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**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX 2**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the Multiannual Action Plan 2023-2025 in favour of the Republic of Sierra Leone

**Action Document for EU - UN Spotlight initiative to fight all violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone**

This document constitutes the multiannual 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**

<b>1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic Act</b>	<b>EU-UN Spotlight initiative to fight all violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone</b> OPSYS number: ACT 61774 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument ( <u>NDICI-Global Europe</u> ).
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in Sierra Leone
<b>4. Programming document</b>	EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for Republic of Sierra Leone 2021-2027
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results</b>	MIP Priority Area 3 “Governance” Specific Objective 3: “Improved social, economic and political participation of women, girls, youths and vulnerable groups in general. Sexual reproductive health rights and fight against sexual and gender based violence/FGM supported”.
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	
<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	151 - Government & Civil Society-general
<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	<b>Main SDG: 5 Gender Equality</b> Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5.2 “Eliminate forced marriages and genital mutilation”</li> <li>▪ 5.3 “End all violence against and exploitation of women and girls”</li> <li>▪ 5.9 “Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality”</li> </ul> <b>Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets:</b> <b>SDG: 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3.7 “Universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education”</li> </ul> <b>SDG: 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</b>

	<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 16.3 “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all”,</li> <li>▪ 16.6 “Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”,</li> </ul> <p><b>SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.</b></p>			
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	15170 - Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions (15%) 15180 - Ending violence against women and girls (100%)			
<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel</b>	20000 – Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society. 41100 – United Nations agencies and funds (UN) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - 41114</li> <li>▪ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – 41119</li> <li>▪ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) – 41112</li> <li>▪ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN) – 41114</li> <li>▪ UN-Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (UN-MPTFO) - 41401</li> </ul>			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
<b>10. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	/
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity energy transport health education and research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	/
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @ (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line: 14.020120  Total estimated cost: <b>EUR 15 000 000</b>  Total amount of EU budget contribution <b>EUR 15 000 000.</b>  This action is co-financed in parallel co-financing by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNDP: USD 1 200 000</li> <li>• UN Women: USD 720 000</li> <li>• UNICEF: USD 750 000</li> <li>• UNFPA: USD 700 000</li> </ul>			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
13. Type of financing <sup>1</sup>	<b>Direct management</b> through grant (section 4.4.1). <b>Indirect management</b> with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.4.2.			

<sup>1</sup> Art. 27 NDICI

## 1.2 Summary of the Action

The Spotlight Initiative is an ambitious multi-year partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), here-included traditional harmful practices (HP) such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

The action will be implemented by the United Nations in partnership with Civil Society Organisations, national and sub-national authorities. This initiative builds on lessons learnt from the global EU-UN flagship programme and aims to scale resources, promote evidence-based programmes, and intensify focused action in key areas for the country. It aims directly at advancing SDG 5 “Gender Equality”.

The proposed action aligns with Sierra Leone’s Medium Term National Development Plan 2019-2023, specifically target 4/Cluster 5 which foresees the drastic reduction “by more than 50% of the number of women experiencing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) compared to 2018”. It will contribute to the achievement of the EU – Sierra Leone Multi Annual Indicative Programme Priority Area 3 “Governance” and Specific Objective 3 “Improved social, economic and political participation of women, girls, youths and vulnerable groups in general. Sexual reproductive health rights and fight against sexual and gender based violence/FGM supported”.

The overall objective of the Spotlight Initiative is that “All women and girls in Sierra Leone, particularly the most vulnerable, live a life free of violence and harmful practices, collectively described as violence against women and girls (VAWG)”.

Addressing violence against women and girls is a multi-faceted issue. It affects all people – particularly women and girls – in different ways and is highly context-specific. The Spotlight Initiative theory of change promotes a comprehensive multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approach centred around 4 outcome areas: i) laws, policies and institutions (including data collection and analysis to support decision making), ii) prevention and social norms change, iii) response (services for survivors and accountability of perpetrators) as well as iv) support to and partnership with the women’s movement to advance women’s rights. This holistic strategy harnesses data, expertise and best practices to ensure that programmes promote evidence-based measures proven to work.

A part of the action will be co-implemented by UN agencies, with funds pooled with the UN Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) acting as the Administrative Agent. As a joint UN Programme, the Spotlight Initiative will be implemented in line with UN Joint Programming and UN Development System reform principles and under the responsibility of the UN Resident Coordinator. A governance structure has been designed to ensure a “whole government, high level” approach and effective coordination.

Civil Society plays a central role in the fight against VAWG/HP and as such it has a central role both in the design and in the implementation of the programme, both as part of the programme governance structure and as recipient of programme funds.

This Action pursues a Team Europe approach with Ireland as a co-funder of UN Women and potential third party contributor to the grant to civil society.

## 2 RATIONALE

### 2.1 Context

Since the end of the civil war (1991-2002), the situation in Sierra Leone has progressively improved, the country has **maintained peace and stability** and achieved good progress in state-building efforts. The Government has introduced **positive reforms** such as the abolition of the death penalty, the repeal of the criminal libel law and the **adoption of the first ever Women Empowerment and Gender Equality policy and law**. Sierra Leone is an example of religious tolerance and contributed actively to peace building process especially in the ECOWAS region. Sierra Leone has just become **member of the UN Security Council** for the period 2024-2025.

Sierra Leone’s history of protracted conflict and civil war ended with a transition to democracy that has seen four consecutive elections held since 2002, the most recent being in 2018. However, despite the democratic transition the democracy in Sierra Leone remains fragile. **General Elections are scheduled for June 2023** and the political landscape is characterised by a high degree of polarisation and deep regional divides and many of the factors that led to civil war still persist (interplay of poverty, marginalisation, greed and grievances).

Sierra Leone's full economic potential is untapped and the country is extremely vulnerable to economic and social shocks. Since the end of the civil war, several major setbacks limited Sierra Leone's development and economic progress: 2014-2016 Ebola and iron ore price slump; 2019-2021 Covid-19; 2022 global economic downturn due to the Russian aggression on Ukraine. The economic costs of the crisis, including setbacks to the Government's revenue mobilization goals, have worsened the already-tight fiscal financing, and Sierra Leone's is at a **high risk of debt distress**. GDP growth is now projected to reach only 3.9% in 2022 (versus an initial forecast of 5.9% in December 2021) and **public finances are under high stress**. **Sierra Leone faces one of the highest food inflation in Sub-Saharan Africa**, and by far the highest on food and transport inflation with 40% (March 2023). The local currency value has depreciated by 70%. **Protests and strikes against the rising cost of living turned violent on 10 August 2022**, with six police officers and about 30 civilians killed in Freetown.

Sierra Leone is one of the **most food-insecure countries in the sub-Saharan region** (19% of the population affected), and one of the poorest in the world. **57 % of the population lives below the poverty line** with more than 10% in abject poverty, affecting disproportionately rural areas, home to 75% of the poor, though there is a rapid migration of mainly poor youth to urban centres.

Sierra Leone is dangling at the bottom of all development indicators and is facing considerable threats that place additional strain on systems and people, with disproportional impact to women and girls. Development and gender equality challenges are significant. Sierra Leone's **HDI score (0.477) is one of the lowest in the world** and positions the country at 181 out of 195<sup>2</sup>. In 2021, the country ranked **162 out of 170 on the UNDP's Gender Inequality**<sup>3</sup>, with very high rate of violence against women and girls (VAWG) here-included Harmful Practices such as female genital mutilation or cutting (experienced by 86% of women) and child marriage.

Sierra Leone faces complex, **interlinked, and persistent development challenges**: i) Weak Government effectiveness, patronage system, high levels of corruption and a fragile democracy, ii) Economic challenges of stagnation, unemployment and low productivity, iii) Social challenges of poverty, inequality, a sizeable precariat combined with population growth, iv) Environmental challenges of an alarming loss of primary natural forest and forest degradation, biodiversity loss, degrading ecosystems and high climate change vulnerability.

To address the country longstanding social and economic challenges and increasing inequalities, and unleash its full developmental potential **the 2018 National Development Plan identified Gender Equality as a key developmental objective**, namely "by 2023, drastically reduce by more than 50% the number of women experiencing GBV compared to 2018". Since then, the Government of Sierra Leone has indeed pursued a resolute Women Empowerment and Gender Equality agenda.

**In 2019 H.E. the President Julius Maada Bio declared a State of Emergency over sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** and called on the EU, the UN, and other development partners to make significant, concerted and comprehensive investment in gender equality and the fight against SGBV. **A fierce national campaign (the 'Hands Off Our Girls') was launched - led by the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone - to increase awareness of violence against girls in Sierra Leone; the institutional set up for Gender Equality reinforced through the establishment of a stand-alone Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs** with focused political leadership and a complement of professional staff who would advise the presidency and national government on gender equality, formulate policies, draw up appropriate legislation, coordinate partnerships, collaborate across ministries and with international and local partners, engage community stakeholders, monitor and evaluate programmes, etc. In the same year the newly established Ministry successfully **laid at Parliament a Bill to reform the 2012 Sexual Offences Act** in view to strengthen the legal framework applicable to VAWG. The new law introduced amongst others, the offence of aggravated sexual assault and increased the maximum penalty for rape and sexual penetration of a child. **A National Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence** was also adopted in 2019 to accelerate the prevention of GBV by encouraging the participation of men and boys as change agents and champions of women's and girls' rights.

In **2020**, upon enactment of the revised Sexual Offences Bill, **the SGBV Special Courts were established** to enable speedier management of SGBV cases, as well as a **24-hour free hot-line** and a **pilot network of 6 One-Stop Centers (OSC)** to provide in one single location multi-sectoral response services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including justice, medical, and legal aid. **Sierra Leone is a precursor of the OSC concept**

<sup>2</sup> [https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf\\_1.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index>

**in Africa**, the second country to adopt One Stop Centres for SGBV response and one of only nine countries in the entire continent.

In 2021, Government of Sierra Leone adopted the first Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and laid at Parliament the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill, which was signed into law in January 2023. The new policy and legal framework mark a significant advancement for gender equality in Sierra Leone. The law enshrines improvements to women's access to finance, employment opportunities, equal pay, maternity leave, and—critically—political representation. GEWE establishes a 30 percent quota for women's participation in government for both appointed positions, including cabinet, ministry, and ambassador roles, and elected positions, such as parliamentary and local council seats. Currently, women represent just 12 percent of parliamentary seats and four of 32 cabinet positions.

