of the primary beneficiaries, with data gathered from both chiefdoms. This added up to a sample size of 94 primary project beneficiaries,

The survey questionnaires (Annex 2) were electronically administered in the two chiefdoms by trained enumerators. Data was collected digitally through google forms by use of smart phones (See annexes for raw data).

The mid-term evaluation report outline will follow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland's Outline of an Evaluation Report⁴.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

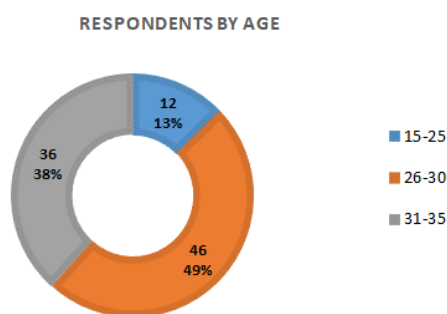
The survey targeted a total of 94 respondents, 47 from each of the targeted chiefdoms of Kakua and Bumpeh. 60% (56) of the survey respondents were female i.e. 28 (30%) from Kakua and 28 (30%) from Bumpeh respectively. Likewise, 40% (38) of the male respondents were composed of 20% (19) from Kakua and 20% (19) from Bumpeh. The pie chart below shows a diagrammatic presentation of the gender composition of the respondents.

Table 2: Survey Respondents disaggregated by Gender

Survey Respondents by Gender				
	Bumpeh	Kakua	Total	%age
Men	19	19	38	40%
Women	28	28	56	60%
Total	47	47	94	100%

Survey respondents were all youth aged between 15 and 35 who participated in project activities. 13% (12) i.e. 8 females, 4 male) were aged between 15 and 25; 49% (46 i.e. 20 males, 26 female) between 26 and 30 and 38% (36 i.e. 14 males, 22 female) between 31 and 35. The pie chart below summarises diagrammatically the respondents by age group.

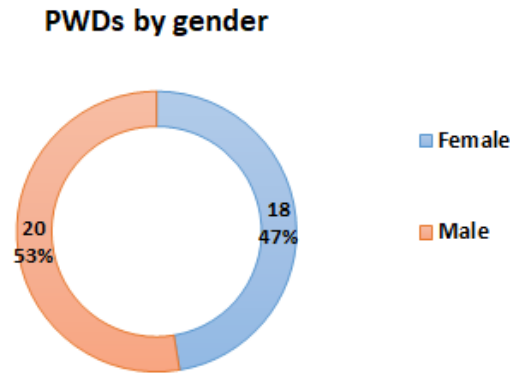
Figure 1: Survey Respondents by Age



⁴ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Development Evaluation Unit (2018). Template: Outline of an Evaluation Unit. [Template Outline Evaluation report 181122.docx](#)

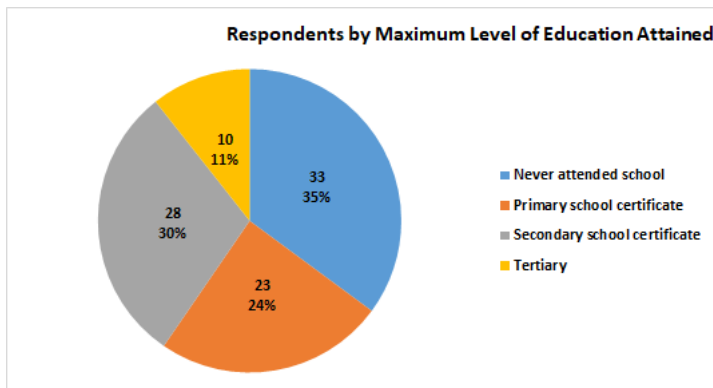
40% (38) of the respondents were youth with disabilities, of which 47% (18) were female while 53% (20) were male. This is presented by the chart below.

Figure 2: PWDs disaggregated by gender



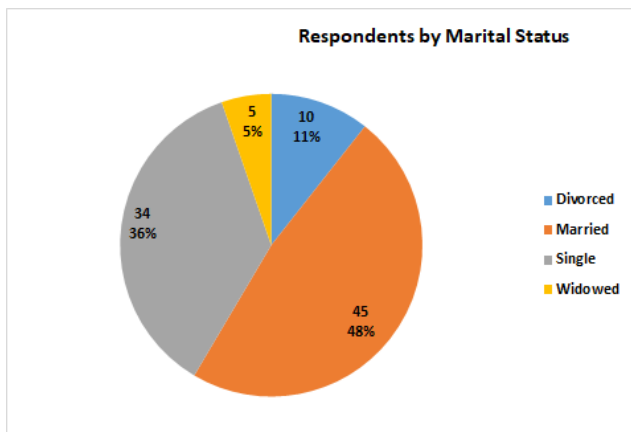
Disaggregated by level of education attained, 35% (33) of the respondents had never attended school, 24% (23) had primary school certificates, 30% (28) had secondary school certificate and 11% (10) tertiary education.

Figure 3: Respondents by Maximum level of Education



Close to half of the respondents (48%) of the respondents were married, 36% (34) were single, 5% (5) widowed and 11% (10) divorced as shown by the chart below.

Figure 4: Respondents by Marital Status



3.2. Assessment by Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria were aimed at understanding how the implementation of this project was unfolding to inform programme design and improved implementation. Six assessment criteria were used as follows:

- i. Relevance
- ii. Effectiveness
- iii. Impact
- iv. Sustainability
- v. Coherence
- vi. Lessons learnt

Refer to the inception report (Annex 1) for detailed guiding questions per evaluation criteria and the Mid-Term Evaluation Matrix.

3.2.1. Relevance

The project owes its relevance to the rigorous designing process that was inclusive and accommodated the views and experiences of staff, stakeholders, boundary and strategic partners. The project team presented evidence of various layers of engagements with both internal and external stakeholders that took place during the project design process. External stakeholders and strategic partners engaged during the design process included youth and women groups, Disability Commission, National Youth Commission (NaYCOM) Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry among others. Within CCYA, the designing process was a collaborative exercise that involved CCYA's staff in Programmes, Finance and M&E units under the leadership of the Executive Director. CCYA leveraged its years of partnership with Taksvärkki and experience in youth programming in Bo District to draw lessons from previous implementation into programme design. The wide engagement was necessary in ascertaining the gaps and establishing consensus on intervention areas relevant to addressing the needs of both boundary and strategic partners. Indeed, the project document is very articulate in describing the outcome challenges and issues that the project was initially set out to address. Taksvärkki provided technical support and advice to CCYA in the drafting of both the narrative and financial report including articulating donor requirements and expectations. As a result of these intensive engagement exercises, the relevance of the project was ensured from the onset.

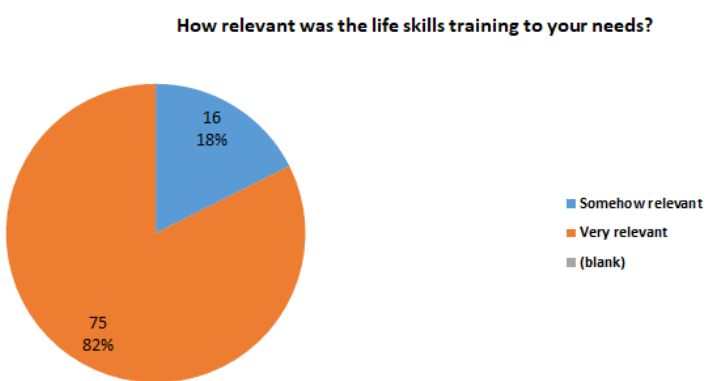
The study also established that partners and project participants appreciated the project as relevant and appropriate in addressing the needs of both partners and staff owing to the implementation methodology and approaches used. The outcome mapping and harvesting approach empowered CCYA, its boundary and strategic partners to stay relevant and flexible enough to modify activities and implementation techniques to respond to changes in the environment or context. The outcome harvesting sessions were described as serving a key purpose especially in tracking changes in behaviours influenced by the project. Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA), Adaptive programming, strategy testing, and related tools used under this project empowered partners to stay relevant. CCYA was able to implement activities that were not envisaged at the onset of the project but were necessary to address emerging issues such as COVID-19 prevention and response activities, election related activities and relevant policy advocacy activities with state actors. One of the CCYA staff said:

We used outcome harvesting so we were also given to opportunity to ensure the project is heading towards to right direction; and modify activities. We deleted activities that were no longer relevant. As result, we infused other activities, like the establishment of mothers' clubs and peer groups because it became necessary to do so, to deal with increased rape cases and sexual assault, among other issues.

It was noted that outcome mapping presented an opportunity for open communication, especially by project partners; and this empowered them to be part of the process of ensuring that the project remains relevant and implementation methodologies appropriate.

The Life Skills trainings facilitated by CCYA were found to be highly relevant in addressing the needs of boundary partners. Out of the 97% (91) survey respondents who indicated that they participated in Life Skills Trainings, 75 (82%) said the training was relevant to their needs as shown in the pie chart below.

Figure 5: Relevance of the Life Skills Training



In FGDs participants agreed that topics and issues covered by the Life Skills training were timely and necessary for them to manage their businesses better, develop their skills in activism, advocacy and lobbying as well as enhance their agricultural related activities. One male youth in Kakua said:

This project, through the life skills training, gave me knowledge on how to calculate profit from my trading and keep record of my expenses. Before that, I was just buying and selling and living from hand to mouth because each day I will make enough money for just that day. Now I have book where all my records are kept; and have been training others to do the same.

Other topics mentioned as highly relevant include agro-business management, micro-enterprises, advocacy and lobbying.

