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ANNEX 4

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan 2024 in favour of the Republic of Liberia

Action document for “Support measures for the MIP of Republic of Liberia”

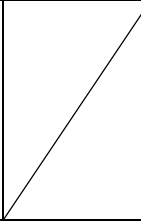
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans in the sense of Article 24 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

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| 1. Title CRIS/OPSYS business reference Basic act | Support measures for the MIP of Republic of Liberia OPSYS number: ACT-62554 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) |
| 2. Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting (inter alia) TEIs on “Forestry and biodiversity” and on “Safe and sustainable food systems” |
| 3. Zone benefiting from the Action | The Action shall be carried out mainly in Liberia |
| 4. Programming document | Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Liberia |
| 5. Link with relevant MIP’s objectives / expected results | Objective: support all stages of the programming cycle and respond to specific needs to strengthen the policy dialogue and coordination in the EU-Liberia partnership. Expected result: the main and transversal objectives of the EU-Liberia partnership lay down in the MIP are achieved. |
| PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION | |
| 6. Priority areas / sectors | Not applicable |
| 7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | Main SDG: 17 (Partnerships for the goals) Other significant SDGs: 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions); 5 (Gender equality); 8 (Decent work and economic growth); 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure); 10 (Reduced inequalities); 13 (Climate action) |
| 8a) DAC code | 43010 Multi-sector aid – 100% |

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|---|--|--|--|---|
| 8b) Main delivery channels | Service contracts and grants - Central Government – 12001 - Local Government – 12002 - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society – 20000 - Private sector institutions – 60000 Contribution agreement - Third country Government (Delegated co-operation) – 13000 | | | |
| 9. Targets | <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human rights, democracy and governance | | | |
| 10. Markers (from the DAC form) | General policy objective @ | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | 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 checked="" 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"/> |
| | RIO Convention markers | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | Biological diversity @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Combat desertification @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change mitigation @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change adaptation @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Policy objectives | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | 11. Internal markers and tags | Digitalisation @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services | | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |  |
| Connectivity @ | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------|
| | transport people2people energy digital connectivity | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Migration @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reduction of inequalities @ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Covid-19 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BUDGET INFORMATION | | | | |
| 12. Amounts concerned | Budget line: 14.020120 Total estimated cost: EUR 7 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 7 000 000 | | | |
| MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION | | | | |
| 13. Type of financing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperation facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures in favour of civil society | | | |
| 14. Type of measure | Direct management through: - Grants - Procurement Indirect management with the partner country in accordance with section 4.4.3. | | | |

1.2 Summary of the Action

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| <p>The Action is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Consensus for Development. It will contribute mainly to SDG 17 but also to SDGs 5, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 16. The Action will be implemented through grants, procurement of services and a delegated cooperation agreement with Liberia. It has two components:</p> <p><u>(i) Cooperation facility</u></p> <p>The cooperation facility (CF) is a horizontal flexible mechanism to support the implementation of the MIP, including monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the implementation and follow-up of the TEIs, and the implementation of the national development strategy (including development partners and sectoral coordination, capacity building and inclusive policy dialogue). It provides for: i) technical assistance for programme identification, formulation and implementation to translate the political and strategic priorities formulated in the MIP into concrete activities; ii) strategic communication and public diplomacy in line with the political priorities of the EU-Liberia partnership, giving all cooperation activities effective visibility and highlighting the EU's political presence, action and value in the country.</p> <p>The communication strategy will focus on showcasing the Global Gateway strategy and will aim at the inclusive understanding of this strategy, forging sustainable and trusted connections that work for people and the planet. The strategy will also raise the visibility and profile of the Team Europe Approach, including the TEIs on “Forestry and biodiversity” and “Safe and sustainable food systems”.</p> <p><u>(ii) Capacity building and collaboration with civil society to reinforce social cohesion, public debate, and oversight</u></p> <p>The Action also includes capacity building inclusive of civil society to contribute to the quality of social dialogue and more inclusive policies that respond to real problems of the Liberian people. It particularly supports youth and women organisations to interact with key policy makers and other stakeholders to advocate for specific youth and women’s policies and programmes with special consideration for the marginalised persons, youth and children – to increase their participation in economic and political spheres. It also supports organisations working for the wellbeing, empowerment, and inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD), as they account for a significant part of</p> |
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the Liberian population¹. The average percentage of PWD in Liberia reaches 14.2% according to data from 2016. The causes range from congenital conditions and birth trauma to accidents and sickness. The two civil wars in Liberia between 1999 and 2003 also caused an increase in the number of PWD².

