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ANNEX 1

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of The Gambia for 2024

Action Document for “EU support to improve Secondary Education for the Youth (EU-ISEY)”

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, within the meaning of Article 23 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act	EU support to improve Secondary Education for the Youth (EU-ISEY) ACT-62598 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	No
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in The Gambia
4. Programming document	Republic of The Gambia Multi-Annual Indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027 ¹
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	<p>MIP Priority area 3 – Human Development</p> <p>Specific Objective (SO) 3.1 – To reduce gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys, in all of their diversity.</p> <p>Expected Results (ER) 3.11– The education system in The Gambia empowers girls, boys, women and men in all their diversity and reduces the gender disparity among teachers.</p> <p>The action also contributes to the gender dimension under MIP priority 1 (Good Governance): girls’ progression in the education system paves the way to women’s empowerment, creating the basis for women’s civic engagement and leadership roles. It also contributes to priority 2 (Green economy for sustainable growth and jobs): increased completion rates and greater quality increase access to tertiary education or Technical and</p>

¹ Commission Implementing Decision adopting a multiannual indicative programme for the Republic of The Gambia for the period 2021-2027, C(2021)9361 final, 14.12.2021

	vocational education and training (TVET) and enhance the skills base of young people and their prospects for employment.			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Priority area 3 – Human Development DAC code 113			
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): SDG 4: Access to quality education SDG 5: Gender equality SDG 10: Reduced inequalities			
8 a) DAC code(s)	DAC code 1 – 113 Secondary Education (60%) DAC code 2 – 114 Post-Secondary Education (30%) DAC code 3 – 16010 Social protection (10%)			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	Multilateral Organisation - 40000			
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Internal markers and Tags	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity energy transport health education and research	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	BUDGET INFORMATION			
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14 02 01 20 Total estimated cost: EUR 20 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 20 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Indirect management with the entity(s) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.4.1			

1.2 Summary of the Action

While over the last decade there has been a progression in enrolments at Senior Secondary Education (SSE) level in The Gambia, indicators for access and quality outside of the Greater Banjul Area remain very low. Based on the Government's official statistics², in 2023 the SSE completion rate was 46.6% of the population aged 15-19 completing secondary education. The completion rate was reported at 54.3% for girls and 39.1% for boys). Rural areas and regions like Basse record even lower completion rates (total completion: 11.2%; completion rate for girls at 10.6% and 11.7% for boys). Gender disparities further manifest in the gross enrolment rate (GER), which stands at 55.3% at SSE (63.7% of girls and 47.0% of boys), starkly lower than the basic education rate (of 77.6% , with 87.3% of girls and 68.1% of boys).

The gender gap concerns not only students' completion rates but also entry into the teaching force, where only 16.7% of teachers are female. Increasing the ratio of female teachers is critical to fostering girls' attendance and in providing positive role-models, with a consequent increase in SSE completion rates and enhanced skills and youth employability contributing to the country's human and socio-economic development.

² MoBSE Yearbook 2023

The action (foreseen for a duration of 5 years) aims to support the Government of The Gambia, specifically the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) in addressing the challenges the SSE system is facing by improving the completion rates of both boys and girls through strengthened inclusivity, quality and equity amongst students and teachers, with a focus on rural areas.

The action specifically aims at: i) increasing completion rates for boys and girls in secondary education and preventing drop outs; ii) improving the quality of SSE through improvements in teacher education, including building capacities to develop basic, green and digital competences of learners. This entails support to both in-service and pre-service teacher training; and iii) supporting the transition of girls to tertiary education to proceed with a teaching career.

The action will directly address the Government of the Gambia's priorities, as set out in the National Development Plan and the National Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2016–2030) in provision of accessible, equitable, inclusive and quality education for the sustainable development of the country. The development of teacher training activities and revisions to the SSE curriculum will allow integration of topics such as gender, the environment and climate change, science and technology (including ITC), health (including reproductive health, hygiene and sanitation), civic education. Furthermore, the action will also support the transformation of the Gambia College School of Education into a University of Education (as decided by Government).

Improving education is one of the strategic priorities of the Gambian Nationally Determined Contributions for Climate Change³ and this action will support the implementation. Support for digitalisation in teaching and learning underpins the overall logic of the intervention in priority areas.

The action will assist in overcoming negative sociocultural norms and practices, such as child marriage, Gender Based Violence, masculinisation of the teaching force, and the inadequate number of female role models in secondary education. Therefore, the Action will contribute to the fulfilment of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 GAP III⁴, in particular to its thematic area of engagement “Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women”.

The action will also support students with disabilities (both at SSE and Gambia College) and will enhance the capacity of teachers to assist this vulnerable group. As such, it will contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵, and the EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.⁶

The action will capitalise on the Gambia Sustainable Energy Project Component 4 which provides energy units for schools (blending operation implemented by the European Investment Bank (EIB) with EU funding). It will also coordinate with MRC Holland Foundation, one of the main donors for infrastructure works in education.

Finally, the action will be complementary to the Action “Sustainable Value Chains” (AAP 2024): by educating and skilling youth, particularly women, their chances to benefit from green employment opportunities in the agricultural sector and successfully access to finance for agri-food systems development will be increased. In the same vein, it will complement the support to the Tourism (Youth Empowerment Programme on Tourism - AAP 2023) and the skills development and youth employability agenda under the migration portfolio..

1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in the Republic of The Gambia, country included in the list of ODA recipients.

³ [Second NDC of The Republic of The Gambia-16-12-2021.pdf \(unfccc.int\)](#)

⁴ JOIN(2020) 17 final of 25.11.2020

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>

⁶ JOIN(2020) 5 final of 25.3.2020

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

Investing in girls' education, especially at the senior secondary level, is critical in ensuring increased girls' access, retention and completion of the general education cycle. This action directly responds to the government priority as captured in the ESSP plan Area 1: to reduce out of school rates and increase retention and completion rates for girls. The action aims to address the large numbers of Gambian girls and young women, as well as disadvantaged boys, dropping out of SSE between grades 9 and 12 and to assist the Government in ensuring that a larger proportion of youth transition to and complete secondary education.

Gender parity in enrolment has by and large been achieved in basic education. The gap in enrolment is narrow, and in some cases boys' enrolment even falls behind that of girls. According to the MoBSE Year Book 2023, the total enrolment for SSE was 85,026 (36,483 boys and 48,543 girls). And out of this, 12.5% of boys and 7.5% of girls dropped out of school at the end of their third/final year. According to a *National Study on Out-of-School Children in The Gambia 2017* by UNICEF, most people drop out of school due lack of money and resources. Other factors include but not limited to; failure/low performance, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, drugs abuse, peer influence, distance to school, no interest in learning, domestic work, farming work, single parent, strict discipline in schools, etcetera.⁷

Completion rates at SSE are generally low, and in some cases boys' completion even falls behind that of girls. In 2023 the SSE completion rate was 46.6% of the population aged 15-19 completing secondary education, of which 54.3% are girls and 39.1% are boys. Rural areas and regions like Basse record significantly lower completion rates (11.2%, of which 10.6% are girls and 11.7% are boys).

Globally, girls' access, retention and completion of SSE are disproportionately affected by socioeconomic and cultural factors, including gender stereotypes, gender roles, Gender-based Violence (GBV), early marriage and teenage pregnancies, especially in rural areas. Despite favourable enrolment data for women, men have slightly greater educational attainment than women; the median number of years of schooling completed among men is 7.4, as compared with 5.6 among women. In addition, 35% of women have no formal education, compared with only 22% of men. Sixteen percent of women and 17% of men have attended or completed primary school, and 42% of women and 51% of men have attended or completed secondary school. Higher education is relatively rare; only 7% of women and 10% of men have attended or completed more than secondary school. Literacy follows a similar pattern, with only 47% of women being literate, as compared with 67% of men. The percentage of women who attended at least some secondary education increased from 40% in 2013 to 50% in 2019-20. Among men, the percentage increased from 56% to 62%. The percentage of women and men with no education declined between 2013 (47% and 31%, respectively) and 2019-20 (35% and 22%, respectively).⁸ By supporting interventions such as allowances, scholarships and counselling and by ensuring community participation under the project, it is expected that the numbers of girls' completing secondary education will increase.