The EU has an important role to play in supporting Sierra Leone ending all forms of violence against women and girls, and, recently, has contributed substantially through a dedicated local call for proposals launched in 2019. Four grants – of an overall EU contribution of approximately 4 M EUR – were awarded to Consortia of Civil Society Organisations, to support CSOs-led action to advocate for normative, policy and legal change, raise community awareness and contribute to the national prevention and multi-sectoral response mechanisms.

Gender equality also figures high on the **EU/Sierra Leone political dialogue**, and is mainstreamed in EU cooperation programmes, notably in support to Basic Education and the National Radical Education Policy.

The afore-mentioned positive background and high degree of national commitment warrants a higher degree of EU support. The present action seeks to end all forms of VAWG and more broadly, alleviate gender inequalities as a precondition of, and driver for, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so the Spotlight Initiative is aligned with the **high-level global commitment of the European Union to end all forms of violence against women and girls**, it implements the objectives and priorities set forth in the **EU Gender Action Plan<sup>4</sup> (GAP III)**, the **European Union Strategy for Democracy and Human Rights**, as well as the **EU Roadmap for engagement with CSOs**.

## 2.2 Problem Analysis

In spite of progress made towards a more robust legal and policy framework for gender equality and women empowerment, a significant gap remains between the laws and policies on one hand, and the reality of women's and girls' lives on the other. The persistence of VAWG in Sierra Leone is closely linked to institutionalised gender inequalities exacerbated by discriminatory customs, a patriarchal society and a history of protracted conflict and hardship. Evidence shows that the acts of extreme brutality, widespread and systematic sexual violence experienced during the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002) have left scars which still run through the fabric of households, families and communities. Women and girls were also particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence during the 2014-2015 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in Sierra Leone.

Women and girls in Sierra Leone are commonly subjected to gender inequities, social marginalisation, discrimination in economic matters, and widespread acts of violence. This encompasses a broad range of forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence including but not limited to: intimate partner violence (domestic violence); sexual violence; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); child, early and forced marriage; and trafficking of women and girls and forms of exploitation such as school-related sexual abuse, and abusive employment conditions.

Data on VAWG in Sierra Leone are disturbing.. According to the Afro Barometer Survey<sup>5</sup> almost **50% of Sierra Leone females experiences sexual or physical violence during their lifetime**. In Sierra Leone, **83% of women aged between 15-49 are circumcised**, according to Demographic and Health (DHS) Survey of 2019<sup>6</sup>. According to the 2017 Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017 report<sup>7</sup>, 12,9% of women aged between

<sup>4</sup> The EU Gender Action Plan III was adopted by 24 Member States through the Presidency Council Conclusion of the 16th December of 2020 (13947/20).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.afrobarometer.org/articles/gender-based-violence-a-high-priority-in-sierra-leone-but-citizens-say-women-who-come-forward-likely-to-face-criticism-and-shame/>

<sup>6</sup> Sierra Leone Demographic and Health survey 2019 (DHS 2019), Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) and ICF, 2020. Available at: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR365/FR365.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/sierra\\_leone\\_mics6\\_2017\\_report.pdf](https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/sierra_leone_mics6_2017_report.pdf)

20-24 in Sierra Leone had married before the age of 15, and 29,9% before the age of 18, positioning Sierra Leone as the **19<sup>th</sup> country with the highest child marriage rate in the world.**

Especially troubling are data from Rainbo Initiative<sup>8</sup> (an NGO providing free clinical care and counselling services for sexual violence survivors at five locations), showing that of 3,339 sexual assault cases seen at their support centres in 2020, close to **70% of the victims were children below 15 years.** In 2019, of the 3,252 cases of sexual penetration recorded, the **alleged perpetrator was known to the girl's family in more than 90% of cases.** Yet, according to NGOs and women's groups, thousands of SGBV cases go unreported each year. Among women aged 15-49 who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence, **49% have never sought help** or told anyone about the violence<sup>9</sup>. Many survivors, particularly women aged 50 and older, decide not to report to a medical facility or other authority, pointing to a disturbing cultural acceptance of SGBV within some segments of society.

The conviction rate of perpetrators is also very discouraging. According to the National Referral Protocol on SGBV of July 2022<sup>10</sup> out of the 12,052 cases of SGBV recorded by the Sierra Leone Police in 2018<sup>11</sup>, only 1,334 went to court and only 226 convictions were reached - reflecting **a conviction rate of less than 2% of reported case load.**

Studies have shown the correlation between weak and/or underfunded legal and institutional frameworks; conflicting customary practices; lack of awareness on VAWG/HP and entrenched cultural norms; lack of economic opportunities; lack of services (medical, psychological, legal etc.) for survivors and the prevalence of VAWG/HP.

Hereafter the key specific problems this action seeks to address and the primary stakeholders (public and non-state actors).

#### **A) Weak and underfunded legal and institutional framework**

Sierra Leone has made important positive strides and effectively reinforced the policy, legal and institutional framework to combat VAWG/HP. However the system faces considerable constraints. National budget allocation is grossly insufficient to ensure effective service delivery, and key institutions (health/social welfare/police/judiciary etc.) lack sufficient staff or staff sufficiently trained to address VAWG/HP. The capacity of national institutions to collect disaggregated VAWG/HP data in line with globally agreed standards is extremely weak and data paucity hinders effective evidence based policy and decision making.

Also, the recently revised policy and legislative framework, whilst praised by many, carries significant set-backs and it is not yet translated into multi-sectoral plans, nor duly budgeted for. As an example, the recently amended Sexual Offences Act 2019, has introduced welcome amendments for new offences such as prohibiting forced sex in marital relationships, protecting children from solicitation by persons in authority and introducing provisions for aggravated sexual assault. However some provisions are controversial and warrant evidence-based impact assessment and a potential legal review. The most controversial change is that children below the age of 14 can now be prosecuted for sexual offences. Also, more severe sentences could in fact lead to a reduction in victims reporting crimes. Some people are already deterred from informing formal authorities about violations because such incidents can cause significant ruptures in small, tight-knit communities. Harsher sentences could lead to people being even more deterred. Likewise, the provision criminalising "compromise" - meaning that if anyone (be it a family head, religious leader, chief etc.) attempts to settle a case of sexual violence in their community instead of reporting it to the police, they can be fined 10 million Leones (\$1,000) and/or spend 1-10 years in prison - could have negative implications for local power structures and community leaders, who can be penalised for intervening. Many people in rural areas commonly resolve cases using informal channels and criminalising compromise may drive a further wedge between the formal legal system and traditional authorities. Also the Sexual Offences Act has not been translated yet in operational guidelines for effective implementation. For instance, the Chief Justice has yet to provide specific sentencing guidelines, while the Rules of Court Committee is still to provide rules and procedures for the implementation of the amendment. Provisions for a sex offender register don't include details as to how it will work, and while the law allows for survivors to access free medical examination and treatment, there is no statutory regulation to guide implementation.

<sup>8</sup> <https://rainboinitiative.org/our-data/>

<sup>9</sup> Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019 (DHS 2019)

<sup>10</sup> Accessible at: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/National-Referral-Protocol-on-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence-report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Sierra Leone Police Annual General Crime Statistics Report 2018

There is also some criticism that the policy and legal framework focuses disproportionately on sexual violence, particularly of young girls, and neglects other types of violence against women, notably harmful traditional practices such as FGM and child marriage. **Initiation rite-related FGM was criminalised in 2019.** However, it still remains legal as long as practiced outside of an initiation ritual. Sierra Leone is one of 28 countries in Africa where female genital mutilation (FGM) is known to be practiced and one of few that has not banned it. Effective legal ban of the practice will be a key expected result of this action.

The Domestic Violence Act also needs to be updated, as it allows for out-of-court settlement for matters that are considered as ‘aggravated domestic violence,’ which limits constructive dialogue on punishment and access to justice for many survivors.

Lastly but not least, the revised policy, legal and institutional framework still needs to be translated into multi-sectoral plans. The National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in force dates back to 2012 and requires a thorough revision and adequate budgeting.

### **B) Gender inequitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours and lack of economic opportunities.**

Gender Inequities are deeply rooted in society and data and evidence indicates a disturbing cultural acceptance of VAWG/HP within some segments of the community, and victims themselves. Many women (notably those whom married young) believe that a man is sometimes justified in beating his wife and are also less likely to report the abuse and leave abusive partners.

Significantly, the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans (whether urban/rural, analphabetic or highly educated citizens) do not engage at all in the state-sanctioned legal system. Whilst SGBV case reporting to police have increased – mostly for child victims – the vast majority of the victims do not report to police and if they do, they eventually do not press charges in the justice system. Most cases end in silence or with community compromise. This indicate a high aversion in society to disclose the matter and recur to formal justice. VAWG victims are most often deterred from informing formal authorities for fear of repercussion within their house-hold and community.

FGM/C is a particularly controversial matter which is highly politically instrumentalised and supported by many groups in society (local politicians, traditional leaders, the cutters).

All of the above point to the need to engage significantly in behavioural change campaigns, in community-based interventions that raise knowledge on GBV referral pathways and related laws, change attitude and social norms, prevent VAWG/HP occurrence, and bridge the gap between formal and customary systems. There is need to carefully design victim-centred strategies that can effectively improve access to formal justice and protection for GBV survivors, whilst ensuring their safety and dignity in communities. As well as need to design and implement conflict-sensitive approaches in respect to FGM/C practices.

Equally important, there is need to enhance women economic opportunities. Evidence shows that gender inequalities, women poor decision making in the house-holds and society and VAWG/HP are correlated to lack of economic opportunities and financial dependency. The action will therefore seek to support women livelihood, notably strengthening access to micro-credit opportunities by encouraging establishment of Village Loan and Saving schemes and supporting alternative initiation rituals and income generating opportunities for FGM cutters.

