EU ROADMAP FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE GAMBIA FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2023

GENERAL INFORMATION

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PART I – BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT AND PAST EU ENGAGEMENT

A.   THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY: BRIEF UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The space for CSOs has increased since 2016, when the former dictatorship ended and the democratic elections took place. Civil Society is in the process of strengthening and widening their role in society. The environment for CSOs has enhanced in the last years by becoming more enabling. Based on feedback from CSOs in The Gambia, CSOs no longer face problems with registrations and are able to operate without larger constraints. The registration process for CSOs is outlined in the Companies Act of 2013 and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Act of 2009. The registration occurs through the Ministry of Justice and after two years, organizations can then apply to register as NGOs through the NGO Affairs Agency in the Ministry of Regional Governments and Land.

Through civil society consultations and especially through the practice of putting draft legislation through a validation process with civil society representatives, the collaboration with the current, democratic government has been largely positive. One of the most fundamental challenges remains the lack of information and access to it for CSOs. With the adoption in the National Assembly of the Access to Information Bill, on 1 July 2021, at least the legal foundation for this situation to improve should be in place in the near future. The cooperation with public institutions is not sufficient and the public's understanding of the role of civil society is insufficient. The country is facing the challenge of rampant corruption, which civil society has mentioned as a big concern. Funding and low capacity of local CSOs remain a great barrier for more effective participation of CSOs.

CSOs have played an integral part in educating and advocating for people to engage in the Constitutional Review process. In September 2020 the National Assembly rejected the draft Constitution and ensuing negotiations including with the former Nigerian President Goodwill Jonathan as a facilitator have not yielded results. This was a major setback for everyone involved but also a testimony of how civil society in The Gambia is able to mobilize people and take a strong stand for what they believe in.

Civil society is also facing challenges when it comes to the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. In The Gambia, it is mandatory to apply for a permit from the Inspector-General of the Police, who has the possibility to deny requests, ahead of any major public assembly. Following peaceful protests in December 2019, in January 2020, a civil group called "Three Years Jotna", which advocated for the current President Adama Barrow to keep his promise of stepping down three years after inauguration, staged another protest. This time, the movement was outlawed and its leaders were arrested allegedly for breaking the law for not having a valid permit, rioting and destruction of

public property. Moreover, two radio stations who had given a podium to the movement's leaders were shut down. The case against 9 leaders was later dropped but upon leaving the court house the same leaders were re-arrested in March 2021, which resulted in a massive public debate. The charges have been finally dropped but it remains a telling case in terms of how precarious certain democratic gains still are in today's Gambia. These kinds of arrests and intimidations cannot be taken lightly and work towards the full respect of the freedoms of speech and assembly needs to be done.

Gender remains an important issue whether it is gender-based violence, lack of political opportunities or access to land - just to mention a few. Positive progress does occur on a political level with the establishment of the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare. In 2021, the Ministry has also published a tender for a Gender Analysis highlighting their willingness to have a proper analysis of the current situation. Civil society can play a key role in ensuring that the government will put more weight on gender in all of its action and to ensure that Gambian women, girls, men and boys, in all their diversity, have the same opportunities in their society.

Climate change is another key issue, which CSOs will need to be actively involved in to ensure the government will take necessary action without further delays. Environmental degradation, depletion of fish stocks, pollution and land rights are human rights related issues which touch the lives of Gambians, their communities and their livelihoods on a daily basis. Civil society in close cooperation with media professionals are key to exposing these issues and to advocating for measures to improve the situation to be taken.

The capacity of civil society has expanded in recent years as more freedom of expression has occurred. The major challenge is to ensure that the voices of civil society are heard at all levels. Their role in decision-making, in holding the government to account and acting as a counterbalance needs to be further strengthened, by ensuring their proper consultation and by making sure their voices are taken into account to be able to take up this role of a watchdog, civil society organisations could do with some additional support in the form of funding of these activities, as the capacity for such an exercise exists but is limited.

B. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PAST ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs

For this current roadmap, the Delegation organized a consultation with civil society in the form of a questionnaire. The final turnout with nine responses received remained rather low. However, the responses that were gathered showed that organisations faced similar challenges. Those that responded were very happy that they were asked to participate in this round of consultation, which further proved the interest of Gambian civil society to be actively involved in the EU programming.

