ANNEX I

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme 2015 part 2 and 2016 part 1 in favour of Bangladesh to be financed from the general budget of the European Union


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Title/basic act/ CRIS number</th>
<th>Platforms for Dialogue Project – Strengthening Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making and Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh CRIS number: DCI-ASIE/2015/037-700 financed under Development Cooperation Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Zone benefiting from the action/location</td>
<td>Bangladesh - The Action geographical coverage will be 21 districts in all seven divisions of the country (three districts per division).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Programming document</td>
<td>EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020 for Bangladesh</td>
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<td>4. Sector of concentration/thematic area</td>
<td>Priority Sector 1: Strengthening Democratic Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Amounts concerned</td>
<td>Total estimated cost: EUR 13.000.000 Total amount of EU contribution EUR 13.000.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Aid modality(ies) and implementation modality(ies)</td>
<td>Project Modality Indirect Management with the British Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. DAC code(s)</td>
<td>15150 - Democratic participation and civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Markers (from CRIS DAC form) General policy objective</td>
<td>Not targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation development/good governance</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid to environment</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender equality (including Women In Development)</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade Development</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIO Convention markers</td>
<td>Not targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological diversity</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combat desertification</td>
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Summary:

In the four decades since independence, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in extending basic infrastructure, social services and economic opportunities to a population of more than 156 million people. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of the governance system, the high level of centralisation and limited citizens' participation have all posed a major risk to the inclusiveness of Bangladesh's growth and to the consolidation of the democratic process. The country has made significant policy commitments to reverse this trend and to improve the responsiveness and accountability of the State to the citizens. The organised civil society, known worldwide for its vibrancy and engagement, has an important responsibility in the achievement of these goals but requires space and capacity to effectively contribute to and influence policy making. The EU under its Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2014-2020 (MIP, Priority 1 "Strengthening Democratic Governance") will assist the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the organisations of the civil society (CSO) in their mutual efforts to achieve a more inclusive, transparent and accountable system of governance in the country in line with the “Vision 2021” agenda and the 7th Five Years Plan. The policy framework provides opportunities conducive to strategic actions which the Platforms for Dialogue project can catalyse to assist GoB in broadening civil society participation in governance and decision making. The EU Delegation has designed the strategy in close cooperation with the Cabinet Division (CD) Coordination & Reform Unit and civil society actors which are actively engaged in promoting change in the policy and practice environment. The Platform for Dialogue project was designed to support this process.

The overall objective of the Action presented in this Document is to strengthen democratic ownership and accountability mechanisms in Bangladesh. The specific objective of the Action is to promote a more enabling environment for the effective engagement and participation of the citizens and the civil society\(^1\) in decision making and oversight. To achieve this objective, the Action will be organised around three converging Result Areas:

- Result Area 1: "CSOs’ ability to influence government policy and practice raised through better accountability to and more effective representation of citizens’ interests";
- Result Area 2: "Accountability and responsiveness of government officials raised through enhanced capacity building of decision makers and engagement with CSOs";
- Result Area 3: "New tools and policy platforms for more effective dialogue between citizens and government are developed and utilised".

This Action is part of a broader strategy of engagement with the civil society developed by the EU Delegation in the framework of the Council Conclusions “The Roots of Democracy” and CSO Roadmap, and in the context of the EU+ joint programming process.

\(^1\) Recognising civil society in its broadest sense as representing the associational activity of the citizen
1. CONTEXT

1.1 Country context

The proposed Action will contribute to the consolidation of democratic ownership in Bangladesh by fostering more strategic participation of the civil society in decision making and oversight at the central and the local levels. This intervention is coherent with the assumptions made in the MIP that the establishment of efficient and transparent institutions is closely related to citizens’ demand for accountability and with overall commitments to strengthen both the supply and the demand sides of democratic governance.