### **C) Lack of essential services for victims of violence and harmful practices, including for long term recovery from violence.**

Sierra Leone has adopted a multi-sectoral response approach to SGBV, with services delivered jointly by medical practitioners, social welfare and police staff of the Family Support Unit in the One-Stop Centers. The OSCs are mandated to provide holistic services (health, psychosocial support, legal and police services) to survivors of GBV under one roof and free of charge. There are currently 8 Governmental OSCs in Sierra Leone and the network is complemented and strengthened by 6 additional centres established by the NGO Rainbo Initiative in Freetown, Bo, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, and Makeni.

There are several weaknesses in the typical pathway for survivors to access services. Institutional capacity to deliver quality and coordinated essential services, including psychosocial, Sexual and Reproductive Health services and access to justice, to women and girls’ survivors of violence, is very low, especially for those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (e.g. women in conflict with the law, people with disabilities).

All sectors participating to the response are severely underfunded.

Budgetary allocation to the Health sector does not meet international objectives and contribution towards VAWG/HP is far below acceptable standards. The network of one-stop centres relies heavily on donors and NGOs' contribution to run essential services and distribute essential drugs (including painkillers, day-after pill, and HIV prevention kit).

Both the Police and Judiciary suffers profound human, financial and capacity constraints.

The Family Support Units (FSUs) established in the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in 2001, enjoy highly committed and rather competent personnel but lack the financial and logistical means (vehicle, communication and IT equipment) to effectively investigate VAGW cases. Police facilities are scarce, poorly staffed and underfunded, especially outside big cities. SLP capacity to file official report is allegedly below standards and not sufficient to enable effective prosecution of the cases, the Prosecutor being obliged to drop many cases for insufficient evidence submitted by the police report. Sierra Leone lacks a sexual offenders' register.

Access to justice and legal aid is very poor in Sierra Leone. Generally speaking citizens' trust in the formal justice system is very low, and most VAWG survivors do not recur to it at all, preferring handling the matter in accordance with customary law and practices. Community compromise of GBV cases – albeit banned by the Sexual Offences Act 2019 – is a recurrent practice which promotes a culture of impunity. There is need to intensify efforts to enhance trust and access to legal aid and the formal justice system at community level.

Whilst the establishment, in 2020, of SGBV Special Courts has strengthened and fast-tracked management of the SGBV cases, delays and backlog are still high, due to lack of duly trained Judges/magistrates and registrars, and weak case management systems and practices.

Another obstacle to justice is that medical assessments are only recognised in courts when done by a qualified medical practitioner, and the number of practitioners trained and prepared to do them is very limited. Furthermore, Sierra Leone has no laboratory nor forensic capacity to ensure timely collection and testing of DNA samples, which is perceived by activists as a major obstacle to prosecution of SGBV cases. Profound weaknesses in the juvenile justice system and lack of victims' protection schemes further hinder the capacity to adequately address VAWG in case of child-victims.

Beyond the network of Government OSCs and Rainbo Centres, service provision is extremely limited. The country suffers an acute shortage of safe homes and essential services (such as Mental Health and Psycho-social (MHPSS) support) for longer term recovery for Women and girls' survivors of violence and their families.

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

**The Spotlight Initiative pursues a “Whole of government” approach, at the highest level:**

Ending violence against women and girls is highly political, requires a well funded multi-sectorial response, and sustained coordination amongst a significant number of institutions and non-state actors. It needs to sit at the heart of national development priorities. The role of both National and Local Government is crucial, and global evidence shows that the engagement of Heads of States, Prime Ministers and concerned ministries makes a significant difference. Engaging those at the highest level of government whilst ensuring the necessary financial and human resources allocation is paramount to influencing wide societal behaviour. Successful Spotlight Initiative Programmes have been endorsed and, at times, launched by Heads of States and have featured the consistent commitment of Government at the highest level. Whilst the main Ministry counter-part for the Action is the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA), as mandate and responsibility pertains to it to protect and promote the rights of women, adolescent girls and children and coordinate VAWG prevention and response, it is crucial that structures of coordination for a “whole of government approach” on ending violence against women and girls be established at the highest level (Head of State's office, Vice President and Prime Minister's Offices and Ministry of Planning and Economic Development).

The EU and UN Resident Coordinator will engage closely with the Presidential Task Force on GBV - Chaired by H.E the President and the National Committee of GBV - Chaired by MoGCA, including representatives from sectorial ministries, CSO's and UN Agencies.

**Multi-stakeholders' Partnership to support prevention and response to VAWG/HP**

The programme seeks to establish and strengthen a multi-stakeholders' partnership inclusive of duty bearers and civil society organisations engaged in VAWG prevention and response at national, district, and community level.

Amongst the most critical national stakeholders: the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (leading Executive's action on VAWG), Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Health and Sanitation (providing respectively, psychosocial support and medical services for survivors), Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (implementing a radical education policy inclusive of SRHRs and VAWG commitments), Sierra Leone Police (notably the Family Support Unit), Ministry of Justice (notably the SGBV Special Courts) the Law Reform Commission (mandated to support legal review) and the Ministries in charge of Finance and Planning and Economic Development for their critical role in setting budgetary and national development planning priorities.

The action will also seek to build knowledge and capacities of the Parliament of Sierra Leone and the Human Rights Commission, notably to support review of legislation on ending VAWG in line with international Human Rights' standards. Sierra Leone Statistics and targeted Ministries capacity to collect and analyse VAWG/HP data will also be strengthened to inform evidence-based decision and policy making and reporting.

As local needs require local solutions, the action will seek to promote capacity development and collaborative approaches at district and community levels; bringing together central level institutions, District Councils, traditional leaders (paramount chiefs and community/religious leaders) and civil society.

As evidence shows the significant need to address cultural norms entrenched in society, the action will target specifically paramount chiefs (the custodians of customary law), community leaders (parents, guardians, teachers, religious and community leaders) as well as the media (both traditional and social). The action will also seek to inform parenting skills around gender socialisation through early childhood development programmes, and target specifically the Soweis (the FGM practitioners) to introduce alternative initiation rituals.

The action will also seek to engage the private sector to promote gender equality in the workplace and employment support for survivors; and collaborate with legal aid providers and the Correctional Services to ensure rights of women in conflict with the law – a particularly vulnerably group- are upheld.

#### **A central role for civil society, supported by significant investments:**

For decades, women's rights groups and civil society organisations (CSOs) have demanded that the States addresses violence against women and girls as a pervasive rights violation. Evidence from other Spotlight Initiatives Programmes shows that the presence of vibrant, autonomous, progressive movements – including specifically feminist and women's rights movements – is essential (and in fact a key determinant) to generating sustainable change. Thus the Spotlight Initiative has placed civil society at the center of its efforts to end violence, engaging civil society groups in decision-making, programming, and implementation. Diverse civil society experts will sit on Spotlight's governance mechanisms (with a membership of 20% in the national steering committee) and constitute "self-selected" reference groups to guide and advise implementation, advocate for the realisation of its commitments and monitor its work to hold the Initiative accountable. The action also features a fully dedicated outcome to support civil society and movements in their work to end violence against women and girls. To do that, civil society needs sustained quality resourcing, and a significant part of the overall budget is allocated – in line with Spotlight Initiative best practices, to protect and expand civil society's role in ending violence: 50% of the programme activities' budget to be delivered by CSOs across all outcome areas (with the vast majority channeled to local and grassroots organisations), and 10% of the overall budget dedicated to the specific outcome focused on CSOs/Women Movement strengthening. Support to CSOs will include the design of calls for proposal and subgrant mechanisms as well as capacity building initiatives tailored made to meet the needs of grass-root organizations and provide them with enhanced financial and institutional capacity to fight VAW/HP. Beneficiaries will be identified based on CSOs mapping studies.

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is: **All women and girls in Sierra Leone, particularly the most vulnerable, live a life free of violence and harmful practices, collectively described as violence against women and girls (VAWG).**

The four Specific Objectives and related Outputs are:

**A) Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence, informed by quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place, translated into costed multi-sectoral plans and implemented by National and sub-national systems and institutions**

Outputs:

- A.1 National and regional partners<sup>12</sup> have strengthened evidence-based knowledge and capacities to assess gaps and draft new and/or strengthen existing legislations on ending VAWG and/or gender equality and non-discrimination that respond to the rights of the most groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and are in line with international HR standards and treaty bodies' recommendations. Notably the action will promote impact assessment and legislative review of the Sexual Offences Act and Domestic Violence Act. Criminalisation of FGM and effective implementation of the legal ban will be critical outputs pursued by the action.
- A.2 National and/or sub-national partners<sup>13</sup> are better able to develop evidence-based national and/or sub-national action plans on ending VAWG in line with international HR standards with M&E frameworks, increase financing and allocate appropriate budgets for their implementation, including for those groups facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination. Notably the action will promote the review and budgetisation of the National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.
- A.3 Key officials at national and/or sub-national levels in all relevant institutions<sup>14</sup> are better able to develop and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to VAWG, especially for those groups of women and girls facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, including in other sectors
- A.4 Key partners, including relevant statistical officers, service providers in the different branches of government<sup>15</sup> and women's rights advocates have strengthened capacities to regularly collect data related to VAWG in line with international and regional standards to inform laws, policies and programmes. The action will support the establishment of a sexual offenders' register and the strengthening of the GBV data collection system.

**B) Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including as a result of women's economic empowerment interventions**

Outputs:

- B.1 National and/or sub-national evidence-based programmes are developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in line with international standards, for in and out of school settings
- B.2 Community advocacy platforms are established/strengthened to develop strategies and programmes,<sup>16</sup> including community dialogues, public information and advocacy campaigns, to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including in relation to women and girls' sexuality and reproduction, self-

<sup>12</sup> Parliamentarians, human rights institutions and women's right advocates

<sup>13</sup> Key government/national decision makers (Heads of State, Finance Ministers, Ministries of Justice and Police, Security Ministers and relevant planning institutions) including women's rights advocates

<sup>14</sup> E.g. justice, statistics, police, health, community based, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Statistics offices, justice, security and health sector

<sup>16</sup> Including informing parenting skills around gender socialization through early childhood development programmes

confidence and self-esteem and transforming harmful masculinities. Efforts will be intensified to enhance trust and access to legal aid and the formal justice system at community level.

B.3 Decision makers in relevant settings<sup>17</sup> and key informal decision makers<sup>18</sup> are better able to advocate for implementation of legislation and policies on ending VAWG and for gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours and women and girls' rights.

