

Annex IV to the Agreement establishing the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa and its internal rules.

Action Document for EU Trust Fund to be used for the decisions of the Operational Board

1. IDENTIFICATION

Country	Nigeria		
Title/Number	Reference : T05-EUTF-SAH-NG-02 Investing in the Safety and Integrity of Nigerian Girls (I-SING)		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 3,500,633 Total amount drawn from the Trust Fund : EUR 3,500,633-		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Nigeria – North East Zone		
DAC-code	150	Sector	
Sector of intervention of the Trust Fund	Objective n°1: Greater economic impact and employment opportunities Objective n°2 : Strengthening Resilience		
Sector of Intervention of the Valetta Action Plan	Sector : 1.1. Investing in development and poverty eradication		

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

Since mid-2014, North East Nigeria has seen a dramatic increase in violent attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram, resulting in several thousands of people killed and 2.41 million displaced. Within this humanitarian setting, evidence shows that girls are at an especially high risk of violence as social structures and protective systems disappear. I-SING directly addresses the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls and boys in Gombe, Adamawa (central) and Borno (south) states in North East Nigeria.

¹ OCHA Dashboard for September 2015

Over a period of 24 months, the action seeks to improve the protection, personal agency², access to informal education and economic empowerment of 12,000 adolescent girls through a community-based approach, building on an existing network of community committees, women's groups and mentors in North East Nigeria. Alongside girls, the programme will target 5,000 adolescent boys in activities that improve their livelihood opportunities while building their knowledge on the benefits of gender equity and healthy masculinities. Adolescent girls and boys will be targeted with life skills, reproductive health knowledge, psychosocial support, financial literacy and job readiness and livelihood trainings using the safe spaces model. To support this approach, the action will also engage community leaders, service providers and local stakeholder organisations in programme activities to ensure participation and sustainability of impact.

The objective of I-SING is to improve the safety, livelihoods and personal agency of adolescent girls in North East Nigeria. The specific objectives are threefold:

- OS1: Improve adolescent girls' and boys' life skills, reproductive health knowledge and psychosocial support;
- OS2: Improve adolescent girls' and boys' financial literacy, access to savings and loans and livelihood skills;
- OS3: Provide an enabling and supportive environment for adolescent girls to thrive.

In particular and in terms of aligning with the objectives of the EU Emergency Trust, I-SING will purposefully contribute to the Trust Fund's first and second objectives of achieving *greater economic impact and employment opportunities* especially for young people and women in local communities, and *strengthening resilience of communities, in particular the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people*.³ Finally, the proposed programme is also aligned with the priority actions outlined in the 2015 Valetta Action Plan which include: boosting socio-economic development particularly among youth, supporting resilience especially among the most vulnerable, and enhancing the self-reliance of IDPs and host communities.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Country context

The deteriorating situation in North East Nigeria has resulted in a major humanitarian crisis as several thousand people have been killed and over two million displaced following the violent attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram.⁴ This violence and population movement has had a substantial impact on the lives of both IDPs and host communities, disrupting daily routines and social structures. Northern Nigeria was already the poorest part of the country before the current Boko Haram-led insurgency escalated in the North East. Access to health services, safe water, and sanitation is extremely limited, with less than 40% of health facilities operational in the conflict-stricken region, increasing the risk of malaria, measles, and diarrhoea. Northern Nigeria already had among the lowest level of primary school attendance in the world prior to the conflict, but the numbers of children out of school have continued to increase, particularly in communities that are hosting large numbers of the displaced.

² Personal agency is the ability to make decisions and have autonomy.

³ The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa - strategic orientation document

⁴ IOM Nigeria Displacement Tracking Matrix Round V, August 2015

Overcrowded schools struggle to accommodate the large influx of newcomers or have been closed to be used as IDP camps. In this challenging context, adolescents, who constitute over 22.1% of the population in Nigeria⁵, are of particular humanitarian concern.