Much of the civil society intervention will target the MIP's focal sectors, notably, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry along with public sector accountability issues. Linkages with private sector organisations, notably chambers of commerce, will also be ensured.

1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in Liberia, which is included in the list of ODA recipients.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

Liberia is a valued and reliable partner for the European Union (EU). In spite of remaining among the 10 poorest countries in the world with one of the lowest levels of human development³, Liberia is emerging into a value-based strategic ally which is effectively supporting the EU in multilateral contexts, including on matters where most African states do not take a proactive stance, particularly on Ukraine.

In October-November 2023 Liberia organised its fourth Presidential elections after the civil war that ended in 2003, for the first time without the presence of the UN peacebuilding mission. These free and democratic elections raised the international reputation of Liberia and demonstrated its impressive capacity for a peaceful democratic transition. The country has overcome the state of immediate post-conflict fragility; however, it still presents important elements of political and socioeconomic vulnerability.

Liberia is a Least Developed Country (LDC) with a population of 5.36 million (2022), which increased by 50% in the last 15 years. Even though Liberia has experienced steady consolidation of its peace and stability since 2003, it is “becoming fragile” (OECD, September 2022). Key fragility factors include: weak human and institutional capacity; high youth unemployment (with roughly 78% of Liberia's population being under the age of 35); high climate change vulnerability; an undiversified economy, highly dependent on extractive sectors, with limited private sector involvement outside the extractive sector; the judiciary is weak and under-resourced; lack of transparency and accountability in Government's processes; civil society organisations (CSOs) are often weak and under-resourced.

The EU has been working with Liberia to help the country overcome its challenges and achieve its development objectives. EU's support is well aligned with the new Government's ARREST agenda, which stands for Agriculture, Roads, and infrastructure development, improve the Rule of law, rethink the Education sector, improve Sanitation, and unlock the potential of the Tourism sector. The ARREST agenda is operationalised short-term through the “Government's 100-day deliverables plan”.

The MIP is well aligned with ARREST, as was the previous development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, that expired in the end of 2023. The MIP focuses on 3 priorities (1) **Enhancing and preserving natural resources for sustainable growth** targeted at agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and environment protection; (2) **Promoting decent jobs and inclusive growth** focusing on technical and vocational education and training, small and medium enterprises development, and transport and storage; and (3) **Improving financial and democratic governance** focusing on economic governance, democratic participation, and women's rights.

¹ Statistics about disability in Liberia are out of date. A UNICEF study from 1997 estimated that 16% of the population had a disability. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) estimated in 2014 that, due to the civil war that ended in 2003 and the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the proportion of people with disabilities was likely closer to 20%. The “*National Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Liberia 2018-2022*”, funded by the UNDP, estimates prevalence of PWD between 16-20% of the general population.

² <https://disabilitydata.ace.fordham.edu/country-briefs/lr/>.

³ The country's HDI in 2021 was 0.48, compared to 0.48 in 2020. When inequality of human development across the country is factored in, Liberia's HDI drops to 0.33. Liberia remains in the low human development category being ranked 178 out of 191 countries, one point improvement over the previous rank in 2020. <https://www.undp.org/liberia/press-releases/multiple-global-crises-reverse-human-development-gains-worldwide-undp-report-finds>.

Under “enhancing and protecting natural resources” priority **sustainable forest management combined with sustainable agriculture** offer a potential for the country to create new livelihoods and economic and social development. To enhance sustainable growth, various **agricultural projects** have been implemented in the past years. A more coherent support to a limited number of value chains and sustainable food systems has started under the NDICI instrument.

