

**Malawi Violence Against Women and Girls
Prevention and Response Programme**

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy

December 2020

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1. Introduction

The Tithetse Nkhanza programme is committed to being gender transformative and to leaving no one behind. Our overarching, cross-programme Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy exists to ensure we are systematic and pragmatic about embedding this ambition, and that we can track our progress. This strategy will provide a guiding framework throughout the lifespan of the programme setting out what we want to achieve on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and how this will be done. It will be informed by the programme principles, team values, and data and analysis being collected by the programme and evaluation teams.

Integrating gender equality and social inclusion into Tithetse Nkhanza is everyone's responsibility. Accordingly, this strategy is intended to be used by the Programme Management Board, programme staff, consortium members, and district and community level partners and grantees. In line with our adaptive approach and commitment to learning, we will integrate reviews of the programme against the strategy into our current learning and adaptation processes, on a six-monthly basis.

The GESI Strategy is not a standalone document, but is aligned with other Tithetse Nkhanza frameworks, strategies and approaches including:

- The programme Theory of Change and Theories of Action
- The Gender, Inclusion, Power and Politics (GIPP) analyses (undertaken on a six-monthly basis)
- The Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) framework
- The Partnership Strategy and Capacity Development Approach

2. Key terms

For the purposes of this strategy, the following key terms are defined as below.

Gender equality	Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in opportunities, in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services, such that all individuals can enjoy equal standards of well-being. It is the full and equal exercise by men and women, boys and girls of their human rights: in this situation, women, men, boys and girls have equal rights and equal access to socially and economically valued goods, resources, opportunities and benefits; the different gender roles are valued equally and do not constitute an obstacle to their wellbeing and finally; the fulfilment of their potential as responsible members of society is possible.
Disability	<p>Tithetse Nkhanza follows the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in promoting a human rights approach to disability. 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'¹</p> <p>This concept of disability moves away from the traditional individual, medical-based perspective characterised by a focus on physical deficits (impairments), to one that encompasses the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that limit or exclude people with impairments from participation. In this way, disability is best understood as: Impairment + Barriers = Disability</p>
Empowerment	Empowerment is the expanding of opportunities and acquiring of power to make choices by those who previously had less power. It is also about extending people's imaginations about what they could do. Empowerment has economic, political and social dimensions.
Intersectionality	The programme recognises that multiple forms of discrimination operate against the most marginalised groups, therefore adopting the concept of intersectionality is essential to understanding who these groups are. An intersectional analysis focuses on how people's multiple identities, social positions and experiences intersect and shape their lived reality, including the risk for violence against women and girls (VAWG).
Marginalised groups	'Marginalised groups' refers to social groups that are systematically marginalised/ disadvantaged and oppressed by systems of gender inequality and/ or social exclusion. As opposed to other common terms such as 'vulnerable groups', which have been critiqued for focusing on characteristics of the individual that make them 'vulnerable', this term aims to shift focus to the systematic nature of social exclusion and marginalisation.
Social inclusion	Social inclusion is the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities. These barriers may be formal (e.g. written laws on spousal property), or they may be informal (e.g. time village girls spend carrying water instead of attending school). In short, social inclusion is about evening the playing field by making the 'rules of the game' fairer.

¹ <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

3. Why do we need a GESI strategy?

Incorporating gender equality and social inclusion analysis increases the likelihood that Tithetse Nkhanza will achieve the maximum potential of its intended impact. A programme that seeks long term change in violent behaviour underpinned by power imbalances needs to understand who holds power, over whom, in what contexts and how that power is exercised. Otherwise, it risks ignoring the most marginalised groups, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and discrimination, or exacerbating tensions or conflict. In summary, if we fail to apply a gender and inclusion lens to our work, we risk doing harm and failing to deliver change overall.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out to leave no one behind, without distinction of any kind as to age, race, colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), language, religion, caste, class, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status. To align with these internationally agreed policy commitments, and to comply with the UK Gender Equality Act (GEA), Tithetse Nkhanza must be, at a minimum, sensitive to social inclusion in all political, economic and social spheres.