2.2.2. *Sector context*

Adolescent girls in displacement settings are at an especially high risk of violence as their social structures and protective systems disappear and they become marginalised and economically isolated.⁶ During conflict and displacement they become more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse; sexual violence; neglected health needs; limited access to education; and have to take on greater roles and responsibilities usually associated with adulthood. In turn, their needs for protection, support, and safe space multiply as they lose those structures and access to support networks. Since the start of 2014, at least 2,000 women and girls have been abducted in North East Nigeria by militants, including 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in April 2014. In July 2015, returning IDPs in Adamawa reported that abduction by armed elements is the greatest threat to their safety and that women and children stay at home out of fear of abduction.⁷ This is particularly challenging given that adolescent girls are typically responsible for fetching water and firewood.

Moreover, the lack of social and human assets, restricted access to resources, limited available services as well as potential barriers created by gatekeepers (i.e. community leaders, parents and husbands) creates an environment that is even more restrictive and threatening to adolescent girls, especially for those in displacement. This is exacerbated by the limited awareness of protection issues amongst communities and local actors. As many as 2.64 million people, the great majority women and girls, are estimated to be affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the region. Even before the upscaling of the current conflict, 30% of women in the North East had experienced SGBV.⁸ Furthermore, access to services for survivors of sexual violence remains extremely limited in both IDP camps and host communities.

Adolescent boys are also vulnerable in North East Nigeria as young men are at once targeted for recruitment by insurgents and military actors/allied forces and then retaliated against by both sides for their perceived allegiance to the opposition. In Adamawa, most of the returning IDPs are women and children because men and adolescent boys are blocked at checkpoints under suspicion of being affiliated to Boko Haram or are forced to remain in displacement.⁹ This context puts boys and young men at high risk of brutalisation and radicalisation, and given their treatment by both sides in the conflict, can often lead to a heightened sense of grievance towards the authorities.¹⁰ Men and boys are also expected to adhere to culturally dominant forms of masculinity, which sanctions violence and dictates that men should be strong and not show emotion.¹¹ Young men are expected to earn money for their families, which has become very challenging in the context of northern Nigeria.

It should be noted that this project is in full conformity with the recently completed joint Government of Nigeria/EU/World Bank/UN Recovery and Peace Building Assessment of

⁵ National Population Commission, Nigeria

⁶ Women's Refugee Commission: I'm Here: Adolescent Girls in Emergencies.

⁷ Joint Government and HCT Humanitarian Assessment in the Northeast in the Context of Return, August 2015

⁸ Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2013.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ See Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) Policy Brief: Understanding the Complex Causes and Processes of Radicalization (2015)

¹¹ See Being a Man in Nigeria: Perceptions and Realities; Voices 4 Change; Nigeria; September, 2015

needs in north-east Nigeria as the baseline for the implementation of a major Strategic Action Plan for the reconstruction of the north-east. The assessment identifies gender issues as a fundamental cross-cutting issue and calls for specific activities relating to the creation of safe spaces, the provision of psychosocial support and empowerment schemes for women and youth. This intervention will form part of the first wave of initiatives in response to the findings of the RPBA.

2.3. Lessons learnt

Globally, Mercy Corps works with girls and their communities to develop culturally appropriate solutions in education, employment, leadership, life skills, civic participation and the protection of basic rights. Its adolescent girl programming focuses on helping girls: 1) stay in school while also improving their learning outcomes; 2) make successful and safe transitions to work; and 3) secure the social and economic assets needed to earn livelihoods and be competent caretakers and providers for their future families and children.

Lessons learned include: 1) influence program design from the start to include and specifically target girls; 2) understand the population of adolescent girls that we want to reach; 3) include activities designed specifically for girls delivered through the safe space platform; and 4) include activities that target girls' gatekeepers (always) and adolescent boys where possible. The action will also benefit from lessons from existing EU MS actions in this area including DFID's £41 M EUR Voices for Change Project. This is all reflected in the I-SING proposal.

One of the key learnings is that if programming is to reach adolescent girls, we need to design for them from the very start of proposal development. It is critical to understand the population of adolescent girls we are trying to reach, to identify their unique needs and circumstances. This includes looking at girls' age, marital status, education status and living situation.