**C) Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence**

Outputs:

C.1 Relevant government authorities<sup>19</sup> and women's rights organisations at national and sub-national levels have better knowledge and capacity to deliver quality and coordinated essential services, including SRH services and access to justice, to women and girls' survivors of violence, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Notably the action will seek to strengthen and expand the One Stop Centers and Rainbo Centers, as well as safe homes and essential services (such as Mental Health and Psycho-social (MHPSS) support) for longer term recovery. Efforts will be intensified to strengthen the formal justice system, building capacity for enhanced GBV case management systems and practices.

C.2 Women and girls' survivors of violence and their families are informed of and can access quality essential services, including longer term recovery services and opportunities..

**D) Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAWG**

Outputs:

D.1 Women's rights groups and relevant CSOs<sup>20</sup> have increased opportunities and support to share knowledge, network, partner and jointly advocate for GEWE and ending VAWG, more specifically, with relevant stakeholders at sub-national, national, regional and global levels

D.2 Women's rights groups and relevant CSOs are better supported to use social accountability mechanisms to support their advocacy and influence on prevention and response to VAWG and GEWE more broadly

D.3 Women's rights groups and relevant CSOs representing groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalisation (e.g. women in conflict with the law, people with disability) have strengthened capacities and support to design, implement and monitor programmes on ending VAWG

### 3.2 Indicative Activities

Indicatively, the following activities (non exhaustive list) are planned under each Specific Objective:

**A) Strengthened Policy, Legislative and institutional frameworks**

- Provision of technical assistance to the targeted institutions to undertake impact assessment and review of the VAWG legal framework (e.g. Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Offences Act,), the review and development of a costed integrated National Action Plan for preventing and responding to VAWG at chiefdom, district, and national levels; gender sensitive & VAWG/HP targeted planning and budgeting; formulation of statutory regulations and standard operating procedures for OSCs and Special Courts;
- Supporting multi-stakeholders consultative processes and technical reviews of customary, legal and policy frameworks to ensure their effectiveness in safeguarding and protecting women and girls from VAWG and making recommendations for revision;

<sup>17</sup> Including the media, sports, workplaces, etc.

<sup>18</sup> It includes decision makers from informal institutions, e.g. Paramount chiefs, religious and community leaders

<sup>19</sup> Amongst the key stakeholders: the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Sierra Leone Police (notably the Family Support Unit), Ministry of Justice (notably the SGBV Special Courts).

<sup>20</sup> Including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalisation

- Conducting experimental/applied research, (using behavioural insights and a human-centred approach), to uncover, design, and test actions for addressing drivers that perpetuate VAWG and barriers/resistance to change, informed by findings of existing studies and desk review;
- Provision of technical assistance and procurement of equipment to strengthen the data collection and statistical capacity.

## **B) Strengthened VAWG/HP Awareness and Prevention**

Prevention activities may include efforts to empower women and girls; change attitudes, norms and behavior; adopt and enact legal reforms; and strengthen implementation of laws and policies on ending violence against women and girls, including through strengthening institutional capacity.

- Developing and implementing a Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategy for advocacy, sensitization, and mobilisation efforts to prevent VAWG/HP, working closely with community leaders and CSOs.
- Training /institutional capacity building of duty bearers and non-state actors engaged in VAWG prevention
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, scaling up and adapting curriculum of ongoing Gender Transformative Training (including in Comprehensive Sexual Education) and Positive Parenting / Discipline programmes for parents, caregivers, teachers, children and adolescents in community settings and schools, to address identified key drivers of VAWG.
- Disseminate messages on GBV, safeguarding, and its referral pathways through media / schools / community leaders/CSOs
- Organise quarterly awareness raising sessions on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) /Sexual Harassment (SH) in tertiary Institutions.
- Establish complaint and feedback mechanism on SEA/SH at district and community level
- Develop, print and disseminate Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials on the laws of GBV and referral pathways.
- Set up district-level groups and organize theatre for development sessions at community levels to raise awareness on GBV laws and referral pathways.
- Build capacity of Community Gender Focal Person Volunteers to carry out community awareness raising session on GBV laws, referral pathways and safeguarding messages in communities and schools
- Support women economic empowerment – included livelihood and income generating activities for FGM/C practitioners - through Village Saving and Loan Association Schemes and Technical Vocational Educational Training

## **C) Strengthened access to quality essential services for Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices, and including for long term recovery from violence**

- Provision of technical assistance to strengthen the multi-stakeholder and multi-sectorial referral pathway;
- Training /institutional capacity building of duty bearers (medical practitioners, FSU staff, Magistrates, social welfare and mental health practitioners, etc.) and non-state actors to respond more effectively to the needs of survivors
- Provision of technical and financial assistance to enhance investigation, prosecution and forensic capacity;
- Train police/judges/magistrates/registrars and strengthen formal justice mechanisms to prosecute GBV cases , with special focus on justice for juvenile survivors.
- Provision of technical and financial assistance to duty bearers providing legal assistance, psychosocial counselling and health care to victims of VAWG/HP;
- Support operations of the network of One-Stop Center and other Centers for victims of SGBV / expand access to services through provision of equipment or other material inputs.
- Enhancing the capabilities of CSOs, health workers, paralegals, and traditional leaders to provide survivors with information on legal remedies available to them and to referrals for legal aid.
- Supporting the provisions of legal aid services, including paralegal services, in targeted communities with special focus on services to children, persons with disabilities, and women in conflict with the law.
- Support the establishment/refurbishment and operations of disable-friendly Safe homes

#### **D) Strengthened Women's rights organisations and movements**

Building capacity of **feminist, women-led and women's rights organisations and movements, and institutions (governmental and non-governmental)** at all levels to enhance their effectiveness, influence and sustainability (activities and core-funding). These organisations exist to bring about transformative change for gender equality and/or the rights of women and girls in developing countries. Their activities **include agenda-setting, advocacy, policy dialogue, capacity development, awareness raising and prevention, service provision**, conflict-prevention and peacebuilding, research, organising, and alliance and network building.

- Provision of technical assistance to support Community of Practice-(CoP), Civil Society Organization (CSOs) and GBV actors supported to promote evidence-based advocacy on GBV issues and services
- Facilitating coordination and joint planning among CSOs and promoting their engagements with MDAs, community leaders and others key constituencies, by providing training on consensus building, networking, and advocacy, as well as capacitating them for other roles envisioned under this programme.
- Enabling CSOs with knowledge, resources, and network connections providing livelihood opportunities and support packages to VAWG survivors; alternative livelihood opportunities for women practitioners of FGM, if research during program development reveals this as a significant factor in FGM eradication.
- Provision of grants to local and grass root organization to implement VAWG/HP advocacy/prevention and response strategies aligned with the Spotlight Initiative theory of change.

### 3.3 Mainstreaming

#### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

**Outcomes of the SEA screening:** This action is deemed not environmentally sensitive. In light of the soft-nature of activities foreseen, the environmental screening concluded that this action is unlikely to have any impact on climate change, ecosystems and biodiversity.

**Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening:** 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 :** The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

#### **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. This implies that gender equality is the principal objective of the Action.

#### **Human Rights**

Combating all forms of VAWG, promoting gender equality and human rights is at the core of the Spotlight Initiative. Furthermore this action shall apply a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, whether civil and political or economic, social and cultural in order to integrate human rights principles, to support the right holders in claiming their rights, with a focus on poorer, marginalised and vulnerable people and groups, and to assist partner countries in implementing their international human rights obligations. Activities will specifically target marginalised groups (including PWD, women in conflict with the law, drop-out girls), the approach will be guided by the principles of 'leaving no one behind', equality and non-discrimination on any grounds.

#### **Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that inclusion of persons with disabilities is a significant objective of the Action. Raising awareness on the special needs of women and girls with disabilities will be a core activity and promoting inclusive education and providing rights-based and gender-responsive services to address SGBV and SRHR for women and young persons with disabilities will be emphasised throughout the implementation of the Action. The initiative will target specifically the special needs and rights of people living with disabilities across all components. For instance PWDS special needs will be taken into account in policy, legal, regulatory and SOP reviews, in the design of prevention and

response strategies by tailor making economic empowerment activities and safe homes that can cater for their needs. Association of women with disabilities will be specifically targeted under the component D) and CSOs will be trained to address and advocate for PWDs victims of VAWG/HP.

### **Democracy**

The Action will contribute to deepening participatory governance and build capacities of CSOs and women groups. By fostering partnerships between communities, civil society, central and local governments, dialogue and joint action to end SGBV and address service delivery gaps; strengthening relationships between right holders and duty bearers the action will contribute to strengthening democratic governance and fighting impunity.

### **Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

Sierra Leone is a fragile country and EU programming is underpinned by the conflict analysis conducted in 2022 to ensure conflict sensitivity and take due account of the special needs and circumstances of the partner countries and of their population. The political instrumentalisation of traditional FGM/C practices is deemed concerning. The Action will apply a conflict-sensitive approach and implement the do-no-harm principle. A particular focus will be given to: (i) the attitudes and norms of the schools and communities regarding SGBV, traditional harmful practices such as FGM/C and SRHR, (ii) the access to quality services for SRHR and the survivors of SGBV and (iii) an analysis of the political/conflict and gender dynamics around SGBV/FGM in the target communities and the potential negative effects of interventions, namely whether these could increase tension in the community or endanger the target groups. The Action will promote men and boys positive engagement as agents for change in their communities and society at large.

### **Disaster Risk Reduction:**

Not applicable.

### **Other considerations if relevant**

The Action will embrace the opportunities for leveraging digitalised processes and services that are relevant for SGBV related services. The respective activities will both aim at enhancing the demand side (e.g. empowering adolescent girls to voice their needs or report their vulnerability and harm; build capacity of teachers, teacher educators and education officers for hybrid and digital CPD) as well as strengthening the digital infrastructure required to deliver or make use of the services.

## 3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Overall risks are deemed as medium to high, however risk of negative impact of potential non-intervention is deemed as much higher. VAWG disrupts a survivor’s state of well-being and often prevents him/her from fully participating in social and economic activities. In addition to the physical and emotional toll, women and girls can incur substantial costs in terms of health care, legal expenses and reduced productivity stemming from loss of self-confidence and motivation. This not only impacts not the survivor negatively, but has detrimental consequences for families and limits the socio-economic development of communities and the country overall.

