

TRAC 2

SUBMISSION FORM

Please refer to the Guide for submission instructions.

Country Office: Sierra Leone

Accelerating Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone

The TRAC 2 funds will be used to achieve two inter-related results: a) accelerate youth innovation and entrepreneurship through the full operationalization of YouthConnekt in Sierra Leone; and b) strengthen UNDP's integrator role as the UNCT co-lead (with UNFPA) on youth empowerment, by leading in the establishment of a Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment.

In December 2018 the Minister of Youth Affairs (MOYA) formerly launched YouthConnekt in Sierra Leone. Since then, UNDP and MYA have focused on nationwide awareness on the values and programmes of YouthConnekt. UNDP is also supporting the Ministry of Youth Affairs in reviewing the Youth Policy and the development of a national strategy on youth empowerment. With this TRAC 2 funds, UNDP will create multiple opportunities for skills development, entrepreneurship, access to finance for selected emerging young entrepreneurs, as well as, awareness raising on issues related to youth development and promotion of youth inclusion in local and national dialogue.

Similarly, the Minister of Planning and the UN Resident Coordinator launched the UN's 2020-2023 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in November 2019. The UNSDCF is the framework through which the UN will support the implementation of the MT-NDP to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Sierra Leone in the next four years. Through its co-leadership in the UNCT on youth empowerment, UNDP will use part of the TRAC 2 fund to lead the establishment of a Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment. The Platform which will be co-chaired by the Minister of Youth Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator will facilitate coherent support to youth empowerment by promoting innovative joint programming, mobilizing multi-donor funding, and advancing collaborative actions.

The proposed initiatives will be delivered through the following strategic actions:

1. Map the ecosystem of emerging young entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone: Youth entrepreneurship is growing in Sierra Leone but currently there does not exist a single platform where the emerging talents can be accessed and where they can interact to mutually reinforce one another. The project will begin by undertaking a nation-wide mapping exercise to identify emerging youth entrepreneurs and businesses. The criteria will focus on innovative entrepreneurship in the climate-sensitive agriculture, fishery, arts, fashion, ICT, etc. The report will lead to the development of a web-based platform of young entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone.

2. Select and adopt youth entrepreneurs for empowerment: From the mapping exercise UNDP will select 16 youth entrepreneurs (4 from each of the regions of Sierra Leone) for empowerment. The number will include the four entrepreneurs already being supported in the Tony Elumelu Foundation initiative. Through innovative information and communication tools UNDP will connect the young entrepreneurs to resources (financial and technical), private companies, and policy-makers, etc. to

help improve financial literacy and grow their businesses. The youth will also be linked to successful youth entrepreneurs in the wider network of YouthConnekt Africa for coaching and mentoring. The entrepreneurs will be supported to develop viable business strengthening plans. UNDP will award grants in close collaboration with a selected financial institution for the implementation of the plans. At the end of the year, the businesses will be assessed to determine how well the grants have been invested. UNDP will hold an annual "Successful Entrepreneur Award" to recognize the best entrepreneurs and businesses.

3. Establish fully functioning YouthConnekt Hubs: with the funds UNDP in collaboration with relevant UN Agencies in the UNCT Youth Empowerment Group will support the MOYA to establish and operate YouthConnekt hubs in the four regions of Sierra Leone (Western Area, Southern, Northern and Eastern regions). The hubs will be the space to unlock the creative potential of young people and ensure their participation and voice in national and local dialogues on achieving the sustainable development goals through the MT-NDP.

4. Set-up and manage a Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment: Building on our country presence, this platform will be used to connect youth resources, develop innovative ideas and serve as a one stop shop for innovating integrated solutions to the complex challenge of lifting and keeping Sierra Leone's youth out of extreme poverty. Currently, there are multiple youth initiatives supported by DfID (Invest Salone), Innovative Youth Entrepreneurship (by EU and others), the IFIs, UN Agencies, the private sector, and government institutions. These are uncoordinated and scattered. A platform that will convene and pool these resources will increase the chance of maximizing impact. It will also advance UNDP's integrator role in the 2030 Agenda.

The project will be implemented as part of the Local Economic Development (LED) portfolio of the recently approved 4-year Country Programme for the Sierra Leone Country Office. The portfolio also addresses economic inclusion of other vulnerable populations including women and girls, persons with disability, and remote communities through skills development for small and medium businesses especially agribusiness, tourism, and cross-border trade. The approach will strengthen synergy for optimal results.

