

Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE) Project

Implemented by

AIFO in collaboration with its co-implementers - Welliete Safehouse and Oscar Romero
School of the Deaf with funding from The European Union

Final Evaluation Report

Commissioned by: AIFO Liberia and its co-implementers
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List of Acronyms

AIFO	Associazione Italiana Amici di Raoul Follereau
ORS	Oscar Romero School
WSL	Welliete Safehouse
NUOD	National Union of Organization of the Disabled
VOICE	Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment
DPOs	Disabled People's organizations
PWDs	People Living with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
UNCRPD	United Nation Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo Information Services
CRID	Center for the Rehabilitation of the Injured and Disabled
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HOH	Hard of hearing
WHO	World Health Organization
UNICEF	United Nation Children Fund
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
GoL	Government of Liberia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
CSDF	County Social Development Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE) - Disabled People Organizations stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia is a 2-year project funded by the European Commission and implemented by AIFO in Liberia from February 2021 up to February 2023.

AIFO is an International NGO with headquarters in Bologna, Italy, working in the field of international health cooperation and disability since 1961. AIFO has operated in Liberia since 1997. AIFO Liberia's mission focuses on the promotion of disability rights, building the capacity of local Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) and on fostering economic independence for People with Disabilities (PWDs).

The project aims at enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations, to promote and empower persons with disabilities and to ensure that people with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights in Liberia. Overall, the project supports the CSOs to play a key role at national policy level by increasing their effective engagement with relevant stakeholders and to promote inclusive development.

Evaluation Context and Objectives

This final evaluation of the VOICE project is conducted by an external evaluation consultant that have generated this comprehensive report independently assessing the performance and achievements of the project, as well as the project team's overall methodology and approach, and highlighting challenges and providing recommendations for future projects.

The evaluation will follow the quality standards for development evaluation as per the OECD DAC Guidelines. The OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) has defined six criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability as a normative framework to determine the merit or worth of any intervention (policy, strategy, program, project or activity). These criteria will serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements will be made for the final evaluation of the VOICE project.

Data collection method

Mixed method approach was used during this final evaluation by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. In order to answer evaluation questions, we developed questionnaires including surveys, in-depth interviews/KIIs, and FGD guide that were administered to project beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The evaluation data were collected using the below listed methods:

1. Desk review - the process included review of project proposal, reports, workplan, implementation plan, online platforms, and many other literatures. These sources provided more background context on program performance and timeliness. This will be used to generate both qualitative and quantitative information
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) - qualitative method that the evaluation intends to use

to collect project beneficiaries experience related to the project. This method will be administered to the fellows and their parents.

3. Key Informant Interview (KII) - qualitative method that the evaluation intends to use to collect information on project achievements and changes that could be attributable to the project. This method will use an in-depth interview guide and it is intended for project implementers (applicants, third parties, and other stakeholders) and some key stakeholders at both national and county levels.
4. Mini Survey - short survey will be administered to a small sample of the project final beneficiaries to collect additional quantitative data to support the secondary data analysis findings
5. Secondary Data Analysis – this will include aggregation, consolidation and further analysis of project data involving training, employment opportunity created, knowledge/skill gained etc from program activity reports and other evaluations.

Relevance

On an overall, the VOICE project from the evaluative perspective demonstrated a strong relevance on the country context, partner organizations and beneficiaries' perspectives. The project was relevant supported to enhance the capacity of civil society to promote and empower persons with disabilities; ensuring people with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights in Liberia. The project was relevant improving the socio-economic status of Liberia's deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) community by strengthening CSOs' capacities, particularly Disabled People's Organizations and empowered people with disabilities (PWD). The project was relevant in enhancing PwD and CSOs' policy and advocacy skills to ensure that the rights and needs of people with disabilities are addressed by policymakers at local and national levels.

Effectiveness

Under this evaluation, effectiveness applies to the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across the intervention; thereby attempting to answer the question about the intervention achieving its objectives. During this evaluation, we examined the achievement of the project objectives on its result chain/causal pathway.

Four synergic outputs under this project were designed to create/contribute to the project specific objective/Outcome: Disabled People's Organizations enhanced their capacity and autonomy to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia. In the long term, the improved DPOs role and capacity in the dialogue with key public and private stakeholders will contribute to all deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia enjoying the right to have equal access to work and employment (Impact/overall goal of the Action). The ambition of the project was to enhanced the capacity and autonomy of DPOs to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) in Liberia as a result, all deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia enjoy the right to have equal access to work and employment.

Efficiency

We consider that value for money was fairly achieved on this project although there is the possibility to have more efficiently disbursed. Since this was not a standalone cost evaluation, the evaluation didn't uncover in detail about the financial efficiency. Generally, the funds expended on the project were well targeted and delivered value for money.

Efficiency was also evaluated based upon timeliness of activities, the human/staffing capacity, the duration of the intervention. On an overall, the project was very efficient on project activities timeline. Although there was no cost extension to allow the project complete some of its final deliverables, meanwhile, that didn't actually result from any major delayed activities.

The duration of the project was one of the areas for improvement that could be relook into during future project design. Most of the activities in the project will require some long-term engagement to be able to create more results.

Coherence

The project fits within the national development agenda, the Pro poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). Under the PAPD Pillar-I (Power to the People). People with Special Needs Social and cultural factors limit opportunities to find work while living with disability, but even more so, people with disability face discrimination from employers. Even those who find employment face wage discrimination because they tend to earn less than their colleagues. Disability and poverty are mutually reinforcing.

The project also strongly aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) that was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities; however, in individual member states, program like VOICE could strongly contribute to the achievement and greater adherence to the protocol.

Internal Coherence was also a significant part of the intervention. This project has a stronger synergy with the DASU project previously implemented by AIFO. Based on the research conducted at the end of the DASU project, VOICE project was designed

Impact

The impact of the VOICE project was considered as the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the overall intervention. The evaluation sought to identify the social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion sought to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. We did so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in the context or norms, and potential effects on PWDs, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

Although it will require sometime for the expected changes to occur, but the feedback from

surveys conducted have generally been impressive. People feel that the deaf and HOH persons are now having some access to basic services due to the intervention. Moreover, the perception of the people towards PWDs is now becoming to change as demonstrated from the findings of the survey conducted. Majority of the people who feel that HOH persons and deaf could not become meaningful are now starting to change that mindset because of the intervention. Some Deaf and HOH persons that participated in this project are now able to provide some socio-economic services and become self-employed in the society.

Recommendations

1. The future project needs to organize more long-term programming around enhancing the role of the NUOD representing the views and opinions of DPOs by providing a channel for information on existing and new legislations on PWDs economic and work rights
2. The Future Project needs to take into consideration budget and duration. There needs more strategy to ensure that the project reaches and engages the entire country. This can be done by first having a clear understanding of the audience and how they use information around PWDs rights. A clear picture of the audience will allow for a more targeted approach to misinformation.
3. Future programs should consider full-time monitoring and evaluation personnel on the project and consistently document, store and report result systematically.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The Voices for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE) - Disabled People Organizations stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia is a 2-year project funded by the European Commission and implemented by AIFO in Liberia from January 2021 up to February 2023.

AIFO is an International NGO with headquarters in Bologna, Italy, working in the field of international health cooperation and disability since 1961. AIFO has operated in Liberia since 1997. AIFO Liberia's mission focuses on the promotion of disability rights, building the capacity of local Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) and on fostering economic independence for People with Disabilities (PWDs).

The project aims at enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations, to promote and empower persons with disabilities and to ensure that people with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights in Liberia. Overall, the project supports the CSOs to play a key role at national policy level by increasing their effective engagement with relevant stakeholders and to promote inclusive development. The integral part of this implementation is to more specifically enable the umbrella federation of people with disabilities in Liberia, the National Union of Organization of the Disabled (NUOD), the Disabled People's organizations (DPOs)

and their members to effectively demand the respect and fulfillment of the human rights of all People with Disabilities (PWDs), in line with the Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) to which Liberia is a signatory since 2012.

At the core value of this project, the capacity of the Disabled People's Organization will be enhanced to allow them the autonomy to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the People Living with Disabilities with specific focus and priority to the deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) in Liberia.