Holding ourselves accountable to our values: Our commitment to gender equality and social inclusion should reach 'inward' to focus on systems, structures and procedures within the programme team and consortium, as well as 'outward' to programmatic interactions. This strategy sets a framework for the incorporation of gender equality and social inclusion across the programme, including minimum standards and best practice on how consortium partners should operate, and the integration of gender and inclusion into national, district and community-level implementation. It allows us to measure if we are meeting our commitments on gender and inclusion.

4. Setting our level of ambition on gender equality and social inclusion

4.1. Conceptualising gender equality and social inclusion on a continuum

Incorporating gender equality and social inclusion into programming can be understood on a continuum from GESI blind to GESI transformative. The GESI model below² (Diagram 1) illustrates that there is a spectrum against which programming can be self-assessed, that can help us categorise the level of ambition and achievement of different aspects of the programme and the programme as a whole.

- The first pillar (**GESI blind**) refers to programming or interventions that have little or no recognition of local differences, norms, power balances, and relations in programme/policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- The second pillar on the left of the continuum (**GESI exploitative**) is about programming or interventions that are exploitative by taking advantage of rigid gender and social norms, and existing imbalances in power to achieve the programme objectives.
- The third pillar (**GESI sensitive/minimal compliance**) is about programming or interventions that set out to address the practical or basic needs and priorities of marginalised groups and individuals. This level is also about being sensitive to the impacts on marginalised groups to 'do no harm' and what the programme considers to be the minimum standard.
- The fourth pillar (**strategic/empowering**) is more ambitious and sets out to empower individuals by building their assets, capabilities, opportunities, and motivations. The aim is to increase their access and control, as well as their

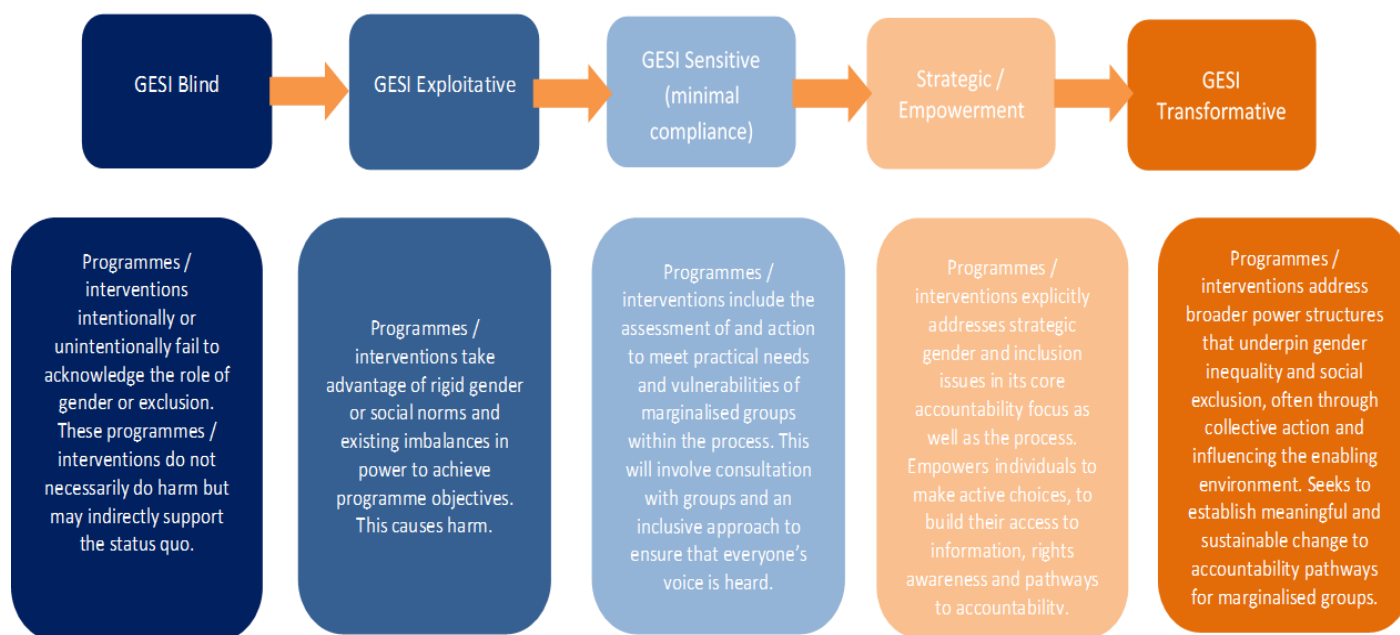
² Adapted from Caroline Moser

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

individual agency and decision-making. This type of programming should empower marginalised groups and individuals to address and meet their strategic needs and priorities.