Civil society came with excellent suggestions on how to improve the current status quo of working with the Delegation by suggesting that there would be an annual EU-CSO forum, which would give the opportunity for proper exchange. Furthermore, a big concern for civil society remains the lack of both funding opportunities as well as specialized capacity-building opportunities such as in fundraising and advocacy. There was a suggestion also to facilitate an exchange type of opportunity between European civil society and Gambian counterparts, similarly to the INTERPARES initiative, where capacity building comes directly from European counterparts through experience exchange.

The Delegation consulted civil society during the drafting of the Multiannual indicative programming exercise (MIP). This has proven an important tool, which should be used more actively in all the phases of programming as well as for policy and political dialogue. The Delegation has an opportunity to also ensure that CSO´s can get the seat at the table in important meetings and should use this opportunity more widely. The proposed EU-CSO forum could be a good first step in broadening and deepening the work with civil societies.

In the drafting process of the Human Rights and Country Strategy for The Gambia, civil society's views were also solicited and taken into account. The document includes deepening engagement with a pluralistic civil society as one of its priorities for the period 2021-2014.

Civil society consultations remain an integral part of the work of the Delegation to ensure that programming is in line with the actual needs in the country. The former roadmap was never validated and hence has not been a guiding document for staff. This new roadmap can learn from this shortcoming by ensuring that staff is actively made aware of its existence and by encouraging every sector to be more actively engaged with civil society to better learn about the needs in the country but to also support civil society more effectively and in line with their wishes considering that they know best what is needed for them to thrive.

The Gambia only has only three Member States represented at the level of Chargé d'Affaires. They are France, Germany and Spain. There are twelve Member State Embassies in nearby Dakar, Senegal. However, collaboration has remained rather limited, as The Gambia, seemingly, is not a priority country to most Member States apart from certain topical issues such as Migration-related questions. No Member State has a bilateral cooperation program with The Gambia and hence there has not been any Joint Programming. Consultations and co-creation however take place.

PART II – EU STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO ENGAGE WITH CSOs

C. THE STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOS AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE EU COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT AND AGENDA 2030/SDG

The EU-The Gambia partnership over 2021-2027 will be articulated around three priority areas:
  i) Promoting Good Governance;
  ii) Green economy for sustainable growth and jobs
  iii) Human development

These areas encompass Governance and civil society (DAC code 151); conflict, peace and security (152) and migration (151, in relation also to 430 and 310), mobility and urbanization (430) agriculture, forestry, fishing (310), and tourism (332) and education (110), social protection (160) and sanitation (140).

This will build on the pillars identified through the Team Europe Initiatives, which frame the ground of the potential cooperation with other EU actors:

1. *"Good Governance";*
2. *"Green Gambia", centering on environment, biodiversity, green economy and climate change.*

As part of the 2021-2027 programming period, specific measures in favour of civil society will be adopted, namely with view to reinforcing the capacities of the CSO umbrella organisation and its involvement and its participation in the public debates in the country (including on migration). Selected thematic umbrella organisation could benefit from the same support. This is also the case for the umbrella organisation of local authorities. Special attention will be paid to women organisations. However, the envelop of the MIP 2021-2027 has been reduced compared to the amount available in the previous period (from 250 mEUR in the NIP + around 50 mEUR of Trust Fund projects to 197 mEUR in the MIP 2021-2027). Therefore, an amount of three mEUR under the Multi-Annual Action Plan 2021-2023 is requested. Funds from the MIP would be used after 2024.

As mentioned above, the Human Rights & Democracy Country Strategy for The Gambia 2021-2024 dovetails with the MIP and with this CSO roadmap, and specific actions are envisaged under the corresponding priority for the HR&DCS.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs	RELATED SECTOR & COMMISSION PRIORITY	RELATED SDG
*Strengthen an **enabling environment** for CSOs*	Governance, peace and security, human development and social inclusion	GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
*Promote **accountability** by supporting civil society to play a critical and constructive role in National Development Plan*	Governance, peace and security, human development and social inclusion	GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
*Support **CSOs' capacity** to be an actor in The Gambia's inclusive and sustainable growth*	Governance, peace and security, human development and social inclusion	GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