Young farmers found the knowledge acquired from the Climate Smart Agriculture Training key in building resilience towards Climate Smart Agriculture. FGD participants reported that the training addressed misconceptions related to climate change and was relevant in building local knowledge around friendly methods of conservation agriculture, crop diversification and rotation. As by one women farmer,

The Climate Agriculture Training was very relevant. The talk on Climate Change is everywhere now, yet we lack understanding on the mechanisms to address some of the challenges and ensure we are food secure despite climate change.

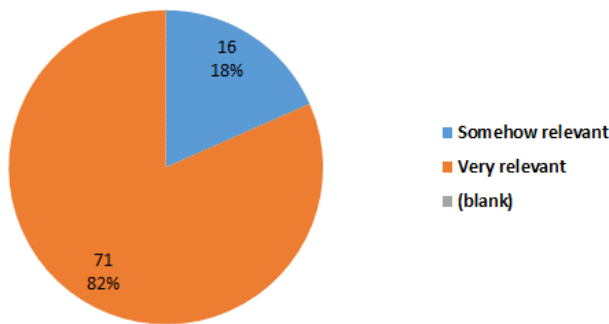
Another female farmer said,

The Climate Smart Agriculture training is relevant for this community, and I think a refresher should be conducted. People are coming to my plot for demonstrations on climate smart practices including making organic manure and planting green manure cover crops.

The findings from the FGDs were found to be corresponding with the survey results where, 82% (71) of the respondents who participated in the Climate Smart Agriculture training found it relevant to their needs.

Figure 6: Relevance of the Climate Smart Agriculture Training

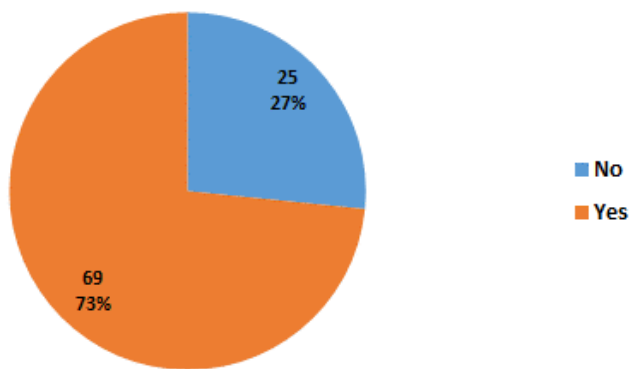
How relevant was the Climate Smart Agriculture Training to your needs?



The revolving loan scheme was also found highly appropriate in especially addressing needs related to unavailability of seed money, absence of friendly credit facilities for families to respond to emergencies and lack of capital. 73% (69) of the survey respondents indicated that they were members of the revolving loan scheme.

Figure 7: Membership of Revolving Loan Scheme

Are you a member of the revolving loan scheme?



All the revolving loan scheme members reached (100%) found it to be relevant to their needs. In FGDs women mostly expressed gratitude to CCYA for having trained and provided them with funding to start the loan scheme. They indicated that micro-finance institutions and banks require collateral from them; and have stringent conditions that they are not able to meet. The loan scheme therefore provided them with available funds for them to acquire loans from *their box* and pay at low interest.

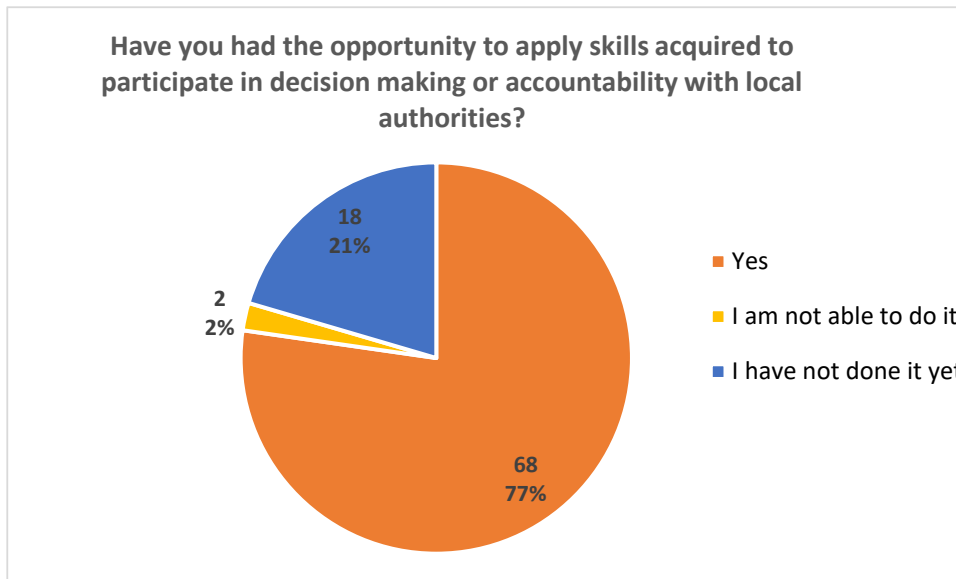
The study also found the exchange visits promoted under this project relevant in promoting shared learning and influencing best practices especially in agriculture, crop production and entrepreneurship. 62% (58) of the survey respondents reported having taken part in exchange visits under the project. All of them (100%) indicated that they acquired some form of knowledge from participating in exchange visits. In FGDs, young men and women including PWDs shared a common view that exchange visits provided opportunities for farmers doing well to show case best practices and share their experiences. For instance, Bumpeh women farmers testified that, through the visitations to Kakua farms, they were able to learn how to process their cassava better. The Agriculture Extension Officer stationed in Kakua applauded CCYA for having promoted exchange visits, indicating that he saw several good farming practices being implemented after exchange visits.

When they visit other plots of land outside their villages, they are motivated and inspired to improve their farming methods. I can tell you that in this last season, we had bumper harvests for groundnuts, cassava and sweet potatoes. It is because, apart from the trainings farmers were also given the opportunity to go into others' plots and talk.

Given the relevance of the exchange visits, some farmers said that they visited each other's' plots outside CCYA's support. Some were taking pride in the fact their farms were among those visited, thus gaining some status and visibility as hard-working farmers.

The Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights Training was also considered highly relevant and appropriate to addressing the needs of the boundary and strategic partners. To the boundary partners, FGDs revealed that the training was relevant in addressing the lack of knowledge on human rights and responsibilities, negative attitudes towards women and PWDs, limited involvement of youth including those with disabilities in decision making and governance processes. The training was considered by the boundary and strategic partners as relevant in influencing activism around youth, women and PWDs' human rights, social inclusion, justice and inclusive service provision. This is clearly supported by the survey findings. Out of the 94% (88) of the respondents who noted having participated in the trainings, 68 (77%) indicated that they had applied the skills to participate in decision making or accountability sessions with LAs, 18 (21%) said that they have not managed to apply the skills while only 2 (2%) did not have the capacity to apply the skills.

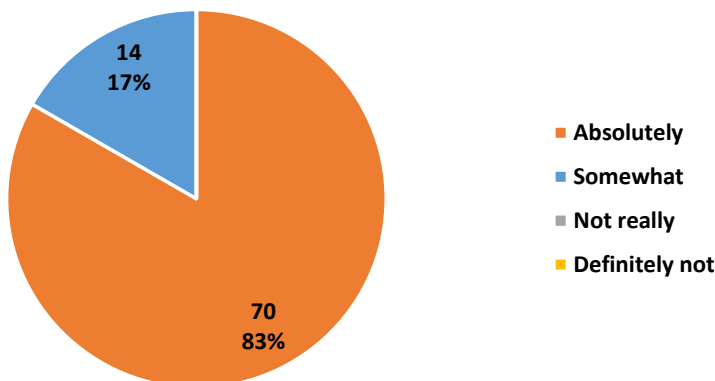
Figure 8: Relevance of the Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights Trainings



The study also ascertained that mentoring and coaching sessions for PWD youth were relevant in boosting their confidence, building self-assertiveness and agency. They were also relevant in building peer support among the PWDs ensuring that the successful and active PWDs share their experiences and influence others to engage in social and economic empowerment activities. PWDs including their parents and guardians view the sessions as empowering and necessary for boosting the morale of PWDs. 83% (70) of the survey respondents who indicated having participated in mentoring and coaching sessions conducted under the project said that the sessions *absolutely* addressed their challenges while 17% (14) said the sessions *somewhat* addressed their challenges.

Figure 9: Relevance of Mentoring and Coaching Sessions in addressing the challenges of youth

Have mentoring and coaching sessions conducted under this project supported you to address your challenges?



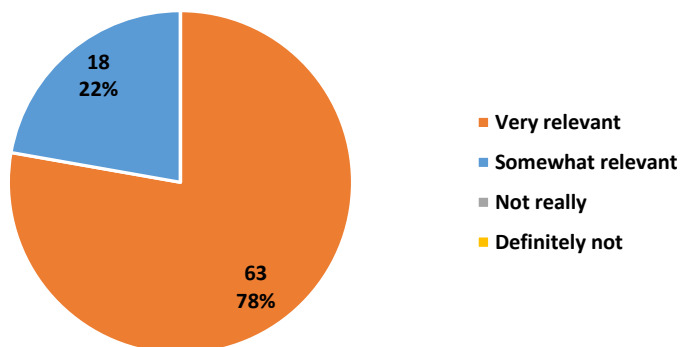
It was additionally ascertained that awareness raising activities were relevant in promoting public knowledge on the rights of young PWDs particularly the town hall meetings, outreach sessions in public places and policy dialogue sessions. These activities were found appropriate in challenging injustice, patriarchy, discrimination and abuse; and shifting norms and attitudes. One of the PWD guardian in Kakua said:

They did well, CCYA made the issues of the PWDs everyone's business; by ensuring that people talk and denounce discrimination and stigma. Look at my daughter now. She can confidently speak in this meeting. She used to be reserved; now she can even challenge the politicians and ask them to pay attention to our needs. She is now even mentoring others...