Through its Safe Space platform, Mercy Corps has also learned that the following is critical; 1) It is a space for girls only, 2) Girls are grouped by age and status (i.e., education, marital) 3) The safe space is physically safe, which means that it is in a location where girls are free from harm or harassment en route; they are safe from physical harm within the space; and they meet during a time of day or night that they have identified as safe, 4) The space is emotionally safe, which means that girls are free to express themselves without judgment; they are encouraged by friends and mentors; and they are never subject to disparaging or abusive words, 5) Caring female mentors with high capacity to connect with girls and teach a curriculum, 6) The physical meeting space is consistent.

Mercy Corps' safe space model is tailored to work with 1) girls who are in school, to support them to stay in school and improve their learning outcomes; and 2) out-of-school girls, to give them an opportunity to build life skills and, depending on the program objectives, financial literacy, essential nutrition actions, business skills, livestock training, and/or reproductive health information.

Mercy Corps has tested these strategies in diverse locations and programming, including Niger, Mali, Uganda, Kenya, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Colombia.

Moreover, Mercy Corps will build on its extensive experience in adolescent girls programming in northern Nigeria and the city of Lagos, where they have enrolled 18,000 in-school and out-of-school girls in safe spaces to equip them with the skills and assets needed to

finish school and earn livelihoods. Best practices and lessons learned from this programming will inform I-SING.

Another key lesson learned from Mercy Corps youth programming is that in order to effectively reach and support girls, boys have to be explicitly included and targeted alongside them. This both ensures that the project does no harm, and supports the interventions in support of girls to be more effective (boys are a critical component of the behaviour change the programme seeks to effect). Moreover, adolescent boys are themselves a hugely vulnerable and hitherto largely overlooked target group in North East Nigeria.

I-SING will document and share tools, lessons learned, best practices and challenges so that adolescent girls are better served in humanitarian and emergency settings. These learnings alongside an in-depth technical report will be published and shared with Nigeria's government actors, peer agencies, donors, and Mercy Corps' teams in West, Central and North Africa. Following the programme's end, Mercy Corps Nigeria will host a "Reaching Girls in Humanitarian Settings Summit" for government actors, peer agencies and donors focused on Nigeria.

2.4. Complementary actions

Mercy Corps Nigeria has a strong presence and successful history of partnerships in North East Nigeria. The EU I-SING programme will be closely coordinated with Mercy Corps' ECHO, FFP and OFDA funded humanitarian programmes in Adamawa and Gombe, respectively, which have significant protection and livelihoods cash transfer components targeting adolescent girls among other vulnerable IDP groups. All programmes are working through networks of community volunteers, women's groups and religious and traditional leaders to improve the awareness of SGBV risks and to find ways to both reduce risk and respond to the needs of survivors. All programmes also seek to provide economic assistance through cash grants to marginalised women and adolescent girls, among other vulnerable groups. The I-SING programme will expand upon these interventions both in new target areas in Gombe, Adamawa and southern Borno State.

In southern Borno, Mercy Corps is currently undertaking a rapid needs assessment in the area to assess priority intervention needs using Gombe town as its operational hub. Mercy Corps is also in the process of developing humanitarian funding proposals for both ECHO and USAID FFP to start humanitarian response activities in this area in parallel.

In partnership with the Women's Refugee Commission, Mercy Corps is also engaged in field research that examines how to improve the safety of livelihoods programmes that target internally displaced women, men, adolescent girls and boys in Gombe and Adamawa. This research is providing technical guidance to ensure safer livelihoods interventions that prevent and mitigate associated risks of GBV, and will thus usefully inform the EU I-SING programme on how to best target and design its livelihood interventions for adolescent girls. In collaboration with the Ford Foundation, Mercy Corps is also participating in a study on youth in North East Nigeria and what makes them join extremist groups or makes them vulnerable to forced recruitment, which should provide valuable insights into some of the drivers of conflict in this region and how to protect adolescent girls and boys from being victimized or drawn into the violence.