Inadequate boarding schools impact access and completion especially for students in rural Gambia. For many parents and students alike, the decision to enrol in a boarding school can be divisive. On the one hand, parents are reluctant to enrol in boarding schools for social norms or for fear of being introduced to inappropriate behaviours (e.g. drug abuse). On the other hand, boarding schools could offer a unique set of advantages and benefits that can shape a student's academic journey and personal growth in profound ways. Boarding schools could also reduce the achievement gap between socially privileged and under-privileged students. However, currently there is only 1 boarding school in The Gambia⁹.

Awareness raising and community engagement are essential to promote girls' education. At local levels, community leaders will be engaged, along with the community as a whole, to work with schools to shift behaviours

⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/gambia/media/636/file/National-Study-of-Out-of-School-Children-in-The-Gambia-2017.pdf>

⁸ <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR369/FR369.pdf>

⁹ Armitage Senior Secondary School, built in 1927 during colonial days. Armitage is also known for producing some of the country's most brilliant students.

in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways while reinforcing the message that investments in the education of girls benefit girls, their families, their communities and their nations.

The gender gap is severe when looking at the teaching force: only 16.7% of SSE teachers are female. At secondary level, urbanised areas have a greater proportion of qualified and female teachers. In rural areas, the teaching workforce at senior secondary level is predominantly male and girl students (outside of Greater Banjul Area) rarely have exposure to female role models in secondary schools. The training and deployment of female guidance and counsellors also addresses a number of issues encouraging girls' attendance at school – increasing their sense of safety, feeling supported and having female role models within the school – all of which can positively influence their experience in the education system.

While in-service teacher training falls under the mandate of the MoBSE, pre-service training is the responsibility of the MoHERST through The Gambia College. While the MoHERST is relatively new in The Gambia (from 2000), the Ministry is determined to provide quality education and to ensure equitable and affordable access to tertiary and higher education. Government has recently decided to transform the Gambia College into a fully-fledged University of Education.¹⁰ The action will support this development, with a specific attention to the Basse Campus.

Many students dropping or even completing may not possess the necessary competencies to pursue tertiary education or enter the labour market. Government acknowledges the need to enhance the quality of teaching. The action will focus on strengthening national capacities across all SSE sector support institutions, including in-service and pre-service teacher training providers (i.e. The Gambia College and its regional campus).

For both MoBSE and MoHERST, it is essential to boost the participation of females across male dominated disciplines especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This was highlighted by the Minister of MoBSE when recently launching the Mid Term Review of the National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2030.

Competencies in mathematics is a requirement for entry to the University of The Gambia. In 2023, only 23.4% of boys and 19.8% of girls had a pass (including credit) in mathematics. This situation hampers the enrolment of students to the Gambia College. With the upgrade of The Gambia College into a University of Education, the situation for prospective female teachers could worsen. This also affects the number of female teachers imparting on STEM subjects. Of the total number of students enrolled in 2022, only 593 (19.5%) were enrolled in STEM at the University of The Gambia.¹¹ Without the proper investment in STEM education for girls, the Gambia may be left out of achieving its developmental goals, including other global goals like the African Union agenda 2063.

The Action is in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063 on Leveraging the Power of Africa's Youth, aspires to harness the power of Africa's youth demographic dividend by investing in their education, technology and innovation skills, and entrepreneurship.

Children and youth living with disabilities in Africa are some of the most vulnerable in terms of education, innovation and adoption of emerging technologies. Estimations indicate that between 10% - 20% of the African population has a form of disability. Many African countries are guaranteeing the right to basic education, but this right is barely being respected for people living with disabilities. For example, Africa contributes about 80% of the world's total 140 million out-of-school children, the majority of whom are girls and children living with disabilities. Disability affects education progress: the attendance and completion rates decrease drastically from primary to lower secondary for children with or without functional difficulties. At the lower secondary level, attendance is estimated at 33% for children with no functional difficulties and 25 per cent for children with any functional difficulties and multiple functional difficulties. The youth living with disabilities are facing significant challenges in accessing platforms, resources, and support to realise their full potential and become value-adding global citizens. The African youth living with disabilities in Africa are most vulnerable because they live in environments lacking the necessary infrastructure, policies, and resources to fully participate in the digital

¹⁰ The Bill to enact this transformation will be presented to the National Assembly for approval at the 2nd ordinary session for 2024 (24 June to 24 July 2024).

¹¹ University of the Gambia (UTG) admission data. 2022.

economy. The Gambia's situation (as described in section 2.2) is similar to what is encountered in the rest of the continent. Many children with disabilities may not be enrolled or may drop out (this the official statistics do not capture the severity of the situation).

2.2 Problem Analysis

Gender equity is a serious challenge for project interventions as the role of women in The Gambia is still strongly attached to traditional social norms and cultural behaviours with pervasive gender disparities impacting various sectors from socio-economic to cultural realms. Progressive laws exist for gender equality yet gaps in implementation weaken their enforcement, especially in family law under Sharia. Women's roles in decision-making and legislative representation remain minimal, reflecting deep-rooted gender imbalances. Economic participation is hindered by a significant wage gap, with women more likely to engage in informal employment and facing barriers in accessing financial resources and assets. Despite educational advances, significant disparities in literacy and higher education persist, affecting women's economic and social opportunities.

Gender gaps in Senior Secondary Education are particularly evident in access, retention, and completion rates. Data reveals pronounced disparities with only 46.6% of the population aged 15-19 completing secondary education of which 54.3% are girls and 39.1% are boys. Rural areas (like Basse in Upper River Region) record even lower completion rates (11.2% of which 10.6% are girls and 11.7% are boys). Gender disparities further manifest in the gross enrolment rate (GER) for SSE, which stands at 55.3% (63.7% for girls and 47.0% for boys), starkly lower than the basic education rate of 77.6% (87.3% girls and 68.1% are boys) (source: MoBSE Yearbook 2023).

Demand-side constraints exacerbate these challenges differently for boys and for girls, who face barriers such as non-fee costs that often lead to high dropout rates. In 2020, 59% of students dropped out in the final grade of senior secondary education driven by factors such as poverty, caregiving responsibilities, and early marriage (14% of young women are married by age 19, predominantly in rural districts). According to the MoBSE Year Book 2023, the total enrolment for SSE was 85,026 (36,483 boys and 48,543 girls). And out of this, 12.5% of boys and 7.5% girls dropped out of school at the end of their third/final year.

The educational environment contributes to gender disparities. A male-dominated teacher workforce and issues such as inadequate gender-appropriate facilities, prevalent gender-based violence, and insufficient policies and mechanisms for reporting and addressing such incidents hinder educational progress for girls, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address these multifaceted challenges.

Senior secondary education (SSE) faces major challenges including: (i) low and inequitable access, retention and completion rates, especially among girls and rural youth; and (ii) poor quality and relevance of education. Despite achievement in parity of enrolment for girls in basic education, retention and completion rates remain low at secondary levels, particularly at Senior Secondary level. In 2019, the Human Development Index (HDI) cited only 3% of the population between 15 and 19 years old having completed secondary education and 16.3% among 20 to 24 year olds. Rural areas have the lowest completion rates at 1.8%, especially in regions 5 (Central River Region) and 6 (Upper River Region). Of the 21,306 students enrolled in SSE in 2022, around 15,360 (58% girls and 42% boys) sat for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) with 28% either repeating the exam or dropping out of education.

Though there has been an increase in coverage at the secondary level, the Gambia's senior secondary gross enrolment rate (GER) is low at 55.33 %¹². Disparities in enrolment rates are evident across regions with the lowest GER in SSE in Region 6 (11.5%). Low enrolment and completion for boys is also a matter of concern. Boys are underrepresented at all secondary school levels with only a 42.9% completion rate in SSE compared to 46.6% for girls.

