TRAC 2 Submission Form (2023)

Country Office	LIBERIA
Purpose and Objectives: Specify how the CO intends to use the TRAC 2 funds	Like other least developed countries, Liberia faces enormous challenges with respect to adoption of digital skills development which amongst other factors undermines the potential of students to innovate and embark on research, experimentation and creativity that allows them to explore ideas outside the bounds of conventional curricular structures. This is further worsened by the limited access to digital devices (hardware), internet, programs (software) and electricity that excludes many students, including those at the university level from benefiting from the digital transition taking place globally. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Liberia was already struggling due to the devastating impact of the civil crisis and the Ebola epidemic which caused immeasurable economic and social depreciations of the society including the ICT infrastructures and access to energy. These factors along with others challenges in Liberia education system pose challenges to adopting ICT in the education sector of Liberia and creating an enabling environment where students at universities can experiment, share knowledge, work together, innovate and challenge themselves to make a difference in their communities and the world around them Youth, including university students, constitute well over 60% of the population- and do have incredible energy but often feel disenfranchised and excluded from ideation process and opportunities. A recent survey indicated that 30%, for example young people, have been at the forefront of protests around a variety of issues, from tuition fees to poor learning environment at universities. Most of the Liberian youth are simply not equipped to navigate a complex 21st century world in a country where governance performance is often dysfunctional, education opportunities are limited and access to knowledge, learning and communities of like-minded people are limited.

	There are few active, managed spaces anywhere in Liberia where youth, students, innovators and entrepreneurs can come together to collaborate, access high-speed internet, attend skills-building sessions, events and lectures - all designed to help students to develop shared ideas to solve collective challenges. UNDP Liberia, Orange and the University of Liberia shares the same vision of the Unipod ecosystem, in terms of creating a unique centralized space that is powered by solar energy through which innovators, entrepreneurs, inventors and technologists can co-create solutions to Liberia's problems. The center will contain makerspace (electronic, textiles and 3D printing, digital media production etc), computers and accessories with workstation (engineering, environment, agriculture, business). Liberia is now entering a critical period of its post-conflict history in which it is essential that social entrepreneurs have the skills, abilities, tools and communities they need to leverage change and build the Liberia they want to live in. This ideal space for students and faculty at the University of Liberia to design, tinker, invent, imagine, make prototype innovations to make the world a better place would help position UNDP as an integrator, leveraging its convening authority and broad development mandate of systemic utilization of innovation at-scale to provide substantial value addition to country level SDG efforts. UNDP is uniquely positioned to play this role given its extensive networks across government, the NGO and private sector community, and with development partners. The space also speaks to UNDP principal development mandate, which support countries in reducing poverty, inequalities, and ensuring inclusiveness. The Unipod, a dedicated space at the University of Liberia will attract all types of students and faculty, including women and persons with disabilities to design, tinker, invent,

	imagine, make and prototype innovations to make the Liberia a better place. UNDP Liberia has been active in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship amongst the youth of Liberia. Current efforts focus on (a) providing financial and technical business development support to entrepreneurs through the Liberia MSMEs Growth Accelerator Programme and the Youth Business Plan Competition. The COVID pandemic has accentuated the need to do things differently, set common goals and accelerated the necessary transformations in the face of social, economic, and environmental challenges. The CO intends to use TRAC 2 resources to leverage what ODC has pioneered in Liberia through the Orange Digital center Clubs in expanding digital inclusion and increasing employability for youth in the country through the Unipod at the University of Liberia with a building facility that the university has agreed to provide, including the first identified space of 32 by 37 ft2. This building will serve as both a gateway and destination on campus that can attract undergraduate and graduate innovators, creators, and collaborators across disciplines inside a building that anticipates their needs and supports creativity wherever it grows. The University of Liberia UniPod is aimed at optimizing the impact of development through strategic innovation, supporting the government and the University of Liberia to build a better future for generations to come. To ensure that the program is adequately developed, managed and sustained, the Country has mobilized a coalition of partners that includes the private sector (Orange Digital Center), NGO (iCampus Liberia) which have demonstrated interested in convening along with the University of Liberia and UNDP. The Unipod partners, will bring to bear their strategic and