Organizational Overview

- **AIFO** is lead implementer on this action. AIFO is closely working with other stakeholders to implement this project successfully with a high level of integration and coordination with national actors. - AIFO is an international NGO operating in the sectors of health, social inclusion, disability and rehabilitation with headquarters in Bologna (Italy). AIFO has been working alongside the poorest and most marginalized present for the past twenty-three years
- **Williette Safehouse (WSL)** serves as co-implementer on the project. WSL is a local CSO committed to create opportunities for sustainable development in the young Liberian disabled community. They have sound expertise on planning and implementing basic skills and vocational training educational programmes, providing young Liberians with disabilities with specific skills aimed to access job opportunities. WSL maintains a graduation rate of 100% in their Fellowship programme, with 75% of their youth obtaining full-time stable employment.
- **Oscar Romero School (ORS)** is an Associate implementer; established in Liberia in 2008, ORS is a leading boarding school for deaf and HOH children and youth in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, supported by Mary's Meals Liberia. ORS runs from ABC to grade 6, and supports deaf students attending a hearing partner high school with sign language interpreters.

Definition of Disability

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

According to the World Health Organization, disability has three dimensions:

1. **Impairment** in a person's body structure or function, or mental functioning; examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision or memory loss.
2. **Activity limitation**, such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving.
3. **Participation restrictions** in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining health care and preventive services.

Impairment is an absence of or significant difference in a person's body structure or function or mental functioning. Impairment can be categorized into two categories - **Structural impairments** are significant problems with an internal or external component of the body such as complete loss of a body component, as when a limb has been amputated while

Functional impairments include the complete or partial loss of function of a body part such as pain that doesn't go away or joints that no longer move easily.

The World Health Organization (WHO) published the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in 2001 which provides a standard language for classifying body function and structure, activity, participation levels, and conditions. This description helps to assess the health, functioning, activities, and factors in the environment that either help or create barriers for people to fully participate in society. According to the ICF:

- **Activity** is the execution of a task or action by an individual.
- **Participation** is a person's involvement in a life situation.

Activities and participation can be made easier or more difficult as a result of environmental factors, such as technology, support and relationships, services, policies, or the beliefs of others. It is very important to improve the conditions in communities by providing accommodations that decrease or eliminate activity limitations and participation restrictions for people with disabilities, so they can participate in the roles and activities of everyday life. The VOICE project is primarily supporting these categories of disabilities.

Country Context

Demographic

Liberia is a country along the southern part of the west coast of Africa, which Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire surround. It has a projected population of approximately 5.2 million¹. The country is Africa's first republic and is the only African country to never have experienced colonial rule. Liberia experienced 2 civil wars – the first civil war lasted from 1989 to 1997 and the second civil war lasted from 1997 to 2003. In addition, the country has experienced several other natural disasters including the 2014 Ebola and the 2019 COVID outbreaks. These situations greatly impacted both infrastructure, governance, and socio-economics fabrics of the Liberian Society and its democracy.

The most disadvantaged and marginalized group of people in the world including Liberia are persons with disabilities (PWDs). PWDs face many challenges including limited to no access to education, discrimination of all forms, environmental, and societal barriers. Liberia being a post-conflict country with substantial levels of vulnerability and fragility with a very struggling economy has not been able to fully support infrastructural, employability, educational, and socio-economic needs for PWDs. This has challenged many PWDs to fully have access to quality education, basic social services and rights; as a result, some of them have turned into beggars in the streets.

In 1997, an experimental survey funded by UNICEF and conducted by the Center for the Rehabilitation of the Injured and Disabled (CRID) established that more than 16% of the Liberian population lived with a disability. Of this population, 61% were found to be

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LR>

“physically challenged” (persons with physical impairments), 23.9% had visual impairments, 6.8% had hearing impairments and 8.3% had intellectual or cognitive impairments.

There is a limited updated statistics on PWDs in Liberia at the moment. Since the conduct of the 2008 National Housing and Population Census by LISGIS in 2008, data on PWDs have not been updated. However, in 2016, the disability prevalence rate in Liberia was reported at 14.1% according to 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES).

Challenges/Problems

From the Diagnostic Study On Disabled Peoples’ Organizations (DPOs) & National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD) conducted by AIFO and NUOD in 2018, it was identified that some of the County DPOs (i.e.; Bong, Grand Gedeh and Nimba) needed to upgrade in their networking, advocacy and fund-raising skills. In Bong, it was identified that the 4 existing DPOs at that time were not united and couldn’t speak with one voice. In Grand Gedeh at the time, there was a network of 3 district groups united into one county DPO, but were not fully active due to logistical challenges to support regular communication between the 3 districts. Generally, programme priorities were not defined and funding was a challenge. In Nimba, there exists a good network of a county DPO with branches in 7 districts, with district groups and some self-help groups. They were more coordinated and had good relations with county and district authorities; however they have a very limited coverage and there was a need to expand to the remaining districts.

National Actions taken by the Government of Liberia to Support PWD

The vast majority of Liberians who do not attend school have disabilities and are left out or excluded from schools, leave school prematurely and do not obtain opportunities to work. Moreover, the social stigmatization associated with disability results in relegation and isolation. The failure to enforce human rights law to which Liberia is a signatory and the lack of an inclusive education policy disenfranchises individuals with disabilities. As a result, thousands of persons with disabilities in Liberia are illiterate, unable to fend for themselves, lack independence and self-esteem and are among the poorest citizens.

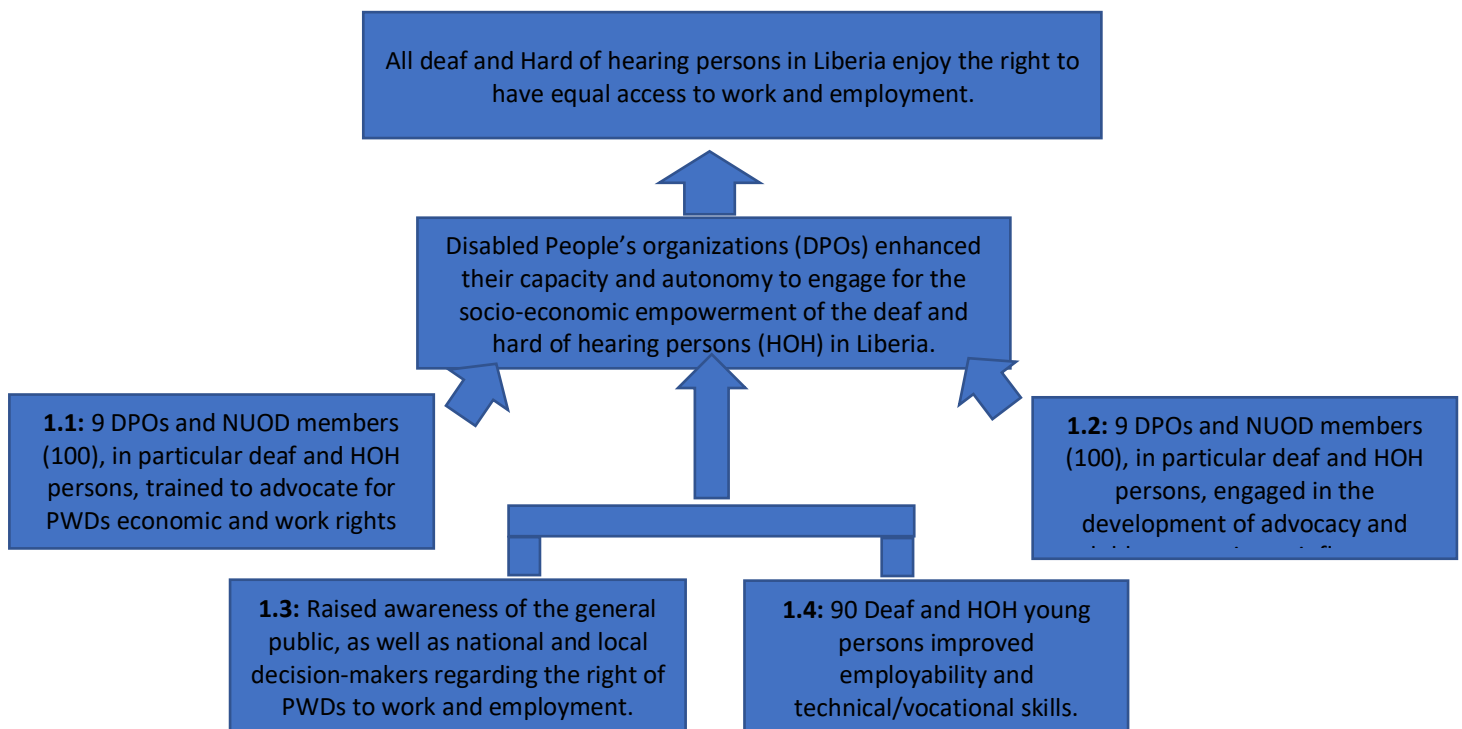
Although there still exists some stigma and discrimination against PWDs, however, Liberia has adopted policies and legal frameworks to ensure the rights of PWDs are respected and protected. The government has taken administrative, legal, and economic measures that indicate the country’s commitment to improving the rights of PWDs. These commitments include the establishment of the National Commission on Disability in 2005, the signing of the UNCRPD in 2007 and ratified in 2012. Liberia has also signed and ratified other international treaties, which demonstrates its commitment to protecting PWDs. These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, Marrakesh Treaty and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Nationally, the country has put in place the Children Law, which criminalizes negative actions against children with disabilities as stated in Section 3. 16.11. Children Act 2011.