Under “promoting decent jobs and inclusive growth” priority a successful EU **TVET programme** is being implemented now in all 15 counties.

Under “improving financial and democratic governance” priority a public finance reform support programme was implemented by the World Bank co-financed by the EU and Sweden. The EU intends to continue a much-needed public financial management (PFM) support programme, considering a possible budget support operation (depending on the situation in the country). The EU contemplates the use of budget support in Liberia, to give the Government more fiscal space while designing and implementing reforms aiming at transparency, accountability and improving economic and social conditions of the Liberian people.

Democratic governance continues to be addressed as from 2023 with EU support to the electoral process and democratic institutions. The EU will continue to support human rights in Liberia with the **Spotlight Initiative** that has created high visibility and a momentum in Liberian society to address sexual and gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation (FGM).

The joint **Team Europe approach** focuses on the closest alignment between EU and Liberia policy priorities: **sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation** and **sustainable food systems**. Together, they will contribute to the implementation of the **Global Gateway and Green Deal objectives**, enhancing business climate, equal access to natural resources, job opportunities, a more inclusive and resilient society and global climate change mitigation measures.

Gender equality context

Despite the significant efforts towards gender equality made by the Government and its partners, such as the adoption of a National Gender Policy, the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in 2019, and the 3-year nationwide suspension of FGM followed by a total ban of the practice in Montserrado County in February 2023 largely thanks to the Spotlight Initiative, women and girls are still largely at disadvantage in terms of economic opportunities and enjoyment of fundamental human rights. Indeed, when gender is taken as an indicator in the Human Development Index (HDI), Liberia ranks among the top 10 most unequal countries in the world. Its HDI for women and girls was 0.447, lagging behind that of men and boys, which was 0.513 in 2021⁴. Liberian women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and domestic work and are traditionally dependent on men for access to land. Furthermore, around 97% of women work in the informal sector. A legacy of the civil wars, sexual and gender-based violence remains prevalent throughout the country while structural barriers and deeply rooted gender norms and stereotypes prevent women from actively participating in all aspects of private and public life. The prevalence rate of FGM in Liberia for 2020 is estimated at 32% by the World Bank.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Cooperation facility

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) is the principal interlocutor for international development partners including the EU and other Government’s ministries and agencies. It does not have sufficient human resources and expertise to carry out the complex identification and formulation of projects/programmes and feasibility studies. Therefore, special attention shall be paid on strengthening national coordination mechanisms to implement the EU cooperation programme with Liberia. This is the mandate of the Aid Management and Coordination Unit (AMCU), while the former Office of the National Authorizing Officer (ONAO) has been, for many years, the principal interlocutor of the EU and a highly appreciated partner on the programming and implementation of the EU-Liberia partnership. The new Government, formed in January 2024, aims at the integration of AMCU and ONAO. The process is ongoing, and the EU communicates with the Government regularly on the

⁴ Human Development Report 2021/2022. UNDP (2022).

progress of this integration. It is, however, up to the Government of Liberia to decide how the MFDP could be best organised to serve this purpose.

EU support will focus on policy related reforms and investments, and not on operational support to the MFDP. Close coordination and alignment with other development partners will also be needed through strategic, inclusive and participatory communication/consultation processes.

Technical support is also needed to enhance the capacity of selected ministries and public entities with a view to improve general management and coordination of EU-funded interventions, ensure smooth implementation of programmes and international commitments and maintain proper and robust monitoring and reporting systems ensuring gender equality and human rights standards.

Communication and visibility activities are essential as there is a need for the public to better understand the EU-Liberia partnership, our policies, values, and principles. This will ensure Liberians engagement with the EU, facilitate cooperation and, ultimately, allow the EU to achieve its strategic and policy goals in the country.

In line with a strategic communication plan, the CF will allow to implement activities aimed at increasing awareness, understanding and appreciation of EU's values and strategic interests. It will increase visibility of the TEIs, public outreach events or campaigns funded under the MIP and of other areas of common interest. By consolidating strategic communication resources under the CF, the EU will be able to plan and execute effective multiannual communication activities.