	comparative advantages to help the University of Liberia strengthen its position as engine of change for systemic transformation and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals nationally.
Alignment with facility objectives:	
Specify how the purpose aligns with the objectives of TRAC2	Seeking out new and more effective ways of supporting the government and people of Liberia and doing development is a cornerstone of UNDP's work in Liberia. The proposed intervention aligns with the "New Approach" of UNDP Renewed Strategic Offer In Africa-Africa Promise "Integrating innovation and entrepreneurship". It will support digital transformation enabling the establishment of Public-Private Partnership for innovation, crowding in a network of partners. The intervention also aligns with UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 around the enablers for maximizing development impact and the achievement of the SDGs. The program will further deepen UNDP Liberia's positioning as a strategic partner in engaging on digitization and strategic innovation. It will also contribute to UNDP's innovative efforts across the region through exploring new technologies and harnessing the potential of the data revolution, new technologies, structural transformation and other innovative practices to help roll out solutions to key development issues
Please identify if the proposal will contribute to the UNDP Gender Strategy	yes
If Yes, select all applicable options from the list below	Empowering women and girls through economic and social inclusion
Alignment with the Strategic Plan 6 signature solutions (select ones applicable):	Gender equality Poverty and Inequality
Alignment with Regional Priorities: Seeking out new and more effective ways of supporting the government and people of Liberia and doing development is a cornerstone of UNDP's work in Liberia. The proposed intervention aligns with the "New Approach" of UNDP Renewed Strategic Offer In Africa-Africa Promise "Integrating innovation and entrepreneurship". It will support digital transformation enabling the establishment of Public-Private Partnership for innovation, crowding in a network of partners. The intervention also aligns with UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-	

2025 around the enablers for maximizing development impact and the achievement of the SDGs. The program will further deepen UNDP Liberia's positioning as a strategic partner in engaging on digitization and strategic innovation.	
Please identify how the proposal will contribute to the RBA renewed strategic offer. Select all applicable options from the list:	Digital technology Youth and women employment and empowerment
Does the proposal aim to support the implementation of the 'UniPod' concept?	Yes
Total Amount Requested ($) Note: For MIC countries, given the limited percentage of allocations of TRAC 2 available to MIC countries each country office is limited to submitting only one proposal not exceeding $ 900,000.	600,000 USD
Gender Marker:	Select one of the Gender Markers
Marker 1: Output at the project level contributes in a limited way to gender equality, but not significantly	
Marker 2: Gender Equality is not the main objective of the expected output, but the output promotes gender equality in a significant and consistent way	x
Marker 3: the achievement of gender equality and/or the empowerment of women are an explicit objective of the output and the main reason that this output was planned	
How much of the budget for this proposal will be dedicated to gender? ($)	288,000.00
Expected Results: Resource Mobilization	
Result 1	Leveraging Private sector finance and expertise to expand digital inclusion and spur innovation The foundation for leveraging of private sector capital and expertise to support technology and innovation and digital inclusion has already been laid with the convening of the University of Liberia and Orange Liberia who have both agreed to enter public-private partnership through the signing of an MOU for collaboration and technical support in promoting digital inclusion and innovation at the University of

	Liberia. Orange initial support will include technical expertise for the design and set up in addition to internet provision to support the facility. The TRAC 2 resources will spur innovation and new programmes to support women empowerment and digital inclusion, while promoting public private partnership
Result 2 (Optional)	Enter value here
Expected Programme Results:	
Programme Result 1	The Unipod is designed and setup, equipped and operational at the University of Liberia and ready to provide technical training for students/faculty members by end July 2023
Programme Result 2	Students/faculty members have improved skills and knowledge in Design Thinking, Digital Fabrication and Entrepreneurship development by end of November 2023
Other Benefits	UNDP and the University of Liberia has long harbored the vision of setting up a STI Center of Excellence at the University of Liberia (as an entrepreneurship and innovation hub) to harness the SDGs potential of an improved STI partnership for commercialization, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development and supporting entrepreneurs, researchers, and innovators to enhance sustainable development initiatives that addresses poverty reduction, gender equality, and youth and women empowerment. The UniPod allows for the realization of this vision with the setting up of an entrepreneurship help desk of expert professionals and an incubation facility, knowledge codification and management services. This will support the grooming of entrepreneurs and professionals, through mentorship, on-the job training and skills development and testing innovative solutions through innovation ideas challenge with small grants and south-south learning and exposure for young entrepreneurs.