In addition, there are significant developments in the disability sector since after the Ebola crisis including the approval of the new inclusive education policy in 2017 and validation of

the National Plan of Action for the implementation of Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2018.

NUOD has developed into a dynamic Organization with experience of running projects. It has branches in the counties and is able to mobilize partnerships and action. It is a much stronger Organisation today compared to five years ago. Its weakness is lack of sustainable funding for its activities. It needs stronger networking, project writing, sustainable projects that can continue beyond outside funding, advocacy planning and fund-raising skills. The VOICE project is designed to support improve the capacity of NUOD in these gaps. To continue to cement and solidify these gains, DPOs needed to launch strong advocacy for ensuring equal rights, access to health and social services, access to employment and support for self-employment. To do this, DPOs needed good skills to ensure implementation of CRPD, strong advocacy skills, effective fund-raising and making stronger networks of persons with disabilities to fight for their rights with one voice. In addition to the support to NUOD by the VOICE project, the project is also strengthening the capacity of 9 DPOs in Greater Montserrado, Bomi, and Nimba Counties.

Project Intervention Logics



Project Geographical Coverage

The Project is being implemented 3 out of the 15 counties in Liberia. Those areas include Greater Monrovia District in Montserrado, Senjeh District in Bomi, and Bain Garr District in Nimba County. The map below shows the project implementation counties that are color in blue.



Project Stakeholders

The primary targeted disabled groups are the deaf and HOH persons. These sects of groups are considered the most invisible and underserved segment of the disability population in Liberia. The target groups are categorized into 2 groups and 3 beneficiary group categories:

Target Groups

1. Target Group 1 (TG1) is composed of 9 DPOs and NUOD members in three different counties as follows: 3 DPOs and NUOD central office in Montserrado; 3 DPOs and NUOD county delegation in Bomi, and 3 DPOs and NUOD county delegation in Nimba. TG1 has been quantified by NUOD, for a total of 1,047 persons with disabilities (419 women and 628 men)
2. Target Group 2 (TG2) includes 90 deaf and HOH young persons (age from 15 to 35) in Montserrado, Bomi and Nimba counties, participating in livelihood and skills training (different persons from TG1). The deaf and HOH young people face major communication barriers, and therefore, they have no access to educational (included sign language) and employment opportunities and do not participate in public, social, and political life.

Final Beneficiaries

1. Final beneficiaries 1 (FB1) are all PWDs in Liberia (estimated 752,000 people, 14% of total population according to UNICEF, 1999), in particular all deaf and HOH young persons (estimated 52,640 people) and women. Persons with a disability in Liberia continue to face a variety of challenges ranging from health care, education, economic opportunities, and access to other basic social services; a situation that limits their opportunities to work and employment.
2. Final beneficiaries 2 (FB2) are deaf and HOH young persons' family members (estimated 250,000 members). Their major challenges are communication barriers

with their children or relatives with hearing impairment, which causes low understanding of their needs and the lack of awareness of their rights.

3. Final beneficiaries 3 (FB3) are 10,000 Community dwellers in target communities. They have low understanding of disability related issues, difficulties in communication with deaf and HOH community members and misinformation on the rights of PWDs to be included in community's activities.

Other stakeholders

- **Start-ups** - 15 Start-ups funded by AIFO DASU project expressed low or no participation of deaf and HOH persons. They share experiences and promote the interest of businesses for the target groups. Beneficiaries who have received basic vocational and life skills training from this proposed Action could then be included in these start-ups, for them to have a broader representation of all types of disabilities.
- **Community radio stations** - the partnership promotes a nation-wide broadcasting of a disability friendly radio programme called We Are One (WAO), which boasts of approximately 500.000 listening audiences. The programme objective is to enhance greater awareness and inclusion of deaf and HOH persons in development interventions.
- **Association of Sign Language Interpreters** - promotes sign language education and knowledge nationwide. Currently, it lacks technical capacity and their visibility is very low. Through their engagement in this project, efforts will be made to advocate for government policies and programmes to make compulsory the utilization of sign language as a key medium of information between the deaf and the larger community.

Other key stakeholders

The project also collaborated with other key stakeholders including the Alliance on Disability and the National Commission on Human Rights to lobby and advocacy efforts at national level; the Ministry of Youth and Sport/TVET to develop, design, implement, supervise and monitor programmes and activities related to technical education and training in the “informal sector”. The Ministry of Education/Bureau on TVET to support advocacy efforts, promoting the inclusion of deaf and HOH in the regular school system and supporting the Fellowship programme. The Ministry of Gender Children and Social Inclusion to promote inclusion in the project's action. The Ministry of Labor and Liberia Labor Congress to identify synergies for collaboration. The Ministry of Justice, Department of Human Rights to support advocacy and lobbying efforts, considering the review of Liberia's State Party Report submitted to the UN General Assembly.

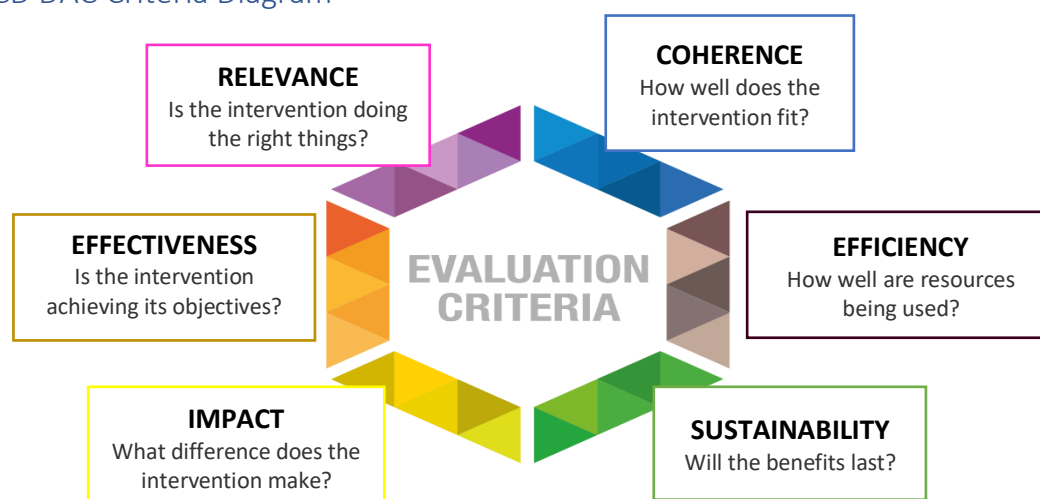
SECTION 2: EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Evaluation Context and Objectives

This final evaluation of the VOICE project is conducted by an external evaluation consultant that has generated this comprehensive report independently assessing the performance and achievements of the project, as well as the project team's overall methodology and approach, and highlighting challenges and providing recommendations for future projects.

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OECD DAC Criteria Diagram²



The criteria will be contextualized to the evaluation purpose and the project context and the needs of the stakeholders. In addition, the evaluation will also assess other cross cutting components of the project including gender sensitivity and inclusiveness, visibility, and communication.

The Final Evaluation of the VOICE project aims at the following:

1. To Assess the significance of the VOICE Project intervention and the progresses made towards achieving its planned objectives.
2. To provide an opportunity to give feedback to the project design, implementation and methodology to ensure planned objectives were achieved with in the lifetime of the project
3. To Provide an objective project impact during the phases of the project including tools, instruments and capacity building to the programmers' team to strengthen its capacity for internal management and evaluation.
4. To provide information that is credible (evidence based) and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into AIFO decision-making process.