The study further noted that the project beneficiaries found the trainings on Disability Inclusion, Advocacy Strategy and Human Rights Based Approaches relevant in meeting the needs of the beneficiaries. The training was found relevant in creating public knowledge around the Disability Act, facilitating a human rights-based approach to development and promoting inclusion. 78% (63) of the survey respondents who participated in the training found it very relevant while 22% (18) found it somewhat relevant to addressing their needs.

Figure 10: Relevance of the Training on Disability Inclusion, Advocacy, Strategy and Human Rights Based Approaches

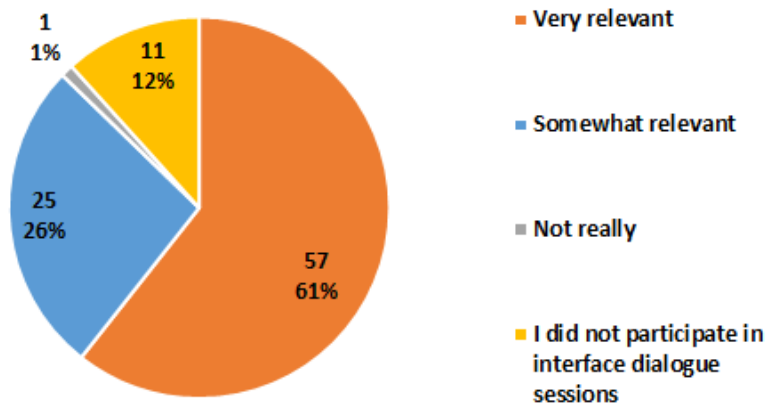
How relevant was the training of Disability Inclusion, Advocacy Strategy and Human Rights Based Approaches to your needs?



The dialogue sessions between Disability Youth Groups, community members and duty bearers were considered valuable by the PWDs, parents and guardians of PWDs engaged through the FGDs. In both Kakua and Bumpeh, PWDs explained that they have established 2 groups that are now active in advocating for the rights of youth with disabilities, because of the importance of the engagement meetings. This includes creating awareness around existing legislation and policies and demanding for the implementing of such policies.

Figure 11: Relevance of lobbying dialogue sessions between Disabled Youth Groups and Duty Bearers

How relevant were the interface dialogue sessions between Disabled Youth Groups and duty bearers?



3.2.2. Effectiveness

The study determined that the project was effective in contributing towards achieving its intended outcomes. The outcome mapping approach enabled project stakeholders to develop relevant strategies and appropriate implementation methodologies in line with the Adaptive Programming approach. This adaptive nature of the project also ensured that the project was periodically reviewed for relevance which further enhanced effectiveness. Project staff and strategic partners highlighted that the approach used by CCYA provided an opportunity for them to highlight key challenges prevalent in their communities that they desired to see being addressed in a participatory manner that involved boundary partners. As indicated in the table below, results achievement shows significant effectiveness at the rate of 85% average completion rate.

Table 3: Project Output Table:

Project Title: Expanding the space: Socio-Economic Empowerment for Marginalized Rural Poor Youth”					
Donor	Taksvärkki	Implementation Progress			
No.	Activities	Output Target	Completed	Outstanding	Progress (%)
A1	Project start up meetings with CCYA Staff/ Partners and Communities	2	2	0	100%
A2	Baseline setting study and situational analysis	1	1	0	100%
A3	Validation of Baseline & Situational Analysis Report	1	1	0	100%
A4	Life skills Training and Start up Support to Young ABC Women	2	2	0	100%
A5	Start up support to Young ABC Women Micro-Projects	1	1	0	100%
A6	Capacity Building Training in Right-Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights	2	2	0	100%
A7	Advocacy Lobbying on National Policies	8	3	5	38%
A8	Awareness/ Sensitization on Rights, Entitlements and Social Inclusion	8	4	4	50%
A9	Development of IEC Materials	1	1	0	100%
A10	Conduct Awareness/ Sensitization through radio, jingles and promoting good stores on Rights, Entitlements, and social Inclusion	36	14	22	39%
A11	Exchange Visit of Young ABC Women	2	2	0	100%
A12	Mentorship and Coaching	8	4	4	50%
A14	Monitoring visits	27	18	9	67%
A15	Documentation, Dissemination and Reporting of Project Outcomes (1 report per quarter)	9	9	0	100%
A16	Establishment of Peer Educators Health Clubs (1 per chiefdom)	2	2	0	100%
A17	Life Skills training for teenage girls and male youth as peer educators (1 training, 1 refresher)	2	2	0	100%
A18	Establishment of Peer Educators Health Clubs (1 per chiefdom)	2	2	0	100%
A19	Training on harmful traditional practice (FGM) and Human Rights Promotion (1 training, 1 refresher)	1	1	0	100%
A20	Training on Menstrual Health and Hygiene for adolescent girls and young women. (1 training, 1 refresher)	1	1	0	100%

A21	Establishment of Mothers Clubs (1 per chiefdom composed of 5 women per group)	2	2	0	100%
A22	Mentoring and Coaching Sessions	8	4	4	50%
A23	Training of Duty Bearers and Parents/Guardians of Children and youth with disabilities (1 training, 1 refresher)	2	2	0	100%
A24	Life skills training on Disability Inclusion Advocacy Strategy and Human Right Based Approached for CSOs and Youth Organizations	3	3	0	100%
A25	Lobbying Dialogue Sessions	8	3	5	38%
A26	Awareness Raising and Sensitization on access to health and medical facilities	8	3	5	38%
A27	Strengthening Project Staff on Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation	2	2	0	100%
A28	Training of Boundary Partners on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation	2	2	0	100%
A29	Capacity Building Training on Outcome Mapping/Outcome Harvesting	2	2	0	100%
A30	Training on Financial Management Systems and Processes	2	2	0	100%
AVERAGE					85%

Note: Given that the project mid-term evaluation was conducted two months prior to the end of project implementation, output achievement was high reflecting only a few outstanding activities.

Timely implementation of project activities was affected by the impact of COVID-19, particularly within the first quarter of project implementation. COVID-19 associated restrictions on gatherings as well as lockdowns and district boarder closures made it difficult for implementation to commence in time. However, the project was at its peak within the second and third quarter as activities were rolled out.

The project was found effective in generating positive changes that addressed the needs of youth. At the onset of the project, the project baseline report articulated key challenges related to youth especially women and PWDs lack of participation in socio-economic activities, limited involvement in governance processes, discrimination and stigmatization of PWDs among other issues. Several testimonies confirmed that the project was effective in its selection of boundary and strategic partners. The project responded by targeting young people including PWDs with agricultural related economic empowerment activities, series of capacity development activities, creating platforms of interaction between youth and duty bearers, outreach and awareness raising, district wide media campaigns among other activities. The study found convincing evidence that these efforts were effective in enhancing the participation of youth including PWDs in agro-business, socio-economic activities and civic engagement.

The study revealed that project activities were effective in developing active and vibrant youth including PWDs, able to challenge and influence duty bearers and service providers to prioritize the needs of young people especially PWDs and put resources in dealing with their concerns. It is assumed that reported progress in improved public knowledge on awareness, changes in attitudes and norms towards vulnerable groups especially young women and PWDs, increased participation of youth in governance processes and involvement of youth in demanding for inclusive public service delivery were fundamentally dependent on the project's implementation strategy and methodology. The partnership between CCYA and Local Authorities, as well as the collaboration with strategic partners such as the Disability Commission, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs ensured the responsiveness of duty bearers thus influencing changes in behaviours among key service providers including building trust with youth. KIIs with strategic partners discovered that the project enhanced interest among youth in governance, transparency and accountability; born out of the support drawn from the project as youth understood how they can influence service providers to include their priorities in planning, budgeting and evaluation processes.

Project Strategic Partners including the Ministry of Youth Affairs, NAYCOM, Disability Commission, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and the District Council appreciated the project as highly effective with high level of project ownership among its participants. High familiarity and ownership of the project among boundary and strategic partners was a result of the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PCVA) tool employed at the onset of the project. In KIIs, project Strategic Partners noted that the uniqueness of the project centered on the fact that they were part of the design of the project from the onset, their ideas were taken on board and helped to shape project activities. There was demonstrated evidence that the outcome harvesting and mapping enhanced commitment and passion among strategic and boundary partners to be part of working towards achieving change. The project also owes its effectiveness to the flexibility and participatory nature of the outcome mapping approach among other tenets. As a result of the flexibility of the project boundary and strategic partners saw themselves as project participants influencing the direction of the project rather than just beneficiaries or recipients.

As a result of the flexibility of the project, project participants take pride in the fact that COVID-19 awareness raising was mainstreamed in public education, awareness and outreach activities. The project was found to be relevant and effective in addressing the pressing needs presented by COVID-19 because of its adaptive nature.

The study found life skills trainings facilitated by CCYA effective in building knowledge on key issues related to financial management, agro-business management, and numeracy among others. Out of the 97% (91) of the respondents who noted having participated in life skills training, 73% (66) said they acquired skills in Basic Financial Management, 60% (55) in agro-business Skills, 69% (63) in numeracy, 62% (56) in Literacy, 54% (49) in Micro-Enterprises Development and 62% (56) in Advocacy and Lobbying.