	The program, from its design and implementation, will enable the scaling of successful solutions or initiatives through that can promote livelihood and employment creation with priority for female (60%) aiming at breaching the digital gap between males and females and encouraging STEM education. These efforts at the policy level then create additional space for the program approaches on-the-ground in supporting innovation, experimentation and accelerated learning while promoting gender empowerment and digital inclusion.
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 1:	Number of Unipod set up, equipped and operational at the University of Liberia
Baseline 1	0
Target 1	1
Source of Data for Indicator 1	Photos, videos, Project Report
Timeline for indicator 1	End of July 2023
Indicator 2	Number of students/faculty members trained in Design Thinking, Digital Fabrication and Entrepreneurship development at the University of Liberia Unipod that are able to access livelihood and income opportunities as well as apply the skills and knowledge in start-ups

Baseline 2	0
Target 2	1500 (Minimum 60% females)
Source of Data for Indicator 2	Attendance Register, Photos, Videos, Project Report
Timeline for indicator 2	End of December 2023
Implementation (Key Outputs and Costs)	
Output 1	The Unipod is set up, equipped and operational at the University of Liberia and ready to provide technical training for the University of Liberia Students/Faculty Members.
Output 1 Cost ($)	348,000.00
Output 1: Key Activities	Conduct Assessment of Unipod facility Interior modification of Unipod Furnish Unipod Facility Install Solar Panels at Unipod facility Procure: Equipment and Materials (3D printers, projectors, screens, white boards, Basic Tools,

	Embroidery Machines, Laser Cutter, computers, printers, projectors, screens, white boards etc)
Output 2 (Optional)	Training and workshops conducted for students/faculty members of the University of Liberia in Design Thinking, Digital Fabrication and Entrepreneurship development at the Unipod
Output 2 Cost ($)	132,000.00
Output 2: Key Activities	Supplies Material for the Unipod activities Conduct Workshops (Prototyping, Technical Workshops on Digital Fabrication Machines, Networking Events) for knowledge transfer Organize, facilitate and conduct Seminars Organize, facilitate and conduct Hackathons Online subscriptions for Computer-Assisted Design tools
Output 3 (Optional)	Program Management/Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
Output 3 Cost ($)	120,000.00
Output 3: Key Activities	Unipod Staffing, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning: Design Lab Coordinator, MakerSpace Coordinator, Collab Space Coordinator and Technical Consultants
Key Partners: The submitting CO should identify the key government partners or other development partners, along with a description on the role of the partner in the activities and how they will contribute to the project.	

Partner 1	University of Liberia
Role Description	Established in 1951, the University of Liberia (UL) is the largest public university in Liberia with an enrollment of over 20,000 in 2021. The university has six colleges (including the colleges of Science and Technology), three graduate programs, and three professional schools. In 2020, the UL was amongst 100 Universities that met at the request of the UN Secretary General to explore how the academia can support the UN Decade of Action on the SDGs. The UL's committal to this initiative is contained in a committal delivered by its President at that meeting, wherein a commitment, among others was made to SDGs target 8.3 of 'promoting development-oriented policies, that support productive activities, decent jobs creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation and encouraging the formalization and growth of MSMEs, the support thereof which is also in line with the UNDP's Green & Inclusive Growth Program. Additionally, and prior, the UL in partnership with the Tilburg University in the Netherlands developed a course curriculum which it began rolling out for entrepreneurship education. The University participated in the UNDP/Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) International Distance Learning Initiative on Economic Transformation in Africa and the Diaspora. Before and after this, plans have been underway with the UNDP Liberia and the UL to have an MOU to advance: innovation and entrepreneurship learning, support a research center, and develop a curriculum or signature programme on Human Development, Poverty and Multi-vulnerability Analysis and reporting. In furtherance of this, with aim of accelerating innovation, experimentation and entrepreneurship at the UL under a University of Liberia, UNDP, iCampus Liberia and Orange Digital Center partnership; an initiative that supports incubation, acceleration, and strengthens entrepreneurship knowledge, and promote the skills of students, bringing together entrepreneurship and