- The fifth and most ambitious pillar at the end of the spectrum (**GESI transformative**) is closely associated with structural change in power and social relations/norms; it also emphasises collective action. This type of programming creates an enabling environment for marginalised groups to practice leadership and be meaningfully involved at all levels (economic, social, political, and cultural) and in all domains (family, community, organisations, state and religious institutions, schools and the market). This work requires more investment and is often long-term in nature.

Diagram 1: GESI Responsiveness Continuum



4.2. Our vision, objectives and principles

The expectation is that Tithetse Nkhanza operates at the **empowerment/transformative** end of the spectrum described above with respect to gender equality and women's rights, which are central to the programme's mission. However, the programme will also aim to, at a minimum, **strategically** engage on all forms of social exclusion, and to raise the level of ambition on social inclusion towards empowerment and transformation as the programme progresses, recognising that this is a process.

Vision: A Malawi in which **all** women, girls, boys and men enjoy **equal** rights, protection from all forms of violence and have access to justice, **irrespective of** their disability status, literacy levels, ethnicity, SOGIE, age, marital status, occupation and any other factors upon which they may be marginalised.

Programme goal: TN is recognised as a leading champion for delivering, learning about, adapting to, and achieving transformative change on gender equality, and sustainable strategic change on social inclusion, in particular disability inclusion, whilst fully adopting a 'do no harm' approach in all interventions and towards all groups.

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

Objectives:

1. We will learn from and collaborate with others, and design, deliver and adapt our approaches and activities to achieve³:
 - a. **Gender equality** | transformative change in gender equality
For our purposes, we define transformative change in gender equality as challenging and sustainably changing the structures, systems and social norms that withhold power from women and girls in relation to VAWG and access to justice at all levels (national, target district and community).
 - b. **Social inclusion** | strategic change in social inclusion
For our purposes, we define strategic change in social inclusion as including and sustainably empowering prioritised marginalised groups to make active, informed choices in relation to VAWG and access to justice within our target districts and communities.
2. **Working policies and practices** | We will be a gender equal and socially inclusive team, with equitable policies and procedures that enable all team members to effectively deliver their roles, attain work-life balance and enhance the realisation of our gender equality and social inclusion aspirations.
3. **Sharing learning** | We will reflect, document and share lessons learnt at all levels (local, national and international) on what works, and what does not work, to realise transformative change in gender equality and strategic change in social inclusion within VAWG programming.

Focus on disability inclusion: Although TN aims to engage on various forms of social exclusion through inclusive policies and practices, we recognise that to take effective steps towards removing barriers to participation and meaningfully engage with marginalised groups, we need to focus our efforts and prioritise **intentional inclusion** of certain groups rather than seeking to address all forms of social exclusion at once, in all areas of work. Given the evidence of the higher risk of VAWG experienced by women and girls with disabilities generated through the Independent Evaluation Baseline Survey, and other sources of data, TN has decided to focus on disability inclusion as a first social inclusion priority, which may be followed by focus on other marginalised groups in later stages of the programme. This means that while broader social inclusion will still be considered and prioritised throughout the programme as part of its GESI strategy, disability inclusion will be a prioritised area during the first phase of the programme.