Rationale

Youth empowerment and employment is a major development challenge in Sierra Leone. 60% of Sierra Leone's population make up of youth and this is expected to double in the next 30 years. According to the Sierra Leone population and housing survey 2015, 53.4% of youth are employed, while 43.6% are not in the labor market. Investment in employment and entrepreneurship targeting both female and male youth is critical to ensure Sierra Leone can harness the demographic dividend. Engagement of the youth in the formal and informal sectors will bolster the capacity of the nation to fully utilize their skills and energies in accelerating achievement of the SDGs.

In a 2019 study conducted by the Ministry of Youth with support from the UN on community and gang violence, high unemployment and pervasive poverty across the country were identified as critical root causes for youth joining gangs and cliques. Unemployment in Sierra Leone remains high, especially among young people. At the same time, economic gains have been uneven and there is a growing sense of inequality which is resulting in a widespread sense of frustration among youth. The lack of employment opportunities and social protections has left youth searching for income generating opportunities in the informal sector – including commercial sex work and seeking alternatives in Europe through dangerous routes. Gang membership and associated activities can serve as a means to generate income to support families and provide livelihoods, making it an option for youth seeking

sustainable sources of income. Investing in youth empowerment and entrepreneurship is critical to the success of the SDGs in Sierra Leone and to sustaining the peace.

Sierra Leone's 2019 national budget is strongly built on strengthening youth initiatives across the country. The President declared 2019 as the year for youth. This political will backed by a strong financial support from Government present an opportunity to advance the youth agenda in Sierra Leone. UNDP has been the lead support to youth empowerment and employment since the end of the civil war. The political momentum and the growing regional youth agenda through the AU Agenda 2063, the YouthConnekt, the Tony Elumelu Foundation initiatives present unique opportunity to accelerate the youth agenda in Sierra Leone.

Outcome 4 of the UNSDCF (2020-2023) captures youth as a central point of focus, prioritizing entrepreneurship, financial literacy and employability for vulnerable groups, including youth. The Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) also captures youth as a central point of focus, under policy cluster 6 (youth employment, sports and migration), which shows the level of premium and immediate need to support initiatives geared toward youth empowerment in Sierra Leone.

These opportunities and challenges justify investing TRAC 2 resources to accelerate youth innovation and entrepreneurship through a more coordinate and joined up programming as herein proposed.

Alignment with facility objectives:

Specify how the purpose aligns with the objectives of TRAC2

The availability of resources from TRAC2 to the SLE CO, will present a unique opportunity to move a step further in building strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders to develop youth entrepreneurial skills to contribute to the eradication of poverty--the goal of the CO's 2020-2023 Country Programme as well as the first Signature Solution of the UNDP Strategic Plan and a goal in the Common Chapter of the SP. Setting up a Country Support Platform will strengthen coordination, partnership-building including the private. The platform will allow for joined-up resource mobilization. Giving the wide range of actions in the youth empowerment space in Sierra Leone, a platform model is likely to attract both traditional and non-traditional partners in or out of Sierra Leone through south-south cooperation and other modalities for partnership and financing.

Alignment with regional priorities:

Priority 2 of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan of the AU's Agenda 2063 focuses on Youth and Women Employment. The project will also contribute to achieving the UN Youth Strategy, Youth 2030 which aims to build a world in which the human rights of every young person are realized; every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential; and where the agency, resilience and positive contributions of every young person is recognized. The initiative will also contribute to the implementation of YouthConnekt Africa which aims to create 10 million jobs for Africa's youth. It's emphasis is youth creating jobs through innovation and leading the way in accelerating SDGs achievement in Sierra Leone.

Total amount requested: \$1,000,000

(cannot be less than \$350k per CO)

Expected Results

The submitting CO should list the expected benefits and indicators for success.

Resource Mobilization

Result 1

Increased investment in youth-led enterprises to expand business and job opportunities supported by both traditional and non-traditional partners. The initiative will practically demonstrate UNDP's integrator role, by bringing together a host of stakeholders to deal with youth employment in Sierra Leone through the Country Support Platform. It is expected that through this project, new partnerships will be established that will lead to future engagements that will sustainably increase the resources stream of the CO. As an immediate benefit, this initiative will strategically position the CO to tap into resources that are meant for youth development in Sierra Leone including those now available through the EU, DfID, and the IFIs. The Country Office has a well-developed resource mobilization strategy and is making conscious efforts to build new partnerships. The renewed energy around youth driven by the Office of the President in the context of the human capital development agenda of the country presents an exciting opportunity for the CO, if we better position ourselves in the space.