Synergies will also be actively sought with other EU activities, funded under the EU Trust Fund or the EDF National Indicative Programme with a focus in the same zones.

Finally, the targeted research, initiated under the *Enhancing state and community level conflict management capability in North East Nigeria project*, to address knowledge gaps for

government, security, agencies and civil society organizations managing peace and security initiatives will be used in the framework of the current action in order to ensure that evidence is used to refine project design and implementation.

2.5. Donor co-ordination

Mercy Corps is actively participating in the humanitarian coordination mechanism, the relevant sector working groups and other strategic coordination meetings for North East Nigeria, facilitating coordination and maintaining strong links with other actors. In addition to I-SING proposed activities aligning with the objectives of the EU Trust Fund, the programme also complements current ECHO interventions (providing a package of relief interventions to IDPs and host communities to meet basic needs in terms of cash income, protection and WASH) and US donors including FFP and OFDA (both aimed at enhancing food security for IDPs and host communities as well as supporting economic opportunities, relief commodities and protection). Mercy Corps also regularly connects with UN partners (notably OCHA, UNHCR, UNIFEM and UNICEF) at both Abuja and state level.

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The general objective of the programme is to improve the safety, livelihoods and personal agency of adolescent girls in North East Nigeria.

The specific objectives are threefold:

- OS1: Improve adolescent girls' and boys' life skills, reproductive health knowledge and psychosocial support;
- OS2: Improve adolescent girls' and boys' financial literacy, access to savings and loans and livelihood skills;
- OS3: Provide an enabling and supportive environment for adolescent girls to thrive.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

R1: Adolescent girls and boys, (both IDPs and host community members aged 10 to 19), have improved life skills (i.e., negotiation skills, goal setting), reproductive health knowledge and psychosocial support.

Based on girl mapping, community safety mapping and a situational assessment, the programme will establish 600 safe spaces for 12,000 adolescent girls to learn life skills and reproductive health through tailored curricula, participate in facilitated drama activities to express feelings and issues related to violence, and build friendships with other girls and learn from a mentor. The programme will also directly engage 5,000 adolescent boys through 250 safe spaces where they will also learn life skills and reproductive health through tailored curricula; participate in facilitated activities that address gender roles, harmful masculinities, and issues related to violence; and build friendships with other boys and learn from a mentor. Young women and men will act as mentors in the safe spaces and have the opportunity to develop leadership skills themselves as they become positive role models and support girls and boys. Overall, this intervention aims to improve the lives of girls and boys and contribute to a safe and enabling environment for girls to thrive.

Key Activities:

- A1.1. Use of Girl Roster/eGAIM tools to map demographics and needs of adolescent girls and existing services in target areas;
- A1.2. Identification of safe spaces and enrol 12,000 girls and 5,000 boys into groups
- A1.3. Recruitment/training of 600 young women and 250 young men as safe space mentors along with 120 young female coordinators and 50 young male coordinators.
- A1.4. Development of individual curriculums targeted towards girls/boys that include life skills, reproductive health, psycho-social support, financial literacy.
- A1.5. Distribution vouchers to most vulnerable girls and boys in safe spaces

R2: Adolescent girls and boys, IDPs and host community members aged 10 to 19, have improved financial literacy and access to savings and loans, as well as improved livelihood skills and links to vocational training where appropriate.

To support the economic empowerment of both adolescent girls and boys, the programme will teach financial literacy through the Safe Space groups, tailoring instruction materials to the level of literacy of the girls and boys targeted, and grouping them by age cohort, as well as similar levels of literacy. Mercy Corps’ ENGINE programme has found this approach to be highly effective even for adolescents with very low levels of education, for whom teaching materials for oral transmission developed in the local language can be adapted to use symbols and a tally system that even completely illiterate girls have been able to master and use to produce simple profit/loss business plans. Older adolescents will also have the opportunity to learn about Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) methodology and create their own VSLAs.