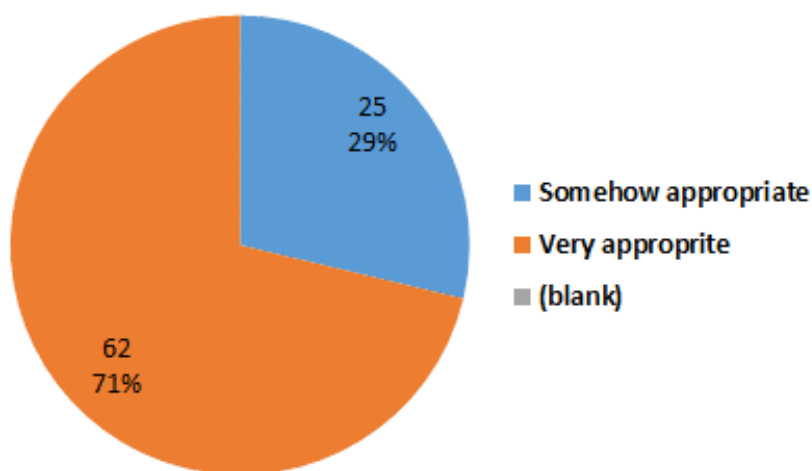
What skills did you learn from the Life Skills training facilitated by CCYA?		
Basic Financial Skills	66	73%
Agro-business skills	55	60%
Numeracy	63	69%
Literacy	56	62%
Micro-enterprises Development	49	54%
Advocacy and Lobbying	56	62%

Engagements with participants revealed that the life skills trainings had a multiplier effect since participants shared the information to their colleagues, specifically with regards to agro-business skills, micro-enterprises Development, and Advocacy and Lobbying. FGD participants explained that the methodologies and language used in these trainings were effective in ensuring knowledge transfer.

The study also noted that the content and methodology employed in conducting the Climate Smart Agriculture was effective in building skills among young farmers.

Figure 12: Appropriateness of the Smart Agriculture Training Methodology

How appropriate was the smart agriculture training methodology?



The training on Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights was also generally appreciated by the boundary partners. Findings demonstrated that the approach was appropriate for the targeted participants and effectively contributing to building knowledge around human rights, advocacy and social inclusion. In FGDs participants exhibited understanding of the importance of claiming their rights including the right to civic participation, and knowledge of their human rights. 94% (88) of the survey respondents reported having participated in the training. Asked to name the specific issues they learnt from the training, respondents demonstrated understanding of the key topics reflecting the effectiveness of the approach and the appropriateness of the content. 91% (80) mentioned inclusion, 67% civic participation, 60% human rights and responsibilities.

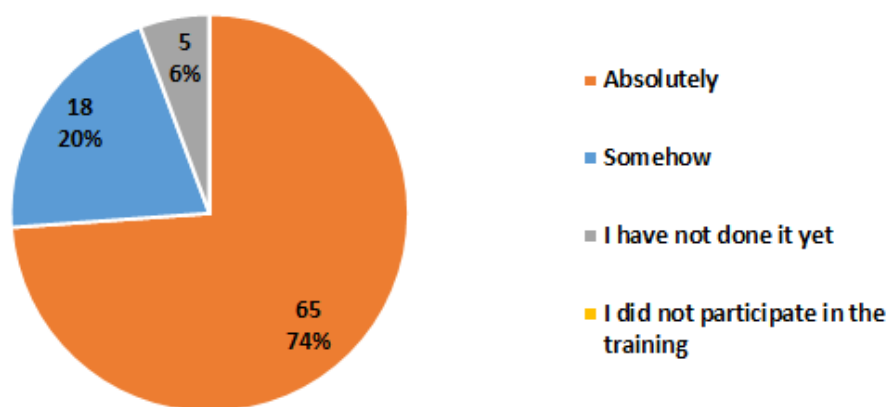
Table 4: Lessons from the Training on Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights

What specific issues did you learn from the training on Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social inclusion and Human Rights?		
Issue	Frequency	Percentage
Human rights and responsibilities	53	60%
Transformational leadership	49	56%
Social change	51	58%
Inclusion	80	91%
Civic participation	59	67%

The study also noted that downstream knowledge sharing on Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social inclusion and human rights took place informally in platforms established by the project. In FGDs, it was discovered that women in ABCs used the platforms to build knowledge among their peers. Similarly, youth groups, women’s groups, mothers’ clubs, mentorship and coaching sessions also served as platforms to transfer knowledge. The survey results showed that 74% of the respondents managed to *absolutely* pass knowledge acquired from the training to other people; while 20% said they *somehow* managed to pass the information.

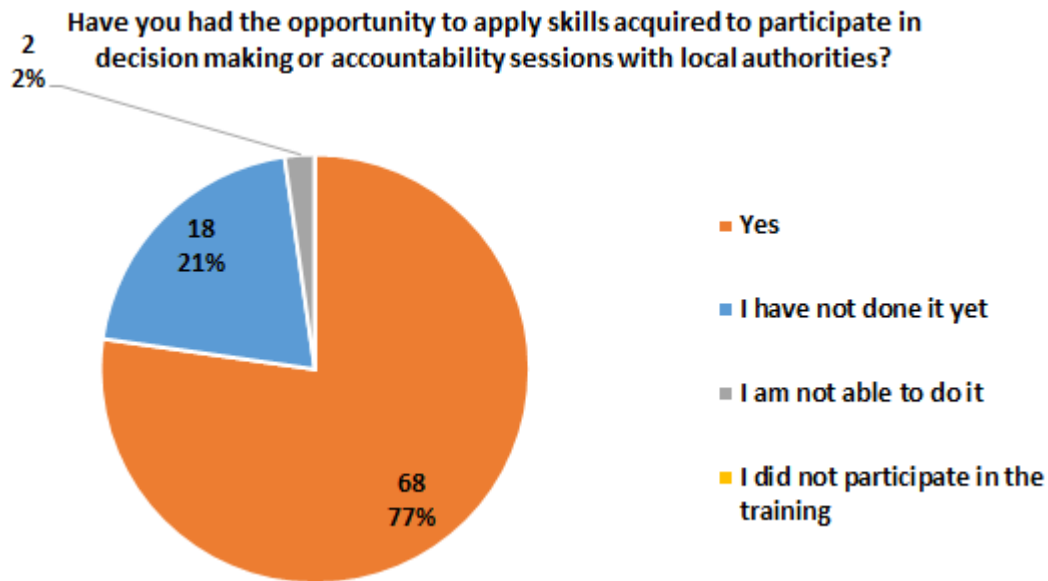
Figure 13: Ability to share knowledge on Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights

Were you able to pass the knowledge acquired from the training in Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights to other people?



Trainings in Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights were effective in enhancing youth participation in decision making and accountability. 77% of the survey respondents indicated that they used skills they acquired to engage local authorities as presented in the chart below.

Figure 14: Application of skills acquired from capacity development for participation in decision making and accountability sessions



The study also discovered that mentoring and coaching sessions were effective in building assertiveness and confidence among youth including those with disabilities. FGDs revealed that these sessions empowered vulnerable young people to be resilient and develop livelihood goals such as starting entrepreneurship, pursuing careers or nurturing talents. The effectiveness of the mentorship programme among young PWDs was a result of the project’s ability to recruit PWD mentors, who were able to cultivate among their peers’ virtues such as living independently, healing from traumatic events, getting employment or running a business among other things. One female PWD in Bumpeh said;

Yes, mentorship has been effective, especially for me. I have improved my attitude, I know how to respond to negativity, my self-esteem was boosted, and I am ready to pursue my dream of growing a tailoring business.

Similarly, one male PWD in Kakua noted;

I like the mentorship to continue. I was at risk of starting alcohol, drugs and substance abuse but when I got involved in this mentorship programme my mind completely changed. I am now geared for a successful career and to positively influence other young people living with disabilities.

3.2.3. Impact

The impact of the project is a product of its responsiveness to the needs of youth including those with disability, and its ability to organise youth structures able to independently work towards enhancing their involvement in socio-economic activities. The project was designed to support young people aged between 15 and 35 years including PWDs to prepare them to play their rightful roles and responsibilities in contributing to meaningful community development. CCYA's engagement with young women, men and PWDs under this project was found to be highly impactful in promoting inclusion and participation in socio-economic activities.

Capacity building on Rights Based Approach, human and youth rights positively impacted the lives of youth including those with disabilities. Youth indicated that knowledge of their rights and responsibilities was enhanced, and they got involved in governance processes. They noted that, more than ever before, they can articulate their rights as espoused in relevant international conventions and national legislations such as the National Youth Policy and the Child Rights Act. As a result of CCYA's intervention, youth focused groups were established and registered with the council to advance youth issues. Disability Advocacy Structures were also established and are currently engaged in lobbying and advocacy around the implementation of the Disability Act and inclusive development processes. It was ascertained that several advocacy and engagement activities on local issues were led by young people through these structures. Examples include radio talk shows on burning issues such as young women's rights to land, demand for disabled friendly government infrastructure and the right of PWDs to access free health care services.

Mentoring and coaching activities were impactful on the lives of women in ABCs, peer educators and young PWDs. The one-on-one engagement of women by CCYA Staff as mentees empowered Women in ABCs to recognise their potentials and relevance in the community, especially in influencing young girls and building their life skills. In the second year of project implementation, mothers' clubs were established, and this led to older women and girls improving their communication with girls and doing away with socio-cultural barriers that used to define taboo topics. One of the adolescent girls engaged by the evaluation team in Kakua said;

I have been with my mentor for over a year now and we meet regularly, at least 4 times a week, for at least an hour. She taught me how to manage myself during my menstruation, that I should keep myself away from bad influence and should be a good influence among my friends. In the past I used to disrespect my mum, I used to sneak out and go to clubs but now I am very close to my mum and concentrate on my schoolwork.

One mentor said;

We have been doing home visitations, wherein we entered the homes speaking to children, parents and guardians, sensitising them on their roles and responsibilities related to young girls. Now we see parents adopting a closer relationship with their children and protecting especially the girl child against early marriage and sexual abuse.