Programme Results

Result 1

16 youth entrepreneurs and their business will be strengthened and expanded through seeding, mentoring, financial literacy, and networking. These as a result will contribute to increase job opportunities. At least 5,000 youth will improve their knowledge in financial inclusion, participate in local and national development dialogues, and connect with youths leadership across Africa and the world through the use of the YouthConnekt Hubs. Increased commitment and new partnerships with traditional and non-traditional donors to invest in financial inclusion, access to finance, youth entrepreneurship development and exposure to innovation will be achieved through the Country Support Platform and networking across the YouthConnekt Africa platform. Specifically, a fully functioning country support platform will drive a concerted response to youth empowerment in Sierra Leone; 16 Youth entrepreneurs are better resourced to develop and expand their businesses; and Sierra Leone youth are included and engaged in local and national dialogues on the achievement of the SDGs through the country's Medium-term National Development Plan.

Other Benefits:

The project will create employability for young people in Sierra Leone and will promote youth entrepreneurship for sustainable development. Financial inclusion and access to finance will be enhanced through financial literacy skills training for youths.

Indicators of Success

The submitting CO should identify specific indicators for each result area, being as specific as possible. Each indicator should include a baseline (if available), target, source of data, and timeline.

Indicator: # of youth-led enterprises established that are strengthened and are accessing financial services

Baseline: 0

Target: 16

Source of data: Project Report; loan records

Timeline for target: 2021

Indicator: # of new partnerships established by CO with traditional and non-traditional partners to support youth entrepreneurship and innovation

Baseline: 0

Target: 3

Source of data: Project Report; partnership agreements

Timeline for target: 2021

Indicator: # of youth innovation and entrepreneur platform established and functioning

Baseline: 0

Target: 1

Source of data: Address of web-based platform

Timeline for target: 2021

Indicator: # of youth using YouthConnekt Hubs

Baseline: 0

Target: 5,000

Source of data: Records of users

Timeline for target: 2021

Implementation

Key Activities, Costs, and Timeline:

The submitting CO should identify the implementation plan during 2018-19. The plan should include activities, costings, timeline – activities, estimated costs , and timeline.

Activity 1

Conduct a mapping exercise on youth entrepreneurs and businesses in Sierra Leone.

Design and establish a web-based youth entrepreneur platform in Sierra Leone (Q2 2020)

Activity 2

Recruit an international UNV to lead the design and establishment of a Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment

Establish and operate a Country Support Platform for Youth Empowerment (Q3 2020)

Activity 3

Provide business improvement grants to the 16 selected youth entrepreneurs and businesses with focus on equal number of young women and men in sectors focusing on climate sensitive agribusiness including value addition, arts and fashion, ecotourism

Conduct a "Successful Business and Entrepreneurship Award" to celebrate the most successful of the 16 adopted entrepreneurs.

Support the winners and runners-up to attend the annual YouthConnekt Summit (Q3 2020)

Activity 4

Establish and operation 4 (four) YouthConnekt Hubs equipping them with ICT, electricity and other facilities for the operation of the Hubs. UNDP will support the upkeep of the Hubs in the first year and the Government will assume full responsibility (Q4 2020)

Key Partners:

The submitting CO should identify the key government partners and/or other development partners, along with a description on the role of the partner in the activities and if/how they will contribute to the project.

Partner & Role Description

NAYCOM will co-implement the project and serve as co-chair of the project board and will provide oversight and assurance on project delivery

The PPP Unit will lead public private dialogue with potential private sector entities that the project will partner with qualified NGOs or a commercial bank will implement the access to finance component of the project and will provide financial literacy skills training to selected youths and expose them to loan schemes for sustainable livelihoods

UNCDF will form part of the project steering committee and will provide technical support in the area of access to finance

Risks

Partnership risk: Partnerships with the private sector usually exposes UNDP to some reputational risks, depending on how the companies conduct themselves. To mitigate this risk, UNDP will conduct a thorough assessment of the private company partners, drawing on the Global Compact guidelines.

Political risk: Like most youth programs, this project has the potential to be politicized, particularly in the selection of the 16 entrepreneurs out of hundreds. UNDP may be accused of bias. To mitigate this risk, UNDP will undertake extensive awareness exercise including involving the entrepreneurs in

the design of the guidelines and the constitution of the selection committee. Through extensive awareness and involvement of all stakeholders throughout the process will help mitigate the risk.

Financial risk: There is intense competition for the limited and shrinking donor funds for development in Sierra Leone. This often impact negatively on collaboration and partnership. This is even exacerbated as agencies duplicate and encroach in one another spaces and mandate areas. The country support platform will help to mitigate this risk but fear of exposing one's best initiative could lead to reluctance to participate. The leadership of the UN RC and the Minister of Youth Affairs will serve as impetus for agency participation. Government's investment in youth efforts through its 2020 youth budget will also reduce financial risk. Engaging private sector, foundations, and other financing opportunities will also contribute to the risk mitigation.

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Document submission status:

Document is final