The programme will conduct a youth-inclusive market assessment to identify skills in demand, profitable sectors and appropriate apprenticeships or links to vocational training. For the latter, Mercy Corps has already established contacts with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Women’s Affairs vocational training centre in Gombe, and with the Adamawa Peacemakers Initiative (API) vocational training programme for financial literacy and technology in Yola. To support safe livelihoods, older adolescents will participate in livelihood trainings and be matched to apprenticeships (that last at least three months so they can learn a trade) or vocational trainings where appropriate. Small business grants will also be available.

Key Activities:

- A2.1. Development of individual curriculums targeted towards girls/boys for financial literacy.
- A2.2. Training of older adolescent girls/boys in VSLA methodology and VSLA formation allowing adolescents to increase their access to savings and loans (supported technically and logistically by Mercy Corps).
- A2.3. Conduct of youth-inclusive market research to identify skills in demand, profitable sectors, hiring trends and appropriate apprenticeships or links to vocational training.

R3: Community leaders and members—particularly men and boys—including government actors and local service providers an enabling and supportive environment for adolescent girls to thrive.

The programme will collaborate with community and religious leaders, government actors and service providers to provide trainings on protection issues facing adolescent girls (and boys) and the means to reduce risks (i.e. GBV; referral pathways where they exist). They will be supported to conduct behaviour change campaigns in their communities to positively influence social norms and practices around gender equality and GBV, in order to improve the protective environment for girls.

Key Activities:

- A3.1. Recruitment and enrolment of 500 community leaders, government actors and service providers in trainings on protection issues facing adolescent girls (and boys) and the means to reduce risks (i.e., GBV; referral pathways where they exist);
- A3.2. Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on I-SING model.
- A3.3. Development of a technical report outlining lessons learned, best practices and tools and circulate among Nigeria’s government actors, peer agencies and donors
- A3.4. Development of tools to address adolescent girls’ needs in emergency settings;
- A3.5. Organization of a “Reaching Girls in Humanitarian Settings Summit” for government actors, peer agencies and donors focused on Nigeria.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The main risks and assumptions for the success of the project and its implementation include:

- Conflict in the North East does not spiral out of control again to prevent programme implementation. Humanitarian space will not be unduly limited by the GoN and the transition of roles and policies under the new government will not lead to a period of drift and unclear decision making)
- Appropriately skilled national staff can be hired to work in the programme target areas of the North East (or trained where skill gaps exist).
- Adolescents have the desire and ability to participate in I-SING activities. Mercy Corps will mitigate the risk if this is not the case by engaging adolescent peer volunteers of both sexes up front in the design and then throughout the programme.
- Local authorities will cooperate and support the I-SING programme and function as service providers for referrals of girls in need of support from the communities targeted.
- Adolescent boys as well as girls can be safely located, identified and incentivised to participate in the programme

Mitigating measures have been considered, including:

- Build sufficient “non-activity” periods into programme work plan. Work with or through local community based partners and volunteers where possible. Push ahead with the programme in areas that are accessible, even when other locations are out of reach.
- Maintain relations and communication with GoN and follow discreet advocacy approach. Provide information to donors in Abuja (EU, ECHO, others) to carry out front line advocacy on issues like humanitarian access, avoiding forced returns and protection

- Mercy Corps has robust security protocols around travel in the field, which will be strictly applied to minimise the risk of being targeted when traveling in the field. Mercy Corps has developed strong relationships with actors in the field and has a high level of acceptance by communities and local stakeholders. Recruit MCN Security Officer, have strong SOPs in place, train senior staff in security management.
- The use of discreet cash transfer mechanisms and vouchers for livelihoods support activities will considerably reduce risk of looting and theft. Careful monitoring will ensure activities do not proceed while presence of armed groups is a threat.
- Programme design is critical to ensure a 'Do No Harm' approach is understood and adopted. Utilise conflict sensitive design tools to assess impact on the programme and externally. Beneficiary targeting will be transparent, participatory and will include vulnerable members of the host community.
- Vulnerable adolescent boys as well as girls will be included as beneficiaries. SGBV policies will be reviewed throughout the programme, across functions, and at milestones to ensure that the design takes account of each specific context.
- Ensure strong operational and financial procedures are in place, that there is clear separation of duty and that staff are well trained in following procurement procedures. Offer career progression and learning opportunities to staff.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

Gender: Mercy Corps is committed to using a gender equity approach in our work. Analysing and integrating gender takes place throughout the programme cycle, ensuring that programmes identify the distinct roles, needs and opportunities of women, girls, men and boys and design activities to close opportunity gaps.