Context-specific risks relate to i) deeply entrenched social norms which create high resistance to change and EVAWG; ii) instrumentalisation of harmful traditional practices (FGM) for political gain; iii) insufficient funding and limited human resources amongst relevant government and non-government services (health/police/justice, social services, etc.); iv) risk of fiscal deficit and v) political instability.

Specific risks rating and mitigation measures associated with the Action are listed below:

Category	Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating measures
1 external environment	Post-electoral changes in the Government and/or selected ministries could negatively impact ownership and commitment to implement the programme	Medium	Medium	The SI will pursue a “Whole of government” approach, at the highest level. High level advocacy by EU HoD /UNRC / UN Heads of agencies / and empowering CSOs advocacy, to ensure high-level government commitment continues even if institutional changes occur.

	Political instability/social unrest and/or detrimental fiscal situation drastically reduce the commitment and contribution towards VAWG.	Medium	Medium	Continuous monitoring of the political and fiscal situations to anticipate potential risks and maintaining dialogue with high-level counterparts on the importance of advancing core program objectives for the overall development of the country.
	Deeply entrenched social norms and political instrumentalisation of harmful traditional practices (FGM) create resistance on the part of authorities and community members to the structural and normative changes required to end VAWG/HP	High	High	Invest heavily on awareness and behavioural change campaigns at all levels in collaboration with high level influencers in society and at community level.  Intense engagement of influential stakeholders at national and local level, to promote conducive social norms at all levels, notably politicians, paramount chiefs, religious and traditional leaders, schools, communities, families.  Using participatory-based approaches involving CSOs and CBOs to develop strategic plans and community engagement tools to bring about necessary changes to social norms and other elements that influence VAWG and the practice of FGM. Apply a victim-centred and conflict sensitive approach to strategies addressing VAWG/FGM/C
	Risk action has unintended negative human rights' impacts that perpetuate gender inequalities and hinder the wellbeing of target beneficiaries	Medium	High	It is recognised that given the social norms entrenched in the local context, there is a high risk an approach that targets uniquely the implementation of formal justice systems may hinder the inclusion and wellbeing of VAWG victims whom may be stigmatised and rejected by their families/community and society. To mitigate this risk the initiative puts a strong focus on awareness and behavioral change campaign which may change social norms and mindsets and on activities that bridge the gap between formal justice system and traditional and customary practices, and on delivering a response which places victims' rights, dignity and wellbeing resolutely at the center.
2 planning, processes and systems	Modest funding levels and limited human resources amongst government and non-government entities in country (health/police/justice, social services, etc.) limit realisation of activities crucial to achieving the planned Outcomes.	High	High	Design low-cost context-specific activities which stand a higher chance of sustainability despite macro-economic constraints.  Strengthening planning and budgeting capacity to increase allocation to the multi-sectorial strategy to curb VAWG.  Disseminate SI produced tools for cost effective intervention by stakeholders.  Systemise VAWG prevention and response activities into SOPs used by Ministry of Health, Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, and other key ministries.
	Low capacity of service providers for health and psychosocial services results in poor quality of care and additional risks to survivors	High	High	Victim centred approach and capacity development of service providers on how to maintain confidentiality, ensure safety of the survivor, and apply survivor-centred principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination.

	Lack of coherence/ integration between the components of the Action implemented by different implementing partners.	Medium	Medium	Design shall be the outcome of a joint formulation by UN agencies and lead CSOs partners based on evidence-based research and mapping. Sound governance structure (National steering Committee and CSOs reference group) will be established upon programme inception to coordinate implementation and geographical convergence among implementing partners.
3: People and the organisation	Exclusion of boys / men from the action	Medium	Medium	A balanced approach between specific support to adolescent girls and a broader enhancement of the learning environment will be promoted; men and boys will be engaged in SGBV prevention, access to SRHR and sexuality education.
	Insufficient UN agency staffing and capacity; resource competition amongst UN agencies; complex procedural requirements by the UN (procurement, reporting) which surpass capacity of local implementing partners	Medium	High	Strong leadership and coordination sought on the part of UNRC as well as dedicated support services by the UN Spotlight Initiative Secretariat to ensure the implementation of the UN Joint Programming and ONE reform principles and SI best practices. UN to consider appointing one lead agency for overall technical coherence, establishing one implementing team to avoid implementation in silos per agency and recruiting a Chief Technical Advisors reporting directly to the UNRC with mandate to coordinate overall strategy and implantation. UN to establish clear joint procedures for UN agencies as well as joint costed work plan and consider concluding MoUs between UN agencies to define staffing, clear budget allocations and delivery responsibilities
4: legality and regularity aspects	UN and CSOs partners do not comply with donor financial regulations.	Low	High	The United Nations Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) acting as the Administrative Agent that ensures UNDG approved standardized contracting and trustee services including the release of funds to the recipient UN Agencies, high quality financial and narrative reporting and the ability to manage multi-donor contributions. A Fund Secretariat ensures support and services to the Fund's governance structure and to individual programmes and UN CTs, it also ensures accountable and compliant portfolio management as well as technical excellence, results monitoring and reporting, knowledge management and global advocacy and communications. CSOs capacity and compliancy to contractual rules and financial regulations built and strengthened through training, and verified by independent expenditures verifications and audits.

#### Lessons Learnt:

This action draws considerable lessons from the **Meta-Review of the EU funded Global Spotlight Initiative programmes**, as well as the **independent final evaluation of the EU funded project entitled: “Preventing Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Women and Girls in Sierra Leone 2019-22”<sup>21</sup> implemented by the Rainbo Initiative Sierra Leone.**

In its four years of implementation, in 32 programmes across five regions, the Spotlight Initiative has tested and enhanced a holistic approach to ending gender-based violence, a new way of working with key stakeholders, a contextualized whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, innovative localization through partnership

<sup>21</sup> Grant contract ref.n. FED/2019/409-275

with civil society, and a model of coordinated “whole of UN System”. Several lessons can be drawn from the EU-UN Spotlight Initiatives implemented throughout the world:

i) The initiative has shown **the importance of a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. Government’s ownership at both national and sub-national levels is critical.** Ending violence against women and girls is highly political and requires a multi-sectoral response, and sustained coordination among a significant number of institutions. It needs to sit at the heart of national development priorities if it is to succeed. The role of national and local Government is crucial, and evidence shows that the engagement of Heads of States, Prime Ministers and concerned ministries makes a significant difference, as well. Engaging those at the highest level of government whilst ensuring the necessary financial and human resources allocation has shown institutional ownership and responses, thus, influencing societal wide behaviour. Successful Spotlight Initiative Programmes have been endorsed and, at times, launched by Heads of States and have featured the consistent commitment of Government at the highest level as well as concerned ministries. It is therefore crucial that structures of coordination for a “whole of government” approach on ending violence against women and girls be established at the highest level (Head of State’s office, Prime Minister’s Office or Ministry of Planning, for example).

ii) **A central role for civil society, supported by significant investments is paramount:** Evidence shows that the presence of vibrant, autonomous, progressive citizens movements – including specifically feminist and women’s rights movements – is essential (and in fact a key determinant) to generating sustainable change. The role of CSOs in shaping norms and their ability to reach out to the beneficiaries is also paramount. The EU/UN have placed civil society at the center of their efforts to end violence, engaging civil society groups in decision-making, programming, and implementation. While it may be more efficient to work with fewer and more experienced CSOs, it is paramount to also build capacity (institutional and financial) of localised and informal grassroots-oriented networks as they bring an added value to community mobilisation and mindset change.

iii) **Need to adopt a comprehensive theory of change addressing the complex nature of violence against women and girls and a common results framework across programmes.** Violence against women and girls is a multi-faceted issue, affecting all people – particularly women and girls – everywhere in different ways. Evidence shows that for sustained change to happen and for prevention and response to be efficient, we need to use all entry points. To address it, Spotlight Initiative promotes a comprehensive approach at multiple levels centered on four interconnected specific objective areas. This framework offers stakeholders the ability to flexibly select and adapt proposed interventions to their context and the (varied) needs of women and girls, including those that are traditionally left behind, while maintaining a holistic approach. This approach and results framework also goes beyond a sole focus on ending violence against women and girls to integrate elements that advance gender equality more broadly, such as social norms change, access to justice, political participation, and women’s economic empowerment.

Socio-cultural norms, values, attitudes, beliefs and practices impact heavily on the advancement of SRHR and SGBV prevention as well as the positive engagement of men and boys in the process. Gaining the support of community champions such as cultural or religious leaders is a precondition for engaging effectively with communities. Community mobilization complemented with multimedia integrated messaging (SGBV/Violence against Women and Children, Harmful Practices, SRHR) works well for social norms change. Social workers and community-based social structures are essential not just in bridging the gap between formal and informal social welfare systems, but also in making basic essential information accessible to remote communities. Schools have also proved to be a relevant platform for integrated SRHR services and SGBV prevention.

iv) **Need to address UN Internal restraining factors and ensure UN deliver as ‘One’.** Based on the lessons learnt from the Meta-Review of Spotlight 1.0, possible restraining forces which might impact negatively the outcome of the action are: i) weak government ownership, capacity and effectiveness; ii) suboptimal collaboration with CSOs; iii) insufficient UN agency staffing and capacity as well as coordination; iv) slow process of the UN reform and resource competition amongst UN agencies; v) complex procedural requirements by the UN (procurement, reporting) which surpass capacity of local impending partners. Measures have been recommended by the Spotlight Initiative Global Meta-Review and are already being adopted during programme development to mitigate these restraining aspects, including a balanced governance structure, staffing reviews by UN agencies, clear budget allocations and delivery responsibilities among UN partners, promotion of National ownership and commitment and a focus on relationship building with and empowerment of CSO partners. Going forward + necessity to have clear joint procedures for UN agencies as well as joint costed work plan.

Experience from other SI programmes also highlights the necessity to consider one lead agency for overall technical coherence, one implementing team to avoid implementation in silos per agency and recruitment of a Chief Technical Advisors reporting directly to the UNRC with mandate to coordinate overall strategy, joint annual work plan and implementation.