1.1.1 Public Policy Assessment and EU Policy Framework

In its Vision 2021 and associated Perspective Plan 2010-2021, and in the draft 7th Five Years Plan, Bangladesh sets out to accelerate its economic and social progress over the next decade and to become by 2021 a Middle Income Country (MIC) rooted on democratic and pluralistic institutions, where citizens enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms and public accountability is built on transparency and participation. The GoB recognises that achieving this goal requires working in partnership with a wide spectrum of development institutions, the private sector, the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the people themselves.

The civil society has been very strong in Bangladesh historically. In the last forty years, service delivery and advocacy NGOs have made a major contribution to the development of the country, bringing services to the poorest and influencing policy decisions in important sectors like women’s rights, disaster management, education, all areas where interests were shared. Today service NGOs are still the most prominent expression of the Bangladeshi civil society. However, the civil society is also progressively diversifying to include a variety of organisations, formal and non-formal CSOs, such as representation, advocacy and watchdog CSO, campaigning and citizen groups, the media, professional associations, trade unions. In the graduation towards the MIC status, this diverse and pluralistic civil society, if provided with the necessary space, will play a critical role to ensure that policy making remains pro-poor and supportive of the development and democratic process of the country.

The Constitution of Bangladesh enunciates the fundamental freedoms of civil society (art 37 Freedom of assembly; Art 38 Freedom of association; Art. 39 Freedom of thought, conscience and of speech); legal provisions are in place to regulate CSOs registration and operations, and invited spaces2 exist for CSO consultation in the policy process. Furthermore, the government programmatic framework increasingly refers to the role and responsibility of the CSOs as development, governance and policy actors. The Government has also clearly identified the CSOs as pillars of the national integrity system. The 2012 National Integrity Strategy (NIS)3 fully acknowledges the role of the CSOs in opening spaces for the citizens, in generating demand and exerting pressure for better democratic governance. Under the overall NIS framework, the Government is also fully committed to broadening the right to information and the power to act upon it through the implementation of the 2009 Right to Information (RTI) Act; to ensuring relevance, transparency and accountability of central and local service providers, through citizens’ participation in the definition and monitoring of the second generation of Citizens’ Charters (CC); to setting-up a functioning and user-friendly Grievance Redress System (GRS) allowing the citizens to lodge complaints, to track the action taken in handling such cases and to hold the

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2 Initiated and led by the authorities
3 Following Bangladesh ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2007
concerned ministries and public service providers to account. These accountability mechanisms are also amongst the features introduced by 2009 Local Government Acts, which have incorporated fundamental dimensions of good governance in an effort to strengthen downward democratic accountability aspects and impact of local government on local development. At this level, issue-based CSOs stemming from citizen’s self-organisation (citizens committees, welfare groups, women, youth or press clubs, or labour unions) have shown a high potential to mobilise people in the interaction with the local authorities, creating demand, facilitating people’s access to decision making and accountability mechanisms, and the monitoring of their roll-out.

In spite of this, the reality of the political, policy and practice environment remains a major challenge for the effective engagement of civil society and the CSOs in governance and decision making. To make the situation more complex, a security narrative linking civil society activities to the threat of terrorism has also led the authorities to monitor more closely some sections of the civil society, generating concerns that this may create opportunities to stifle the basic freedoms of the civil society provided for by the law. Amongst the most debated Acts are the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act (2013, amendment), regulating the use of the digital media and the new draft Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act (FDRA, 2014) regulating CSOs receiving foreign funds.

In this context, the EU and the Development Partners have initiated a dialogue with the GoB and the CSOs to support them in the process of strengthening the enabling environment for civil society, in line with constitutional principles and international standards. The Action proposed in this document is part of this important endeavour.