I-SING seeks to evolve gender norms so they support more equal economic and social opportunities for girls; more equitable relationships between the young men and women; healthier masculinities; and the unacceptance of GBV. Behaviour change campaigns will support more positive gender norms, as well as the influence of religious and community leaders who will participate in I-SING. This will be coupled with the training of 300 young men and 720 young women to act as mentors, coordinators and role models in their communities. The capacity building an ongoing coaching of these 1,020 young people will support all three outcomes of the programme, while also contributing to its sustainability.

Conflict Sensitivity: Mercy Corps ensures a 'Do No Harm' approach is understood and adopted within all programming. I-SING will utilise conflict sensitive design tools to assess impact on the programme and externally. Beneficiary targeting will be transparent, participatory and will include vulnerable members of the host community.

Human Rights: Programme messaging will promote improving girls' personal agency and participation in safe livelihoods, including the rights granted to girls under the constitution and traditional ethical principles related to fairness. This will support the overall objective of improving the safety, livelihoods and personal agency of adolescent girls, as well as the sustainability of impact.

3.5. Stakeholders

Mercy Corps will coordinate programming, prevent overlap and share lessons learned with international NGOs (notably IRC, Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children and ICRC) and local NGOs /CBOs particularly those working

under the umbrella of the API/AUN. They will also regularly connect with UN partners (notably OCHA, UNHCR, UNIFEM and UNICEF) at both Abuja and state levels. At the national level, Mercy Corps will liaise regularly with both NEMA and SEMA (National and State Emergency Management Agencies) to coordinate on protection issues and concerns in programme target areas. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, and LGA-level Department of Social Welfare representatives have already confirmed their interest in working with Mercy Corps to improve community-level protection monitoring and response. Mercy Corps is also a member of the Protection Sector Working Group in Abuja and Gombe and Adamawa. Mercy Corps has a Memorandum of Understanding signed with SEMA in Gombe and is in discussions with SEMA in Adamawa for a similar approach. In addition, ongoing advocacy meetings with the different local and national actors will lead to the signature of MOUs relevant to this action and other interventions that Mercy Corps intends to or is currently implementing.

For maximum effectiveness and impact, the priority focus is on working with and through the existing community structures in the target areas to directly support the selection of beneficiaries and to carry forward programme activities. These community structures include women's groups; religious and traditional leaders; community volunteers and female and male mentors. Working with sister agencies from the Nigeria INGO Forum, local NGOs will be mapped and assessed for future partnering compatibility. They will also be invited to participate in ongoing trainings and assessment work carried out by the Forum or by Mercy Corps itself.

For the anticipated follow-on phase of programming, Mercy Corps intends to go beyond the close cooperation and interaction with local institutions referenced above, and formally partner with local NGOs and CSOs. This will allow increased local accountability and will enable Mercy Corps to directly build local capacity in organisations that will be able them to perpetuate the positive results of the programme.

Mercy Corps has conducted preliminary meetings with programme stakeholders, including community leaders at several LGA levels, SEMA, MoWA and other INGOs such as IRC, NRC and DDG-DRC particularly regarding complementarity and synergy in implementation. All stakeholders have very positive attitudes towards the proposed programme and express willingness to participate and actively support the proposed activities through regular updates, signature of MoUs where pertinent and ongoing collaboration.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country

4.2. Indicative operational implementation period:

The programme will be implemented over a period of 24 months, from the date of adoption on of this Action Fiche.

4.3. Implementation components and modules

(a) Objectives of the grant, fields of intervention, priorities of the year and expected results

The management mode will be direct management in the form of a grant to Mercy Corps in direct award.