Dropout rates during grades 7, 10 and 11 remains a critical and pressing issue. The percentage of children who drop out of school in the final grade of Senior Secondary Education (SSE) is extremely high at 59% (2020 UNICEF). In addition to poverty and the high opportunity costs of attending school (for example, many girls contribute to their family's income or are given the responsibility for caring for younger siblings or children), other

¹² MoBSE Year Book, 2023

factors driving high dropout and low retention rates among females include: inadequate support at school and/or at home to continue with education; a lack of school safety and limited if any gender-appropriate facilities (latrines); and pregnancy and early marriage. For boys, expectations to contribute to the family income, including through 'backway migration', are among the influencing factors.

In The Gambia, gender disparities pervade socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres, resulting in a range of inequalities. Specific issues impacting gender equity include:

- Legal and institutional frameworks: despite progressive laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality, implementation gaps remain, and women's rights are not fully protected, particularly in the realm of family law governed by Sharia.
- Participation in decision-making: women's involvement in decision-making at all levels is limited, reflecting broader gender inequalities in power and influence within The Gambian society.
- Legislative representation: women are underrepresented in The Gambia's political landscape, comprising a minute fraction of the National Assembly members. This gap persists despite legislative efforts and international commitments to enhance women's political participation.
- Economic participation: women face a stark wage gap and are more likely to work in the informal sector or to be unemployed. They have lower ownership rates of assets like homes and land and are less likely to have bank accounts.
- Access to resources: women's access to financial resources and credit is constrained, hindering their entrepreneurial activities and economic independence.
- Employment: female labour force participation is high, but employment is often in less secure, informal sectors. Unemployment affects youth, particularly young women, and educational achievement does not necessarily translate into job security.
- Education and literacy: while the gender gap in education is narrowing among younger age groups, significant disparities remain. Women are less likely to attain secondary or higher education levels, influencing the literacy rate which stands higher for men.
- Health and survival: women's life expectancy outstrips men's, but they are disproportionately affected by health issues like HIV/AIDS and maternal health conditions. Health and survival rates vary with economic conditions and access to healthcare.
- Gender-based violence: a significant portion of women report experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual violence, with many cases going unreported due to stigma and fear. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains prevalent despite legal prohibitions.
- Early marriage and pregnancy: early marriage rates are notably higher for girls, especially in rural areas, and correlate inversely with wealth. Teen pregnancy remains a significant issue, impacting girls' educational and economic opportunities.
- Childcare and domestic work: women disproportionately shoulder childcare and domestic responsibilities, impacting their ability to participate fully in education and the workforce.
- Social Norms and Cultural Practices: Patriarchal values deeply influence gender relations, perpetuating discrimination and limiting women's public participation. While shifts towards gender equality are noted in urban areas, rural regions maintain more traditional gender roles.

At school levels, the teacher workforce in The Gambia is predominantly male. Given the high prevalence of GBV in schools as well as teenage pregnancies leading to early marriage and school dropout, safety mechanisms and accountability must be in place and enforced. While MoBSE has recently developed a mentorship system for teachers that includes provision of student counselling, these services are not properly functional and remain to be reinforced.

Gender disparities are significantly affected by competencies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). In The Gambia, at least a pass (including credit) in mathematics is a requirement for entry to the University of The Gambia (UTG). In the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) particularly at tertiary levels, possessing a strong mathematical knowledge and skills is necessary. Students have been failing the subject, causing low enrolments at Gambia College and UTG to take up STEM courses and by extension the availability of female teachers at SSE to teach on STEM subjects. The poor performance in mathematics among senior secondary school students is negatively impacting their access to tertiary institutions for higher education in order to effectively take part in future national developments like

teaching. In 2023, only 23.4% of boys and 19.8% of girls had a pass (including credit) in mathematics. The government's agenda of transforming The Gambia College (school of education) and the University of The Gambia (school of education) into a full fledged University of Education, is a crucial step towards The Gambia's higher education reform agenda, ensuring the provision of quality and relevant teacher training, school management and planning programmes. This transformation drive will significantly expand access to tertiary and higher education in The Gambia and ensure the provision of competent teachers, education managers, and planners.

In 2023, in The Gambia's SSE 626 boys and 1,819 girls are classified under special needs. At The Gambia College, out of the 12 students categorised under blind and low vision, 9 are males and 3 are females and out of the 10 students categorised under hard of hearing, 3 are males and 7 are females. The Gambia College currently has one albino and one physically challenged students enrolled at the school of education. Presently, in The Gambia there are few formal special resource centres providing educational services to children and youth with disabilities. These centres cater for those who are visually impaired, hard of hearing and have learning difficulties.

Exclusion of children with disabilities from education has an adverse economic impact at the family, community, and country level. The schooling deficit experienced by children with disabilities can become the most challenging impediment to earning an income and long-run financial health as adults. Recent studies show a positive wage return on education for children with disabilities, while the costs of exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market range from 3% to 7% of a country's GDP.¹³

At central and regional levels, the current MoBSE Education Management Information System (EMIS) generates data for policy and operational level decisions. However, the EMIS is highly centralised, aggregate, and paper based with critical imitations in the overall system, including at SSE level. As a result, some of the key indicators (e.g. pupils per teacher ratios, enrolment of student by field of study) may be irrelevant at the senior level due to the lack of key data. As such, the EMIS is not fully able to advise targeted learning or teacher placement/deployment at the senior secondary level.

The education systems is impacted by climate change, notably floods and storms. During 2008-2023, at least 15 extreme events were recorded in the Gambia, leading to approximately 75,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As of end 2022, there were more than 7,000 IDPs due to climatic events. This trend is likely to increase due to the impact of climate change. The promotion of digital tools (such as SD cards with pre-loaded lessons) offer viable technical solutions that will allow continuity –in schooling in such climatic events. This was piloted during the COVID-19 pandemic and now needs to be expanded. In addition, extreme weather conditions such as high temperatures in rural areas, affect the tools for digitalisation as well as the laboratory equipment and reagents (used for science classes). As a result, the programme will contribute to Disaster Risk Reduction (mitigating risks linked to climatic events or possible pandemics).

Identification of main stakeholders (duty bearers, right holders) and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action: ¹⁴

Duty bearers: The principal public sector duty bearers are (i) the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), which oversees all general education in conjunction with Regional Education Directorates (RED's), including grant aided schools, private schools and Madrasas (Arabic schools) and (ii) the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST), which oversees tertiary institutions, including The Gambia College which has responsibilities for teacher training.

Rights holders: Civil society organisations such as teacher and learner associations, sector-professional associations, social partners, youth and women's organisations, organizations of people with disabilities (Gambia

¹³ [Disability-Inclusive Education in Africa Program \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/disability-inclusive-education-in-africa)

¹⁴ webgate.ec.europa.eu/intpa-academy/mod/scorm/player.php?a=582¤torg=articulate_rise&scoId=1784&sesskey=qRDx2hfRoN&display=popup&moodle=normal

Federation of the Disabled), will be associated. This will include their involvement to promote awareness and overcome negative sociocultural norms and practices.

Other key stakeholders include the local chapter FAWEGAM (Forum for African Women Educationalists), the Gambia Teachers Union Teacher's Union and the Teacher's Trade Union.

The main international development agencies with related experience and are members of the Local Education Group, are: United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM-UNESCO), The World Bank and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Key non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in education include MRC Holland Foundation, Child Fund, Red Cross, SOS Children Villages, Action Aid, Caritas, Save the Children, Czech Bikes and others.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** is to improve Senior Secondary Education completion rates while reducing the gender and socioeconomic inequalities in educational attainment in The Gambia, especially in rural areas.

The **Specific Objectives (SO)** of the action are:

Specific Objective 1 (SO1). Increase **access** and **retention of girls and boys** to inclusive Senior Secondary Education (SSE).