1.1.2 Stakeholder analysis

Main stakeholders can be indicated as follows:

Main Interlocutor and Beneficiary: Cabinet Division (CD) - The CD coordinates the functioning of the Government and its programmes. Its Coordination & Reforms Unit is very forward looking, reform oriented and open to positive changes to the ways the government engages with citizens. The CD is responsible for the implementation of the National Integrity Strategy (NIS), the activation and effective implementation of the Right to Information Act (RTI) and other social accountability mechanisms such as the Citizens’ Charters (CC) Initiative and a functional Grievance Redress System (GRS) linked to a performance management mechanism being monitored by the CD itself. The CD acknowledges the need to engage the CSOs as facilitators in policy implementation and oversight; it has proactively contributed to the definition of the strategy and agreed to this Action Document. Given its functions, the CD is a key interlocutor and the most strategic counterpart on the government side.

Main target groups and direct beneficiary: the citizens and their associations - the civil society and its organisations play a key role as advocates for inclusive and pro-poor policy making, good governance and accountability. If empowered and provided space they can influence policy decisions and ensure sustained change. The Action will engage the general public and specifically the people at risk of marginalisation (indigenous groups, women, young people, the disabled) as well as a broad base of CSOs representing them, such as community based organisations; development, advocacy and watchdog organisations; CSO structures (networks), the media and professional associations both at the grassroots and at the central level.

Target groups/beneficiaries of selected actions:
- Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA) and its training institutes (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy
(BCSAA)): The Ministry is in charge of formulating civil service policies and ensuring capacity development of the civil service. MoPA expressed an interest to work with the EU in the development of capacity building programmes on leadership development and inclusive governance for civil servants and public officials at both central and local level. With a view to fostering institutional sustainability, in the formulation and delivery of these programmes the Action will engage the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA), the two major training agencies under MoPA.

- **Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives** - The Local Government Division of the Ministry is responsible for the management and the strengthening of local government institutions and for the implementation of social, economic and infrastructure development activities. The Ministry emphasised the need to empower the civil society (and the youth in particular) to bring innovation and build more accountability in local governance. Officials from the Ministry and field administrations will be part of the target group.

- **Upazila Parishad/Union Parishad** - The Upazila Parishad (UzP, 486 sub-district council) and the Union Parishad (UP, 4500 union council) are the two lowest tiers of government in rural areas in Bangladesh. They coordinate many aspects of local social and economic development but they need to improve their own capacity to engage in more inclusive and participatory local governance implementing the provisions of the 2009 Local Government Acts. The project will strengthen the capacity of the UP and UZP elected representatives to collaborate with the civil society in building more inclusive and accountable governance at the local level.

- **NGO Affairs Bureau** (NGOAB) - The NGOAB, under the Prime Minister Office, is the regulatory body of foreign funded NGOs and it is an important interlocutor of both the NGOs and Development Partners. The NGOAB oversees the implementation of the NIS by foreign funded CSOs. The Action can therefore be instrumental to foster NGOAB and CSOs dialogue in the operationalisation of the NIS. It is also expected that NGOAB officials will take part to project capacity building and institutional strengthening activities concerning the roll-out of the NIS, RTI, CC and GRS which the NGOAB itself is bound to implement. Opportunities will be identified in consultation with the Cabinet Division, the NGOAB itself and the CSOs to engage the NGOAB as possible throughout the project.

### 1.1.3 Priority areas for support/problem analysis

Two distinct but complementary sets of problems have been identified: one set concerns CSOs capacity to engage with the citizens and the institutions; the other concerns the policy and practice environment, the rules of engagement and the accountability mechanisms linking government institutions, the CSOs and the citizens. These include the following:

**Main problems concerning the civil society/CSOs:**

- The level of understanding among citizens, particularly the most vulnerable groups, including indigenous groups, the women and youth, is very low about their rights, the way to voice and claim them. The language and the tone of the policy discourse and the failure to use appropriately social marketing techniques to engage meaningfully with citizens results in the exclusion of the poor and marginalised, but also the wider society, causing their disengagement from the public policy arena.