²<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

The Final Evaluation will also assess the project's performance on cross cutting issues; livelihood and skill development for disabled, Institutions capacity, disability inclusion, added value and participation. Particular attention will be placed to the realization of activities (respect for employment opportunities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons, effective participation of beneficiaries, perception of satisfaction, management and collaboration between partners, beneficiaries' level of skills gained during the implementation; visibility. All data collected must be disaggregated by sex, age, disability type and project areas.

Indicative Research and Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions below are indicative. Based on consultations with the AIFO technical team and document analysis, the consultant/s additional questions may be added before the finalized set of evaluation questions with an indication of specific criteria and indicators, as well as the relevant data collection sources and tools.

Relevance

- To what extent the project's objectives have impacted the country, partner organizations and beneficiaries?
- Are the results of the project consistent with the impact, outcome, outputs and overall objective (as part of the analysis of the log frame matrix)?

Effectiveness

- To what extent has the project achieved its objective(s)?
- What were the major factors that influenced the achievements or non-achievements of the outcome(s)/expected results/outputs? (Also consider any which were possibly beyond the control of the project)
- Did the project contribute to DPOs capacity building as planned?
- Did the project develop the livelihood and skill training capacity for beneficiaries as planned?
- To what extent are gender and environment mainstreaming included in the project?

Efficiency

- If applicable, to what extent were all items/equipment purchased and used as planned under this project?
- Was the project implemented in the most efficient way (time, personnel resources)?
- Have any issues emerged, if so which ones and why?

Impact

- How many women, men, girls, boys and people with disabilities in total benefited from the project?
- What has changed in the lives of women, men, girls, boys with disabilities from the Project?
- Has the project impacted the lives of women, men, girls and boys without a disability? How?
- Which positive and/or negative effects/impacts in terms of gender and environment can possibly be attributed to the project?
- Which organizations benefited from the project and how? What has changed for whom?
- Are there any other important aspects regarding impact?

Coherence

- How well does the intervention fit?
- The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa?
- To what extent complementarity, harmonization and co-ordination with others' intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?

Sustainability

- To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the withdrawal of the donor?
- If applicable, if the project continues will it be integrated in local structures and/or funded by other sources?
- What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?
- If applicable, what could have been done and/or improved to ensure sustainability?

SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY

Inception Meeting

The Evaluation Methodology included an initial inception meeting between the external evaluation consultant, the Country Director and the Project Manager of the VOICE project. The inception meeting was basically intended to hold the first acquaintance and introductory engagement between the consultant and the program team. We streamlined the coordination, communication, and engagement approaches that were adhered to throughout this evaluation. During this meeting, the program team also provided clear expectations, timeline, and urgent need of the evaluation. The consultant also used this opportunity to acquire relevant project documents for the purpose of desk review.

Desk review of existing data, systems, and reports

Desk review was an integral part of this evaluation. The consultant conducted a thorough desk review as part of this evaluation. The desk review included literature review of other available literature for more contextual information. As part of the desk review, all secondary data for this evaluation or project collected data and its source references were triangulated. Additionally, the evaluation reviewed partner organizations' data system, M&E practices, tools, and documentations.

Data collection method

Mixed method approach was used during this final evaluation by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. In order to answer evaluation questions, we developed questionnaires including surveys, in-depth interviews/KIIs, and FGD guides that were administered to project beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The evaluation data were collected using the below listed methods:

1. Desk review - the process included review of project proposal, reports, workplan, implementation plan, online platforms, and many other literatures. These sources provided more background context on program performance and timeliness. This was

used to generate both qualitative and quantitative information

2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) - qualitative method that the evaluation intends used to collect project beneficiaries experience related to the project. This method was administered to the fellows and their parents.
3. Key Informant Interview (KII) - qualitative method that the evaluation used to collect information on project achievements and changes that could be attributable to the project. This method will use an in-depth interview guide and it is intended for project implementers (applicants, third parties, and other stakeholders) and some key stakeholders at both national and county levels.
4. Mini Survey - short survey administered to a small sample of the project final beneficiaries to collect additional quantitative data to support the secondary data analysis findings
5. Secondary Data Analysis – this included aggregation, consolidation and further analysis of project data involving training, employment opportunity created, knowledge/skill gained etc from program activity reports and other evaluations.

Sampling Approach

The sample size for the quantitative and qualitative data collection were selected using the random and convenience sampling approach, respectively. The respondents for the mini-survey were identified and selected in consultation with the Program Manager and the key stakeholders; however, the program team didn't have any control over the selection process; while for the FGD and Key Informant Interviews were conveniently selected based upon deskreview and availability and accessibility of the key informants. The description on how respondents for each of the data collection methods (FGD, KII & Mini Survey) is outlined under each of the data collection methods.

Quantitative Survey (Mini survey)

The mixed method approach also incorporates a mini survey that was administered among selected beneficiaries. From the desk review of the project proposal, the project provided capacity building and created platforms to improve NUOD's organizational capacities including coordination, training, and supporting 9 DPOs to implement advocacy actions for PWDs with a focus on economic and work rights. DPOs members have increased their knowledge and skills, while becoming recognized actors in influencing the policy dialogue with public and private stakeholders at county and national levels and building on the benefits of collective approaches.

Based upon this, the evaluation included a mini survey to collect quantitative feedback on key project activities from a small sample form among the project direct targeted beneficiaries, 90deaf and HOH persons that fully participated in the project activities

To define the sample size for the mini survey, number of factors including the total direct beneficiaries under consideration, the final evaluation estimate for key indicators, the level of confidence and the design effect (as related to sampling technique). A rough calculation can be made using the following formula below:

$$x = Z(c/100)^2 r(100-r)$$

$$n = N x / ((N-1)E^2 + x)$$

$$E = \text{Sqrt}[(N-n)x / n(N-1)]$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = Beneficiary size

r = fraction of responses that are interested to us (i.e., Percentage PWDs that report improved knowledge (disaggregated by gender), we estimate at 50% for sake of calculation)

Z(c/100) = is the critical value for the confidence level c

c = Confidence level

E = Error Margin

Using Raosoft Sample Calculator, the sample size for the mini survey is 74. Error Margin at 5% at 95% CL and 50% distribution rate. The mini survey was administered through in-person interview using a mobile data collection platform/google form. The sampled respondents were selected using the stratified sampling approach. This approach allowed the random selection of respondents with no bias on gender and age groups.

Qualitative Surveys

Focus Group Discussion

Convenient Sampling approach was used to identify samples for both FGDs and KIIs. Three counties were identified for both FGD and KII. Two (2) FGDs were conducted in each county – Montserrado, Bomi, and Nimba targeting the following:

- Final beneficiaries 1 (FB1) – sample will be drawn from among the 90 deaf and HOH young persons (age from 15 to 35) in Montserrado, Bomi and Nimba counties, participating in livelihood and skills training deaf and HOH young persons
- Final beneficiaries 2 (FB2) – sample will be drawn from among the deaf and HOH young persons' family members

A Heterogeneous group of 6 to 12 participants was convenient for each FGD. Each of the discussions lasted for a maximum of 90 minutes. Confidentiality and respect for participants' personally identifiable information were adhered to. The FGD questionnaire includes key selected questions from the list of evaluation questionnaires were developed into the FGD guide. Additionally, probing questions and other general questions relating to the program objective were included to acquire broader understanding and knowledge. The FGD was facilitated by the lead consultant and its associates.

Focus Group Discussions Details

County	# of FGD	Group Type	Gender and age composition	Timeframe session	Targeted Group
Montserrado	2	Heterogeneous	Preferably 1:3 male to female and youth to adult ratio in the discussion	Max 90 minutes	FGD Group I: Deaf and HOH fellows FGD Group II: Parent or family members of deaf/and or HOH fellows

Bomi	2	Heterogeneous	Preferably 1:3 male to female and youth to adult ratio in the discussion	Max 90 minutes	FGD Group I: Deaf and HOH fellows FGD Group II: Parent or family members of deaf/and or HOH fellows
Nimba	2	Heterogeneous	Preferably 1:3 male to female and youth to adult ratio in the discussion	Max 90 minutes	FGD Group I: Deaf and HOH fellows FGD Group II: Parent or family members of deaf/and or HOH fellows

Key Informant Interview

At the organizational level, key Informant interviews were conducted for the project implementers and the key stakeholders to answer key evaluation questions. One to two representatives (i.e. head of departments, directors, program managers, commissioners etc.) were targeted as key informants using the KII interview questionnaire

Targeted Key informants among the project implementation team

#	Name	Title	Institution
1	Mr. Nibo R. Browne	Project Manager	AIFO
2	J. Sylvester Roberts	Regional Coordinator	AIFO
3	Willie D. Peters	Project Accountant	AIFO
4	Mr. Peter Flomo	President	NUOD
5	TarleeNuahn	Project Manager	Williette Safehouse
6	Madam Jerrilyne	Head of ORS	ORS

Data collection tool Development

This phase involves the design of the Data Collection Forms/Tools, the schematic of Data collection and analysis approach, and the mini survey. Survey questionnaire, Key Informant Interview, and Focus Group Discussion Guides were developed to guide both the quantitative and qualitative data collection. Qualitative data collection tools were paper-based while mini surveys were digital. This remediated the delays in entering data and ensured that only valid information was sent to the server during the mini survey. Respondent Confidentiality features were integrated within the application to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data. All data collection tools – draft FGD and KIIs guides were developed and attached to the inception report for final approval before the data collection.