Specific Objective 2 (SO2). Improve **quality** and **gender-sensitiveness** of Senior Secondary Education (SSE) with a focus on a just green and digital transition and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) competencies.

Specific Objective 3 (SO3): Improve the **gender balance** and **retention in the teaching force**, as well as the access of girls into the teaching profession.

The **Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives are:

Output 1.1. Senior Secondary school capacities are strengthened with a particular focus on reducing the gender gap in the rural areas.

Output 1.2. Enhanced social, educational and financial support measures of public authorities and schools that support vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including girls and people with disabilities.

Output 2.1. Increased capacities of key public sector agencies in the design and implementation of teacher training and continuing professional development strategies with a focus on gender-transformative education, green economy, digital competences, and STEM education.

Output 3.1. Improved availability of measures and incentives for female students interested in accessing higher education and training for the teaching profession.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Output 1.1 (contributing to SO1): Senior Secondary school capacities are strengthened with a particular focus on reducing the gender gap in the rural areas.

Activities relating to Output 1.1:

- 1.1.1 School leadership capacities assessed and school leadership training programme developed and implemented, including gender-sensitive assessments of school leadership and a corresponding training programme that promotes gender equality in leadership roles;
- 1.1.2 School development plans produced, including investment needs for infrastructure and equipment, together with staffing plans and revisions to teaching and learning strategies that promote gender balance and ensure inclusivity (both girls and students with disabilities);
- 1.1.3 Actions to support re-entry into school of girls who have dropped out, including during pregnancy and after childbirth;
- 1.1.4 Support to female students and students from disadvantaged groups through provision of allowances (e.g. transport allowances, stipends for accommodation, provision of learning materials, food and personal items) to foster retention in SSE;
- 1.1.5 To introduce a *Comprehensive Health Education* programme to teach girls and boys about reproductive health education to prevent teenage pregnancies leading to girls dropping out of school as well as hygiene and sanitation;
- 1.1.6 Engagement of regional authorities, community leaders, Mother's Clubs, CSO's/NGO's, schools and families through communications and awareness raising activities to promote girls' retention;
- 1.1.7 Hygiene promotion and sensitization campaigns, including formation and training of school health clubs fostering an intersectoral approach with links to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Sexual and Gender Based Violence and social norms, as well as hygiene;
- 1.1.8 MoBSE Education Management Information System (EMIS) is strengthened through training and resource provision to ensure frequency and reliability of data relevant to SSE outcomes, to include a focus on equity (gender aspects, students with disabilities, children from economically disadvantaged background). The action will also support MoBSE to gather and analyse disaggregated data on household income level;
- 1.1.9 In close collaboration with MRC Holland Foundation, the programme will assess possible gaps with regard upgrading infrastructure to ensure that every school offers appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, as well as climate-proofing of infrastructure (e.g. science or ITC laboratories) to reduce vulnerability to impacts of climate change and natural disasters. This could also include support to improve the learning environment in rural areas that normally experience higher temperatures;

Output 1.2 (contributing to SO1): Enhanced social, educational and financial support measures of public authorities and schools that support vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including girls and people with disabilities.

Activities relating to Output 1.2:

- 1.2.1 Support to female students through provision of allowances (e.g. transport allowances, stipends for accommodation, provision of learning materials, food and personal items) to foster access to SSE;
- 1.2.2 Development of a national strategy and action plan to address issues of access and inclusion for vulnerable and disadvantaged students with a related training-of-trainers programme implemented;
- 1.2.3 Staff and teacher training to raise awareness of the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable students, including training and placement of student counsellors;
- 1.2.4 Upgrading of infrastructure in selected schools with provision of equipment and materials to ensure access for disabled students and students with special needs education;

1.2.5 Coordination with RED's and BSE schools to improve transition from Basic Secondary Education to SSE through a programme of remedial teaching and assessment;

1.2.6 In close collaboration with MRC Holland Foundation, the programme will assess possible gaps and provide upgraded infrastructure to improve access to senior secondary education for girls and vulnerable young people. This includes assessing needs to ensure that every school offers appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities (WASH - Water Sanitation and Hygiene);

Output 2.1 (contributing to SO2): Increased capacities of key public sector agencies in the design and implementation of teacher training and continuing professional development strategies with a focus on gender-transformative education, green economy, digital competences and STEM education.

Activities relating to Output 2.1:

2.1.1 Strengthening of E-Learning centres in selected schools to support to digital learning / use of offline technologies (SD cards) / video tutorial lessons etc. in selected topics (e.g. in STEM) to support the continuing professional development of teachers with a focus on inclusivity;

2.1.2 Integration of life skills, green and digital competences into the curriculum to support graduates to access advanced Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, higher education and the labour market;

2.1.3 Support to ICT facilities in selected schools in each region (in close coordination with MRC Holland Foundation);

2.1.4 Enhance civic education in the curriculum and teacher's competencies in this area;

2.1.5 To introduce and enhance teachers' competencies on a Comprehensive Health Education programme;

2.1.6 Strengthen the existing research centres (e.g. at the University, at The Gambia College), including provision of equipment (i.e. ICT), materials, and research activities to promote gender equity in Senior Secondary Education;

2.1.7 Introduce and enhance teachers' competences on artificial intelligence/robotics, material science, virtual realities and internet of things (IOT);

2.1.8 Review of SSE teaching standards and competencies with analysis and research (i.e. Participatory Action Research (PAR) conducted to assess both in-service and pre-service teacher training needs, especially in STEM, green and vocational subject areas, and incorporating gender-sensitive approaches;

2.1.9 Development of a pre-service and in-service teacher training and continuing professional development strategy and action plan addressing gender equity and with a focus on STEM subjects, digitalisation of Progressive Mathematics Initiative / Progressive Science Initiative / Progressive English language and Arts (PMI/PSI/PELA) and vocational approaches to teaching and learning in Senior Secondary Schools;

2.1.10 Design, organize, and implement a training-of-trainers program for SSE teachers that integrates gender-transformative education, green and digital competences into the curriculum of The Gambia College, enhancing the capability of teachers to apply inclusive educational practices;

2.1.11 Design and implement remedial training for senior secondary teachers on the teaching and learning of STEM subject areas;

2.1.12 Upgrade the iLearn Digital Platform and other digital resources to facilitate the digitalization of the curriculum, ensuring the Science and Technology Education Directorate (STED) directorate is equipped to

coordinate digital education effectively with tools and content that support gender equity and respond to the needs of learners with disabilities;

2.1.13 Organisation of regional teacher exchange programmes within The Gambia at both in-service and pre-service levels and development of peer support networks;

2.1.14 Organisation of study visits for exchange of best practices in teacher education within West Africa and internationally;

Output 3.1 (contributing to SO3): Improved availability of measures and incentives for female students interested in accessing higher education and training for the teaching profession.

Activities relating to Output 3.1:

3.1.1 Analysis and research conducted on the barriers to entry for girls into the teaching profession with recommendations and an action plan produced and presented at a national workshop;

3.1.2 Support to female students through provision of scholarships/allowances (e.g. transport allowances, stipends for accommodation, provision of learning materials, food and personal items).

3.1.3 Remedial teaching programmes supported for female students aspiring to higher education qualifications and entry into the teaching profession;

3.1.4 Initiation of a women's leadership in education programme to promote and support women educators at SSE levels and to revitalise a consultative process with government, trade unions, CSO, and other partners to identify strategies (policy, legal, etc.) for encouraging higher rates of participation and retention of female teaching and managing staff at SSE levels;

3.1.5 Establish mentorship programmes for aspiring female educators, encouraging them to pursue leadership positions within schools and educational institutions;

3.1.6 Possible support to caregivers and counsellors to support young mothers attending the College;

3.1.7 In close coordination with MRC Holland Foundation, the programme will assess possible gaps with regard supporting teachers' childcare centres/dormitories at Gambia College, with specific attention to the Basse campus (and finance such facilities if needed);

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the SEA screening (relevant for budget support and strategic-level interventions). The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening concluded that no further action was required (given the nature of the Action).

Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment). If the Action needs to undertake small construction activities (e.g. construction of laboratories in

schools, refurbishment of classes or construction of dormitories), it will ensure that adequate vulnerability assessment is carried out in order to ensure that these are climate-proof. This could also include assessing needs to improve the learning environment in rural areas that normally experience higher temperatures.

The programme will support/promote environmental protection and climate action through the revisions of the curriculum as well as enhancing teacher's skills in this area.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per the OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G2. Gender equality is a principal objective of the programme, and it responds to the priorities as defined in the MIP. Comprehensive gender analysis was executed during both the identification and formulation phases of the action, utilising data from the gender country profile to inform contextual and problem analysis. Sex-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators have been established in the LogFrame (and this will be further enhanced during implementation when monitoring activities). Risk assessments conducted have identified potential gender-related inequalities, with strategic mitigation plans developed and agreed upon with stakeholders. Inclusivity is further emphasized through targeted activities aimed at vulnerable groups, including those in rural areas and persons with disabilities.

Gender equity is a serious challenge for project interventions as the role of women in The Gambia is still strongly attached to traditional social norms and cultural behaviours with pervasive gender disparities impacting various sectors from socio-economic to cultural realms. Progressive laws exist for gender equality¹⁵ yet gaps in implementation weaken their enforcement, especially in family law under Sharia. Women's roles in decision-making and legislative representation remain minimal¹⁶, reflecting deep-rooted gender imbalances. Economic participation is hindered by a significant wage gap, with women more likely to engage in informal employment and facing barriers in accessing financial resources and assets. Despite educational advances, significant disparities in literacy and higher education persist, affecting women's economic and social opportunities.

Gender gaps in Senior Secondary Education are particularly evident in access, retention, and completion rates. Gender disparities manifest in the gross enrolment rate (GER) at SSE: in 2023 the GER was 55.3% (63.7% are girls and 47.0% are boys for SSE), starkly lower than the basic education GER of 77.6% (87.3% girls and 68.1% are boys). Data reveals pronounced disparities with regard to completion: only 46.6% of the population aged 15-19 complete secondary education (54.3% are girls and 39.1% are boy). Rural areas and town like Basse record even lower rates: the completion rate is 11.2% (10.6% are girls and 11.7% are boys). (Source MoBSE Yearbook 2023¹⁷).

Demand-side constraints exacerbate these challenges differently for boys and for girls, who face barriers such as non-fee costs that often lead to high dropout rates. In 2020, 59% of students dropped out in the final grade of senior secondary education driven by factors such as poverty, caregiving responsibilities, and early marriage (14% of young women are married by age 19, predominantly in rural districts). In 2023, the total enrolment for SSE was 85,026 (36,483 boys and 48,543 girls). And out of this, 12.5% of boys and 7.5% girls dropped out of school at the end of their third/final year.

The educational environment further contributes to gender disparities. A male-dominated teacher workforce and issues such as inadequate gender-appropriate facilities, prevalent gender-based violence, and insufficient policies and mechanisms for reporting and addressing such incidents hinder educational progress for girls, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address these multifaceted challenges.

Gender equality considerations are integral to the design, it will be mainstreamed in all activities and will be monitored during implementation. Hence, a gender perspective is integrated into every phase of the action: design,

¹⁵ Approximately 75% of girls aged 15 to 19 have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, with some regions reporting rates up to 95%. While there is a law banning this practice since 1995, it has not been systematically applied. Furthermore, there is an ongoing debate to repeal the law (following the submission of a private member bill at the National Assembly). No final decision has been taken at the time of drafting the Action Document.

¹⁶ There are 5 women in the National Assembly (out of a total of 58 members).

¹⁷ <http://www.edugambia.gm/data-area/publications/year-book-2023.html>

implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting gender equity in opportunities for girls and boys and for women and men. Gender considerations will be based on a two-pronged approach: actions targeting SSE graduates aiming to attract them to the teaching profession, including designing gender-differentiated indicators at outcome and output levels; actions that mainstream gender into the SSE system through analysis, supporting the capacities of the duty bearers, enhancing the skills base in SSE education while markedly reducing the gender gap in completion rates and educational staffing, particularly in rural settings. The foundational objectives of the action echo the themes specified in GAP III, specifically thematic objectives 1, 5, and 6, focusing on gender equality in education for both students and educators as a central pillar.

Human Rights

The intervention will encompass human rights in its design and implementation and adopt a rights-based approach to development of the SSE sub-sector. The action supports the fulfilment of the rights to education, non-discrimination, freedom from child labour, and the rights of people with disabilities (education, accessibility, participation, work and employment, adequate standards of living).

The action will indirectly address issues of human rights and social protection through the promotion of opportunities for people living in vulnerable and marginalised situations, including remote and rural communities.

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) will be enshrined into the planned interventions, while working in close cooperation with local government to meet its obligations of service delivery. Strengthening capacities of right holders to hold local authorities accountable and to ensure more transparency of service provision are part of the proposed approach. This action strengthens the capacities of the State of Gambia as duty bearer as it has particular obligations and responsibilities to respect, promote and fulfil human rights. The Action in its interventions will pay attention to the situation of persons living in the most vulnerable and marginalised situations (persons living in poverty, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to ethnic minorities, etc.) It shall leave no one behind throughout the programme cycle and the design process.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that the action will ensure opportunities for disabled secondary school age children to fully participate in SSE through development of participatory, digital and interactive teaching and learning materials and methodologies, specifically under SO1. Special needs training is foreseen for teachers at both in-service and pre-service levels and schools will be audited to ensure the physical infrastructure supports disabled access. A methodology is foreseen to be developed in cooperation with relevant Directorates within MoBSE and in conjunction with the Social Protection Secretariat and The Gambia College to identify children and youth excluded from secondary education for reasons of disability and to support their inclusion.

Furthermore, accessibility to events, workshops and information of persons with disabilities will be promoted throughout the activities of the programme. In particular, their active participation in consultation processes with local communities and minorities will be promoted. Finally, where possible, indicators will be disaggregated by disability.

Reduction of inequalities

Inequality reduction is a significant objective (I-2). This action targets girls, people with disabilities and more generally students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds.

To this end it will provide allowances/scholarships to students in need. A scholarship programme for prospective female teachers will be introduced to include a quota for vulnerable and at risk groups. Also, allowances and remedial classes will be available to disadvantaged students (both girls and boys) to ensure that economic factors do not hamper their progress, completion and transition to higher education.

Furthermore, disadvantaged groups and support retention in SSE, including special provisions to facilitate outreach to vulnerable and marginalised people (e.g. development of specific modules/equipment/materials for disadvantaged groups, etc.).

Democracy

The action takes place within the context of decentralised decision-making and increasing autonomy for provincial authorities in planning and implementation of SSE governance and teaching and learning programmes. The impact of improved and sustainable economic development resulting from improved educational outcomes will re-enforce democratic principles and governmental accountability. It also supports the participatory models of sector governance that involve civil society representatives in management bodies, including school boards. The strengthening of civic education will also contribute to promote democratic values.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The action promotes social and economic stability through contributing to reductions in inequalities, particularly in terms of improving access to education and training for women, girls and disadvantaged groups. Empowerment of women as learners, teachers and leaders will support social reliance over time.

Also, the promotion of civic education in the curriculum is an essential tool given the previous undemocratic regime.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The action will contribute to the mitigation of natural and other disasters through supporting awareness of climate change and building greater resilience of the population through improved educational outcomes. Digitalisation of the curriculum will contribute to remote learning capacities in the event of catastrophic events.