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4 The analysis of the problems and of the priority areas for intervention derives from the 2013 Joint EU Political Economy Study, the 2013 CSOs Mapping study and the 2014 EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society, as well as workshops held with GoB and the CSOs in December 2014 and January-February 2015.
Only the elite of the Bangladeshi civil society has access to government invited spaces and is in a position to claim spaces for advocacy and policy influencing. Small or medium sized CSOs mainly engage in voicing functions through networking, campaigning or street rallies. Grassroots level CSOs/CBOs (citizens committees, welfare groups, women, youth, press clubs or workers associations) have a high level of credibility and good potential to mobilise people but there is little capitalisation on their role, even though these constitute avenues for association and collective expression on which governance and policy engagement can be built up.

Client-patron dynamics, scarcity of resources and fears of reprisal (particularly for watchdog and advocacy CSOs) cause fragmentation within the civil society. CSOs lack safe and neutral spaces to form positions, develop coalitions, broaden participation and influencing capacity of the civil society in governance spaces.

CSOs are often challenged by weak internal governance and capacity issues (including the inability to generate and make use of evidence) and they are criticised for paying stronger attention to government and donors' requirements (upward accountability) than to the demands of their constituencies and beneficiaries (downward accountability). This negatively affects CSOs' legitimacy and accountability in the public perception and, in a polarised environment, makes them vulnerable to criticism, political branding and isolation.

Main problems concerning government institutions:

- The rules of engagement between Government and CSOs are not clear and therefore not conducive to ensure transparency and accountability of decision making processes. Consultations are held on an ad-hoc basis upon the decision by the concerned authority, as a result of CSO advocacy efforts or personal contacts. “Invited spaces” for civil society consultations are sometimes distorted by the political environment, elitism and patronage. There is a need for more viable and predictable frameworks structuring government and CSOs relations.

- Inclusion in governance is hindered by political influence, corruption and traditional culture of closed and elite oriented administrative practices, by which civil servants and elected leaders lack capacity and motivation to engage citizens and CSOs. There are questions of trust, particularly towards watchdogs and right-based CSOs.

- Government is still unequipped to ensure effective implementation of existing accountability mechanisms or to track compliance of its own key policies. Specifically, despite the growing number of designated officers who are being appointed by the Government under the NIS and the RTI Act, there are challenges to empower them to effectively discharge their statutory role in line with policy provisions, while citizens’ charters initiatives and grievance redress mechanisms are yet to be made functional, known and accessible by the citizens. CSOs are engaged in generating demand and monitoring the roll out of these policies at the local level but mainly on a pilot basis and with limited opportunity to provide feedback and influence policy development.

- Local government’s response capability is limited due to budget constraints, political influence, client-patron relations and corruption. Inclusive government mechanisms would ensure better accountability, transparency, cost-effectiveness and inclusiveness of local decision making.

2. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Risk level (H/M/L)</th>
<th>Mitigating measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political and institutional Risk: the volatility of the political environment and the innovative nature of the Action may raise some resistance from</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The Action derives from a strong commitment from the Cabinet Division and is embedded in ongoing GoB-EU- Development Partners’ dialogue on democratic governance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Regulatory risk:** tightening of regulations on foreign funding to CSOs may negatively impact on CSOs operational capacity and the implementation of donor funded projects.  

| M/H | 1. Transform any possible blockages in opportunities for dialogue on the enabling environment for the civil society; 2. Delegate the implementation of the project to an EU MS organisation with solid experience in the management of similar actions in the country; |

**Institutional capacity risks related to CSOs:** at the outset of the Action only a few CSOs (with experience of dialogue with decision makers) will have the capacity to engage in governance, influence decision making and policy dialogue.  

| M | At the central level, the Action will engage credible professional CSOs which already participate in decision making processes; at the local level, a modular approach to capacity development will be adopted, ensuring that CSOs are progressively enabled to engage in the policy space and equipped to make a meaningful contribution to policy dialogue. |