Additionally, the mentorship programme has empowered PWDs to be confident and assertiveness. One of the PWDs said;

Before this time, I was always conscious of my disability and though I felt discriminated against in most cases I couldn't speak up. Now I can talk even for my peers, and I can educate other people around me to respect PWDs.

Alongside mothers' clubs, it was noted that the peer educators' activities were also impactful as their outreach and one-on-one engagements with their young peers influenced positive behaviours. The peer education programme brought young people together and supported them to share experiences, discuss issues that affect them and participate in influencing positive behaviours. One male peer educator interviewed said;

This project was very important. I learnt about menstruation, hygiene management; causes and effects of early marriage and drug abuse. I changed my behaviour for the better and this also applies to the many youths I engaged as my peers.

It was noted through FGDs and KIIs that young people gained confidence and boldness to talk about issues affecting them including teenage pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health, STIs, HIV/AIDS, Female Genital Mutilation that used to be sacred topics.

Women in ABCs and mother's clubs promoted the culture of preventing and responding to rape and sexual assault. It was noted that mothers' clubs were active in reporting cases of rape to the Family Support Unit and providing support to victims to access the hospital and Rainbo Centre⁵ Services. The increased public knowledge that came about because of intensive awareness raising led to a decrease in rape cases, child marriages and teenage pregnancy. The representative of the Sierra Leone Police said;

CCYA's is placed highly for having influenced a reduction in rape and sexual abuse of young people. The situation was unbearable but not because communities are reporting, compromise has minimised, and we are seeing victims receiving support rather than stigma.

The SLP representative also noted that they have been receiving cases of abuse of PWDs and children because of the increased awareness raising among communities. They reported having witnessed a shift in people's attitudes against discrimination and stigma.

Apart from mentorship sessions, capacity development activities were impactful in terms of empowering women including those with disabilities to engage in business ventures and explore income generating opportunities. Some women FGD participants indicated that because of the implementation of the project, they now understand how to work towards enhancing their livelihood. This was further strengthened by the opportunities provided for income generation through ABC activities and the revolving loan scheme. The representative of the Ministry of Social Welfare said;

The impact of this project was pronounced more among women. They used to rely more on their husband for livelihood support and thus, there was a lot of poverty and hopelessness. This project strengthened the participation of women in agricultural activities and empowered them to make more money through marketing and trade.

Agricultural activities impacted youth positively in several ways. This includes the combination of capacity development activities, exchange visits and collaboration with government partners such as extension workers. Household food security increased alongside household income. Women adopted better farming methods and improved their cassava, groundnuts and potato yields. It was also ascertained that the trainings conducted on the revolving loan were effective in building the capacity of women to run their revolving loan scheme independently within their groups.

⁵ Rainbo Centers provide free medical and psychosocial services to victims of rape and sexual abuse.

It was confirmed that the targeted 2 ABC women’s groups received funding to set up revolving loan schemes and were supported to develop their constitution. They also signed an MoU with CCYA. It was also confirmed through the funds provided; ABC groups established micro projects of their choice aimed at improving farming practices. They are currently contributing towards the revolving loan and managing the funds within the framework of their constitution and are recruiting new members. Women in ABCs confirmed that their income improved, and they were able to access services because of their involvement in the scheme. 73% (69) of the survey respondents indicated that they were part of the loan scheme. Asked to name the services they acquired because of their participation in the revolving loan scheme 77% (53) mentioned business capital, 57% (39) said food and 54% (37) health as indicated in the table below.

Figure 15: Services accessed by women because of their participation in the revolving loan scheme

What services were you able to pay for using funds acquired from the revolving loan fund?		
Service	Frequency	Percentage
Education for my children	34	49%
Food	39	57%
Sexual and Reproductive Health Services	10	14%
Health	37	54%
Business capital	53	77%
Rent	2	3%
Repayment of loan	4	6%

Exchange visits were highly appreciated by ABC women and Agricultural Extension Officers as an effective approach of promoting interaction among women in ABCs. Women in ABCs view exchange visits as having positively influenced best practice and sharing of experience. It was confirmed that Bumpeh women in ABCs visited Kakua and vice versa several times. Asked what worked well, one female FGD participant in Kakua said;

Me, I say the visits were good because I learnt a lot about farming cassava, groundnuts and pepper. I have expanded my farm wish to continue visiting other farmers and host some at my own farms

As had been anticipated from the onset, awareness raising activities enhanced the participation of women in agricultural activities. The use of media awareness activities, outreach engagements, radio talk shows and social media engagements positively impacted the lives of women leading to increased number of women involved in agriculture. As a result of the increased dialogue around women’s participation in agricultural activities, the collaboration with relevant stakeholders improved (Extension Officers, Gender Desk in the District Council, Ministry of Social Welfare, Disability Commission, Traditional Leaders etc). Women were able to acquire land (as individuals and as groups), something that was taboo at the onset of the project. The evaluation team spoke to one woman who inherited agricultural land from her father, and she had this to say.

Many thanks to CCYA, because I was able to inherit my father’s piece of land as his only surviving child. There was no hope for me because according to tradition, the land should be inherited by a male child or a brother. This changed because of the public education activities that CCYA embarked on, that managed to influence the thinking of the leaders here. It is not only me, but other women as well.

The activities implemented with youth with disabilities and their parents and guardians yielded positive impacts. It was noted that young PWDs became more actively involved in governance activities thus improving their agency and activism. A Disability Advocacy Committee (DAC) was established as a key outcome of this project and is operating at district level coordinating PWDs and engaged in awareness raising activities. The impact of this activity went beyond the project targeted chiefdoms of Kakua and Bumbeh because the composition of DAC is inclusive of other chiefdoms. DAC is engaged in direct communication with state institutions and demanding for the rights of PWDs and lobbying for inclusive decision-making processes. Currently DAC is working with MDAs to ensure the establishment of the Disability Desk in every public office.

The head of the DAC said;

We had a lot of engagements with MDAs and stakeholders, communities and local authorities on PWDs' affairs especially focused on demanding them to focus on issues that they should prioritise and the support they should give to us. They are listening and we are not going to stop.

There was substantial evidence demonstrating that PWDs are influencing policy making especially the District Development Planning processes and are now able to track the implementation of PWD focused public projects and activities. On the other hand, public service providers became more responsive to the needs of PWDs and thus were able to incorporate their priorities in planning processes. The District Council worked closely with CCYA to ensure the registration of youth and PWD focused groups and supported them to open bank accounts.

The Social Welfare Officer indicated that the project was unique in its ability to build agency among young PWDs, and to ensure the participation of PWDs in community development programmes. It was noted that the awareness and capacity building for inclusion of young PWDs and respect of their rights did not only reach the parents and guardians of PWDs but included community people. Government building recently contracted have ramps for easy movement and wheelchairs are made available for easy movement of PWDs.

The town hall meetings conducted under this project managed to build knowledge around the Disability Act. One of the parents of the PWDs in Bumpeh Chiefdom said;

People used to mock us and say it is because we are witches or because we committed some grave sin and that is why we gave birth to children with disabilities. As a result, I did not want my child to be going out and feared for stigma and discrimination. Now it's better because CCYA spoke to us and even my child is happier and mixing with other.

The evaluation therefore noted changed attitudes towards youth with PWDs. In the recent local government elections, PWD representatives were involved in contesting for the chieftaincy position, for the first time ever in Bo District.

In FGDs, it was noted that some ABC women improved their farming methods to adopt business entrepreneurship practices including better marketing techniques, use of improved mechanisation and climate friendly agricultural systems. A female farmer in Bumpeh said;

If not for this project, I might still be witnessing low agricultural output. You see, now I have increased my hectares and cover more land, I am now better off because I now use organic fertiliser and can do better financial records.

Another sign of impact was noted with increased involvement of young people in promoting transparency and accountability in service provision. It was revealed that the Bo District Council was influenced by this project and is now conducting public monthly budget discussion meetings. Additionally, young people are engaged in budget tracking and monitoring the use of public funds. One Local Authority official said;

CCYA complemented the work that we do as council by giving us the platform to interact with youth and informing them about our roles and responsibilities. They asked questions and raised concerns and we clarified. Now it is a regular process.

Skills development activities implemented under this project improved the participation of young people into socio-economic activities and empowered them to run their agri-businesses and income generation activities effectively. Young people testified that positive changes emerged from the implementation of various skills acquired. One woman said.

I now have a book to keep records, because I learnt numeracy and financial skills. I can also run my agriculture business employing climate smart agriculture practices, do proper pricing and am concentrating on growing the business.

Trainings offered by CCYA were impactful in as far as the youth used them to improve their livelihood and their ability to enhance their advocacy and lobbying skills. 100% of the survey respondents who participated in life skills training indicated that they were able to put into practice agri-business skills acquired; 76% were able to utilise skills from micro-enterprises development, 71% advocacy and lobbying and 64% basic financial skills.

Which skills have you been able to utilise from the life skills trainings offered by CCYA?			
Life Skills Trainings Offered by CCYA	No. trained	No. utilising skills acquired	%age utilising skills acquired
Basic Financial Skills	66	42	64%
Agro-business skills	55	55	100%
Numeracy	63	37	59%
Literacy	56	24	43%
Micro-enterprises Development	49	37	76%
Advocacy and Lobbying	56	40	71%

At national level, advocacy activities contributed to improved youth legislations and policies. Examples of legislations that were reviewed and can be attributed to CCYA's advocacy activities include the National Youth Policy reviewed in 2020, the Sexual Offenses Amendment Act (2019) and the Disability Act that is currently being reviewed.