D. THE ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES FOR THE EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs	ACTIONS (including analysis, policy and political dialogue, operational support)	MEANS (EU programmes / instruments to implement the actions)
*Strengthen an **enabling environment** for CSOs*	1. Support the Government legislative process in the revision of key legislation and support public awareness campaigns surrounding widening the civic space (incl. the EU EOM and EU EFM recommendations).	- Democratic reforms expert under SRBC3 (budget support program) technical assistance - Article 8 Political dialogue - Advocacy towards review of Public order Act, Laws governing the media, criminal code, and other archaic laws inhibiting the space of civil society - Advocacy towards codification of practice of CSO validation workshops for draft legislation
	2. Commit to engaging with CSOs (focus on women & youth movements) whenever consultation is needed.	- Ad hoc working of the EU delegation - EU-CSO Forum to be established (T.A for TANGO)
	3. The ratification, domestication and	- Democratic reforms expert

	implementation of relevant international human rights conventions and optional protocols.	under SRBC3 technical assistance
	4. Support the National Human Right Commission (NHRC) in setting up/developing a sustainable civil society engagement and involvement mechanism and the proper running of the individual complaints mechanism	- Democratic reforms expert under SRBC3 technical assistance
*Promote **accountability** by supporting civil society to play a **critical and constructive role in National Development Plan***	1. Support CSOs to monitor public policies, as well as to participate, be consulted, and be involved in decision-making processes, including national and local budgets.	- CSO Watchdog: strengthening transparency, accountability and resilience in The Gambia (STAR) under SRBC 3
	2. Train CSOs on their roles and responsibilities in National development processes	- Anti-Corruption expert under SRBC 3 - technical assistance
	3. Set up a civil society mechanism to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, research centers/think tanks and the media to perform their roles in the fight against corruption.	- Engage CSOs in popularising EU EOM recommendations on the organisation of elections
	4. Promotion of a partnership between media and CSOs whereby CSOs are systematically asked to share their views on current affairs or topical events in The Gambia	
*Support **CSOs' capacity** to be an actor in The Gambia's inclusive and sustainable growth*	Capacity building and trainings for CSOs (i.e.: on reporting, fundraising, proposal writing and budgeting skills) to support upscaling of operations.	- Ongoing projects - Organise information sessions (including information on proposal writing & budgeting) when call for proposals are published
	Ideas of actions: Transfers of know-how and experience; Promotion of best practices and lessons learned; Collaborations and information sharing	- CfP CSO Watchdog: strengthening transparency, accountability and resilience in The Gambia (STAR) under SRBC 3

	between Civil Society Organisations, central and local authorities. Actions of public information, sensitisation, awareness-raising, advocacy and mobilization; Civil society networking and coordination; Training, educational activities, and capacity development. Assist in linking CSOs with like-minded institution in Europe for knowledge exchange and capacity building as well as potential exchange programs.	
	Joint/Consultative programming Funding	Ad hoc working of the EU delegation
	Partner with organizations to train youths and women on entrepreneurial skills and technology	Ongoing projects mainstreaming gender & youth
	Promote effective partnerships between CSOs and the Private sector by organising innovation days	Tekki Fii program & ITC/YEP

OBJECTIVES FOR EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs	OUTCOME INDICATORS	TARGET	BASELINE INFORMATION (if available)	SOURCES OF INFORMATION & MEANS OF VERIFICATION
*Strengthen an **enabling environment** for CSOs*	1. Public Order Act is amended in accordance to International standards	- **Target 1:** A revised Public Order Act that protects the rights of civil society to carry out their duties.	- **Baseline 1:** Existing Public Order Act which inhibits the freedom of assembly of civil society	- Official Gazette - Passing at the National Assembly - EU-funded projects/programme reports - EU/CSO consultations agendas and minutes of meetings - Annual EUD reporting on the HRCDS and other reports issued by the political section
	2. Existence and enforcement of a Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation, applied also to budgets	- **Target 2:** The enactment of the Access to Information, Right to Information, and Freedom of Information (FOI) laws that would allow the media and the public to make informed decisions and debate the matters affecting them.	- **Baseline 2:** No Access to Information, Right to Information, and Freedom of Information (FOI) laws	
	3. Number of times enabling environment-related topics are discussed during EU consultations with CSOs and included in the agenda of the EU political dialogue with the Government	- **Target 3:** Working on an enabling environment remains high on the agenda of the EUD in its discussion with CSOs.	- **Baseline 3:** EUD consults CSOs, although this is carried done in a systematic manner.	
*Promote **accountability** by supporting*	1. Existence of an institutional framework regulating CSO – public authorities' relations	- **Target 1:** To set up a civil society mechanism of oversight and dialogue to assess the progress	- **Baseline 1:** No systematic mechanism exists on access to	- MoU, protocols regulating public consultations