**Socio-cultural attitude and corruption as cross-cutting risks:** patron-client relations, polarisation and corruption may pose challenges to the implementation of the Action.  

| M/H | All the actors concerned will be engaged in collaborative networks grounded on agreed accountability standards (neutrality, use of evidence in advocacy, mutual commitment, third party monitoring); |

**Institutional capacity risk related to Government:** Development Partners' projects may create pressure on the Cabinet Division and reduce its absorption capacity.  

| M | Coordination among donors and clear division of labour will be ensured in the framework of this project; in the meantime, the Cabinet Division has already increased its personnel to support the process of implementation. |

**Assumptions:** both GoB and CSOs maintain the same level of interest and support for such type of initiative as shown so far; both GoB and CSOs will be more inclined to collaborate as long as they are given equal space and equal access to the resources mobilised by the Action; the Action creates strong incentives for both government and civil society to work together.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNT, COMPLEMENTARITY AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### 3.1. Lessons learnt

The most important lessons learnt so far in EU development cooperation interventions with GoB and CSOs are: 1. A big portion of the EU development assistance to Bangladesh is provided through service delivery CSOs/NGOs. Only in a small percentage of projects CSOs act as independent policy actors, and an even smaller percentage engage in more sensitive, political issues such as government and accountability. There is a need to broaden support for CSOs that work to keep decision making accountable and democratic spaces open for citizens to interact with the state. 2. Several donor funded local governance projects focus on the strengthening of local government institutions, covering a few Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad and addressing selected development issues linked to specific MDGs. Others only focus on CSOs empowerment. To strengthen democratic ownership, strategies have to engage both government and the CSOs, recognise them as actors in their own standing and contribute to their dialogue through capacity development on both sides; 3. Studies and consultations with CSOs concluded that specific stakeholders groups like women, youth, indigenous people are often targeted as "beneficiaries" of CSO projects rather than engaged as citizens and right holders; in this
intervention these groups will take a leading role in the identification of policy and rights issues of their concern, in the identification of the solution and in the implementation of relevant response strategies. 4. A debate is emerging on the meaning of "civil society" and the accountability relations between the CSOs, their beneficiaries, the government and the private sector; however there have been no spaces to foster this debate; the Action is designed to engage in this discussion a broad base of stakeholders including the civil society; 5. CSO interventions focusing on the activation of inclusive governance mechanisms and social accountability tools provide sporadic experience and ensure only narrow coverage which results in limited impact in terms of policy influencing; there is a need to consolidate the lessons learnt and feed them into the policy cycle.

3.2 Complementarity, synergy and donor coordination

Complementarity and synergy with EU funded projects: By creating demand and strengthening CSOs as actors of governance and development, the project is complementary to: 1. the Union Parishad Governance Project (UPGP) and Upazilla Parishad Governance Project (UZGP) which work to make the local government capable, transparent, efficient and pro-poor 2. The Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh project (AVCBP) which works with both the UP level government and citizens to provide access to justice to the poor. 3. The Access to Land project, which tackles a critical governance and right issue of public concern, where CSOs play a key role in awareness raising and policy advocacy.

The Action is also complementary and synergetic with the EU funded Thematic Programme CSO-LA which will support capacity development for CSOs in governance and accountability mechanisms. Lesson sharing and cross-fertilisation opportunities will be sought between the proposed project and the CSOs beneficiaries of the Thematic Programme. Some of the CSOs implementing EU grants under the Thematic Programme may be exposed to the capacity building activities or participate in the advocacy coalitions that will be established under the Action.

Complementarity and synergy with EU MS/Development Partners projects, including EU added value: the Action will be highly synergetic and complementary to ongoing Development Partners’ initiatives bringing value added at the operational and policy level.