In addition, public diplomacy initiatives will aim at reinforcing and developing trusted channels of engagement with key targeted audiences and partners in Liberia and fostering networks that can support the achievement of shared priorities. These include women and youth organisations, students, academics, influencers, business community, CSOs, disability organisations, and the cultural sector. Press and information activities will also target key mass and community media.

Support to civil society organisations

CSOs play a key role in Liberia. They advocate for policy reforms, public service delivery improvements, and citizen's engagement in the public sphere. However, they face several challenges that limit their effectiveness and sustainability. Some of these challenges are:

- Lack of adequate funding and financial resilience: many CSOs depend on external donors for their operations and have limited access to local resources or private sector investment.
- Lack of capacity and skills development: many CSOs lack the technical and organisational skills to design and implement evidence-based advocacy strategies, monitor, and evaluate their impact, and communicate their results to the public.
- Lack of coordination and collaboration: many CSOs work in isolation or in competition with each other, rather than forming issue-based coalitions that can leverage their diverse strengths.
- Lack of trust and accountability: many CSOs have low levels of trust and credibility among the government (and limited access), due to weak governance structures, transparency mechanisms, and feedback systems.

Therefore, there is a need for more support and investment in strengthening the capacity, sustainability, and collaboration of CSOs in Liberia.

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

Stakeholders will include, but will not be limited to:

Cooperation facility

- The AMCU at the MFDP in its role of coordination and planning of international aid for development, and/or any specific structure responsible for coordinating EU cooperation within the MFDP.
- Ministries, agencies, and commissions (MACs) involved in or benefitting of the EU interventions.
- EU institutions and EU Member States, and other development partners.

Communication and visibility

- Wider audiences, comprising ordinary citizens, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, who are not involved in policy, advocacy, or international relations, and who may hardly be aware of the EU.
- Key specialised audiences, including opinion leaders, activists, human rights defenders, CSOs and other multipliers who already have a stake in the sphere of policy, advocacy, and international relations.
- Private sector actors specialised in communication (consultants, media, etc.).
- General public in the EU Member States and Liberia.

Civil society

- CSOs active in the country/region.
- Youth and women's organisations, including disability organisations.
- Private sector representations.
- International NGOs, including its Coordination Unit.
- Representatives of women's organisations in technical committees, steering committees, platforms or other spaces where decisions are made.

Other

- Microfinance institutions.
- Members of the Parliament.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **overall objective** of this Action is to facilitate the implementation of the EU cooperation with Liberia and strengthen its impact and visibility while reinforcing the partnership with the country.

The **specific objectives** of this Action are:

1. To provide support to Government institutions for the effective preparation, implementation, monitoring and management of the EU-Liberia cooperation as well as the political and economic partnership.
2. To increase public knowledge and perception of the EU-Liberia partnership through strategic-communication and public diplomacy activities.
3. To provide support to CSOs for effective advocacy for policy reforms, public service delivery improvements, and citizen's engagement.

The **outputs** to be delivered by this Action contributing to the corresponding specific objectives are:

- Contributing to outcome 1 (or specific objective 1): Capacity of the Government and other relevant stakeholders in the effective preparation, management and oversight of the EU cooperation programme is improved. TEIs, including dialogue, visibility and concrete results are achieved successfully.
- Contributing to outcome 2 (or specific objective 2): Communication on actions and results and large-scale public campaigns are designed to make the EU's positioning measurably more understandable, visible, and influential in targeted audiences.
- Contributing to outcome 3 (or specific objective 3): Regular dialogues have been strengthened between CSOs and policy makers, and when relevant in association with development partners. Advocacy/awareness-raising products have been developed. The organisations have their own fundraising strategy.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities related to **output 1** may include the following:

- Provide technical assistance to support the identification, formulation, implementation, management, monitoring and audit and evaluation of EU-funded programmes including priorities of the EU-Liberia cooperation programme.
- Provide technical assistance to support the work of the MFDP, as the country's focal point for the long-term National Development Plan and coordination of development partners, including the EU.
- Support to civil society to effectively oversee the Liberia-EU cooperation programme and the implementation of the National Development Plan.
- Provide technical assistance for institutional strengthening and capacity building, evaluation of the MIP's implementation, support to the TEIs, monitoring and statistics, and specific policy making initiatives from ad-hoc requests of the Government.