Participant Consent

The Evaluator solicited prior consent of the respondents during all interviews. Respondent consent allowed the evaluator to take notes during the conversations. During the focus group discussions, oral/verbal consent of the discussants were taken before the discussion.

Tools Pilot Testing

To ensure that the tools are valid for the data collection, the tools were firstly tested with a small sample of project participants in Saclepea before its final roll out. All technical inputs from the review were incorporated into the tools before final roll out.

Data Cleaning, Analysis, and Reporting

After the successful field implementation and data collection, a rigorous data quality check was followed. Data cleaning and analysis included transcription of qualitative interview notes, validation of quantitative data, and coding of the qualitative note based upon theme. The data were aggregated and visualized based upon evaluation criteria, project objectives, key indicators and disaggregation including gender. The findings are reported under the finding section of this final report.

Limitation to the methodology and mitigation measures

Risks	Description	Mitigation Measures
Limited Resources for the evaluation	Evaluation budget is low as compare to other final evaluation with the same size and scope	Greatly rely on secondary data that are generated by the project and other reference materials with small primary data collection
Timeliness and Availability of some reference materials	Taking into consideration final evaluation being implemented during the last month of the implementation, most of the long-term impact of the project will not be identified during this evaluation	We intend to contextualize the evaluation approach; conduct additional primary data collection and external reference materials review; adjust evaluation activity timeline and focus on early outcome, processes, learnings and adaptations.
Limited M&E coverage	The project didn't have a robust and dedicated M & E Plan, operations and data system in plan for routine tracking, analysis, and reporting. There may be limited monitoring data available to support the evaluation.	Coordinate with the Project lead to review and reconcile on key project documents, conduct interviews to generate additional primary data; collaborate with other implementers and stakeholders to harvest results.

Ethics rules

The Evaluator understands the risks involved in working with project beneficiaries and the sensitivity and social context working with PWDs. Based upon this, the evaluator operated on a strict Do No Harm policy ensuring protection of project beneficiaries, communities and individuals involved in the implementation. To ensure this, the following approaches were

employed:

- i. All interviews were voluntary and with consent
- ii. Safe space to speak and express for all person involved in this survey were provided
- iii. All and any information collected during this survey were treated with the desired safety and with no unauthorized disclosure and use of personal data.
- i. All person under the age of 18 will were interviewed in the presence of their Parent and/or guardian where issues of safety are seen to be a concern
- ii. The evaluator did not at any one point engaged in any shape or form of inappropriate behavior and conduct with either partner organizations and/or beneficiaries.

SECTION 4: FINDINGS

Relevance

The evaluation takes into account two basic areas in assessing the relevance of this project. The extent to which project's objectives have impacted the country, partner organizations and beneficiaries in terms of **responding to the needs, policies, and priorities; sensitivity and responsiveness to the context; and quality of design**. Key findings into these components were harvested from FGDs and KIIs with project stakeholders including the implementers, beneficiaries, and partner organizations. Additionally, thorough desk review was conducted on key externally available literatures.

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the VOICE project addresses its beneficiaries' needs and priorities. This analysis provides insight into what issues the project addressed and why. Beneficiaries were considered as central stakeholders for an intervention in this criterion and were considered throughout.

Overall, the VOICE project from the evaluative perspective demonstrated a strong relevance on the country context, partner organizations and beneficiaries' perspectives. The project was supported to enhance the capacity of civil society to promote and empower persons with disabilities; ensuring people with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights in Liberia. The project was relevant in improving the socio-economic status of Liberia's deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) community by strengthening CSOs' capacities, particularly Disabled People's Organizations and empowered people with disabilities (PwD). The project was relevant in enhancing PwD and CSOs' policy and advocacy skills to ensure that the rights and needs of people with disabilities are addressed by policymakers at local and national levels.

*“NUOD and other DPOs didn't have the potential for advocacy, limited capacity to coordinate and communicate with national stakeholders, no strategy and skills for advocacy. The project became very relevant to provide capacity to them through training and engagement and strengthened their institutional capacity buildings.”***Mr.Nibo R. Browne, AIFO Project Manager, VOICE Project**

For NUOD and other DPOs, the project sub granted NUOD as part of the project to provide

similar capacity building support to other DPOs. The training changed the perception of the PWDs especially the Deaf and HOH persons and empowered them to start demanding for their rights not only at the national level, but even within their own disabled communities.

“The project has been able to elevate the voice of the PWDs in their own communities. As part of the intervention, Williette house provided basic livelihood training for PWDs which has helped to empower them. Now, they are able to utilize their skills and knowledge to become a meaningful contributor to the national growth. This project has made greater significant improvement in the lives of PWDs”

– Mr. Nuahn, Project Manager – Williette House

From the desk review, it is clearly identified that this project supports the Inclusive Education Policy of Liberia. While inclusive education is clearly defined as applying to all marginalized children and youth with severe lack of capacity within the Liberian education system to cater for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. This Inclusive Education Policy, recognizes the wide range of learning needs and categories of persons with disabilities, including, persons who are blind or have low vision; persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; persons with intellectual disability; persons with mobility-related disabilities; persons with learning disabilities; persons with speech, language and communication disabilities as well as persons with multiple disabilities. In keeping with universal learning conventions, the policy requires all educational stakeholders and providers to respond appropriately to the wide-ranging needs of diverse groups of citizens in the Liberian educational system.

The project also supported the national development agenda for Liberia, “the Pro poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)’s Pillar-I (Power to the People). The government put emphasis on challenges facing people with disability that pose them to limited opportunities to find work while living with disability. Moreover, people with disability face discrimination from employers. Persons living with disabilities are usually excluded from social and economic life and their rights are not fully fulfilled³.

Economic empowerment of the disabled, constitutes a first step to counter poverty and structural discrimination. Relevant education, rehabilitation and work-related programs were highly considered to be developed in partnership with disabled persons organizations (DPOs). The VOICE project design framework and its implementation approach clearly aligned with the PAPD ambition to tackle challenges confronting PWDs.

The project design was built on the strength of the partner organizations, especially with priorities on addressing key identified challenges from the AIFO led Diagnostic Study On Disabled Peoples’ Organizations (DPOs) & National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD) 2018. These are underpinned by the long-standing relationships between AIFO and many of the local partners including Williette House, Oscar Romero School, the National

³ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/lbr204464.pdf>

Union of Disabled People, and the Government of Liberia. The evaluation found that AIFO VOICE Project operational approach of providing sustained, flexible funds to PWDs beneficiaries, and with the support from the EU to partner organizations were pivotal in enabling VOICE Project and partners to be responsive to local context such as capacity needs for NUOD and DPOS, advocacy and outreach activities.

Effectiveness

Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) enhanced their capacity and autonomy to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) in Liberia.

Under this evaluation, effectiveness applies to the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across the intervention; thereby attempting to answer the question about the intervention achieving its objectives. During this evaluation, we examined the achievement of the project objectives on its result chain/causal pathway.

Four synergic outputs under this project were designed to create/contribute to the project specific objective/Outcome: Disabled People's Organizations enhanced their capacity and autonomy to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia. In the long term, the improved DPOs role and capacity in the dialogue with key public and private stakeholders will contribute to all deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia enjoying the right to have equal access to work and employment (Impact/overall goal of the Action). The ambition of the project was to enhance the capacity and autonomy of DPOs to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) in Liberia as a result, all deaf and hard of hearing persons in Liberia enjoy the right to have equal access to work and employment.