	innovation processes. The UL's positioning in this space of entrepreneurship and innovation is against the backdrop that entrepreneurship offers an opportunity for sustainable livelihood, can generate decent employment, contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development and create jobs. It is also a vehicle for driving economic growth and innovation, foresting local economic development, and contributing to addressing environmental challenges. However, harnessing the full potential of the UL's aspiration to earn a space in this area has been challenging. As a country, as Liberia embraces this tech-driven economy, universities must change, too, at a pace unfamiliar to higher education. While UL retains its core mission of educating the next generation and cultivating new forms of knowledge, the university must also embrace the ever-expanding role in driving innovation and catalyzing economic development. The institution is determined to meet the challenges of the digital revolution head on and play an increasingly important role in the innovation ecosystems and economies. To this effect, the UL has embraced the Unipod concept and has agreed to provide a space within its campus facility to host the center with the UL looking forward to having its faculty empowered to take on the management and of the center.
Partner	Orange Liberia
Role Description	Orange is a reputable established international GSM company that has been a leader in digital inclusion along with Orange Foundation and Orange Digital Centers. Orange Digital Center (ODC) houses four strategic programs under the same roof: the coding school, the FabLab Solidaire, Orange Fab and Orange Social Venture funds Africa. This network of free and inclusive resources support local start-ups and projects using digital technology and they are being rolled out

	across the Middle East and Africa. ODC Liberia already has on site and in use 3D printers, laser cutter, digital sewing machines along with PC and Apple computers to buttress beneficiaries' education. As a partner, ODC Liberia will bring the benefit of having access to its international and national established infrastructure and footprint to the UniPod and can support in sharing its experience and expertise for the management and sustainability of the program in addition to other contributions: ODCs are currently in 14 countries with 11 ODC Clubs – satellites of ODC at universities – has impacted 122865 beneficiaries with 56 accelerated start-ups. In Liberia, Orange Foundation has already established computer labs at 3 universities in 3 counties with the plan to increase that number in 2023 which all have internet and remote learning capabilities which increases the local reach of digital inclusion through the Unipod project. In addition, Orange Foundation 2 Women Digital Centers in the rural teaching vulnerable women literacy, numeracy and small business skills using technology is additional experience and infrastructure that can buttress the Unipod project. iCampus Liberia (iCampus), is a shared innovation, co-working and community space for organizations and individuals focusing on the intersection of technology, entrepreneurship and inclusion in Liberia. It acts as a physical and virtual space for youth-focused ICT and entrepreneurship training; a networking and innovation hub; and a focal point for work with women, minorities and digital change makers. iCampus has significant experience managing related programs in Liberia - both in terms of content and process. iCampus has already built-out the USAID LAVI Learning Lab with DAI's support, successfully managing four USAID LAVI grants over the course of five years and has managed the cohort – 1 & 2 of the UNDP Liberia MSMEs Growth Accelerator Programme. iCampus Liberia will provide technical support in the design and implementation of the intervention,

	bringing its experience and expertise to train and mentor staff of the University of Liberia who will take on the management of the UniPod following its setup
Risks: The submitting CO should identify the risks associated with the project. This could include the risks associated with key partners, factors that may contribute to achievement of results, availability of data, and any other relevant factors.	
What are the potential risks associated with this project? Select all possible options from the list below: Note: The submitting CO should identify the risks associated with the Project. If risk is not on drop down list, please enter/type manually (Multiple selections are allowed).	The UniPod concept and system will be a new initiative, and despite capacity building and mentorship support, there is still a risk of the university not having the expertise to manage and sustain the intervention. In response to this risk, the project will leverage the technical expertise of Orange as well as hire technical consultants to support the day-to-day management of the three key components of the lab, build capacity of the university staff and support the transition of the center to fulltime management by the university, while Orange provides routine support to the university for the running and sustainability of the lab.
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Status: Draft Submitted	Select appropriate option
Attachments	Add attachment(s) if necessary