Activities related to **output 2** may include the following:

- Review and update the EU Communication Strategy
- Design and roll out at national level of major public campaigns with the objective to increase the profile, awareness, understanding and approval of the EU's partnership with the country.
- Train NGOs and CSOs in effective communication, persuasion, and lobbying techniques to help establishing and maintaining dialogue.
- Train local journalists on EU related topics, focusing on partisan-free and objective reporting. Training will stress the fundamental role of media in defending democratic values.
- Organise and implement public diplomacy activities to contribute to fostering, maintaining, and connecting networks (and communities), whether these are developed through dedicated initiatives or through existing programmes. This may include meetings and capacity building activities and building relevant avenues to engage with these audiences (e.g., regular fora).
- Develop communication and visibility initiatives with key actors including the cultural sector, the business community and academia to showcase Europe's strong partnership with Liberia.
- Monitor the recognition of the EU by the general public as well as in the media space.
- Organise ad-hoc events whenever relevant.

Activities related to **output 3** may include the following:

- Provide technical assistance, institutional strengthening, and capacity building activities.
- Support cooperation and networking between CSOs, to increase impact through joint actions and to reduce competition between organisations.
- Support research and analysis to assess baselines, viability and impact of policies, and projects/programmes in support of CSOs' development agenda.
- Provide technical support to develop, review and update CSOs resource mobilisation frameworks and partnership strategies.
- Facilitate access to knowledge and skills opportunities, training, workshops, conferences, and meetings for CSOs.
- Ensure participation of Government officials and non-state actors in local and international seminars, conferences, meetings and learning processes.
- Organise outreach activities (including partnership in international fora, media/news production) targeting international partners, policymakers, public audiences, women, youth and marginalised communities, businesses, CSOs and policymakers at the highest political level.

- Establish a Youth Sounding Board, with representatives of each county, which will be networking closely with the Members of the Parliament, CSOs and other interest groups with a responsibility for the youth in Liberia aligned with the principle of leaving no one behind.
- Launch the procurement of equipment and furniture to support the work of CSOs, including disability-inclusive infrastructure and materials.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental protection and climate change

Outcomes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening: The EIA screening classified the Action as Category C (no need for further assessment).

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

As environment issues have a transversal character within our cooperation with Liberia and considering the ambitions of the EU Green Deal, this Action could finance environmental impact studies or climate risk related, depending on the implementation needs of the programmes financed by the EU.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as G1. This implies that gender equality is a significant objective of the proposed Action. Therefore, the intervention contributes to the EU Gender Action Plan⁵ (GAP) III's commitment to applying a gender transformative approach as well as conducting and using updated gender analyses to inform decision-making on future action and integrating these into all relevant dialogues, policies, strategies, programmes and operations.

Human rights

Human rights will be at the heart of our communication and public diplomacy in promoting EU's fundamental values. This Action will apply a human rights-based approach throughout the design and implementation of the EU-Liberia cooperation programme, as well as an intersectionality approach.

In accordance with the international and regional human rights normative frameworks, Liberia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1984); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2008); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993); and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This Action is not targeting vulnerable groups directly, but it will address challenges of people living in vulnerable and marginalised situations (including marginalised communities, minorities, the poorest, PWD, people living in severe poverty, vulnerable women, children, and youth).

Disability

As per OECD disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as D1. This implies that the Action – even if it does not specifically target inclusion of PWD – whenever appropriate may support marginalised, including disabled groups. In particular, it may support the design of activities addressing people living in vulnerable and marginalised indigenous communities, focussing on women, children, and youth.