3.2.4. Sustainability

The sustainability of the project is largely attributed to the outcome mapping and harvesting approaches employed in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. One of the key tenets of the outcome mapping approach is the assumption that, 'boundary partners control change and that, as external agents, development programmes only facilitate the process by

providing access to new resources, ideas or opportunities for a certain period⁶. CCYA spells out in its project document, its vision, mission, outcome challenges for each boundary partner and a set of progress markers that described progression of changed actions, activities, relationship and behaviour per partner. Thus, activities were designed to help support boundary and strategic partners in acquiring the knowledge, responsibility, and power necessary for sustainable behaviour change.

The project positively impacted on patriarchy, shifting norms and attitudes towards respect for young people including women and PWDs. These changes in perceptions and attitudes that permeate society have influenced youth including young women and PWD's participation in household, community and district decision making processes. The project created and/or strengthened structures that promoted youth involvement in socio-economic activities. The evaluation team cannot say with certainty that activities spearheaded by women in ABCs, mothers' clubs, peer educators, youth groups and Disability Advocacy Committees will continue at the same pace as under the project but established that the passion for inclusive socioeconomic activities and activism may continue even beyond the scope of the project. Given that the structures set were mostly empowered through capacity development activities and supported by CCYA to put into practice skills learnt through the trainings, sustainability may also depend on CCYA's ability to motivate and inspire the boundary partners especially in the short term, just after project closure.

The evaluation also noted a positive sustainability indicator from the collaboration between youth groups and different public service providers. Young people including those with disabilities have been linked to key institutions (project strategic partners) such as District Council, National Youth Commission, Disability Commission, Ministry of Social Welfare, Sierra Leone Police and Ministry of Agriculture, through advocacy, lobbying and awareness raising activities where youth among other things demanded for inclusive socio-economic development. On the one hand, the project cultivated social action among young people and the demand for transparency and accountability. On the other hand, it promoted responsiveness among decision makers and duty bearers. These key tenets have the possibility of surviving beyond the scope of the project. However, a key concern is that major engagements took place within platforms created by this project such as town hall meetings, outreach, advocacy and awareness raising activities that require funding to continue.

Mentorship activities promoted through this project have a high likelihood of sustainability beyond the scope of the project. Peer educators and mothers' clubs alongside other outreach and awareness activities were influential in reducing gender-based violence, rape, sexual assault, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse. It was ascertained that peer educators, mothers' clubs and members of the Disability Advocacy Committees gained status and were inspired by the need to impact on the lives of fellow young people and community members. As a result, they all expressed desire to continue carrying out mentorship, advocacy and awareness raising activities. The fact that they had been developing the content of media discussions and influencing dialogue around issues that affect young people is an indication of their ability to engage independently.

Another indicator of sustainability is the fact that ABC women have started expanding their groups to involve other women. Women in ABCs have formally registered their groups with the Local Council; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; and Ministry of Social Welfare. As a result, if ABC women can continue running the groups as registered formal organisations, they will be able to

⁶Roduner D, Agriedea W.S & Nadel W.E (2008). Logical Approach and Outcome Mapping: A Constructive Attempt to Synthesis. http://pdf2.hegoa.efaber.net/entry/content/920/LFA_and_Outcome_Mapping.pdf

reap the benefits of this project even beyond the project's scope. The study noted that activities of women in ABCs were open to scrutiny and monitoring by local stakeholders such as Chiefs, Mummy Queens, youth and women leaders. Most stakeholders engaged indicated that they were ready to support ABCs in conflict management and in managing group dynamics. Additionally, the ABCs are actively engaged in supporting each other in dealing with emergencies and running social activities such as funerals, weddings, naming ceremonies among others. As a result of these factors, ABC members in both Kakua and Bumpeh expressed desire to continue meeting regularly, supporting each other and learning from each other while growing the groups.

The sustainability of staff capacity development depends on long term integration of appropriate control systems and ability of CCYA to extensively integrate skills acquired into organizational practices. The Finance Unit was particularly affected by the resignation of two of out of three of its staff. To build up the lost capacity because of high turnover rate in the Finance Department, it is recommended that the ongoing training of Finance Staff continue including refresher trainings of sessions not covered by the newly recruited staff.

3.2.5. Coherence

The evaluation established high internal coherence⁷ because project activities were seen to be logically contributing towards the achievement of the overall project vision. The project was aimed at supporting young people between 15 to 35 years including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to prepare them to play their rightful roles and responsibilities in contributing to meaningful community development. Activities targeting boundary partners, including youth groups, women in ABCs; youth with disabilities, parents and guardians of young PWDs and mothers' clubs complemented each other towards the achievement of the project outcomes. Similarly, strategic partners were also influenced to change their behaviours through the various capacity development, advocacy, outreach and awareness raising activities.

The project's internal coherence was also influenced by the outcome mapping and harvesting approach employed in the designing and implementation of this project. The positive impact of this project is a result of the interplay between and among boundary and strategic partners. Outcome mapping and harvesting promoted internal coherence because, it involved CCYA continuously determining who to work with, why and how, while ensuring continuous feedback on changes that were occurring to boundary partners. Outcome harvesting enabled the project team to consider the project as a system of key groups of people and institutions interacting with each other and influencing changes in behaviour, attitudes, relationships and policies. Through adaptive programming, CCYA was able to ensure sustained coherence by responding to changing contexts and emerging issues. CCYA collaborated with its boundary partners to regularly redesign activities to direct focus towards achieving project outcomes, thus ensuring coherence throughout project implementation.

The evaluation also ascertained internal coherence because the Taksvärkki supported project was aligned to CCYA's mandate as enshrined in its Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024). CCYA's Strategic Plan highlight key problems faced by youth that it sought to contribute towards addressing. Youth problems cited under the Strategic Plan that were pronounced as priority areas

⁷ Internal Coherence addresses synergies and interlinkages between different objectives or strategies carried out under the same programme/ project or by the same institution. (Yoko Ishida. 2021. How does the Newly Added DAC Evaluation Criterion 'Coherence' contribute to achieving the SDG Target 4c for Teachers? <https://teachertaskforce.org/knowledge-hub/how-does-newly-added-dac-evaluation-criterion-coherence-contribute-achieving-sdg>)

under this project include human rights abuse, marginalisation of youth in governance processes, sexual abuse, GBV, teenage and early pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, youth unemployment and poverty. The project contributed to addressing CCYA's objective of 'reducing incidents of SGBV, teenage pregnancy and early marriage' through the various awareness raising activities, supporting peer educators and child mothers to prevent and report cases. The project also contributed to increasing the level of youth participation in economic activities, governance and decision making which are strategic priorities under CCYA's Strategic Plan. Youth empowerment, promotion of human rights, reduction of violence, alcohol and substance abuse stated as key priorities under CCYA's Strategic Plan were also key focus areas under this project.

External coherence⁸ was also considered high owing to the coordinated approach used by CCYA in project design, review and adaptive programming. The involvement of strategic partners at the design phase promoted an integrated, complementary and coordinated approach in defining project targeted communities, selecting boundary partners and key thematic areas of focus. This also ensured consistency of the project with relevant national policies and legislations. Additionally, regular outcome harvesting, and strategy testing exercises ensured coherence by supporting strategic partners to understand and play their roles within the overall project; and by keeping project activities context specific.

National policy coherence was also noted in as far as project objectives were well aligned with the Sierra Leone's Medium Term Development Plan, the Bo District Development Plan, the National Youth Policy⁹ and the Disability Act (2011)¹⁰.

The project was aligned to Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan's (MTNDP) cluster five (empowering women, children and persons with disability) and cluster six (youth employment, sports and migration). The MTNDP articulates Sierra Leone's ambition of ensuring that young people are involved in entrepreneurial activities as well as in socio-economic development. It specifies:

Growing awareness among youth of their role in development and the willingness of the political class to include young people in development at all levels are opportunities the government seeks to leverage to improve the socio-economic condition of all young people in Sierra Leone, irrespective of location or political persuasion¹¹.

⁸ External coherence refers to the correspondence between the objectives of an intervention and those of other public interventions which interact with it. External coherence addresses how the project complements the intervention of other stakeholders and looks at compliance with national policies and legislations. (European Union Delegation. 2021. *Evaluation Criteria and Questions*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf

⁹ GoSL (2020). National Youth Policy, Sierra Leone: Empowered Youth Leading the Development of a New Sierra Leone. https://forum.youthaffairs.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Youth-Policy-FINAL_21DEC.pdf

¹⁰ GoSL (2011) Persons with Disability Act No. 3 of 2011. http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=92352&p_country=SLE&p_count=166

¹¹ Sierra Leone's Medium National Development Plan (2019 to 2023) page 146 https://www.slurc.org/uploads/1/0/9/7/109761391/sierra_leone_national_development_plan.pdf

The project design therefore considered both the involvement of young people into entrepreneurship, socio and economic activities; as well as the empowerment of the political class to respond to the priorities, needs and concerns of youth including those with disabilities. Similarly, the project was also found to be aligned with cluster two (diversifying the economy and promoting growth) of the MTNDP that, emphasises improving the productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector, with one of its stated key policy actions reading:

Strengthen cooperative farming (farmer-based organisations) and build the capacity of Agricultural Business Centres to promote integration into agricultural value chains¹².

The focus on ABCs as well as the associated trainings in farming, climate sensitive agriculture, revolving loan schemes and enhancing the participation of youth in farming activities were found to be well aligned with the National Development Plan.

The evaluation also found the project was well aligned to and contributing towards the implementation of the National Youth Policy (2000). The objectives of this project are coherent with the key priorities of the National Youth Policy. Specifically, one of the priority areas of the Youth Policy is *'Building Youth Livelihood through Agriculture and Fisheries'*. Among the strategic implementation options stipulated in the National youth Policy and aligned to the project are;

.... Promote awareness among young people on agriculture and fisheries as viable livelihood options; Support climate smart agro-based and aquaculture enterprise for youth (2020)¹³.