From the analysis of the result chain/causal pathway, three indicators were being considered when analyzing the overall effectiveness of the project outcome:

- Number of DPOs autonomously and effectively engaged with key public and private stakeholders for economic empowerment of the deaf and HOH persons in Liberia
- Number of DPOs proposals for PWDs employment related reforms, included in key public stakeholders' agenda.
- Number of deaf and HOH persons which improved their advocacy competencies to become acknowledged counterparts within the disability federation in Liberia and the broader Liberian society.

On the overall, all 9 DPOs were identified to have autonomously and effectively engaged with key public and private stakeholders for economic empowerment of deaf and HOH persons. In Saclepea, after the advocacy training, those DPOs started to engage the county duty bearer such as the county steering committee that manages the County Social Development Fund; as a result; DPOs have been given the slot by the County Management team for the CSDF. This will make the disabled people's voices to be included in the management of the CSDF. In

Bomi, DPOs engaged the County Education Officer (CEO) and advocated for Deaf and HOH persons to attend the only public school, CH Dueh Public in Tubmanburg. The CEO has promised that the opportunities will be given to them during the subsequent academic year 2023/2024.

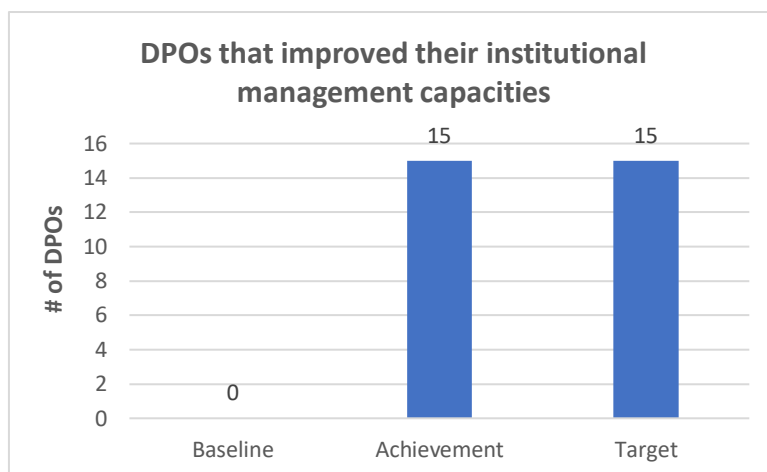
Now, some of the PWDs have had opportunities to gain employment. For instance, some of those Deaf and HOH persons that completed the training in Bomi have been employed by ORS school as Tailors and while others teach at the schools.

The summary table below demonstrate how effective the project was in achieving its specific objective/outcome

Outcome (Specific objective)	Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) enhanced their capacity and autonomy to engage for the socio-economic empowerment of the deaf and hard of hearing persons (HOH) in Liberia.			
	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Achievement
	# of DPOs autonomously and effectively engaged with key public and private stakeholders for economic empowerment of the deaf and HOH persons in Liberia.	0	9	9
	# of DPOs proposals for PWDs employment related reforms, included in key public stakeholders’ agenda.	0	3	3
# of deaf and HOH persons which improved their advocacy competencies to become acknowledged counterparts within the disability federation in Liberia and the broader Liberian society.	0	15	20	

Capacity Building

Training sessions on organizational management skills provided to NUOD and their member DPOs as well as the training for DPOs on advocacy, the UN CRPD and other legal human rights instruments helped to equip NUOD to provide specific training for DPOs to advocate for their PWDs economic and work rights on national and county level. There were several categories of training conducted. These included residential and refresher training. A total of 9 DPOs and NUOD were trained. A total of 100 DPOs and NUOD members participated in these training across the 3 project counties – Bomi, Montserrado, and Nimba. A total of 15 DPOs have had improved institutional management capacities.



In addition to institutional capacity building, individual DPO members capacity was also strengthened in advocacy for PWDs economic and work rights. At baseline, these members didn't have any capacity in advocacy, especially for economic and work rights. However, the project was able to train a total of 175 DPOs members across Bomi, Montserrado, and Nimba County.

DPO members trained by NUOD that advocate for PWDs economic and work rights			
County	Baseline	Target	Achievement
Bomi	0	45	45
Montserrado	0	65	65
Nimba	0	45	45

The ambition of providing training to the DPOs members was to empower them to be able to advocate. At baseline, these members were not involved in any form of advocacy for economic and work rights for PWDs. From the analysis of the result chain, 20 deaf and HOH members that got training were actively involved in advocacy activities for other PWDs for economic and work rights. A total of 15 deaf and HOH persons at the national and county level are actively interacting with NUOD and DPOs

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achievement
Number of deaf and HOH DPO members trained by NUOD that advocate for PWDs economic and work rights	0	20	20
Number of trained deaf and HOH persons actively interacting with NUOD and DPOs at national and county level.	0	15	15

Advocacy component

NUOD held several advocacy follow-up meetings with DPOs to establish local advocacy actions. These meetings allowed DPOs representatives that received capacity building training to plan advocacy actions tailored at local level to suit the country context. Additionally, roundtable dialogues were facilitated by NUOD to raise awareness with target audiences (including policy makers, local businesses and private sector) for better employment integration of deaf and HOH persons. The project was able to shape and ensure that key policy makers and stakeholders actively participated in these dialogues, prioritizing the inclusion of PWDs in the employment sector. The above activities will allow 24 DPOs and NUOD members (100), in particular deaf and HOH persons, to be engaged in the development of advocacy and lobby strategies to influence policy makers at local and national level.

During the course of the implementation, 4 advocacy actions and lobby strategy was developed by DPOs and proposed to key public and private stakeholders to influence policy-makers at local and national level. Taking into consideration the challenges facing PWDs in the context of Liberia, taking ownership for advocacy by the DPOs themselves is significant and may contribute to greater changes. During the focus group discussion, the deaf and HOH persons that participated indicated that through the project, they have better understand their key roles in fostering a strong advocacy platform that could change the dynamics surrounding the DPOs in Liberia.

Output 1.2	9 DPOs and NUOD members (100), in particular deaf and HOH persons, engaged in the development of advocacy and lobby strategies to influence policy-makers at local and national level.			
	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achievement
	Number of advocacy actions and lobby strategies developed by DPOs and proposed to key public and private stakeholders to influence policy-makers at local and national level.	0	1	4

Awareness component

The Information Education and Communication (IEC) Programme through the Community Radio and TV programme with the participation of deaf and HOH persons focused on PWDs right to work and employment was very effective. It helped to increase the awareness of PWDs rights and created more linkages between the PWDs and the stakeholders. Although the aim was to sensitize the public on disability, deafness in particular, inclusion, rights of PWDs, it also fosters more collaboration with radio and TV stations to train and guide youth with hearing impairment. This motivated them to speak out for themselves in the creation and broadcasting of deaf youth radio and TV programmes. The IEC programme activities raised awareness of the general public, as well as national and local decision-makers regarding the right of PWDs to work and employment.

Livelihood and skills training component

As part of the intervention, the Fellowship programme including life-skills, literacy, social entrepreneurship training, and coaching for 90 deaf and HOH persons along with vocational training provided by inclusive and strategic partnerships with primary and secondary education institutes was very effective.

A total of 114 deaf and HOF of hearing persons benefited under the VOICE project were zero in skills. Independently, the training and the sign language have given them more opportunities and improved their access to socio-economic empowerment. For instance, some of the PWDs were marginalized in their own communities and within their own family. Some of the social barriers were limited communication and sign language has enabled them to strengthen their communication with their peers and the training has given them skills to become self-employed in their communities.

The skills gained from these training provided more confidence to the participants to go out to practice what they have learned. With the possibility of access to different tools that they may need to implement what they have learned is still a bit challenging. Meanwhile, through different learning by doing programmes, will provide youth trainees with the needed skills to access job opportunities that afford them more access to tools and they will continue to implement their skills.

In addition to the skills training, sign language education for the deaf with little or no formal education, employers and their parent support groups at community level created robust social cohesion between the deaf and HOH persons and their communities; especially, their parents. With the sign language training, the students were able to effectively communicate with their peers but moreover, with their family.

One of the best practices in the project was the extension of the sign language training to not only the students, but to the parents to foster more social cohesion and reconnect their family ties.

"I am very grateful to God and AIFO for bringing my son back to life. My son was being neglected by most of the family members including myself. I was not able to communicate with him. Therefore, he wasn't much prioritized in the family. However, with the help of AIFO, my son is now part of us and we are able to effectively

communicate with him through the sign language training both of us received as part of this project” – Mr. Alloysius, father of one of the beneficiaries of the sing language training

A total of 114 deaf and HOH young persons successfully completed livelihood and skills training; 100% of them that were interviewed indicated that they have improved technical skills and are now employable with the skills gained from the training.