The Action will ensure that rights of PWD will be respected, and the planned activities related with formulation of projects, evaluations and other activities are disability inclusive. The Action will encourage partners and programme participants to take the initiative to protect PWD and invite organisations representing PWD.

The Action will be in line with the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030⁶, and the guidance note on disability inclusion in EU external action.

⁵ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf.

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

Reduction of inequalities

The main drivers of inequality in Liberia are related to the country's lack of economic and social development, including weak economic growth, limited job opportunities, weak governance and high levels of poverty. Structural factors, such as gender and ethnic disparities, also contribute to inequality. Women are particularly disadvantaged in Liberia. Inequality is also driven by a lack of access to quality education, healthcare, and other public services. This is compounded by widespread misuse of public resources, which further perpetuates inequality. The Action will contribute to address inequality challenges by supporting, among others, economic inclusion, women's empowerment, the creation of job opportunities for youth and disadvantaged communities, and the promotion of access to basic services and fair distribution of public resources.

Democracy

Democracy in Liberia has been a long and challenging process that began after the end of the civil war in 2003. Since then, Liberia has held four presidential and legislative elections, the most recent one in 2023. These elections have been generally peaceful, credible and inclusive. While the democratic framework is largely in place in the country, the popular low trust in public institutions is a main challenge to the Liberian democracy. Liberia's democracy remains fragile and needs to be consolidated through improved governance, oversight and rule of law, enhanced social cohesion, and endorsed civic education. The Action will promote democracy and human rights by involving CSOs in transparency and oversight in Liberia. CSOs are expected to catalyse the role of the citizens, in particular women and youth, demanding more accountable and transparent Government institutions. The Action will also promote women's participation in the political sphere.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The Liberian Government, in collaboration with the UN Peacebuilding Commission and other stakeholders, has formulated a national development agenda that aligns peacebuilding priorities with the attainment of the SDGs. The UN Peacebuilding Fund has contributed to this agenda by funding projects focused on bolstering social cohesion, fostering reconciliation, promoting gender equality, reforming the security sector, and strengthening the rule of law in Liberia. These endeavours are geared towards advancing good governance, mitigating violent tendencies, and nurturing active citizenship among Liberians. Despite these efforts, numerous challenges persist in sustaining peace and reconciliation in the country. Foremost among these challenges are underlying tribal and community disputes over land or property that have remained unresolved since the end of the civil war. Addressing these disputes is crucial for promoting stability and resilience in Liberia, particularly as shortages in rice imports have historically contributed to disorder and riots in the country.

Hence, it is imperative to continuously monitor the situation and offer timely and effective support to Liberia's peacebuilding efforts, with a special emphasis on addressing the issues of youth unemployment and promoting their social inclusion.

Disaster risk reduction

Liberia is vulnerable to natural hazards such as floods, landslides, droughts, and epidemics, as well as human-induced disasters such as civil unrest, conflict, and displacement. To reduce the impact of disasters and enhance resilience, Liberia has adopted a national disaster management policy and strategy, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of different actors in disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. The policy also emphasizes the need for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning and budgeting, as well as strengthening institutional capacities and community participation. However, there are still many challenges and gaps in implementing the policy and strategy, such as lack of resources, coordination, data, awareness, and enforcement. Therefore, the Action may support the Government of Liberia to implement the national disaster management strategy on a needs-based approach.