Do no harm: While certain GESI markers will have an explicit focus on advancing the programme's ambitions and strategies in terms of disability inclusion, it is critical that all GESI markers that relate to ensuring the safety, health and security of staff, partners and people the programme engages with, **adopt a do no harm approach that recognises diversity and is inclusive of all people** regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, SOGIE, disability status, mental health, and other individual factors and social categories. This means that TN, **at a minimum**, must ensure that strategies, interventions and activities cause no harm towards any groups. To ensure this, GESI markers on 'do no harm', 'safeguarding', 'survivor centred approach' and 'duty of care' refer specifically to **recognising diversity** and **specific risks** that women, girls and marginalised groups (of all diversity) may face and develop corresponding mitigation and response strategies and plans. This is a minimum compliance requirement, ensuring programming is at the minimum GESI sensitive. The more ambitious strategic/ empowering and GESI transformative levels for these markers may entail a more explicit focus on disability inclusion as this is a GESI priority, but this is assuming that the minimum do no harm approach is ensured towards people of all diversity.

³ The programme has outlined different levels of ambition regarding gender equality and social inclusion in recognition of the different 'starting points' from which we approach these issues, as well as the need to bring about transformative change in gender equality if we are to sustainably reduce the prevalence of VAWG. This does not, however, detract from our understanding of the intersectionality between gender and social inclusion, and our acknowledgement that multiple layers of discrimination will operate against marginalised groups in whose name the programme operates.

5. Core elements of the GESI strategy

In order to realise the vision and programme goal, Tithetse Nkhanza has described success and outlined key targets for each objective for the first implementation year of the programme, as outlined below.

Strategic Area 1: Embedding gender equality and social inclusion in the programme

Objective: We will learn from and collaborate with others, design, deliver and adapt our approaches and activities to achieve:

a. **Gender equality** | transformative change in gender equality

For our purposes, we define transformative change in gender equality as challenging and sustainably changing the structures, systems and social norms that withhold power from women and girls in relation to VAWG and access to justice at all levels (national, target district and community).

b. **Social inclusion** | strategic change in social inclusion

For our purposes, we define strategic change in social inclusion as including and sustainably empowering prioritised marginalised groups to make active, informed choices in relation to VAWG and access to justice within our target districts and communities.

What does success look like?

- TN is viewed as a legitimate convenor of funded and strategic partners at the district and national levels around GESI issues of key importance to the programme, and at key moments.
 - TN supports partners to have direct interactions with decision-makers and amplifies their concerns in decision-making fora.
 - TN supports the creation of local and district level structures that can support social change independently of the programme.
 - TN's safeguarding approach and VAWG response are GESI sensitive and put survivors first, ensuring that a do no harm approach is taken and that response and support are safe and accessible for diverse survivors, e.g. women and girls with disabilities and LBT+ women.
 - TN supports and empowers survivors to make their own choices about how and when to access support, and proactively works to expand the options and improve the services accessible to survivors.
 - TN demonstrates a high level of transparency and accountability to women, girls and marginalised groups, especially regarding (but not limited to) the management of safeguarding issues. TN supports participation of women, girls and marginalised groups in GESI analysis and reviews of TN's GESI approach and progress, which is integral to TN's learning and adaptation process.
 - TN allocates financial resources for dedicated GESI activities and outcomes, e.g. for dedicated GESI analysis, learning products and where necessary, adaptation of activities to ensure they are accessible, available and adapted to the needs of women, girls and people with disabilities.
- a. **Gender equality**
- All staff (inclusive of partner staff and TN staff) understand the basis of gender inequality relating to VAWG in Malawi and are committed to challenging this in their work and personal lives.
 - Partner organisations are selected to include women's rights organisations.

- TN works with all partners to build their capacity on gender equality.
- All programme activities aim to sustainably change gender power imbalances at all levels, including tackling structural inequality and systems that uphold patriarchal power wherever possible. This is reflected in conceptualisations of interventions and activities, is informed by ongoing GESI analysis, and is promoted through participatory methodologies that aims to empower programme participants and drive transformative change.

b. Social inclusion

- All programme activities are inclusive of all people and pursue proactive strategies to include the most marginalised, with a focus on those most affected by VAWG. The first phase of the programme will focus on inclusion of people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups may be prioritised at a later stage of the programme, as appropriate.
- The programme will be able to evidence key steps taken toward removing barriers to access and participation in the programme for people with disabilities and members of prioritised groups. For example, accessible buildings and accessible communication will be used.
- All staff (inclusive of partner staff and TN staff) understand the basis of social marginalisation relating to VAWG in Malawi and are committed to challenging this in their work and personal lives.
- Partner organisations are selected to include self-representing groups (such as organisations for disabled people (ODPs)).
- TN works with all partners to build their capacity on social inclusion.