Other considerations if relevant

The action will further ensure mainstreaming of the following national SDG's:

- Economic growth, decent work and poverty reduction (SDG1, SDG8) are foreseen under the overall objective to ensure a sufficiently educated and qualified labour force to meet employment demand, generating jobs, incomes and sustainable livelihoods. By enhancing girls' education, the Action can contribute to a more active participation of women in the economic life (as well as access to more profitable jobs).
- The quality of education (SDG4) will be raised across each specific objective and specifically through the introduction and strengthening of quality standards in SSE schools
- Gender equity (SDG5) is addressed through enrolment of girls and women on training courses and scholarship programmes, including targeting of remote, rural and marginalised groups.
- Reduced inequalities (SDG10) are expected to result from the overall objective and through the support for implementation of the national policies and the Education Sector Strategic Plan. It is notably supported through the provision on allowances and scholarships, as well as the inclusion of children with disabilities.
- Climate action (SDG13) will be addressed through incorporation of green subject areas into the SSE curriculum, as well as climate-proof infrastructure.
- Additional cross-cutting themes include incorporation of Life Skills (21st Century skills) modules as integral to SSE curricula, to include digitalization skills.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category¹⁸	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
3, 5.	Risk 1: Low levels of interest, engagement and acceptance by parents and local communities, particularly related to girls aspiring to	Low / Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on development of key communications messages related to SSE and teacher training in close participation with community leaders • Cooperation with local CSO's/NGO's to ensure community access, engagement and ownership of outcomes

¹⁸ The risk (category) can be related 1-to the external environment; 2-to planning, processes and systems; 3-to people and the organisation; 4-to legality and regularity aspects; 5-to communication and information. See pp44-48 of [Implementation Guide of the Risk management in the Commission](#).

	the teaching profession			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied research (i.e. PAR) at local levels to generate evidence-based results and support community participation and sustainability of outcomes
2.	Risk 2: Government and institutional weaknesses at systems levels, including data management, monitoring and reporting, constrain progress of the intervention	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government (MoBSE, MoHERST) responsibilities for monitoring and data management are clarified with institutional capacities strengthened MoBSE EMIS is strengthened to provide reliable data and information used for decision making and acceptance of girls (and their families/communities) to pursue education MoHERST and MoBSE analytical and research capacities are strengthened Government (MoBSE, MoHERST) will be fully involved in the implementation of the programme to identify institutional weaknesses and take corrective measures.
2.	Risk 3: Limited government funding for recurrent cost and maintenance of equipment	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative solutions and community participation at local levels Embedding considerations for sustainability and scalability in programming will be a key criteria for the provision of equipment. The issue of budgetary allocations and spending in education could also be part of the policy dialogue with Government in the context of the State Resilience Building Contract 4.
1.	Risk 4: Crisis stemming from global and domestic factors, including climate-related ones, poses threats to the disruption of children's education	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening digitalisation of teaching and learning Enhancing community-level mechanisms through green school strategies Raised awareness at local levels of threats and mitigation capacities strengthened.

Lessons Learnt:

The action is informed by key general lessons from other programmes¹⁹, such as: i) the need to have clear overall management arrangements, for effective coordination between the Government, implementing partners and the EU; ii) the need to ensure multi-stakeholders engagement to ensure effectiveness; this also entails working with civil society, traditional and religious leaders at community levels; iii) need to promote dialogue to ensure that budgetary allocations sustain the national policy goals; and iv) the importance of strengthening the institutional capacities of regional authorities and of schools to guarantee the education supply.

Experience in other sectors highlight the importance of data for decision making. The action will not only support action oriented research, but also the support to strengthen the EMIS (Education Management Information System) –

¹⁹ Education is a new priority area for the EU in The Gambia.

to ensure it provides reliable data and information used for decision making and acceptance of girls (and their families/communities) to pursue education.

The gender dimension is critical in The Gambia. Due to the limited completion rates, women are less likely to fully benefit in all development projects. Even though more girls than boys enrol in senior secondary education, there is a considerable drop in participation for both boys and girls at that level, thus reducing the number of adolescents that advance in their studies. Also, young men are more likely than young women to complete this level, and the transition to tertiary strongly favours young men. The gap between urban and rural areas is significant, as well as between rich and poor households. The action aims at addressing these imbalances by enhancing quality and relevance of teaching and by providing the means to increase completion rates, reduce gender disparities and address equity issues (to ensure that economic reasons do not prevent students from completing SSE).

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that by reducing the existing gender gap in both the student population and teaching force, as well as the socioeconomic gap between students, and by supporting measures geared at increasing completion rates and enhancing the quality of Senior Secondary Education (SSE), student retention and completion rates will improve.

IF the tools and strategies of Senior Secondary Schools in the reduction of gender-gaps, the promotion of healthy learning environments and the protection of students' rights are improved (Output 1.1.) AND IF the social, educational and financial support measures of public authorities and schools that support vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including people with disabilities are enhanced (Output 1.2.) THEN the access and completion rate of women, men, girls and boys to inclusive Senior Secondary Education (SSE) in line with climate and digital challenges will be increased (Specific Objective 1).

In addition, by supporting transition of girls to tertiary education through the provision of scholarship will allow female students to proceed with a teaching career the action will increase the employability of girls and ensure the presence of more female teachers in SSE (gender role models for adolescent girls). The allowances/scholarships will be provided to students in need, based on the indications provided by various sources (data collected by MoBSE/MoHERST, Social registry, etc.).

By supporting students with disabilities, the programme will help addressing inequalities and ensuring learning opportunities to all.

By improving the quality of teaching and learning, the project will contribute to enhancing the skills base of the population who on one hand would have better access to higher education opportunities, including to advanced post-SSE TVET²⁰, and, on the other hand, would strengthen their employability in the labour market and support access to more qualified occupations.

By promoting the use of digital tools (such as SD cards with pre-loaded lessons), the programme will contribute to Disaster Risk Reduction (mitigating risks linked to climatic events or possible pandemics).

The intervention logic reflects the support provided by the EU and other partners:

- The EU is implementing The Gambia Sustainable Energy Project Component 4 – solar photovoltaic (PV) energy units for schools and health facilities in urban and rural areas (blending operation implemented by EIB with EU funding)²¹. It targets 1,000 schools nationwide. Installations are expected to take place in 2024-2025
- MRC Holland Foundation is one of the main donors for infrastructure works in education (e.g. refurbishments in schools, provision of dormitories, basic sanitation and hygiene facilities for Menstrual Hygiene, provision of internet infrastructure). MRC Holland Foundation has already supported the construction of the Gambia College in the Basse Campus. It also built a number ICT labs in selected schools and furnished each of them with 25 computers.

²⁰ TVET can take place at secondary (certificate level) and post-secondary/tertiary levels (diploma and advanced diploma level). Two ministries are in charge of TVET: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology (MoHERST) and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE).

²¹ 2018 Delegation Agreement for EDF/2018/402-340 and EDF/2018/402-372; and 2019 Contribution Agreement (EDF/2018/404-234).

- The EU supports the Regional Teacher Programme for Africa (ACT-61343 funded from the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme), both with regard to the networking opportunities among African countries and with European institutions, as well as its Technical Assistance Window. The programme focuses policy reforms and teacher education/training from early childhood to lower secondary.

The intervention logic also takes into account the need for supporting Government to strengthen the whole education cycle. As such, it capitalises on the support provided by other partners:

- World Bank, through the RISE programme (Resilience, Inclusion, Skills and Equity), supports activities to improve foundational learning outcomes (USD 27,710,000, including USD 12,260,000 from Global Partnership for Education (GPE), as well as TVET (USD 21,000,000)
- UNICEF supports Early childhood development/Pre-school as well as primary education
- MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) is preparing a programme that will include, among others, support secondary education and TVET. Their programme will not materialise before 2027. There are ongoing contacts to ensure coordination and the EU will assess the opportunities for piloting innovative approaches for students' and teachers' retention and motivation that MCC could later continue supporting.

The programme will therefore support a level of education currently not supported by other partners. This will not only fill an important gap, but will also maximise the visibility of the EU support.