Additionally, the National Youth Policy emphasises Sierra Leone's focus on supporting 'the establishment and strengthening of structures, processes and mechanisms that promote meaningful participation and inclusion of youth in all aspects of the country's development and that prevent discrimination against youth'. Project activities geared towards inclusion in governance processes contributed towards achieving this priority objective and 'building partnerships between youth, MDAs, local government and chiefdom authorities.

The Ministry of Social Welfare considered the project coherent with its mandate of supporting the welfare of PWDs, ensuring good parenting and mental health services. Mentorship sessions and engagements of parents of PWDs were singled out as appropriate in promoting community social protection, including empowering PWDs, and shifting attitudes against the marginalisation and discrimination of PWDs. Similarly, activities by peer educators and child mothers were also found to be complementing the work of the Social Welfare Department by promoting community led life skills development. Given the uniqueness of the activities, it was noted that CCYA was complementing rather than duplicating the work of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

¹² Sierra Leone's Medium National Development Plan (2019 to 2023) page 71

¹³ Government of Sierra Leone (2000) National Youth Policy Sierra Leone: Empowered Youth Leading Development of Sierra Leone. https://forum.youthaffairs.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Youth-Policy-FINAL_21DEC.pdf

Dialogue sessions managed to create platforms of interaction between duty bearers and community people including young PWDs, where young people asked questions related to inclusive service provision, sought clarity on key concerns and demanded accountability. The Bo District Council representative view the lobbying meetings as relevant in complementing their work and supporting in promoting citizens engagement and inclusion in line with the District Development Plan and the Local Government Act. 61% (57) of the survey respondents believed the lobbying meeting were very relevant, while 26% (25) said they were somewhat relevant to their community needs.

The representative of the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police applauded CCYA for influencing community members to report cases of rape and sexual assault. In that respect, the project was found to be complimenting the role of the police. It was noted that community members improved their support to victims of GBV especially mothers' clubs and youth groups, who were cited as having brought victims of rape to the police and supported with investigations. Additionally, the police also recognised the role the project played in building community dispute resolution structures that the police recognised and worked well with. There was evidence that some ABC members and Disability Advocacy Committee Members had received cases from the police to mediate and support with out of court settlements. Such cases involved quarrels among family members, disagreements related to repayments of debts from the revolving loan scheme and other minor disputes. The SLP representative indicated that the police respect the way the groups established under this project were able to settle internal conflicts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Relevance

- The project owes its relevance to the rigorous designing process that was inclusive and accommodated the views and experiences of staff, stakeholders, boundary and strategic partners.
- Boundary and strategic partners both appreciated the project as relevant and appropriate in addressing their needs owing to the implementation methodology and participatory approaches used. The outcome mapping and harvesting approach empowered CCYA, its boundary and strategic partners to stay relevant and flexible enough to modify activities and implementation techniques to respond to changes in the environment or context.
- The Life Skills trainings facilitated by CCYA were found to be highly relevant in addressing the needs of boundary partners.
- Young farmers found the knowledge acquired from the Climate Smart Agriculture Training key in building resilience towards climate sensitive farming practices.
- The revolving loan scheme was also found highly appropriate in addressing needs related to unavailability of seed money, absence of friendly credit facilities for families to respond to emergencies and lack of capital.
- Exchange visits promoted under this project were relevant in promoting shared learning and influencing best practices especially in agriculture, crop production and entrepreneurship.
- The Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights Training was considered highly relevant in addressing the lack of knowledge on human rights and responsibilities, negative attitudes towards youth, women and PWDs, limited involvement of youth including those with disabilities in decision making and governance processes.
- The study also ascertained that mentoring and coaching sessions for PWD youth were relevant in boosting their confidence, building self-assertiveness and agency.

- Advocacy and awareness raising activities were relevant in promoting public knowledge on the rights of young PWDs particularly the town hall meetings, outreach sessions in public places and policy dialogue sessions. These activities were found appropriate in challenging injustice, patriarchy, discrimination and abuse; and shifting norms and attitudes.
- The dialogue sessions between young PWDs, community members and duty bearers were considered valuable by the PWDs, parents and guardians of PWDs.

4.2. Effectiveness

- The study determined that the project was effective in contributing towards achieving its intended outcomes. The adaptive nature of the project also ensured that the project was periodically reviewed for relevance which further enhanced effectiveness.
- Results achievement shows significant effectiveness at the rate of 85% average activity completion rate.
- The study revealed that project activities were effective in developing active and vibrant youth including PWDs, able to challenge and influence duty bearers and service providers to prioritize their needs and put resources in dealing with their concerns.
- High familiarity and ownership of the project among boundary and strategic partners was a result of the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PCVA) tool employed at the onset of the project. Project strategic partners noted that the uniqueness of the project centered on the fact that they were part of the design of the project from the onset, their ideas were taken on board and helped to shape project activities.
- The project was found to be relevant and effective in addressing the pressing needs presented by COVID-19 because of its adaptive nature.
- Trainings in Human Rights Based Advocacy for Social Inclusion and Human Rights were effective in enhancing youth participation in decision making and accountability to building knowledge around human rights, advocacy and social inclusion.
- The study also discovered that mentoring and coaching sessions were effective in building assertiveness and confidence among youth including those with disabilities.

4.3. Impact

- The impact of the project is a product of its responsiveness to the needs of youth including those with disability, and its ability to organise youth structures able to independently work towards enhancing their involvement in socio-economic activities.
- Mentoring and coaching activities were impactful on the lives of women in ABCs, peer educators and young PWDs. The one-on-one engagement of women by CCYA Staff as mentees empowered Women in ABCs to recognise their potentials and relevance in the community, especially around influencing young girls and building their life skills.
- Peer educators' activities were also impactful as their outreach and one-on-one engagements with their young peers influenced positive behaviours. The peer education programme brought young people together and supported them to share experiences, discuss issues that affect them and participate in influencing positive behaviours.
- Young people gained confidence and boldness to talk about issues affecting them including teenage pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health, STIs, HIV/AIDS, and Female Genital Mutilation that used to be sacred topics.
- The increased public knowledge that came about because of intensive awareness raising led to a decrease in rape cases, child marriages and teenage pregnancy
- Capacity development activities were impactful in terms of empowering women including those with disabilities to engage in business ventures and explore income generating opportunities. Household food security increased alongside household income. Women adopted better farming methods and improved their cassava, groundnuts and potato yields.

- The project positively impacted the lives of women leading to increased number of women involved in agriculture. Women were able to acquire land (as individuals and as groups), something that was taboo at the onset of the project.
- Young PWDs became more actively involved in governance activities thus improving their agency and activism. A Disability Advocacy Committee (DAC) was established as a key outcome of this project and is operating at district level coordinating PWDs and engaged in awareness raising activities.
- Some ABC women improved their farming methods to adopt business entrepreneurship practices including better marketing techniques, use of improved mechanisation and climate friendly agricultural systems.
- At national level, advocacy activities contributed to improved youth legislations and policies. Examples of legislations that were reviewed and can be attributed to CCYA's advocacy activities include the National Youth Policy reviewed in 2020, the Sexual Offenses Amendment Act (2019) and the Disability Act that is currently being reviewed.

4.4. Sustainability

- The sustainability of the project is largely attributed to the outcome mapping and harvesting approaches employed in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Activities were designed to help support boundary and strategic partners in acquiring the knowledge, responsibility and power necessary for sustainable behaviour change.
- The project positively impacted on patriarchy, shifting norms and attitudes towards respect for young people including women and PWDs. These changes in perceptions and attitudes that permeate society have influenced youth including young women and PWD's participation in household, community and district decision making processes.
- The evaluation also noted a positive sustainability indicator from the collaboration between youth groups and different public service providers.
- Mentorship activities promoted through this project have a high likelihood of sustainability beyond the scope of the project.
- Another indicator of sustainability is the fact that ABC women have started expanding their groups to involve other women and have assumed legal status. The two ABCs were formally registered with the Local Council; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; and Ministry of Social Welfare.

4.5. Coherence

- The evaluation established high internal coherence because project activities were seen to be logically contributing towards the achievement of the overall project vision.
- The project's internal coherence was also influenced by the outcome mapping and harvesting approach employed in the designing and implementation of this project. The positive impact of this project is a result of the interplay between and among boundary and strategic partners.
- Through adaptive programming, CCYA was able to ensure sustained coherence by responding to changing contexts and emerging issues.
- The evaluation also ascertained internal coherence because the Taksvärkki supported project was aligned to CCYA's mandate as enshrined in its Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024). Youth empowerment, promotion of human rights, reduction of violence, alcohol and substance abuse stated as key priorities under CCYA's Strategic Plan were also key focus areas under this project.
- External coherence was considered high owing to the coordinated approach used by CCYA in project design, review and adaptive programming.