Proposed targets:

- 1) TN will include women's rights organisations and organisations for disabled people within the partner portfolio at national and district level by March 2021.
- 2) All partner staff and TN staff meet minimum requirements⁴ in terms of knowledge and attitude towards GESI by February 2020.
- 3) Partners demonstrate that they have reached⁵ women, girls and people with disabilities and achieved set targets which can be tracked over time during the first phase of the programme. Targets include:
 - Of the women and girls accessing funding from the Survivor Support Fund, at least 5% are women and girls with disabilities.
 - Targets for the inclusion of people with disabilities in SASA! Together, Champions of Change (CoC) and Moyo Olemekezeka (MO) activities are to be determined in consultation with the National Disability Advisory by March 2021.
- 4) TN demonstrates overall programme impact on those most marginalised and most affected by VAWG during the first phase of the programme.
- 5) TN demonstrates adaptation of programme approaches where appropriate based on learning derived from monitoring and reviewing our GESI reach and impact.
- 6) At least 50% of TN delivered activities will meet minimum accessibility requirements⁶ by December 2021.

⁴ To be determined through consultations with GESI specialists.

⁵ Reach defined as women, girls and marginalised groups 'present, meaningfully engaged and benefitting from'.

⁶ To be determined in consultation with Disability Inclusion Advisors by February 2021.

Strategic Area 2: Integrating gender equality and social inclusion in TN's working policies and practices

Objective: We will be a gender equal and socially inclusive team, with equitable policies and procedures that enable all team members to effectively deliver their roles, attain work-life balance and enhance the realisation of our gender equality and social inclusion aspirations.

What does success look like?

- The programme should model the change it wants to see, in respect to gender equality and social inclusion as well as issues related to Duty of Care.
- This includes establishing a workplace where equality between men and women is practised and experienced; where diversity in the workplace is recognised and embraced; and where accountability is built into programme systems, ensuring that we hold ourselves accountable through regular reviews of policies, progress, and achievements and challenges, which will feed into TN's learning and adaptation process.
- The team will be provided access to psychological support mechanisms to support mental health and well-being whilst responding to challenging cases of VAWG.

Proposed targets:

- 1) Team leadership and staff reflect on gender equality, social inclusion and power dynamics in the workplace on a bi-annual basis.
- 2) All TN workplace policies are reviewed with a GESI lens and revised where needed to ensure a gender equal and socially inclusive workplace is practiced by May 2021.
- 3) All TN staff include an objective to meet GESI targets within their annual performance agreement by January 2020.

Strategic Area 3: Raising the profile of Tithetse Nkhanza as a pioneer of gender equality and social inclusion within the VAWG sector

Objective: We will reflect, document and share lessons learnt at all levels (local, national and international) on what works, and what does not work, to realise transformative change in gender equality and strategic change in social inclusion within VAWG programming.

What does success look like?

- TN facilitates networking and alliance building at the district and national levels between civil society organisations (CSOs) and statutory actors, amongst social movement organisations, and between different interest groups to break down siloes between social justice issues and share learning on what works and what does not.
- Other programmes and partners demonstrate interest to adopt lessons from TN on GESI implementation.
- All learning products developed by the programme include lessons learnt regarding GESI implementation.
- TN is asked to present at national fora our lessons on GESI.

Proposed targets:

- 1) By May 2021, at least 50% of learning products developed by the programme include relevant GESI lessons. This target will increase each year of the programme.
- 2) By May 2021, at least 20% of programme communications support TN's gender equality and social inclusion objectives, which includes highlighting the links between gender equality, social inclusion and ending VAWG.

5.1. The GESI Markers Tool

Why was the tool developed?