Output 1.4	90 Deaf and HOH young persons improved employability and technical/vocational skills.			
	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Achievement
	Number of deaf and HOH young persons who successfully completed livelihood and skills training.	0	108	114
	Number of deaf and HOH young persons who improved their technical/vocational skills and employability.	0	90%	100%
% of trained deaf and HOH young persons that had access to employment opportunities, social services delivery and networking.	0	75%	80%	

Efficiency

This criterion was an opportunity to check whether an intervention’s resources were justified by its results, which is of major practical and political importance. Efficiency matters to many stakeholder groups, including governments, civil society and beneficiaries. Better use of limited resources means that more can be achieved with development co-operation, for example in progressing towards achieving PADP components on PWDs where the needs are huge.

However, this evaluation focused more on operational efficiency as this was not a cost evaluation. Therefore, summary of the interventions with feasibility and implementation, particularly with regard to the way in which resources are used are summarized. In terms of timing, and other resources allocations, the project was very efficient in terms of staffing, timing of activities, and partnership grant management.

We consider that value for money was fairly achieved on this project although there is the possibility to have more efficiently disbursed. Since this was not a standalone cost evaluation, the evaluation didn’t uncover in detail about the financial efficiency. Generally, the funds expended on the project were well targeted and delivered value for money.

Efficiency was also evaluated based upon timeliness of activities, the human/staffing capacity, and the duration of the intervention. On an overall, the project was very efficient on the

project activities timeline. Although there was no cost extension to allow the project complete some of its final deliverables, meanwhile, that didn't actually result from any major delayed activities.

The duration of the project was one of the areas for improvement that could be relook into during future project design. Most of the activities in the project will require some long-term engagement to be able to create more results.

Coherence

The project fits within the national development agenda, the Pro poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). Under the PAPD Pillar-I (Power to the People). People with Special Needs Social and cultural factors limit opportunities to find work while living with disability, but even more so, people with disability face discrimination from employers. Even those who find employment face wage discrimination because they tend to earn less than their colleagues. Disability and poverty are mutually reinforcing. Insecure living conditions, lack of access to basic services, malnutrition and other dimensions of poverty can lead to disabilities. Persons living with disabilities are usually excluded from social and economic life and their rights are not fully fulfilled

The project also strongly aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) that was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities; however, in individual member states, program like VOICE could strongly contribute to the achievement and greater adherence to the protocol. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

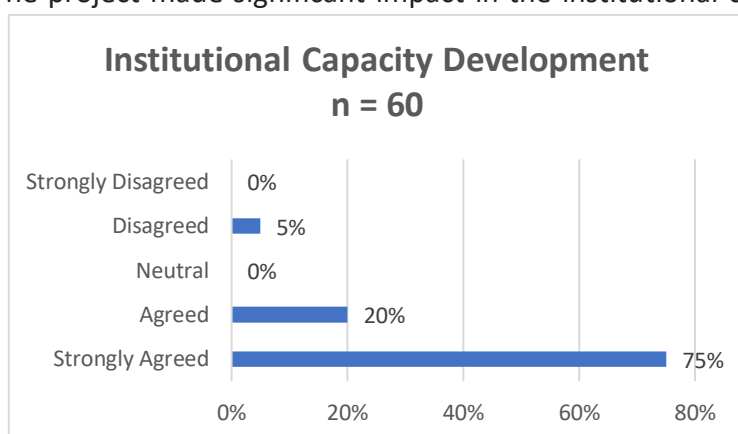
Internal Coherence was also a significant part of the intervention. This project has a stronger synergy with the DASU project previously implemented by AIFO. Based on the research conducted at the end of the DASU project, the VOICE project was designed.

Impact

The impact of the VOICE project was considered as the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the overall intervention. The evaluation sought to identify the social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion sought to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. We did so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in the context or norms, and potential effects on PWDs, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

Although it will require some time for the expected changes to occur, the feedback from surveys conducted have generally been impressive. People feel that the deaf and HOH persons are now having some access to basic services due to the intervention. Moreover, the perception of the people towards PWDs is now becoming to change as demonstrated from the findings of the survey conducted. Majority of the people who feel that HOH persons and deaf could not become meaningful are now starting to change that mindset because of the intervention. Some Deaf and HOH persons that participated in this project are now able to provide some socio-economic services and become self-employed in the society.

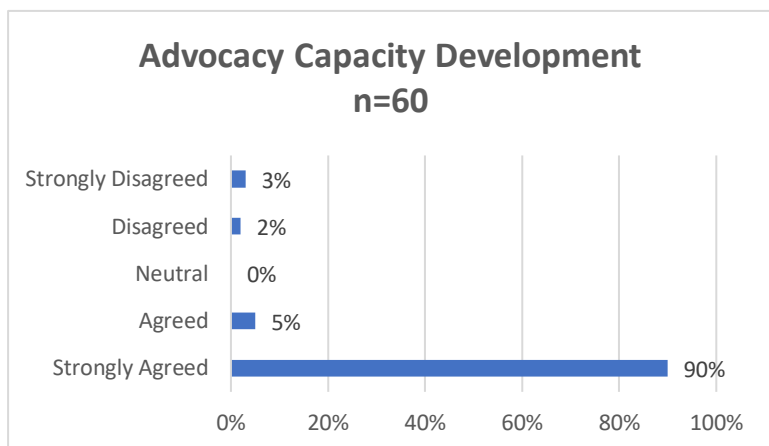
The project made significant impact in the institutional capacity development of DPOs and



NUOD. Out of the 60 project participants that were interviewed during the survey, 75% of them strongly agreed that the project strengthened their institution capacity in several thematic areas including advocacy, financial and stakeholder engagements. Financial viability was one of the

institutional capacities that was also strengthened by the project for the DPOs. During the trainings, the provided financial mobilization strategies capacity to the DPOs. In one of the towns, ZOUGOWEE in Nimba, the DPOs were able to organized fundraising event and raised more than 50,000 LD in less than 3 hours and they have invested this money in an agriculture project.

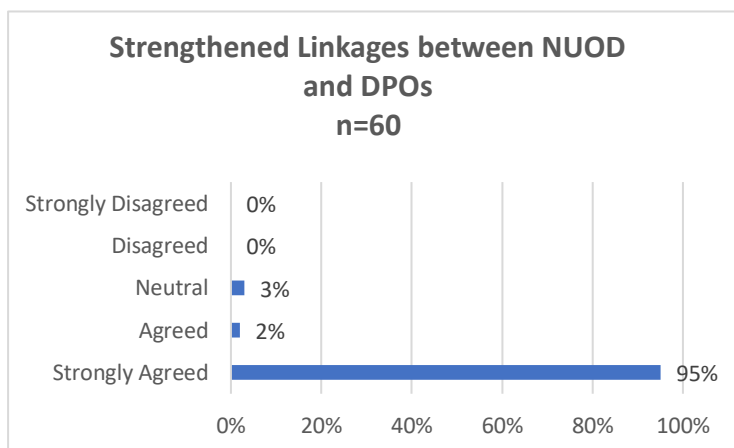
The Advocacy Capacity was one of the strengths of the intervention. The project was more impactful in strengthening the advocacy capacity of the PWDs through the various DPOs.



From the survey results, all respondents that were asked if the intervention contributed to their advocacy capacity including NUOD, indicated that they strongly agreed the intervention has robustly strengthened their advocacy capacity. From the key informant interview with all the 3 DPOs in Nimba, they indicated that advocacy capacity was one of the best components of the

intervention. Prior to the intervention, they didn't know much of their rights and didn't know that they could engage the county stakeholders and discuss issues affecting the rights of the PWDs. However, the project has redirected their engagement with the county stakeholders. They are now able to present issues and have a negotiation with the county stakeholders on their rights and protection. Out of the total number of surveys conducted among the sample beneficiaries, 90% of them strongly agreed that the project strengthened their advocacy capacity; 5% agreed, while 3% strongly disagreed that the project contributed to their advocacy capacity. When asked further, the 3% indicated that they have been involved in advocacy activities prior to the VOICE project. These respondents were actually from Montserrado County that have been involved in other advocacy strategies development.