- National policy coherence was also noted in as far as project objectives were well aligned with the Sierra Leone's Medium Term Development Plan, the Bo District Development Plan, the National Youth Policy and the Disability Act (2011).
- The Ministry of Social Welfare considered the project coherent with its mandate of supporting the welfare of PWDs, ensuring good parenting and mental health services.
- The Bo District Council representative view the lobbying meetings as relevant in complementing their work and supporting in promoting citizens engagement and inclusion in line with the District Development Plan and the Local Government Act.
- The representative of the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police applauded CCYA for influencing community members to report cases of rape and sexual assault. In that respect, the project was found to be complimenting the role of the police.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS LEARNT

5.1. Programming Design

- The project designers were strategic in working with youth including those with disabilities, stakeholders, council and MDAs and community groups to define community needs and collaboratively design the project. Given the success of this approach, particularly in addressing the needs of young people, promoting agri-business and entrepreneurship, shifting norms and attitudes towards inclusivity, it is recommended that this approach be considered in future designs.
- Participatory methods used in this project yielded results and enhanced youth inclusion in socio-economic activities, governance and policy making. The PVCA and outcome harvesting with their associated outcome mapping, adaptive programming, participatory progress review and participatory bench marking ensured that resources and efforts were directed where they were needed the most. Thus, it is suggested that similar approaches be considered in the future.
- The town hall meetings, lobbying meetings and policy dialogue sessions among other approaches proved to be simple and user friendly participatory social accountability mechanisms for the boundary and strategic partners. Budget tracking and monitoring processes as well as lobbying meetings empowered youth to confront authorities with evidence on key issues affecting them. It is recommended that similar innovative approaches that connect young people to duty bearers be considered in future programming.
- This project targeted chiefdom and community levels and this brought it closer to the people and made it more impactful than focusing on a district or province. Ownership and knowledge of the project was high among both boundary and strategic partners and results were appreciated chiefdom wide. It is recommended that future projects with community-centred approach, should also consider strongly working at chiefdom and community level systematically with a holistic approach that brings benefits to a wide range of the target populations within the same district.
- Project activities were designed to help support boundary and strategic partners in acquiring the knowledge, responsibility, and power necessary for sustainable behaviour change. As a result, primary project saw themselves as active project participants rather than recipients of development interventions, thus promoting sustained activism. This approach is recommended in future programmes.

Below are recommendations for specific project participants worth consideration in the design of the next phase of the project.

5.1.1. Youth

- The capacity building on Rights Based Approach, Human and Youth Rights was generally considered key by beneficiaries who made a clarion call to CCYA to expand it to cover other Chiefdoms outside the project targeted communities especially the rural communities. Additionally, it is recommended that the training content be updated to cover emerging issues including consideration on election preparedness, given that Sierra Leone's general elections are expected to be conducted in 2022 to 2023.
- CCYA managed to mobilise youth including youth PWDs to lead advocacy on social inclusion issues, rights, and participation in development work. Though there is demonstrated evidence of the gains spilling over to other chiefdoms and the district; stakeholders and boundary partners appealed for an expansion of advocacy activities. It is also important for CCYA to be well informed of the content of the advocacy discussions and engagement meetings, and this can only be done if these activities are considered in the next phase of project implementation.
- Unexpected positive impacts of the project include the expansion of the beneficiary scope. Youth and women including PWDs engaged their peers and recruited them in their structures (Peer educators, Disability Committees, Youth Advocacy Groups, Mothers' Clubs etc.). To keep this momentum, CCYA should not only consider training and capacity development for these indirect beneficiaries, but more frequent youth engagement meetings at grassroot level, like once a month. However, sustainability issues should be taken into consideration.
- Guidance and counselling, mentorship and coaching that worked well for women and youth PWDs could also be strengthened for the youth groups. This might involve identifying successful youth and creating platforms for them to engage with the vulnerable groups and inspire them especially for income generation.

5.1.2. Women in ABCs

- The second phase of the project coincides with the election period; thus, governance related training activities should be designed taking this into consideration the electioneering process. Strengthening the trainings on women's rights, civic rights, and inclusion in decision making is key in mobilising women for leadership and to support each other. Additionally, CCYA might also consider engaging political parties for inclusion and non-violence elections as well as building knowledge of the Gender and Women Empowerment Bill that calls for 30% quota on elected and appointive positions across all levels.
- It is also suggested that future project design should consider empowering women to lead advocacy on social inclusion issues; a strategy that worked very well with the youth groups. This is especially critical during the pre-election period to ensure space is created for women to lead advocacy and engagement activities with support from CCYA. Structures created under this project could be activated for this purpose.
- Despite the progress in entrepreneurship development, beneficiaries desire more trainings on entrepreneurship, financial management and leadership. Refresher trainings and financial support are thus recommended.
- The benefits of the mentorship and coaching programmes are immense; thus, they should be continued. It is recommended that focus should include inspiring young women to occupy public offices and building their skills to engage duty bearers on issues that affect them.
- The exchange visits were found useful, but the project only managed to fund one visit per year. Some women testified that they ended up conducting some informal exchange visits outside the project. To ensure maximum gains, the frequency of the exchange visits should be increased to at least once a quarter.

- The strategy used in the disbursement of the revolving loan funds should be reviewed to give CCYA greater control over monitoring and tracking of the utilisation of funds. CCYA may need to make it mandatory for the groups to share their financial records. CCYA might need to design a monitoring and tracking tool that will enable them to keep track of the activities.
- Media engagements were activated throughout the implementation period, which kept the project visible and beneficiaries well informed. However, in future designs, it is recommended that on the ground a media engagement tracker be designed to support reporting and tracking of media activities.
- In the next phase of the project, CCYA should include activities towards addressing priority area 5 of the 2020 to 2024 Strategic Plan, i.e. 'violence, alcohol and substance abuse'. This can be done through mainstreaming awareness of alcohol and substance abuse education into all awareness raising activities.

5.1.3. Youth with disabilities

- Activities targeting youth PWDs were impactful, but communities desire to see more youth engaged particularly in coaching and mentorship sessions, advocacy and awareness raising. If possible, CCYA should expand their reach through working with Disabled People's Organisations.
- Though the assertiveness, confidence, and engagement of youth PWDs with service providers was enhanced, most young PWDs remained economically vulnerable. Thus, it is recommended that strategies for building entrepreneurship skills and supporting income generation be included as part of the project.
- Engagement of duty bearers on the rights and responsibilities of PWDs worked well, because PWDs managed to establish structures and effect changes in their communities. For instance, PWDs are currently working with the state on the review of the 2011 Disability Act and district level commitments to ensure disabled friendly government buildings have been made. Gains could be consolidated by ensuring continuation of these activities in consideration of the upcoming elections, with support from CCYA.

5.2. Staff Development

- The project owes its success to a strong implementation team that integrated capacity development into activity implementation. Project implementers improved the management of CCYA, as an organisation, while also strengthening activity implementation, accountability, monitoring and reporting. This is something commendable and worth emulating in organisational strengthening.
- CCYA's interaction with Taksvärkki was key in transferring key skills especially on the outcome harvesting approach, monitoring, data collection, narrative and financial reporting. Working closely with the donor enhanced effectiveness and efficiency.
- However, despite the positives cited above, internal project monitoring and reporting was found weak among animators at field level. This may be addressed by conducting intensive activity monitoring trainings and supporting the staff with relevant implementation and reporting tools.
- The monitoring tools are cumbersome for boundary partners, animators and volunteers who reported being overwhelmed with the various columns. CCYA did not foresee these challenges at design stage, because it was the first time such tools were designed and utilised by the organisation. The tools could be reviewed to have simplified versions for each of these project participants e.g. we can have a tool for boundary partners, another

tool for animators etc. A participatory approach that involve users, is recommended in the design of these tools.

- While appreciating the capacity development activities implemented under this project, CCYA staff believe that international exposure through networks with other Taksvärkki supported institutions is also important for learning.
- To build up the lost capacity because of high turnover rate in the Finance Department, it is recommended that newly recruited Finance Staff be trained on financial management, including issues covered in previous trainings.
- Other capacity development needs identified by staff during the evaluation include project design, donor reporting, communication, and resource mobilisation.

5.3. Activity implementation

- Capacity development of youth structures including youth groups, women in ABCs and PWDs facilitated a trickle-down approach and empowered vulnerable youth to be active and vibrant in the promotion of social accountability, inclusivity, and participatory socio-economic development. This approach is unique and commendable for its ability to ensure gains are sustained beyond project implementation. It is therefore recommended that future programming consider this approach.
- Boundary partners developed advocacy and awareness raising skills because the project, not only conducted trainings but provided platforms for the youth to put into practice the skills they acquired, under the leadership of CCYA. This was key in ensuring sustained behaviour change among boundary partners. In the future CCYA might introduce other innovative advocacy and lobbying strategies, while also motivating the youth to focus on pressing and pertinent issues.
- Though the revolving loan scheme was overly a success, given the testimonies provided; the evaluation team noted the absence of monitoring guidelines as a major loophole.
- Mentoring and coaching was initially a different activity from guidance and counselling, but CCYA staff and boundary partners both agreed that the two activities were understood as one activity. Given the value placed on this activity by primary beneficiaries, its continuation in the second phase of the project cannot be overstated.
- CCYA and its partners, both strategic and boundary articulated the overwhelming benefits of TV and radio engagement activities. However, there was no proper record of the number of engagements conducted involving partners and stakeholder, apart from financial records of payments made to media houses. CCYA could improve on this by developing and utilising a media engagement tracker that records details of participants of radio programmes, the topics discussed, the panellists, and any resolution made, or issue raised that may require follow up.
- A substantial number of PWD beneficiaries were still engaged in begging, because of limited livelihood opportunities. Though their agency was impacted and can organize themselves and advocate for their rights better, the economic aspect of the project did not focus strongly on some of the PWDs. CCYA might consider pursuing economic empowerment of PWDs in future designs.
- In future, project mid-term evaluations should be conducted one or two months before or after the middle of the project's lifespan for recommendations to influence the implementation of the project within the remaining months of project implementation. Delays in conducting mid-term evaluations result in loss of opportunities that could have been derived from lessons learnt within the first half of the project's lifespan.

6. LIST OF REFERENCES

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7. ANNEXES

7.1. Inception Report



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7.2. Data Collection Tools



DATA%20COLLECTION%20TOOLS.docx

7.3. Mid-Term Evaluation Terms of Reference



Final%20TOR%20CYA-%20TAKSVARRK