



**GROWTH
ACCELERATOR
LIBERIA**



Livelihood & Employment Creation

**Liberia MSMEs Growth Accelerator Liberia Programme (GAL)
Cohort III**

Due Diligence Assessment Visits Report

December, 2023



I. Background and Introduction

The Growth Accelerator Liberia's Programme cohort III MSMEs' supported ten (10) business ventures: five general MSMEs and five clean/renewable energy businesses, each of which won a grant of U\$40,000.00. Each business developed a growth implementation plan which consisted of three milestones: The first Milestone covered all legal and compliance documentation, including invoices of needed material/equipment covering the grant funds mentioned, including a 20% (U\$8,000.00) matching funds to be proffered by the business. The other two activities included the implementation of the plan. Towards the end of August, each business had submitted their full milestone one requirement. Upon receipt, review, and approval of the completed documents, the donor disbursed the first half of the project funds, Twenty Thousand United States Dollars (U\$20,000.00). The businesses matched the grant funds provided by the donor, as agreed, with Four Thousand (U\$4,000.00, 20% of the first tranche), making the available funds Twenty-Four Thousand United States Dollars (U\$24,000.00) to commence the project implementation activities.

iCampus and partners set out and conducted a due diligence visit to each of the ten business ventures funded for operations. This occurred across three counties, Margibi, Montserrado, and Nimba, with ten staff. The overall purpose of the exercise was to track key medium-term deliverables/achievements of the program's outputs and how these consistently contributed to the long-term goals.

The technical due diligence Monitoring visit of the ten (10) cohort III beneficiaries was carried out on the 1st and 2nd of December, 2023. It consisted of gathering real-time information on program implementation activities and performance of the businesses with the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status and progress of project implementation of each of the business ventures based on the agreed milestone plan and budget, which feeds into the program outcomes and goals;
- ii. To measure the achievement of the milestones' deliverables/outputs targets consistent with the effectiveness, quality, and timeliness, and;
- iii. To capture and summarize the major challenges/issues affecting the implementation progress, comply with reporting and Monitoring, and recommend actions to overcome them.
- iv.

A survey questionnaire of about 19 questions was developed and used for the exercise. The questions were subdivided into three parts: The business information, the business

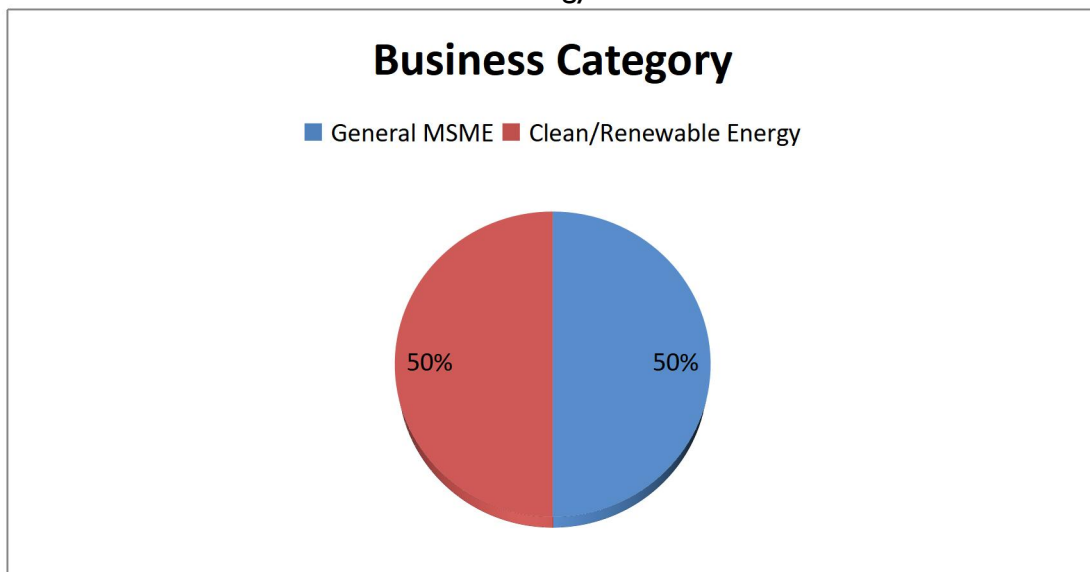
output deliverables, and the project implementation challenges and recommendations. The details are provided as follows:

The Businesses' Information: This section covered the basic information of the businesses that participated.