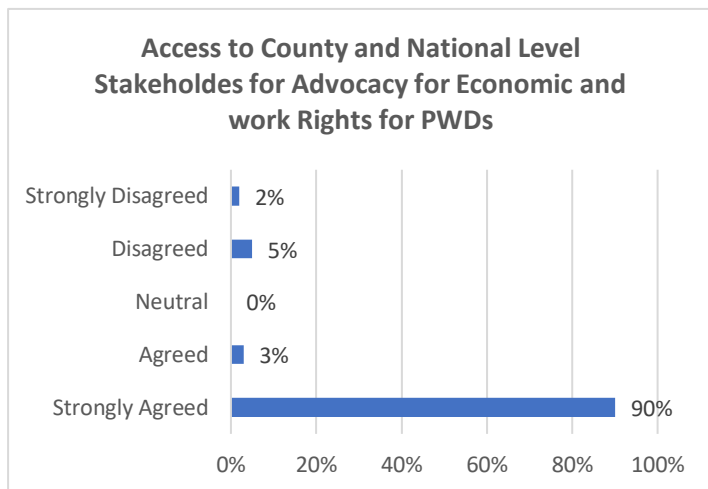
The Project has also strengthened Linkages between the 9 DPOs that AIFO work with and 25 DPOs that NUOD worked with. These DPOs have been able to coordinate adequately on



advocacy for access to basic social services for PWDs. The project has strengthened a greater harmony within the DPO communities. Initially, there were more fragmented DPOs operating differently under their own context. However, the intervention built more synergies and interconnected them together robustly. These linkages also include between DPOs and

DPOs. Out of the total sample, 95% of the respondents strongly agreed that the project built stronger linkages between the DPOs and NUODs as well as DPOs to DPOs.

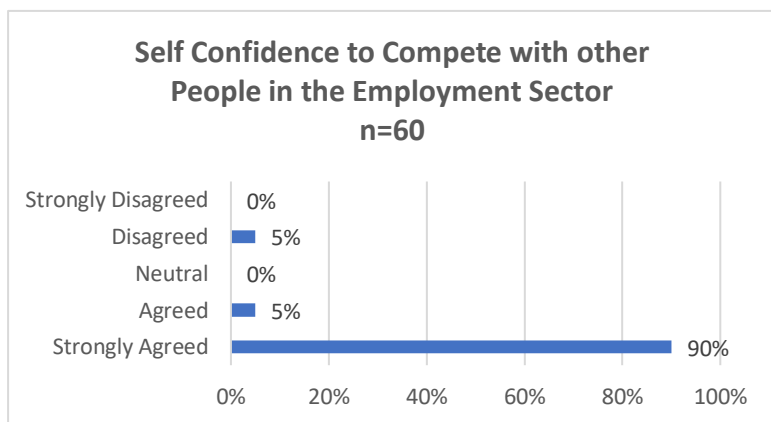
Creating a platform that gave access to Stakeholders for DPOs was also another impactful area for this intervention. Often, when PWDs are visiting some of the stakeholders, the



general perception of the people is that they are going to beg for money. However, most of the visitation by the DPOs to the County and national authorities such as law makers, superintendents, and local ministries, are now about policy discussions. From the survey, 90% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed to have more access to both the county and national level stakeholders that is

attributable to the project that allow them to advocate for economic and work rights for PWDs especially deaf and HOH persons. Only 5% disagreed that they have access to these stakeholders. According to them, there needs to be more linkages built and connections that will make them more meaningful when engaging these stakeholders.

From the surveys conducted among additional 60 participants. Mainly, these were students from livelihood training programs. Key concentration for this component of the survey was

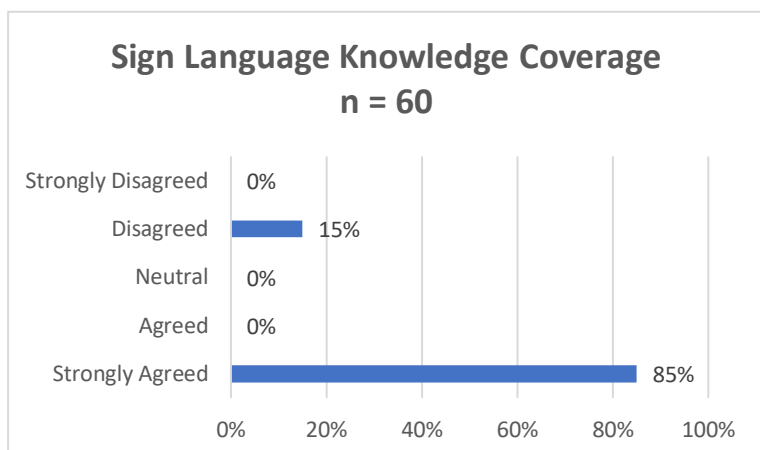


to better understand how confident are the learners taking into consideration their status of disability. Based upon the livelihood training such as tailoring, computer, soap making etc, those deaf and HOH persons that participated in those skill training are highly confident due to the level of training provided by the project. Out of 60 learners that

were interviewed, 90% of them indicated that they strongly agreed that they are now able to compete with other people within the employment sector. However, 5% of them disagreed and indicated that the employment sector still remains biased to PWDs. This drove their perception by reducing confidence in themselves to compete with other people that are not disabled.

Sign Language bridged the social gap between the deaf and HOH persons that benefited from the project and their family including the communities. The data from the survey was also triangulated by the FGD with the parents. From the FGD with the parents in Saclepea, all students that participated in both cohorts of the training didn't have any form of basic sign language knowledge. However, the project was able to bridge the communication barrier between the deaf and HOH persons that participated in the training and their parents. From the survey conducted among these categories of beneficiaries, 75% of them indicated that

they got the Sign language knowledge solely due to their participation in the project; 20%



Sustainability

The project impacts are very sustainable. From the context of continuation of some of the project activities, the current projects funded by SIDA, the Coordinated Action on Disabilities in Liberia, will support some of the VOICE project activities such as radio and television programs.

Capacity Building activities under the project were able to create more knowledge gain among the beneficiaries. The DPOs institutional capacity will continue to enhance their operations and keep them connected with the NUODs and other DPOs to continue advocacy. However, the project reached a small number of DPOs across the country.

The ability of the DPOs to produce technical proposals, strategic action plans and fundraising serves as a strong sustainability path for the DPOs and NUOD. The AIFO programme contributed to organizational sustainability of local partners, through stronger strategic planning, programming skills, proposal designs, monitoring and evaluation and skills in preparation of agendas. During midterm evaluation, the community level stakeholders including beneficiaries such as PwDs, DPOs and CBOs highlighted the need for further back up and support arrangements to capacitate and encourage local NGOs, especially in the current process of transformations in local government through inclusion programme and empowering People with Disabilities (PwDs). While exploring all means with the Government

Advocacy skills gained from the project are also sustainable. On an overall, the knowledge gained and practices learned by the DPOs from their engagement with NUOD and continued engagement with local and national level stakeholders will continue to make the DPOs more viable and respectable institutions in local and national level decision making.

Recommendation

The evaluation results suggest that the project landscape in general has great growth

potential.

1. Long-term programming around enhancing the role of the NUOD representing the views and opinions of DPOs by providing a channel for information on existing and new legislations on PWDs economic and work rights would make more sustainable impact than short duration project.
2. Future Projects needs to take into consideration budget and duration. There needs to be more strategy to ensure that the project reaches and engages the entire country. This can be done by first having a clear understanding of the audience and how they use information around PWDs rights. A clear picture of the audience will allow for a more targeted approach to misinformation.
3. Future projects should consider full-time monitoring and evaluation personnel on the project and consistently document, store and report result systematically.
4. Other areas that could need further collaboration include improvement partner organizations coordination and communication, external relationships and coordination with NCD on planned targets, outputs, co-creation of strategies and plans; and program internal management including monitoring and evaluation, data management, and result harvesting.
5. While some interventions are considered to be quick wins, others focus on systems thinking and change (improving the current environment of PWDs. EU and other potential donors should focus on the sustainability of individual programmes
6. While DPOs have been capacitated, their role as an interface between people and local government still needs more support. They will require continuous follow up, technical support, and backstopping to continue working as an interface between the disabled citizens and local government.
7. Support DPOs to also explore for funding opportunities in the private sector. For example, corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects of multinationals, as they may create room for potential or future employment for PwDs.
8. Startup Kits for livelihood skill training beneficiaries. Most of the livelihood training beneficiaries would require start up kits to fully utilize their skills and become more employable within the sector that they have learned from the training.