Lessons drawn from the **Rainbo Initiative** efforts to preventing and respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Women and Girls in Sierra Leone highlight the need to

i) Strengthen support to expanding the livelihoods component to support VAWG prevention. The evaluation report confirmed the positive impact of the Village Saving Loan schemes on women empowerment and recommended to boost the livelihoods support of individuals and the wider community, notably through vocational training for women, young people, PWDs and survivors.

ii) Strengthen support to access to justice. The evaluation also suggested that more efforts must be drawn to facilitate access to justice for survivors and address the causes of late and underreporting of GBV cases which are due to a variety of factors including stigma, shame, family reactions, the perception of GBV as a private matter, or lack of confidence in reporting channels.

The design of the programmend implementation of the activities will be further informed by the findings from an ongoing **Audit by the European Court of Auditor**, as well as by the outcomes of the **One Stop Centers capacity gap analysis** and a **CSOs mapping study** which are being commissioned under another financing decision.

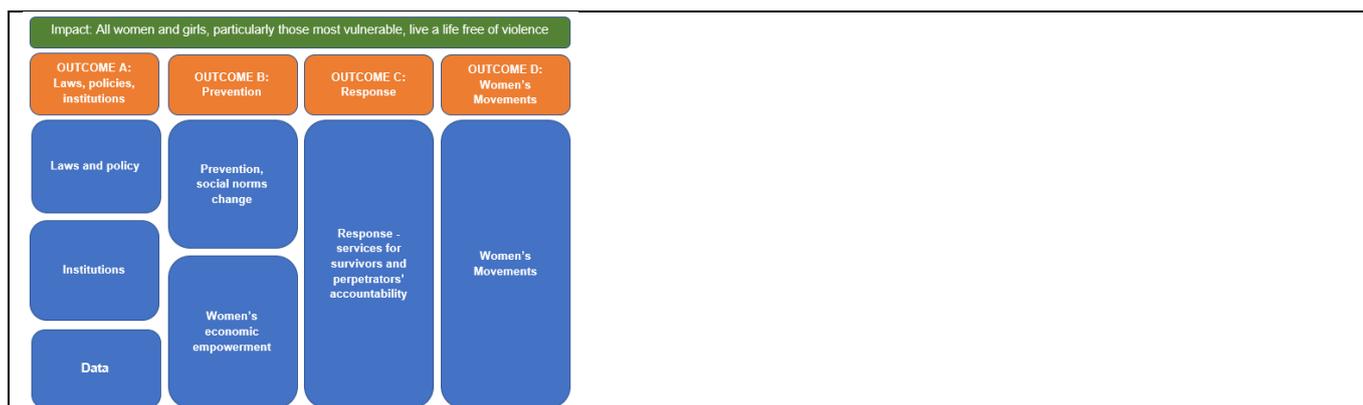
### 3.5 The Intervention Logic

Addressing violence against women and girls is a multi-faceted issue. It affects all people – particularly women and girls – in different ways and is highly context-specific. Eliminating gender-based violence requires a 360-degree approach focusing on prevention, protection and the provision of services, alongside broader efforts to advance women’s rights. The Spotlight Initiative promotes a comprehensive approach at multiple levels centred around 4 specific objectives: i) laws, policies and institutions (including data collection and analysis to support decision making), ii) prevention and social norms change, iii) response (services for survivors and accountability of perpetrators) as well as iv) support to and partnership with the women’s movement.

The holistic strategy harnesses global data, expertise and best practices to ensure that programmes promote evidence-based measures proven to work. This theory of change and proposed Global Results Framework (developed through consultations with all key stakeholders and based on internationally recognised indicators on GBV) are also a central component of the Initiative’s identity, as it constitutes an important opportunity to consolidate achievements across programmes and regions as well as to establish comparisons and prospect for lesson-learning.

The Theory of Change (ToC) of the Spotlight Initiative identifies the underlying causes and drivers of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, femicide, harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation, family violence, domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Spotlight initiative seeks to strengthen systems for delivery of an integrated package addressing health, education, justice, social-economic/livelihood and psychological needs of women and girls. The cross-cutting objectives of the programme are to mainstream women’s rights, to leave no one behind, particularly those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and to promote civil society engagement and participation.

**Outline of the Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive theory of change:**



## IF

### Outcome A Theory of Change (ToC)

If (1) women and VAWG/HP experts are engaged in assessing, developing and implementing policies and legislation to VAWG/HP; if (2) relevant decision-makers and stakeholders in all sectors of government are informed, mobilised and trained to address VAWG/HP; if (3) adequate budgets are allocated; and if (4) the capacity of national institutions to collect disaggregated VAWG/HP data in line with globally agreed standards is strengthened

### Outcome B Theory of Change (ToC)

If (1) multiple strategies such as community mobilisation, key stakeholders' engagement and education strategies are carried out in an integrated and coordinated manner based on a shared understanding and approach in line with international standards and evidence on preventing VAWG/HP; If (2) Women can access economic empowerment opportunities in the context of violence prevention programmes, then (3) favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours will be promoted at community and individual level to prevent VAWG/HP because (4) multi-pronged prevention initiatives that mutually reinforce each other can effectively shift individual and socio-cultural norms including those affecting women's sexuality and reproduction

### Outcome C Theory of Change (ToC)

If (1) service providers have the capacity to deliver essential services, including SRH services, and to prosecute perpetrators in line with international human rights standards and guidelines; (2) if these services are made available and accessible to women and girls and if (3) women and girls are informed and empowered to exercise their rights to services (including SRHRs and access to justice); then (4) women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices will increase their use of services and recover from violence, while perpetrators will be prosecuted; because (5) underlying barriers to women and girls' access to services have been addressed; (6) including in relation to gender and socio-cultural norms affecting women's sexuality and reproduction

### Outcome D Theory of Change (ToC)

If (1) the knowledge, expertise and capacities of women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination is drawn upon and strengthened,

and (2) the space for women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination's expression and activity is free and conducive to their work,

and (3) multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks are established at local, national, regional and global level with women's rights groups and autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,

then (4) women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations will be able to influence, sustain, and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAWG policies and programmes that respond to the needs of all women and girls, including those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,

because (5) the activism of women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination is a crucial driver of progress on efforts to end VAWG

**THEN**

All women and girls in Sierra Leone, particularly the most vulnerable, can live a life free of violence and harmful practices.

**BECAUSE**

The above areas of action have been shown as significant factors in reducing VAWG in countries with similar context to Sierra Leone under the global Spotlight Initiative.

### 3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

The Spotlight Initiative will endeavour for data to be disaggregated by income, sex, age, ethnicity, disability and geographic location, when possible. Data disaggregation will also be pursued for other characteristics relevant in national contexts over the lifespan of the country programmes. This include discrimination on the basis of age (with attention to youth and older persons), nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status (including HIV), place of residence, economic and social situation, and civil, political or other status.

The following indicators apply to Sierra Leone.

Indicators	Baselines (Values and Year)	Targets (Values and Year)	Sources of Data	Assumptions
<b>IMPACT: All women and girls, particularly those most vulnerable, live a life free of violence and harmful practices</b>				
SDG 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner since age 15 in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.	405 (2022 MGCA report)  48.8% (2022) a) Physical violence: 38.9% b) Sexual violence: 6.2% c) Psychological violence: 38.3%	15% (2027)	DHS, GBV IMS, OSC report, MGCA reports, DHS, GBV IMS, MICS	OSCs continue to receive the requisite financial and logistical support to provide multiple services to survivors. If the strategy for reduction is adopted by the National Strategy and reported by DHS and MICS. OSC continue to receive the requisite financial and logistical support to provide multiple services to survivors
SDG 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who undergo female genital mutilation/cutting, by age	83% of women age 15-49 were circumcised before age 15 (2022)	73% reduction of women age 15-49 circumcised before the age of 15 throughout project duration (2023- 2027)	DHS (2019) Partner reports MSW reports MGCA report UN Women report	Communities continue to buy in and support Alternative rites of Passage in Communities  Political will to reduce FGM through legal frameworks
SDG 16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18	8% (2019 DHS)	25% decrease	MGCA reports Partner reports UN Women reports	Communities are clear on the SGBV referral pathway including on reporting mechanisms  Political will to reduce SGBV for those under the age of 18
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE A: Evidence-based legislative and policy frameworks on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices (HP) are in place, translated into National plans and implemented by institutions</b>				
A.1 Number of existing legal and policy framework addressing VAWG/HP, aligned	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	3 Legislations and 1 Policy on HP is developed (Review of the Matrimonial Causes Act; Registration of customary	Sierra Leone Gazette	The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to

with international HR standards, treaty bodies' recommendations <sup>[1]</sup>  [1] Progress towards international standards will be measured through an analysis of specific components ("degree to which") as described in the Methodological Notes	Act 2022, Sexual Offenses Act 2019 Domestic Violence Act, Child Rights Act, Devolution of Estates Act of 2007 and Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2009, Radical Inclusion Policy, Customary Land Rights Act 2021 Education Act of 2023	Marriage and Divorce Act, Domestic Violence, Ban on FGM		enact/develop the policies and or legislations
A.2 Number of costed M&E frameworks and plans developed/reviewed to address VAWG/HP	2 National Costed Plans (Sierra Leone National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 and 1820 and the National Action Plan on GBV 2021), National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancies, Existence of a draft Strategy on Female Genital Mutilation	2 Integrated National Action Plans and 6 Sub-National Action Plans on GBV, including HP	Publication on Ministry Website and Reports	Government is committed and willing to develop Action Plans on GBV, including HP
A.4 % increase in the budget allocated by targeted MDA's to address VAWG/HP	No GBV integration in the Justice Sector Plan 2019-2022, Security Sector Reform Plan and little consideration is made in the National Health Sector Strategic Plan, 0= No integration of GBV/HP in sector plan 1= Little Consideration in sector plan 2= Some Consideration in Sector plan 3 Considerable GBV consideration in sector plan	5 Sector Plans integrate VAWG (2024-2028)	National Sector Plans	Government is committed to integrating GBV in the Sector Plans  VAWG is a priority for the various sectors
A.7 Existence of national statistics related to VAWG/HP incidence and prevalence, disaggregated by income, sex, age, ethnicity, disability, and geographic location	No	Yes	DHS2	