*civil society to play a **critical and constructive role in National Development Plan***	(at national, sectoral, regional and local level), in the form of defined procedures describing the ways for CSOs to have access to information on the implementation of the National Development Plan.	in implementing the National Development Plan (NDP) and its successor. This platform will issue yearly reports on the implementation of the NDP from the angle of public accountability. The report should be debated in a yearly workshop.	information, monitoring or reporting on the National Development Plan (and its successor).	- Public consultation reports and minutes of the meetings organised between the Government (national or local) and CSOs meetings/ of public hearings - EU-funded projects/programme reports - Reference in Media (formal and informal) to initiatives where CS is involved in public consultations/public affairs - Corruption perception index by Transparency International, and other related indexes and reports[1]
	2. Number of EU & MS-supported initiatives aiming at reinforcing the **technical capacities and skills of CSOs** who participate actively in **public budget transparency** at a local and national levels	- **Target 2:** Two projects either stand-alone or part of existing initiatives. Objective is to improve the capacity of public administrations (including local authorities) and civil society to engage in a structured dialogue based on efficient, transparent and accountable governance.	- **Baseline 2:** No existing projects on this thematic	
*Support **CSOs' capacity** to be an actor in The Gambia's inclusive and sustainable growth*	1. Number of institutional capacity building components included in EU grants	- **Target 1:** Capacity building of CSOs is included in at least 25% of EU & MS projects.	- **Baseline 1:** No information available.	- CS mapping studies (if available) - EU-funded project/programme progress reports - CSOs activities reports
	2. Number of programmes (funded by the EU, EUD and MS) supporting youth/ women in leadership.	- **Target 2:** Supporting youth & women in leadership roles within CSO capacity building is mainstreamed in at least 25% of EU & MS projects.	- **Baseline 2:** No information available.	

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[1] https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview

ANNEX 1: THE PROCESS

How were MS/EU+ present in the country involved in the drafting of the RM?	Member States were invited to participate in the drafting and were made aware of the different steps of this Roadmap. Due to time constraints, they were not participating in person. The roadmap will be sent to the member states for final validation.
What mechanisms are set up to ensure the involvement of MS/EU+ in the implementation and follow up of the RM?	The final roadmap will be sent to all Member States ensuring that they agree with the content and an annual meeting in regards to the implementation of the Roadmap will be organized to ensure it is not forgotten.
What consultations with CSOs were organised? What type of actors were involved? What mechanisms, if any, were used to ensure the inclusiveness of the process?	A consultation in the form of a questionnaire was organized. The questionnaire was based on the work completed by other Delegations that HQ shared. These questions were then reformulated to fit the Gambian context and additional questions were drafted. Nine organizations responded to the questionnaire with similar input. To ensure an inclusive list of organization, which were consulted, all Program Managers were asked to share the contact details of important actors in their sectors. Furthermore, it was ensured that both small organizations as well as organizations specializing in certain sectors were also consulted. There was a consultation with the Youth of The Gambia by using the U-Report tool with Unicef. Through this tool, the Youth can respond to a poll. These polls are a great way to get information and reach the Youth all over the country but comes with the limitation that the questions are restrictive as they respond via phones. Questions were focused around human rights and gender as the polls were conducted in cooperation with the drafting of all three documents.
What mechanisms, are set up to continue the dialogue with CSOs? What mechanisms, if any, will used to ensure the inclusiveness of the dialogue?	The consulted CSOs expressed that they considered it important to be consulted by us and wanted to have a more direct and closer dialogue with the Delegation in the future. One such mechanism, which was suggested, would be to set up an EU-CSO forum, where proper exchange would occur.
How is the RM integrated /coordinated with the JP process?	Joint Programming does not occur in The Gambia as no Member State has a bilateral cooperation program with The Gambia.
How does the RM relate to other country processes including human rights and democracy country strategies, the gender action plan, etc.?	The Roadmap was drafted simultaneously with the Gender Action Plan and the Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy as these Strategies are feeding each other.

ANNEX 2: Questionnaire sent to CSOs