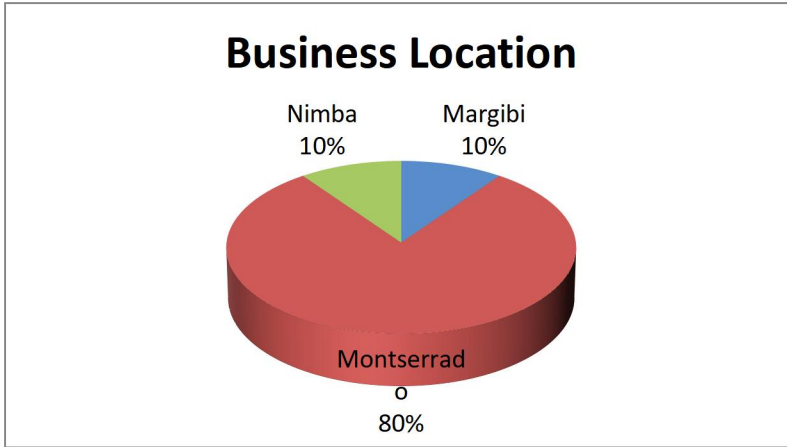
a. **Business' Name and Product/Services:**

No.	Name of Business	Specific Products/Services
1	Eco-Energy Liberia	Solar Energy Products
2	iFarm Liberia	Animal husbandry, and organic fertilizer
3	Grace Diagnostic and Treatment Center Inc.	Medical diagnosis and treatment services, clinical engineering
4	Green Gold Liberia	Briquettes, clean cook stoves.
5	Eco fuel	Chacoal briquette. fire starter, shisha coal and organic fertilizer
6	Payless Cloth Pads	Pad production
7	Voma Energy Liberia	Clean energy , maintenance, configuration
8	Mako's Fruits	Caved fruits for events, fresh juice, smoothes
9	Naz Naturals	Natural hair products
10	A-I Technical Engineering Solutions	Solar Installation, Maintenance and Retailing Solar Products

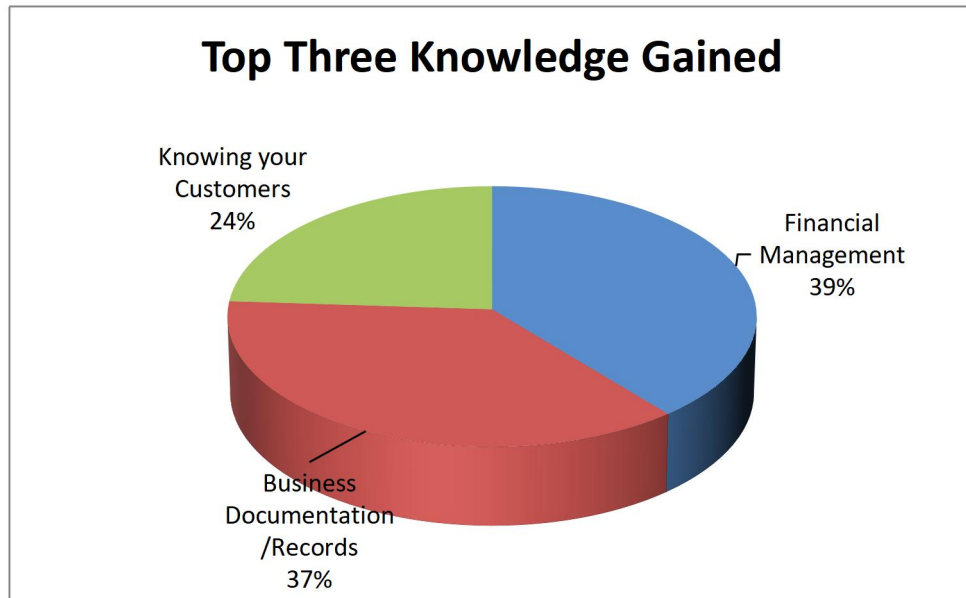
b. **Business Category:** The businesses are divided into two major groups; General MSMEs and the Clean and Renewable Energy.



- c. **Location-** Eighty percent (80%) of the businesses are in Montserrado County



- d. **Capacity-building and Knowledge Gained:** The top Three Knowledge Gained from the capacity-building interactions reported by the businesses are, Financial Management, Business Documentation and Records, and Knowing your customers. See the graph below:

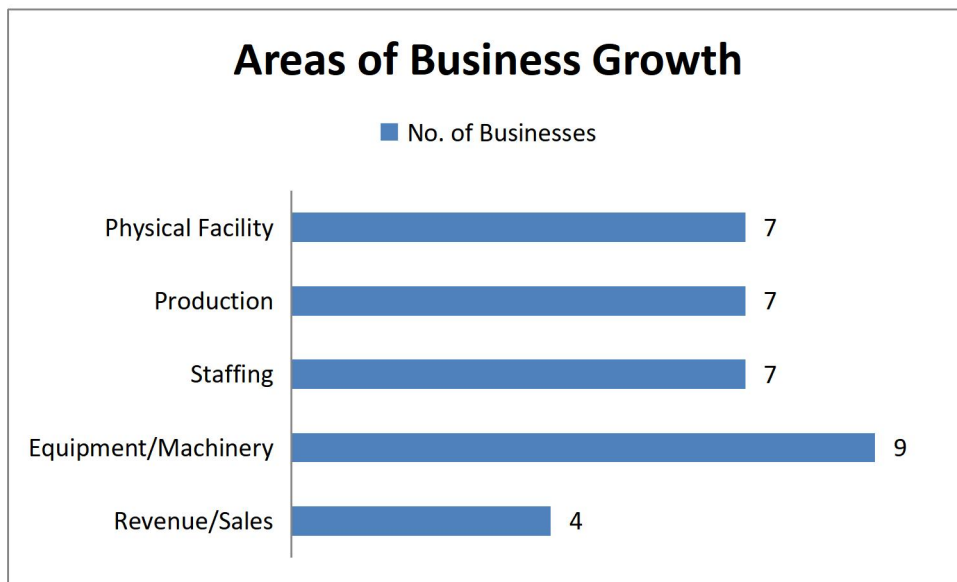


2. Businesses' Output Achievements/Deliverables

a. **Grant Funding Provided-** To date, each of the businesses reported to have received 50% of the total committed funds (U\$40,000.00) which is U\$20,000.00 (and a 100% of the first tranche/milestone), This is depicted in the table below:

No.	Name of Business	First Tranche Disbursed
1	A-I Technical Engineering Solutions	U\$20,000.00
2	Eco fuel	U\$20,000.00
3	Eco-Energy Liberia	U\$20,000.00
4	Grace Diagnostic and Treatment Center Inc.	U\$20,000.00
5	Green Gold Liberia	U\$20,000.00
6	iFarm Liberia	U\$20,000.00
7	Mako's Fruit	U\$20,000.00
8	Naz Natural	U\$20,000.00
9	Payless Cloth Pads	U\$20,000.00
10	Voma Energy	U\$20,000.00
11	Total Disbursement	U\$200,000.00

b. **Areas of Business Growth-** The businesses reported growth in five key areas; Equipment/Machinery, Physical facility, Production, Staffing, Sales/Revenue. The graph below depicts the areas of growth the business has experienced and expressed over the past month and a half since the grant funds were provided for the business's operations.



- i. **Physical Facility-** Seven out of the 10 businesses (70%) have expanded their existing operations facilities and/or rented new and spacious facilities for their operations. These were verified through ownership deeds, rent payment receipts, and lease contracts from the lessors.
- ii. **Production-** Seventy (70%) businesses have experienced increased production. An average increase in production/sales is recorded at 22%. Most businesses still expect key machinery this month and early January, boosting production and sales.
- iii. **Staffing-** Seventy percent (70%) of the businesses have employed additional and needed manpower. They have already hired a total of 44 persons (25 females, and 19 males), which constitute 57% females



- iv. **Machinery/Equipment-** Nine of the 10 businesses (90%) could procure needed equipment/machinery for their operations. This was also verified through procurement documentation (proformas, cash transfers, receipts), including pictures of assets purchased.
 - v. **Revenue and Sales-** With a total of U\$200,000.00 in grants invested by the donor, the businesses are already beginning to experience an increase in Revenue and Sales. Four of the 10 businesses have already started seeing early returns on investment. The average Revenue/Sales is 13% for this first month of operations.
3. **Status of the Milestone Implementation-** The table below categorizes and presents the status of the milestone deliverables for each of the businesses:

		Milestone Deliverable Status			
No.	Name of Business	Completed	Ongoing	Not Started	Comment
1	Eco-Energy Liberia	Completed spending all the funds	Products purchased are being shipped	NA	Expected before the end of the month. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
2	iFarm Liberia	Completed spending all the funds	Pig Pan is under Construction	NA	Works delayed due to the extended rainfall. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
3	Grace Diagnostic and Treatment Center Inc.	Completed spending all the funds	Wholesale pharmacy lease was not paid	NA	Due to delay in the funds transfer, the facility identified was given out. Therefore the funds were diverted to medical supplies. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
4	Green Gold Liberia	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	50 pieces of cook stove are being produced		Submitted report and awaiting the next tranche. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
5	Eco fuel	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	Construction of website and fencing of the property completed	NA	This is expected to be completed in December 2023. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
6	Payless Cloth Pads	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	Provision of operation training for staffs	Provision of operation training for staffs	Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
7	Voma Energy	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	Completed the installation of solar-mini-grid in Margibi	NA	Submitted report and awaiting the next tranche. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
8	Mako's Fruit	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	NA	NA	Submitted report and awaiting the next tranche. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.



9	Naz Natural	Purchases of raw materials and equipment have been made	NA	Product certification	This is expected to be completed in December 2023. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.
10	A-ITechnical Engineering Solutions	Purchases of products and equipment have been made	Uploading entries to Quick books and HR Policy	NA	Completed by the 15th December. Accountability Lab Liberia - iCampus recommends that UNDP pays the 2 nd tranche.

4. **Program Implementation by iCampus Consortium-** In the set of questions proffered for this MEL evaluation, a set of questions were directed at the program implementation led by the iCampus and partners, and the following feedback was provided by the program participants:

- a. Participants’ rating of their experience in the program - On a scale of 1-10, the average rating of their experience accessing the GALP program and funding is 8.7.
- b. Assessing grants before GALP- The participants commented that assessing grants before GALP was challenging and difficult. About 50% of the businesses have never participated in any grant application process. Of the remaining five businesses, four have yet to participate. The last business participated and won once
- c. Participants rated the GALP in achieving its goals/objectives- On a scale of 1-10, the participants rated the program’s ability to achieve its goals/objectives and impactful scaling at 9.5.

5. **Conclusion-** All ten (10) businesses are well on track regarding their milestone deliverables. Collectively, the milestone implementation plan achievements can be rated 95-98% in terms of its outputs delivery and budget spending. Outstanding expenditures are related to ongoing staff training, professional contractors’ fees, and in-country duty clearing charges, including product transportation, and equipment/machinery. Therefore, the iCampus consortium has no reservations about recommending that the second tranche payment be disbursed to the businesses.

6. Key Program Implementation Challenges and Recommendations

- i. The timeframe for implementation after the grant disbursement needed to be longer; therefore, there have been some delays with a few business milestone activities. To avoid these delays, especially those related to procuring equipment/machinery and other products from overseas, Including local procurement from the counties during the rains, considering the difficult road conditions in Liberia, It is advisable to start the program early, between January to March, each program year.



- ii. Poor internet connectivity has made coaching and mentoring less effective. Internet connectivity outside of Monrovia or cities in the counties can be a real challenge. Therefore, the program should Invest in in-person coaching and mentorship at the businesses rather than online.
- iii. Coming up with cash-matching funds took a lot of work for most of the businesses. Almost all of the business's revenue/profit was reinvested in the business's operations. Therefore, the GALP should use other existing business assets (Equipment/Machinery, Land, or other properties) and/or cash as matching capital rather than only the physical cash.