<b>Output A.1 National and regional partners<sup>22</sup> have strengthened evidence-based knowledge and capacities to assess legislations on ending VAWG and/or gender equality and non-discrimination</b>				
A.1.1 Number of regulatory frameworks and legislations drafted/enacted to end VAWG and discrimination within the project life span	4: Mines and Mineral development Act (addresses issues relating to women and girls) GEWE Act Customary Lands Act Anti Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act	4 draft and or strengthened new Laws/policies (Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Offences Act)	Ministry reports UN Women Reports Policy Briefs Laws of Sierra Leone ( <a href="http://Sierra Leone Web - The Laws of Sierra Leone (sierra-leone.org)">Sierra Leone Web - The Laws of Sierra Leone (sierra-leone.org)</a> ) Parliament of Sierra Leone Acts Detail Page <a href="https://parliament.gov.sl">https://parliament.gov.sl</a>	Continued Political will for ending VAWG and Promoting GEWE
<b>Output A.2 National and/or sub-national partners<sup>23</sup> are better able to develop evidence-based and costed action plans on ending VAWG in line with international HR standards</b>				
A.2.1 Number of evidence-based costed national action plans developed and implemented to end VAWG/HP in line with HR standards	2012 National Plan to end VAWG	1 National Plan, reviewed and budgeted	National Plan published and annual reports	MDA's are committed to addressing VAWG
<b>Output A.3 Key officials at national and/or sub-national levels in all relevant institutions<sup>24</sup> are better able to develop and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to VAWG</b>				
A.3.1 Number of institutions that develop strategies, plans and/or programmes to prevent and respond to VAWG, including for those groups of women and girls facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination	3 Institutions have developed strategies that addresses VAWG (Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education)	6 Institutions have developed strategies that addresses VAWG	Baseline, Annual Reports, Action plans/strategies developed	Institutions are willing to develop Strategies, programmes to prevent and respond to VAWG
<b>Output A.4 Key partners, have strengthened capacities to collect data related to VAWG in line with international standards to inform laws, policies and programmes.</b>				
A.4.1 Number of institutions/service providers with the relevant capacity to collect VAWG data	TBD at inception	TBD upon establishment of the baseline		

<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE B: Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including as a result of women's economic empowerment interventions</b>				
B.1 Percentage of people who think it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife/intimate partner, by sex and age.	52.6% (women) 32.7% (men)	TBD	MICS 2017	A new MICS survey is expected be carried out during the Spotlight implementation period and this will allow for comparative data to the baseline.

<sup>22</sup> Parliamentarians, human rights institutions and women's right advocates

<sup>23</sup> Key government/national decision makers (Heads of State, Finance Ministers, Ministries of Justice and Police, Security Ministers and relevant planning institutions) including women's rights advocates

<sup>24</sup> E.g. justice, statistics, police, health, community based, etc.

B.2a Percentage of women aged 15-49 who think the practice of FGM should be continued.	57%	TBD	MICS 2017	A new MICS survey is expected be carried out during the Spotlight implementation period and this will allow for comparative data to the baseline.
B.2 b. Percentage of people who believe that a girl failing to marry before 18 would disadvantage her in the eyes of the community	65%	35%	Baseline: Social norms survey 2021  Endline: TBD	There is no comparable indicator in regard to attitudes. The baseline found here as per the Social Norms survey on Child Marriage. There is no funding to do a survey or endline to collect this data. Discuss based on this Spotlight framework in running a baseline and endline on a series or indicators which are not determined.
<b>Output B.1 National evidence-based programmes are developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for in and out of school settings</b>				
B.1.3 Number of national and/or sub-national programmes developed to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including in educational curricula.	18 Schools	50 schools in 5 districts	UNICEF monitoring reports, MBSSE data	Continued government commitment
<b>Output B.2 Community advocacy platforms are established/strengthened to develop strategies and programmes,<sup>25</sup> to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including in relation to women and girls' sexuality and reproduction, self-esteem and transforming harmful masculinities</b>				
B.2.4 Number of communities with advocacy platforms established and/or strengthened to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including in relation to women and girls' sexuality and reproduction	36	8,000	SRGBV programme report, GPECM annual report	Government and civil society leadership in mobilizing communities and engaging in campaign
<b>Output B.3 Decision makers can advocate for implementation of legislation and policies on ending VAWG and women and girls' rights</b>				
B.3.5 Number of key decision makers in relevant institutions with strengthened capacities advocating for implementation of legislation and policies on ending VAWG	2,582	50,000	UNICEF monitoring and partner report; U-Report.	Government and civil society leadership in mobilizing communities and engaging in campaign
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE C Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use accessible and quality services including for long term recovery from violence</b>				
C.1 Number of women, including those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, who	TBD at inception	TBD upon establishment of the baseline		the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).

<sup>25</sup> Including informing parenting skills around gender socialization through early childhood development programmes

report experiencing physical or sexual violence who seek help, by sector				
C.2.a During a specific time period (e.g. past 12 months) a) number of cases of VAWG reported to the police, b) number of cases reported to the police that are brought to court, c) number of cases reported to the police that resulted in convictions of perpetrators.	2019: a) 12,052 reported to SLP b) 1,334 went to court c) 226 convictions	TBD upon establishment of the baseline	Sierra Leone Police Ministry of Justice	the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets)
C.3 Existence of a dedicated VAWG information management system (IMS) at national level which can measure number of women/girl victims/survivors of violence that have received quality, essential multi-sectoral services	GBV National Information System launched in June 2023			
<b>Output C.1 Relevant government authorities and women's rights organisations at national level have better knowledge and capacity to deliver quality and coordinated essential services, including SRH services and access to justice</b>				
C.1.4 Number of personnel from government and CSO service providers who have increased capacities to deliver quality and coordinated essential services to survivors of violence	TBD at inception	TBD upon establishment of the baseline	Programme reports from MoGCA, MOHS, MBSSE, MSW & other service providers	
<b>Output C.2 Women and girls' survivors of violence and their families are informed of and can access quality services</b>				
C.2.1 Number of survivors that have <i>access to</i> a) quality essential services and b) support/recovery initiatives	TBD at inception	TBD upon establishment of the baseline		
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE D: Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and relevant CSOs can influence and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAWG</b>				
D.1 Proportion of women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and relevant CSOs (Including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization), that have increased their coordinated efforts to jointly advocate on ending VAWG	Baseline value to be determined later in year 1	30% increase	Baseline Monitoring data, Program reports Annual data collection reports	The increase in the coordination will mean that the Spotlight Initiative has gained enough importance and elevated accountability and benefits to working together. Ideally, implementation would be tracked as well.
D.2 Proportion of women's rights organisations, autonomous social movements and CSOs, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, report having greater influence and agency, influence	Baseline value to be collected at inception	35% increase	Spotlight stakeholders' reports; UN Agency/multiple agency	This indicator measures progress in EVAWG efforts in Spotlight. Data from the indicator will be used to monitor an increase in social accountability mechanisms, with

and engaging social accountability mechanisms to monitor ending VAWG and harmful practices, GEWE.			reports on social accountability mechanisms	positive effects on budget utilisation, public service delivery, gender imbalances and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB).
D.3. Number of Districts that have functioning high-level coordination and oversight mechanisms for addressing EVAWG/HP that includes representations from marginalized groups, especially women's rights-oriented groups.	3 (functioning at 75%, 60% and 50% performance)	10 (cumulative) functioning at 50% to 100%	Inquiry into the effectiveness of district-level EVAWG/HP steering committees from member organizations' and users' perspectives.	This indicator ensures that a single functioning coordinating mechanism, inclusive of marginalized peoples and their organizations/groups, meets the needs of those peoples encountering VAWG/HP.  Equally important are connections between district single mechanisms and coordinating mechanisms at the sub-district and national levels.
<b>Output D.1 Women's rights groups and relevant CSOs, 26 have increased opportunities and support to share knowledge, partner and advocate for GEWE and ending VAWG</b>				
D.1.1. Number of jointly agreed recommendations on ending VAWG/HP generated by women's rights networks and platforms to end VAWG/HP and promote GEWE as a result of multi-stakeholder dialogues that include representatives of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization.	Baseline data to be collected at inception	TBD with representatives of the target-organizations/groups (Cumulative over Life of Project)	Inquiry into ministries and other relevant state bodies, concerned organizations/groups, UN SLE, for records of such decision-making sessions and publications	Compilation of dialogues on ending VAWG/HP that took place over the last 12 months, and involved multi-stakeholder dialogues, that included representatives of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
<b>Output D.2 Women's rights groups and relevant CSOs are better supported to use social accountability mechanisms to support their advocacy</b>				
D.2.1. Number of women's rights groups/relevant CSOs applying appropriate accountability mechanisms[1], undertaking initiatives aligned with agreed standards to	Baseline data to be collected at inception	TbD with representatives of the concerned stakeholders (Cumulative over Life of Project)	Project reports; M&E; stakeholders' reports;	Data from this indicator will be used to monitor the growing use of standard accountability mechanisms among women's rights, youth groups and relevant CSOs; improvement in

<sup>26</sup> Including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization

positively impact subnational or national efforts directed to ending VAWG/HP or promoting GEWE.			government records	stakeholders' knowledge of EVAWG mechanisms.
<sup>[1]</sup> E.g. the CEDAW, UPR shadow reports, and social accountability mechanisms such as social audits, citizen report cards, etc.				
<b>Output D.3 Women's rights, youth groups and relevant CSOs representing groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalisation have strengthened capacities and support to jointly design, implement and monitor programmes on the effectiveness of ending VAWG/HP coordinating mechanisms at district and national levels.</b>				
<b>D.3.1.</b> Number of official outstanding EVAWG/HP initiatives (including dialogues, human impact cases) proving the functioning of ending-VAWG/HP coordinating mechanisms enabled by joint projects of women's rights groups, relevant CSOs, including youths and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.	Baseline data to be collected at inception (ongoing work will ease the collection of the data)	TbD with representatives of concerned institutions and groups	Publicly available documents describing the process and outcome of such dialogues.	This indicator measures an increase in the skill-base of women's rights groups, networks and relevant CSOs in networking, partnering and jointly programming/acting for progress and improved political commitment on ending VAWG/HP coordinating mechanisms, at subnational (district for instance), regional or national levels.

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country.