Demand-side initiatives:
- DFID’s Transparency, Accountability and Right to Information project (TARIF): implemented by the British Council (BC), TARIF supports government and civil society initiatives to improve transparency and accountability in business regulation and climate financing. The EU will complement this effort by focusing on transparency and accountability aspects of public governance.
- DFID's Community Legal Services (CLS) project: partially implemented by the British Council, the project has established service quality standards for legal aid NGO. The EU will expand this experience by developing quality standards for both CSOs internal governance and CSO service provision applicable across-sectors.
- British Council's Active Citizens (AC) project: the project trains youth from 54 districts in the skills and knowledge needed to affect social change. The EU may engage the youth trained by the AC project by extending its project activities to some of the 54 AC districts; at the same time it may carry forward the experience by engaging youth in some of the non-beneficiary 10 districts.

Supply-side initiatives:
- DFID-funded World Bank’s technical assistance (TA) to the Cabinet Division and the Information Commission: the project develops supply side compliance with the RTI Act, (i.e. responsiveness to RTI requests and proactive disclosure of information). The EU will mainly focus on the demand
side, engaging the CSO in the activation of the RTI at the grass-roots, from broadening access by the citizens, to the monitoring of its implementation and provision of feedback to the decision makers.

- ADB "E-Solutions" project with the Cabinet Division: the project has designed the software for an online grievance redress system (GRS) and its management. The EU will support the Cabinet Division in the roll out of the system (internal to government where it will be linked to performance management and government accountability), in generating demand amongst the citizens (end-users), and in the monitoring of the implementation of the system by the CSOs.

- The Prime Minister’s Office Access to Information (a2i) Programme, implemented with technical support from UNDP and USAID: the project aims to increase access to services and information by establishing e-service delivery centres in all 4,545 UPs. The Action will build capacities amongst CSOs and communities to access and use these resources to demand transparency and accountability. The EU intervention will enable the CSOs to facilitate citizens’ access to information, to act upon it using existing accountability mechanisms, to monitor the implementation of policy provisions and provide the decision makers with feedback on their effectiveness.

- JICA’s Technical Assistance to the CD in the implementation of NIS Implementation Action Plans at the national level: the EU will complement this initiative (which ends in 2016) by providing NIS related management trainings to government officials at the central and at the local level; by raising officials and citizens’ awareness of the NIS and by operationalizing the NIS in the CSOs sector through the development of quality standards for CSOs internal governance and service provision.

**Added value of EU intervention:**

As suggested above, the added value of the EU intervention lays in its innovative integrated approach whereby both government and civil society actors are engaged under one project framework, in recognition of their specific and complementary mandates; capacity building and institutional strengthening support is delivered to both with a view to influencing both the demand and the supply side of the accountability mechanism. The Action connects all concerned actors through an incremental approach leading to the establishment of much needed collaborative relations between government and CSOs and the opening of spaces for their policy dialogue.

It is also envisaged that this Action will provide feedback to and inform the dialogue on civil society issues that takes place in the Governance Working Group (GWG) of the Local Consultative Group (LCG), a policy dialogue platform between GoB and Development Partners. The GWG (currently chaired by the EU) has recently invited CSOs to become members and has already provided space to jointly discuss the enabling environment for the civil society. This is a positive change which needs to be further strengthened and sustained.

### 3.3 Cross-cutting issues

The intervention integrates the **right-based approach** and as such promotes awareness and exercise of rights and duties on both government and civil society side. The project provides safe spaces and resources to advocate for and raise awareness on rights to freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and public participation as cross cutting issues. **Gender equality and Women Empowerment:** The Action will engage women leaders and women organisations (i.e. women forums) and foster their representation in governance and decision making by creating opportunities for their capacity building, by opening spaces for advocacy, and by increasing their access to accountability mechanisms. The Action will also try to engage at least 50% women in government-related capacity development opportunities. **Good governance and accountability:** the
initiative promotes both the accountability of the actors and of the institutional processes. It challenges patron-clients relations and corruption by publicly mobilising a diversity of civil society and government actors in public forums at the central and the local level around issues of good governance and accountability. **Inclusion and empowerment:** the Action will emphasise the role CSOs can play at the local level to build more inclusive governance. The inclusion of the marginalised groups in the activation and empowerment of the civil society will allow them to move away from the status of "beneficiaries" or "invisibles" and take up the role of actors on their own standing. **Resilience:** the strengthening of communities’ resilience (social, environmental etc.) will be an indirect cross-cutting effect of the empowerment of communities and CSOs to demand transparency, accountability and responsiveness from both the private and public sector.