(b) Justification of a direct grant

The recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because of the crisis situation in the North East of Nigeria and Mercy Corps specific experience in addressing issues related to adolescent girls and in implementing these kinds of activities worldwide. Mercy Corps has also demonstrated its effective presence and capacity to intervene in North East Nigeria.

The action will be implemented using a participatory methodology at the stakeholder level and a holistic approach to improve the safety, livelihoods and personal agency of adolescent girls. The approach is based on the premise that sustainable change can be achieved for adolescent girls only when communities are engaged at all levels to meet girls’ practical and strategic needs (i.e., evolving gender norms toward equity at the household and community levels). This approach considers communities as a whole and aims to create change through targeted interventions that help strengthen whole communities rather than focusing only on adolescent girls.

In order to ensure sustainability, the training of 500 community leaders, government actors, service providers and local organisations will equip them on knowledge around protection issues facing adolescent girls (and boys) and the means to reduce risks to adolescent girls and boys. One result will be improved referral pathways to health service providers who have improved capacity to work with GBV survivors. I-SING will also support adolescent girls and boys to build their economic assets and financial literacy in order to create safer livelihoods beyond the programme. Older adolescents will also have the opportunity to become apprentices with local businesses and associations or apply for a small entrepreneurial grant to support their own small businesses. Older adolescent girls and boys will also have the knowledge and materials (i.e., savings booklets) to continue the VSLAs beyond I-SING, with the most capable mentors being trained in VSLA methodology so they can teach those in their communities and encourage others to join savings groups outside of I-SING. Finally, I-SING will work closely with government institutions such as NEMA and SEMA (National and State Emergency Management Agencies); the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development; and LGA level Department of Social Welfare representatives to improve internal capacity and policies that seek to prevent and address GBV and protection issues facing adolescent girls and boys.

4.4. Indicative budget

Component	Amount in EUR thousands
Direct Award (Direct Management) with Mercy Corps	3,500,633
Total Cost of Action	3,500,633

The progress of the action will be monitored as follows:

At project start-up, Mercy Corps will design a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan that corresponds to the logical framework of the programme to track indicator progress and achievement, and allow for refinement during the action (building on the existing humanitarian programme M&E system in Gombe). The quality of the M&E will be assured

by clear and accurate roles and responsibilities, by appropriate M&E staff, and team coordination to ensure timeliness within the system.

A baseline study and endline impact evaluation will be conducted. The baseline will be conducted to provide comprehensive benchmarking of the needs of adolescent girls (and boys) in Gombe, Adamawa and (if security permits) southern Borno. The baseline will use both qualitative and quantitative data and results will be used to measure programme progress against indicators throughout the duration of the programme. An endline final impact evaluation will be conducted during the final quarter of the programme to measure final programme achievement.

Particular emphasis will be placed on identifying the specific needs of adolescent girls (using quantitative and qualitative tools). The results of the assessment will be used to adapt programme activities accordingly. All monitoring data will be disaggregated by age and sex, in addition to disability status to track programme accessibility.

Mercy Corps will build on previous experience of monitoring and evaluation of emergency and early recovery programmes to assure that the programme adapts its strategy to respond to actual context-specific needs as well as to demonstrate change in outcomes to which the programme contributes. The monitoring system will include regular site visits, quality checks by the management team and/or technical staff, and community feedback and accountability mechanisms, and will be used to inform periodic management meetings in which the team will review data, identify trends, and propose changes to interventions when necessary.

Dissemination of best practices and lessons learned will be accomplished by publishing and disseminating good practices, successes and challenges of the action via numerous channels, both within Mercy Corps and externally. The Girls in Emergencies Summit will be an opportunity to share with peer organisations, donors and stakeholders in Nigeria.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The Commission may decide to undertake a final evaluation of this action and, if deemed relevant, a mid-term evaluation for one or more of its components. Evaluations will be carried out via independent consultants.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving in the concerned components.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner 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 project.

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 audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of evaluation and audit contracted by the Commission shall be covered by another measure.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU. This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based

on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation and supported with the budget indicated in section 4.4 above. In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements. The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations