



Fund for Innovation and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation et la transformation



UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY

## ‘Leaving No One Behind:’ Empowering Persons with Albinism, Particularly Women and Adolescent Girls, in Rural Regions of Sierra Leone

### Context

In Sierra Leone, persons with albinism are highly marginalized and stigmatized. They are largely excluded from society and often face harassment, discrimination and violence. Women and girls with albinism face a compounded lack of opportunity and economic empowerment due to their gender and albinism.

### The Innovative Solution

Supported by FIT, the University of the Fraser Valley and Albinism Royal Foundation (ARF) tested an innovation aimed at economically and socially empowering persons with albinism, particularly women and girls. Through increasing their income-generating and leadership skills, and enhancing the engagement of stakeholders, the innovation sought to empower persons with albinism to become influential role models and advocates for disability and gender rights. Workshops for participants covered skills training (in traditional weaving and tailoring), financial literacy, leadership, advocacy and gender equality.

### Advancing Gender Equality

The women’s economic empowerment (WEE) framework was used to design the test. An in-depth gender analysis carried out by ARF in January 2021 captured the meaning of ‘empowerment’ for local women, men, and adolescents with albinism. Using this definition, changes to women’s/girls’ and men’s/boys’ feelings of empowerment were gauged throughout the testing phases by carrying out focus groups discussions and individual interviews with women, men, and adolescent girls and boys. Gender Equality training and awareness sessions were delivered to test participants.



#### COUNTRY

Sierra Leone

#### AMOUNT

\$237,010

#### TESTING PERIOD

15 months  
Ended August 2022



**GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)**

**THEME: SOCIAL JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS**

# Testing Framework

The WEE conceptual framework influenced the design of the testing framework. It was appropriate for this innovation and context due to the marginalized and with albinism. The WEE framework offers diverse and numerous definitions and indicators to measure changes in 'women's empowerment'. Other methodologies included the participation of marginalized groups and individuals, and gender-based analysis plus (GBA+). Results-based management was used for monitoring and evaluation.

# Results and Impact

All target participants satisfactorily produced sewn and woven goods for sale after receiving training and felt that they now had a very high level of knowledge of the trade. When it came to advocacy, 88% of women and 83% of men surveyed indicated that they could advocate in their communities for their rights and those of others. Of the 22 stakeholders involved in the innovation's community engagement events, all indicated that they were committed to integrating the rights of persons with albinism in their work. The recognition of ARF has greatly increased with several media appearances and invitations to participate on government committees, networks and councils.

Of note:

- By endline, 98% of women and, 90% of men project participants expressed confidence in their ability to be leaders in their communities, and to advocate for rights of persons with albinism exceeding the target of 60%.
- At endline, 90% male and 98 % of women project participants, identified as community role models, actively participated in community meetings.

# Key Lessons

1. During the midterm phase it was discovered that 30% of women struggled to attend training for various reasons (household responsibilities, pregnancy, etc.). The innovation adapted by extending the training, holding it closer to women's homes and providing childcare.
2. Vision problems due to albinism affected some participants' ability to acquire skills in tailoring. The innovation responded by diverting some funds to the provision of eye check-ups and glasses.
3. The innovation pivoted to include training in weaving, as some participants could not learn tailoring due to poor eyesight (despite the provision of eye glasses).
4. At the endline phase, it was determined that participants would face challenges to continue practising their skills if they were not provided with start-up kits including fabric, tape, needles, string, scissors etc. These kits were subsequently provided.

One woman TOT aims to have her own weaving location where she can train others – "in particular, training other women to empower them and to help them to be more self-reliant so that they can achieve gender equality in their own homes".

## PARTNER ORGANIZATION

Albinism Royal Foundation

## TARGET PARTICIPANTS

35 TOTs (Training of Trainers; 26 women, 9 men)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Fund for Innovation and Transformation](#)

[University of the Fraser Valley](#)

## ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.



In partnership with

Canada