Other considerations if relevant

N/A

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

| Category | Risks | Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low) | Impact (High/ Medium/ Low) | Mitigating measures |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| External environment | Changes in the priorities of the Government; lack of commitment and ownership | M | H | Policy dialogue; stakeholders' consultations |
| Planning, processes and systems | Delay in implementation | M | H | Procedures and timelines for implementation of the programme and direct implementation will be put in place |
| People and the organisation | Weak governance and coordination capacity of the Government; lack of transparency, ownership and reliability; excessive centralisation of decision making | M | H | Capacity building for the Government and civil society; intensified dialogue; monitoring and coordination mechanisms |
| Lessons Learnt: <p>Over the years, the cooperation facility has been instrumental in assisting the Government of Liberia to advance key policy reform initiatives supported by the EU. It remains an important tool for the EU in order to remain agile and responsive to the Government's evolving demands and needs, leveraging ample expertise and experience. The previous cooperation facilities under the European Development Fund have been pivotal to the Government in assisting with technical expertise on issues not covered by a specific programme. Support was also crucial to the ONAO, both to build capacity of its staff on managing the EDF funded projects/programmes and for its functioning.</p> <p>Due to the specificity of this measure, there are no major risks and assumptions. However, because of the transition from EDF to NDICI-Global Europe and its possible impact on the Government's internal organisation, a key challenge for the successful implementation of the Action will be the availability of some form of capacity-building assistance benefitting both structures in charge of managing and coordinating international and EU aid.</p> <p>Also, stakeholders' engagement should be enlarged to various actors with an increasing involvement of Liberian media, CSOs, youth and women's rights organisations as well as human rights organisations and defenders. Strategic communication should be aimed at ordinary citizens, going beyond the usual stakeholder outreach.</p> | | | | |

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this Action is to support the EU-Liberia partnership. The Action aims at facilitating the implementation of the EU cooperation with Liberia and strengthening its impact while reinforcing the partnership with the country. It follows the logic below:

IF (i) support related to the implementation of the MIP and national strategies is provided by the cooperation facility; and expertise and technical assistance, with special focus on strengthening national mechanisms for aid coordination are made available to the EU and other key partners;

IF (ii) *economic, environmental, and cultural public diplomacy activities, as well as communication activities* are carried out to promote EU's objectives and priorities in Liberia. These include strategic communication and public diplomacy activities aiming to increase awareness, understanding and support of the EU and its action, with a particular emphasis on targeted communication to the wider public in Liberia;

IF (iii) *capacity building is provided to civil society* to enhance the quality of social dialogue and contribute to more inclusive policies that address the real concerns of the Liberian people. This includes a specific focus on youth and women's organisations to boost their participation in economic and political spheres;

THEN, the political and strategic priorities outlined in the MIP and showcased in the communication strategy will be translated into tangible and impactful activities. This will be achieved through appropriate programme identification, formulation, implementation and communication, ensuring the active involvement and participation of the Liberian civil society.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

Given the nature of this Action a Logical Framework Matrix is not required at action level.

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with Liberia.

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 48 months from the date of entry in 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 – NOT APPLICABLE

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 measures⁷.

4.4.1 Direct Management (Grants)

4.4.1.1 Cooperation facility

Grant: (Direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The operating grant will contribute to meet priorities under **Output 1** “Capacity of the Government and other relevant stakeholders in the effective preparation, management and oversight of the EU cooperation programme is improved. TEIs, including dialogue, visibility and concrete results are achieved successfully”. The grant will support the existing national aid coordination structures such as ONAO and AMCU. In case ONAO and AMCU are merged, the support can be provided to the new coordination structure/unit that will be set-up so it can fulfil its mandate. Top-up salaries and other bonuses/incentives are not eligible.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The potential applicant for funding is a public body, connected directly to the Government’s financial authority.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to a government institution responsible for coordinating development partner’s activities.

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified on the basis of Article 198 c) FR 2024 of the financial regulation because beneficiary is in a legal or factual monopoly situation; the action has specific characteristics requiring a specific type of beneficiary for its technical competence, specialisation or administrative power or nature of the action with regard to Article 27(3) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

4.4.1.2 Support to civil society organisations

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grant will contribute to meet priorities under **Output 3** “Regular dialogues have been strengthened between CSOs and policy makers, and when relevant with development partners. Advocacy/awareness-raising products have been developed. The organisations have their own fundraising strategy”.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The grant may be awarded to legal entities, CSOs and NGOs selected through one or more of the following criteria: strong knowledge and experience of the EU-Liberia partnership and its main priorities; potential to contribute to strengthen EU’s working relations with the local CSOs; demonstrated track record on support to civil society in Africa; demonstrated support to evidence-based policymaking in Africa aligned with international gender and human rights standards.