The action will be complementary to the Action "Sustainable Value Chains" (AAP 2024): by educating and skilling youth, particularly women, their chances to benefit from green employment opportunities in the agricultural sector and successfully access to finance for agri-food systems development will be increased. In the same vein, it also complements the support to the Tourism (Youth Empowerment Programme on Tourism - AAP 2023) and the skills development and youth employability agenda under the migration portfolio.

The action complements the support to people with disabilities funded under the complementary measures of the State Resilience Building Contract 4 (ACT 61846). A Call for Proposal with a total allocation of EUR 1.9 million ("Advancing Inclusion – Enhancing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in The Gambia") was launched in May 2024 (to be contracted by end 2024). It includes 2 lots: lot 1 caters to adults, offering vocational training, accessibility enhancements, entrepreneurship support, and healthcare initiatives; lot 2 focuses on children, emphasizing inclusive education, early intervention services, assistive technology provision, and recreational activities. The latter will target children up to lower secondary education.

The project contributes to The Gambia 'Development Vision', with its focus on human development, by strengthening the capacities of the national education system to improve access, quality, retention and completion of secondary education and to improve transition to higher education affecting adolescents in the Gambia at risk of out of school, dropout and outward irregular migration.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention.

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

Results	Results chain (@): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (@): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	The Overall Objective is to improve Senior Secondary Education completion rates while reducing the gender and socioeconomic inequalities in educational attainment in The Gambia, especially in rural areas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Completion rate in upper secondary education disaggregated by sex and rural/urban (MIP Indicator) Percentage of female teachers in secondary education (MIP Indicator) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 46.6% (girls 54.3%, boys 39.1%) (2023) 16.7% female teachers (2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> at least +7% (2027) 25% (MIP target) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE reports (year books) 	Not applicable
Outcome 1 (SO1)	1. Increase access and retention of girls and boys to inclusive Senior Secondary Education (SSE)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of students enrolled in secondary education with EU support: (GERF 2.36)** Disaggregated by sex and region % of school drop-outs in the Senior Secondary Schools supported through the intervention. Disaggregated by sex and region Number of boys and girls enrolled in remedial classes supported by the intervention. Number of students supported by the intervention through allowances/ scholarships. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 55.3% (girls 63.7 % boys 47.0%) 0 % - 0 - 0 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To be determined at the inception phase To be determined at the inception phase To be determined at the inception phase To be determined at the inception phase 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE reports (year books) Social registry data. Reports from the implementing partner. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE reports (year books) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE reports (year books) Reports from the implementing partner <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reports from the implementing partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country's political, economic and social situation remains under current parameters, without the emergence of new national or regional crises that reduce the government's institutional and financial capacity The bilateral relations between the Government of Gambia and the EU continue to be cooperative and stable, including high-level policy

						dialogue around public education and investment
Outcome 2 (SO2)	2. Improve quality and gender-sensitiveness of Senior Secondary Education (SSE) with a focus on a just green and digital transition and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) competencies.	<p>2.1 Number of qualified SSE teachers with HTC (Higher Teacher Certificate) secondary and University degree, disaggregated by sex and disability status.</p> <p>2.2 Student-to-teacher ratio in the Secondary Education Schools targeted by the intervention.</p>	<p>2.1 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 – 0</p>	<p>2.1 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 To be determined at the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1.1 MoHERST Technical reports</p> <p>2.1.2 MoBSE reports (Year books)</p> <p>2.1.3 Databases from the teacher training institutions (Gambia College)</p> <p>2.1.4 Reports from the implementing partner</p> <p>2.2.1 MoBSE reports (Year books)</p> <p>2.3 Reports from the implementing partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE and MoHERST continued commitment and inter-ministerial cooperation Teachers are willing to enhance their competences
Outcome 3 (SO3)	3. Improve the gender balance and retention of females in the teaching force as well as the access of girls into the teaching profession.	<p>3.1. % of representation of women in teaching profession and management in the schools and educational centres targeted by the intervention. Disaggregated by region</p> <p>3.2. Number of women completing pre-service teacher training in the last year.</p>	<p>3.1– 16.7% female teachers (2023)</p> <p>3.2: 42.3% (2023)</p>	<p>3.1– at least +4% (2027) – <i>MIP target</i></p> <p>3.2 – To be determined at the inception phase</p>	<p>3.1.1 MoHERST Technical reports</p> <p>3.1.2 MoBSE reports (Year books)</p> <p>3.2.1. Databases from the MoHERST</p> <p>3.2.2. Database from the teacher training institutions (Gambia College)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women accept to pursue a teaching profession Government's measures to attract and retain female teachers in rural schools are effectively implemented

Output 1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1 Senior Secondary school capacities are strengthened with a particular focus on reducing the gender gap in the rural areas.	1.1.1 Number of people, staff of the Senior Secondary schools and/or other educational centres, who have increased their knowledge on how to address gender gaps and the inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged students through the school leadership training programme. Disaggregated by sex and region	1.1.1 – 0	1.1.1 To be determined at the inception phase	1.1.1.1 MoBSE reports 1.1.1.2 Workshop and training reports (Pre-and-post tests conducted) 1.1.1.3 Reports from the implementing partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoBSE and MoHERST continued commitment and inter-ministerial cooperation Sustained stakeholder interest and engagement Gender equity targets further embedded at policy levels
		1.1.2 Number of schools that implement the updated curricula supported by the action Disaggregated by region	1.1.2 – 0	1.1.2 – To be determined at the inception phase	1.1.2.1 MoBSE reports 1.1.2.2 Reports from the implementing partner	
		1.1.3 Number of Senior Secondary school with improved learning environments and access for people with disabilities through the provision of new infrastructure and/or equipment. Disaggregated by region	1.1.3 – 0	1.1.3 – To be determined at the inception phase	1.1.3.1 MoBSE reports 1.1.3.2 Reports from the implementing partner	
	1.2 Enhanced social, educational and financial support measures of public authorities and schools that support vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including girls and people with disabilities.	1.2.1 Number of female students who have received allowances thanks to their inclusion in new support measures and programmes to foster access to SSE. Disaggregated by region 1.2.2 Number of trained counsellors that are providing services with the support of the intervention. Disaggregated by sex and region	1.2.1 – 0 1.2.2 – 0	1.2.1 – To be determined at the inception phase 1.2.2 – To be determined at the inception phase	1.2.1.1 Reports from the implementing partner 1.2.1.2 MoBSE reports 1.2.2.1 MoHERST reports 1.2.2.2 Reports from the implementing partner 1.2.2.3 MoBSE Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bilateral relations between the Government of Gambia and the EU continue to be cooperative and stable, including high-level policy dialogue around public education and investment

		<p>1.2.3 Number of competent institutions that have been actively involved in the development of a national strategy and action plan to address issues of access and inclusion for vulnerable and disadvantaged students. Disaggregated by region</p> <p>1.2.4 Number of trainers that have been prepared and equipped to support Senior Secondary Schools through the Training of Trainers programme. Disaggregated by sex and region</p> <p>1.2.5 Number of RED's and BSE schools with improved remedial teaching and assessment capacities. Disaggregated by region</p> <p>1.2.6 Number of grassroots civil society organisations benefitting from (or reached by) EU support (GERF 2.28)</p> <p>1.2.7 Number of people who have received relevant and updated information on how to promote girls' retention in school through the communication and awareness-raising campaigns.</p>	<p>1.2.3 – 0</p> <p>1.2.4 – 0</p> <p>1.2.5 – 0</p> <p>1.2.6 – 0</p> <p>1.2.7 – 0</p>	<p>1.2.3 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>1.2.4 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>1.2.5 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>1.2.6 – To be determined at the inception phase</p> <p>1.2.7 – To be determined at the inception phase</p>	<p>1.2.3.1 MoBSE reports 1.2.3.2 MoHERST reports 1.2.3.3 Reports from the implementing partner</p> <p>1.2.4.1 MoBSE reports 1.2.4.2 Reports from the implementing partner</p> <p>1.2.5.1 MoBSE reports 1.2.5.2 Reports from the implementing partner</p> <p>1.2.6 Reports from the implementing partner</p> <p>1.2.7 Reports from the implementing partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gambia's Social Registry and other databases allow an effective targeting of vulnerable and disadvantaged students Families and local communities are receptive of the sensitisation campaigns on girls' education
Output 2 relating to Outcome 2	2.1 Increased capacities of key public sector agencies in the design and implementation of teacher training and continuing professional development	2.1.1 Number of senior secondary teachers who have increased their STEM skills and tools through the remedial classes. Disaggregated by sex and region.	2.1.1 – 0	2.1.1 - To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.4.1 Reports MoBSE 2.1.4.2 Training reports (Pre-and-post tests conducted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective collaboration between MoBSE and