### 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 Budget Support: N/A

### 4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>27</sup>.

#### 4.4.1 Direct Management (Grant)

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant will contribute to the achievement of all specific objectives identified by the action as specified in section 3.1:

- A) Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence, informed by quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place, translated into costed multi-sectoral plans and implemented by National and sub-national systems and institutions
- B) Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including as a result of women's economic empowerment interventions
- C) Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence
- D) Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalisation, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAWG

##### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

Local authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations (including Civil Society Organisations; media associations; association of local authorities, faith-based NGOs; inter-faith councils,..).

The part of the action under the budgetary envelope reserved for a grant may, partially or totally and including where an entity is designated for receiving a grant without a call for proposals, be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience in design and implementation of programmes to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;

<sup>27</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://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.

- Demonstrated experience in supporting developing countries to integrate gender policies in their legal framework;
- Demonstrated experience in supporting capacity building in the area of gender based violence.

#### 4.4.2 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

A part of the action may be implemented in indirect management with United Nations agencies and funds. A multi-partner contribution agreement will be signed with the **United Nations Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (UN-MPTFO)** housed within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), acting as the Administrative Agent that ensures standardized contracting and trustee services including the release of funds to the recipient UN Agencies. As a joint UN Programme, the spotlight initiative will be implemented in line with UN Joint Programming and UN Development System reform principles and under the responsibility of the UN Resident Coordinator.

This implementation entails the achievement of all objectives identified under section 3.1:

- A) Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence, informed by quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place, translated into costed multi-sectoral plans and implemented by National and sub-national systems and institutions
- B) Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including as a result of women's economic empowerment interventions
- C) Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence
- D) Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and ending VAWG

The envisaged entities will be selected using the following criteria:

- the organisation's technical competence, operational capacity and high degree of specialisation and specialised knowledge in the provision of technical assistance and implementation of programmes designed to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls/gender-based violence (VAWG);
- the entities must demonstrate extensive experience and technical expertise in West Africa, as well as in advancing the interventions identified under the Spotlight Initiative's theory of change;
- the entities should also have adequate capacity to lead and implement (incl. geographical presence, past results in the thematic pillars of the Spotlight Initiative, knowledge and technical expertise, capacity to scale up and enable transformative actions).

#### 4.5 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 realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation)

#### 4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution (in USD)
<b>Specific Objective A - Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence, informed by quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place, translated into costed multi-sectoral plans and implemented by National and sub-national systems and institutions</b>	<b>1 100 000</b>	
Grants (Direct Management) c.f. section 4.4.1	200 000	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity cf. section 4.4.2	900 000	
<b>Specific Objective B - Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including as a result of women's economic empowerment interventions</b>	<b>6 000 000</b>	
Grants (Direct Management) c.f. section 4.4.1	2 000 000	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity cf. section 4.4.2	4 000 000	
<b>Specific Objective C - Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence</b>	<b>6 000 000</b>	
Grants (Direct Management) c.f. section 4.4.1	2 000 000	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity cf. section 4.4.2	4 000 000	
<b>Specific Objective D - Strengthened Women's rights organisations and movements</b>	<b>1 700 000</b>	
Grants (Direct Management) c.f. section 4.4.1	600 000	
Indirect management with an entrusted entity cf. section 4.4.2	1 100 000	
Third party contribution covering all 4 specific objectives but without a breakdown per objective		UNDP:USD 1 200 000 UN Women: USD 720 000 UNICEF:USD 750 000 UNFPA: USD 700 000
<b>Grants – total envelope under section 4.4.1</b>	<b>4 800 000</b>	<b>N.A.</b>
<b>Evaluation – cf. section 5.2</b>	<b>200 000</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Audit – cf. section 5.3</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 000 000</b>	<b>3 370 000</b>

## 4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

### PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION:

The programme will be jointly implemented by 4 recipient UN (RUNOs) and partner Civil Society Organisations, building on the comparative advantage of UN partners in country and contributing to more streamlined processes and cost-efficiency.

The UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone (UN RC) will have responsibility for coordination and overall programme accountability as part of the ‘One UN’ approach, guiding UN inter-agency cooperation, and addressing any concerns or issues that could impede successful programme implementation. The UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) will see that clear agency roles and responsibilities are outlined in work plans and that appropriate resources are allocated in the budget. RCO will ensure coherent and collaborative inter-agency programming and that technical expertise from each agency is leveraged to support overall program objectives. A program coordination team will be formed with a direct line to the UN RC.

The UN Agencies and CSOs implementing partners will be responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the outputs under their responsibility

### PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE:

The Spotlight Initiative is a UN Joint Programme, involving more than one UN Agency and as such must be governed according to the UNSDG Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes<sup>28</sup>.

Under the Spotlight Initiative the center of gravity for governance and accountability is embodied by the **National Steering Committee**, to ensure that programmes accommodate country-led funding requirements and are responsive to local priorities and contexts.

The National Steering Committee will be co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and Government and composed of the UN Agencies, EU Delegation, government counterparts, representatives of local authorities and implementing partners. Reflective of the critical role played by CSOs in Programme design and implementation CSOs will have a representation at the Steering Committee of at least 20% of its decision-making membership.

A **CSOs reference groups** will also be established since the on-set to inform programme design and implementation. The CSOs reference group is a national “self-selected” reference group, representing an independent advisory body with a triple mandate: to guide and advise implementation, advocate for the realization of its commitments and monitor its work to hold the Initiative accountable. Its members will be appointed by CSOs active in VAWG/HP prevention and response, and Its members will include representatives of women organisations and organizations representing rights holders such as VAWG/HP survivors, youth, vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, women in contact with the law, the association of local authorities, paramount chiefs, and FGM/C cutters.

Whilst decision making pertains to the independent individual country-level governance structure (the National Steering Committee) a **Spotlight Initiative global governance structure** will be maintained with the participation of the Office of the UN Secretary General, of the EU, selected Heads of UN Agencies and other global donors of the initiative. This entity will have no decision-making power over country-funded programmes but will play a crucial role in elevating the Initiative's reach, sharing key achievements and identifying important advocacy opportunities at global level.

**Group of Friends:** The Spotlight Initiative is also the Secretariat to the EUD in NY led and chaired Group of Friends for the elimination of violence against women and girls. The Group encourages coordination among nearly 100 UN Member States on efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls by providing a forum to share lessons learned, promote advocacy efforts, support the mobilisation of resources, and improve cooperation and coordination.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the European Union, the European Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

<sup>28</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/guidance-note-new-generation-joint-programmes>

## FUND MANAGEMENT:

Spotlight Initiative Programme funds are pooled with the **United Nations Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO)** acting as the Administrative Agent that ensures UNDG approved standardized contracting and trustee services including the release of funds to the recipient UN Agencies, high quality financial and narrative reporting and the ability to manage multi-donor contributions. Through the pooled funding modality MPTFO ensures the amplification of the programme through its global gateway that integrates the whole Spotlight Initiative portfolio under one pooled umbrella.

Under the Global Challenges decision, INPTA is currently in discussion with the MPTFO to maintain a **Global ‘Secretariat’** which would ensure support services to EU funded country programmes. This structure will also ensure, the provision of technical support, global results reporting, knowledge management and global advocacy and communications. This will allow to elevate this action visibility and impact by joining the global momentum created by the Spotlight Initiative.

## 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 log frame matrix.

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).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring: implementing partners will be responsible to define before implementation or within 90 days after the start date of implementation baselines and targets for each of the output and activity indicators included in their respective project implementation document and ensure continuous learning during implementation and provide precise recommendations that are action-oriented, practical, and specific and define who is responsible for the proposed action.

In view to ensure a holistic approach, to guarantee programme quality and to allow for global consolidation, the HQ based Spotlight Initiative Secretariat has developed a global results framework the country programmes are expected to align with. This Global RF will be further contextualised to reflect Sierra Leone’s specificities.

The Spotlight Initiative will endeavor for data to be disaggregated by income, sex, age, ethnicity, disability and geographic location, when possible. Data disaggregation will also be pursued for other characteristics relevant in national contexts over the lifespan of the country programmes. “Other status” or characteristics include discrimination on the basis of age (with attention to youth and older persons), nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status (including HIV), and place of residence, economic and social situation, and civil, political or other status.

Implementing UN Agencies will produce narrative and financial reports to meet the UNDG approved standardized contracting. The Administrative Agent (the Multi Partner Trust Fund Office -MPTFO) is responsible for the production and submission to the Contracting Authority (European Union Delegation) of high quality financial and narrative reporting in compliancy with the Contribution agreement with the European Union.

The monitoring of results by programme teams will serve the contractual requirements and will also be guided by the National Steering Committee. To this effect, the HQ based Spotlight Initiative Secretariat will continue using the Spotlight Initiative Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART Platform), while supporting Country Teams to produce high quality programme reports. Based on contributions by UN Country Teams, a Global

Report will be produced annually by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat to consolidate key achievements made by the Spotlight Initiative at Global and Regional Levels.

To ensure transparency and local accountability reports will be shared with all members of the National Steering Committee.

## 5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term, final and/or ex-post evaluations may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

An independent mid-term evaluation that will serve as performance review will be carried out in order to assess whether the programme is on track and address any issues etc.

A final or ex-post evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that the action's sustainability will depend largely on a gradual integration of the action's methodology, outputs and outcomes into national and sub-national processes.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least one month 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 dissemination. The Implementing Partner(s) 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.

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.

## Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

An Intervention (also generally called project/programme) is the operational entity associated to a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Interventions are the most effective (hence optimal) entities for the operational follow-up by the Commission of its external development operations. As such, Interventions constitute the base unit for managing operational implementations, assessing performance, monitoring, evaluation, internal and external communication, reporting and aggregation.

Primary Interventions are those contracts or groups of contracts bearing reportable results and respecting the following business rule: ‘a given contract can only contribute to one primary intervention and not more than one’. An individual contract that does not produce direct reportable results and cannot be logically grouped with other result reportable contracts is considered a ‘support entities’. The addition of all primary interventions and support entities is equivalent to the full development portfolio of the Institution.

The present Action identifies as <delete the options that are not applicable to the Action>;

<b>Action level</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
<b>Group of actions level</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): N.A.
<b>Contract level</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	Contribution Agreement with the United Nations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	Grants to NGOs