⁷ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.4.2 Direct Management (Procurement)

Communication and visibility

It is foreseen to conclude a contract for communication related activities in line with the new EU communication strategy. This contract will contribute to **Output 2** “Communication on actions and results and large-scale public campaigns are designed to make the EU’s positioning measurably more understandable, visible, and influential in targeted audiences”.

Principal beneficiaries of the contract will be the EU delegation in Liberia, Government entities and other stakeholders involved in the EU-Liberia partnership.

4.4.3 Indirect Management with the Partner Country

Cooperation facility

A part of this Action with the objective of **Output 1**-“Capacity of the Government and other relevant stakeholders in the effective preparation, management and oversight of the EU cooperation programme is improved. TEIs, including dialogue, visibility and concrete results are achieved successfully” may be implemented in indirect management with the partner country according to the following modalities:

The partner country will act as the contracting authority for the procurement. The Commission will control ex-ante all the procurements.

Payments are executed by the Commission.

The partner country shall apply the Commission’s rules on procurement. These rules will be laid down in the financing agreement to be concluded with the partner country.

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

If indirect management with the partner country fails, the Commission’s services may use direct management through procurement.

If direct management (grants) with the partner country fails, the Commission’s services may use direct management through procurement.

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 realization of this Action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

For this Action, persons who are nationals of, and legal persons who are effectively established in the following countries and territories covered by this Action, are also eligible: Liberia and countries as stipulated by the NDICI Global Europe Regulations Art. 28 (f) “member countries of the OECD, in the case of contracts implemented in a LDC or a highly indebted poor country, as included in the list of ODA recipients”.

4.6 Indicative Budget

| Indicative budget components | EU contribution (amount in EUR) |
|---|--|
| Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.4 | |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Output 1 – Support to Government institutions | |
| Grant (direct management) – Cooperation facility – cf. section 4.4.1 | 850 000 |
| Indirect management with the partner country – cf. section 4.4.3 | 2 500 000 |
| Output 2 – Communication and visibility | \ |
| Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.2 | 1 000 000 |
| Output 3 – Support to civil society organisations | |
| Grant (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.2 | 2 350 000 |
| Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3 | 300 000 |
| Totals | 7 000 000 |

4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Cooperation facility and communication and visibility

Regular meetings will be organised jointly by the MFDP and the EU delegation with relevant stakeholders to coordinate and follow up on the intervention under this support measures programme. The strategic communication and public diplomacy envelope will be managed by the Head of Cooperation, in agreement with the responsible communication unit in DG INTPA, fully respecting the cooperation facility Guidelines.

Support to civil society organisations

A bi-annual steering committee and regular technical meetings will be organised with relevant stakeholders that will be identified in the grant contract.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the Action and may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this Action and ensuring effective coordination.

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 and changes introduced.

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).

The AMCU/ONAO or a newly merged coordination unit, shall be fully part of the M&E system.

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the Action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least one month in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partners 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 shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partners and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the Action.

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 2025-2027 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.

Audiences targeted will include general public audiences, in particular youth, women and girls, leaders and rights advocates, opinion shapers at the community level, journalists, relevant stakeholders of the priority sectors, policy influencers and law makers, religious leaders, international development partners, Government institutions, private sector, schools, academia, international organisations, CSOs as well as cultural operators and artists, among others.

Key messages will be developed in line with the priorities and tailored toward the specific audiences. A mix of channels and media will be used to enhance the intended outcomes based on several factors, including each target group's specific characteristics and needs, media trends, and the most efficient channels for communication.

The background for key messages is to raise awareness and understanding of the EU's role not only as one of the Government of Liberia's main provider of grant resources, but also as a value-driven partner.

Public diplomacy, strategic communication and dialogue with stakeholders will contribute to raising awareness, understanding and improve public perception of the EU, its influence in the world, culture and values, and the EU-Liberia cooperation/partnership as well as reinforce and develop trusted channels of engagement with key target audiences and partners in Liberia.

It is envisaged that a contract for communication and visibility may be contracted. To that extent, it must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document "Communicating and raising EU visibility: guidance for external action"⁸ or any successor document.

⁸ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en.