	strategies with a focus on gender-transformative education, green economy, digital competences and STEM education.	2.1.2	Number of research centres that have increased their technical and operational capacity to promote gender equity in Senior Secondary Education with the support of the intervention. Disaggregated by region	2.1.2	- 0	2.1.2 – To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.4.3 Reports from the implementing partner	<p>MoHERST (including the Gambia College)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners associated in the implementation of the various work streams deliver timely inputs
		2.1.3	Number of teachers who have improved their technical knowledge on key areas (life skills, green, comprehensive health education, civic education, STEM and digital competences) through the pre-service and in-service teacher training and/or the peer-to-peer exchange programmes. Disaggregated by sex and region	2.1.3	- 0	2.1.3 –To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.2.1 Reports from MoBSE 2.1.2.2 Reports from the implementing partner 2.1.3.1 MoBSE reports 2.1.3.2 MoHERST reports 2.1.3.3 Reports from the implementing partner 2.1.3.4 Training reports (Pre-and-post tests conducted)	
		2.1.4	2.1.4. Number of teachers trained on inclusive gender-sensitive education of management staff working in the public education sector who are women (GAP III)	2.1.4	- 0	2.1.4 – To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.4.1 MoBSE reports 2.1.4.2 MoHERST reports 2.1.4.3 Reports from the implementing partner	
		2.1.5	Number of digital resources that have been developed and/or updated to improve inclusive and gender-responsive and digital education and	2.1.5	- 0	2.1.5 – To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.5 Reports from the implementing partner	

		facilitate the digitalization of the curriculum				
		2.1.6 Number of people supported by the EU with enhanced access to digital government services (GERF 2.12). Disaggregated by sex and disability status	2.1.6 – 0	2.1.6 - To be determined at the inception phase	2.1.6 Reports from the implementing partner	
Output 3 relating to Outcome 3	3.1 Improved availability of measures and incentives for female students interested in accessing higher education and training for the teaching profession.	3.1.1 Numbers of female and/or disadvantaged students enrolled in Teacher Training at Gambia College through the provision of scholarships/allowances. Disaggregated by sex and region	3.1.1 21.5% female (2023)	3.1.1 To be determined at the inception phase	3.1.1.1 MoHERST reports 3.1.1.2 Reports from Gambia College 3.1.1.3 Reports from the implementing partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women accept to pursue a teaching profession • Ancillary measures to attract and retain female teachers in rural schools are implemented
		3.1.2 Number of teachers' childcare centres/dormitories with increased coverage and/or operational capacity with the support of the intervention. Disaggregated by region	3.1.2 – 0	3.1.2 – To be determined at the inception phase	3.1.2.1 Reports Gambia College 3.1.2.2 Reports implementing partner	
		3.1.3 Number of females who have been included in mentorship programmes to pursue leadership positions within schools and educational institutions. Disaggregated by sex and region	3.1.3 – 0	3.1.3 – To be determined at the inception phase	3.1.3.1 MoBSE reports (Year books) 3.1.3.2 MoHERST reports 3.1.3.3 Reports from Gambia College 3.1.3.4 Reports from the implementing partner	
		3.1.4 Number of caregivers and counsellors who have received accompaniment and/or financial	3.1.4 – 0	3.1.4 – To be determined at	3.1.4.1 Reports the from Gambia College	

		support to facilitate the attendance of young mothers to college. Disaggregated by region		the inception phase	3.1.4.2 Reports from the implementing partner	
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4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the Republic of The Gambia

4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement. Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3 Implementation of the Budget Support Component

N/A

4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures²².

4.4.1 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated operational capacity;
- Experience in working with the EU
- Ability to handle large numbers of procurement activities (supplies);
- Experience in renovation/construction works
- Previous working experience in The Gambia;
- Ability to set up multi-stakeholders partnerships.

The implementation by this entity entails management of all the components.

In case the envisaged entity would need to be replaced, the Commission's services may select a replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is replaced the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

4.5 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

N/A

²² www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.6 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realization of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.7 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.4	
Objective 1 (Outputs 1.1 +1.2),	
Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity - cf. section 4.4.1	10 420 000
Objective 2 (Output 2.1),	
Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity - cf. section 4.4.1	6 350 000
Objective 3 (Output 3.1)	
Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity - cf. section 4.4.1	3 130 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	100 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	
Totals	20 000 000

4.8 Organisational set-up and responsibilities

A Project Steering Committee will be set up. It will be chaired by MoBSE, MoHERST and the EU and will involve The Gambia College, the entrusted entity (ref section 4.4.1) as well as partners involved in the implementation of the action. The Steering Committee will review work plans and budgets, facilitate prioritisation and provide high-level oversight. Other stakeholders may be invited to attend (as observers) including the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare as well as the Social Protection Secretariat to promote policy coordination and alignment.

A Project Management Unit will be set up by the entrusted entity to manage and oversee the activities and ensure coordination of the various work streams, monitoring and reporting.

Project Management Teams might also be set up around the various programme clusters to ensure timely execution.

Local stakeholders will be involved as required to ensure service delivery and sustainability.

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

The main responsibility for data collection, analysis and monitoring on the programmes' activities and results will rest with managing entity. The managing entity will refer to official statistics (such as the Annual Yearbook produces by MoBSE, the reports issues by Gambia College under the oversight of MoHERST, data from the Social Registry produced by The Social Protection Secretariat). This exercise will also build on the 2024 national census. This data will be used notably to ensure the targeting of activities under SO1 and SO2 to students in need. To this end:

- the programme includes activities to strengthen to EMIS.
- The data analysis will also be discussed within the Steering Committee.
- The managing entity will identify possible data gaps, to be addressed at the inception of the programme. If needed, the workplan will include surveys/studies necessary to monitor the programme and to be financed under the contract.

Monitoring will assess gender equality results, impact on rights of groups living in the most vulnerable situations and the implementation of the rights-based approach working principles and leave no one behind (applying all human rights for all; meaningful and inclusive participation; non-discrimination and equality; accountability and rule of law for all; and transparency and access to information supported by disaggregated data). Monitoring will be based on indicators that are disaggregated by sex, age, disability, area of residence. It will also use income-based data. When data is not available, the programme will support the collection of such data.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term and a final evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, to determine progress being made toward the achievement of outcomes and will focus on effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness and identify course corrective actions and adaptive learning if needed.

The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision). The final evaluation shall focus on the delivery of the project's results as initially planned and corrected after the mid-term evaluation. It will be conducted in accordance with EU guidance, policies, and procedures. It will also provide recommendations for follow-up of results including lessons learned for sustainability, replicability of the project's results (best practice, future referencing and planning).

The evaluation plan (or component in the foreseen evaluation) should assess the distributional impact of activities undertaken on the socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, households or groups. It also allows to evaluate whether effective targeting has been done towards women, economically disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination²³. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, it will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

²³ See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)

Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary Intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

Articulating Actions or Contracts according to an expected chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure efficient monitoring and reporting of performance;

Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);

Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.

The intervention level for the present Action identifies as:

Action level		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single contract	Present action: all contracts in the present action