The GESI Markers Tool was developed to support the operationalisation of the GESI strategy and to assess progress towards achieving the objectives under each strategic area. The GESI Markers Tool supports the TN team to identify **what GESI responsiveness looks like in practice** and breaks down what it means for the different strategic areas included above (programming, internal policies and practice, external engagements). The Tool provides an opportunity for reflection and dialogue on GESI internally in the team, as well as with partners and external stakeholders, and is part of TN's learning and adaptation process.

What is the tool?

The tool has two main components:

- 1) The tool identifies a set of '**GESI markers**' or indicators along the GESI continuum, which are defined for different aspects of the programme where GESI integration/consideration is critical – grouped under the three Strategic Areas. Each GESI marker contains definitions linked to each pillar of the GESI continuum, defining what it means to be 'GESI blind' on one end of the spectrum, to what 'GESI transformative' means on the other end of the spectrum. The five-level markers show that GESI responsiveness is a spectrum and a process, where the programme must have the minimum/basic capacity and resources in place and address practical needs before it can address strategic needs and move towards the empowering/transformational end of the spectrum.
- 2) The tool supports Technical Leads to identify which of the GESI markers are relevant to different **intervention areas** and activities, as all GESI markers will not be relevant to all aspects of the programme. The GESI markers on Intervention Areas level supports the team to identify GESI priorities and opportunities for integration across the various workstreams, and supports the Technical Leads to identify what they can do contribute to achieving the programme's GESI vision and objectives (being gender transformative and engaging in strategic social inclusion). The five-level markers help the team and Technical Leads to define what they need to do at a minimum, and what they can do if they have more capacity, resources and appetite for strategic/transformational GESI work.

How will the tool be used?

The GESI Markers Tool will be used by:

- Technical Leads to guide the delivery of interventions within their portfolio.
- TN senior management to support, and hold accountable, Technical Leads to deliver against the programme's GESI objectives.
- GESI Advisors to both support and review the programme, in terms of achievement against the GESI objectives through GESI scans.

The Tool serves an important function in holding ourselves accountable to our GESI objectives and commitment to leave no one behind. The markers will form a basis for carrying out **GESI scans** which is an opportunity to gauge progress against the GESI markers and findings will feed into the learning and adaptation process.

6. Using the strategy

This GESI strategy should not be a standalone or static document, but should be linked to other frameworks within the programme. This includes being informed by the Gender, Inclusion, Power and Politics (GIPP) analyses and feeding into the MEL and PDIA approach. Programme monitoring data evidencing who is being reached⁷ through TN activities, and GIPP analysis findings will be discussed on a six-monthly basis during learning reviews, with key lessons and adaptations focussing on how adequate reach has been achieved, and how to increase reach if needed. The strategy should be iteratively updated as the programme continues through the implementation phase.

The workplan below will be incorporated into the overall programme implementation plan.

The GIPP analysis will be refreshed on a six-monthly basis, and operational research (beneficiary cohort studies) and programme monitoring will provide information to review our level of ambition and hold ourselves to account. The GESI Markers Tool will be reviewed during learning reviews on a six-monthly basis to document learning, and provide a refresher of processes that will facilitate the delivery of the programme's GESI aspirations.

7. Work plan

2021	Activities
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning review will discuss the revised GESI strategy and GESI markers. Finalisation of the pilot to capture data on disability inclusion in TN activities. Drafting of Technical Briefing Note on capturing data on disability inclusion in community-level activities. Psychosocial support for team commences, including group sessions on stress, secondary trauma and work-life balance.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going data collection on disability inclusion in TN activities. Psychosocial support for team continues.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going data collection on disability inclusion in TN activities. Psychosocial support for team continues. Learning review held which includes an agenda point to review and reflect upon GESI reach as demonstrated by monitoring data.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going data collection on disability inclusion in TN activities. Psychosocial support for team continues.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIPP analysis refresher undertaken. GESI scan undertaken to inform end of year 1 review.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GESI strategy review to be undertaken based on the scan findings and appropriate revisions and updates made.

⁷ Reach defined as women, girls and marginalised groups 'present, meaningfully engaged and benefitting from'.