4. **DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION**

4.1 **Objectives/Results**

The **overall objective** of this initiative is to strengthen democratic ownership and improve accountability mechanisms in Bangladesh.

The **specific objective** is to promote a more enabling environment for the effective engagement and participation of the citizen and civil society in decision making and oversight.

The project intervention is articulated in three key-results areas:

**Result Area 1:** CSOs’ ability to influence government policy and practice raised through better accountability to and more effective representation of citizens’ interests; 

**Result Area 2:** Accountability and responsiveness of government officials raised through enhanced capacity building of decision makers and engagement with CSOs;

**Result Area 3:** New tools and policy platforms for more effective dialogue between citizens and government are developed and utilised.

4.2 **Main Activities**

Overall, the project will work across all 7 divisions and 21 districts to be identified following a strategic assessment of ongoing relevant initiatives, potential synergies and resulting multiplication effects. Implementation will therefore follow a modular approach: during year 1 the project will work in 3 Divisions; following review at the end of year 1, and appropriate revisions to the methodology, in years 2 and 3 the project will be rolled out to a further 4 Divisions (2 each year), to ensure that the approach and methodology are tested in a diverse range of areas for possible universal applicability nationwide.

**Result Area 1:** CSOs’ ability to influence government policy and practice raised through better accountability to and more effective representation of citizens’ interests.

The Action will start with the roll out of wide coverage social marketing campaigns aimed to raise people awareness and knowledge of their rights and to empower them to claim those rights within the society and with the duty bearers. Strong focus will be on the empowerment of the most vulnerable groups like women, youth, and indigenous people amongst others. The Action will engage self-motivated rights-based CSOs in tailor-made training programmes responding to unmet demands for capacity development. Amongst these, CSOs seeking new participation spaces will be assisted to
engage in multi-actor partnerships (MAPs) that may evolve into issue-based coalitions. These will be grounded in a solid rights-based conception. The Action will assist these coalitions in identifying problems and use available channels and tools (integrity committees, right to information act, citizens charters, grievance redress system) to promote locally driven solutions through pilot actions (supported by small funding). The coalitions will be enabled to engage with the decision makers at the appropriate level so as to promote institutional and policy change. Quality standards will be designed to enhance CSOs’ internal governance, the quality of their services and their accountability towards their constituencies and wider communities. By doing so, opportunities will be provided for the CSOs to proactively operationalise the NIS and showcase self-regulation as part of a simplified and more conducive regulatory framework for CSOs; standards will also provide assurance to government in relation to the development of common grounds for engagement under Result Area 3.

Key activities will be rolled out at two levels (Outreach Activities and Pilot Actions) and may include the following:

**Outreach activities with broad coverage:**
1. Social marketing campaigns to raise citizens’ and community leaders’ knowledge of people’s rights and institutions that guarantee those rights; contribute to changing perceptions of attitude towards the role and actions of civil society; and to encourage behavioural change in claiming rights and proactive engagement of the citizens;
2. Strengthening institutional capacity of CSOs, CBOs, community groups and the media on the rights-based approach to development, tools for evidence-based advocacy and policy engagement, as well as use of social accountability mechanisms, such as integrity committees, citizens charters, the RTI and GRS;
3. Development, piloting and roll out of quality standards for CSOs to improve CSOs governance, increase quality of CSO services and accountability to constituencies and beneficiaries;

**Pilot Actions:**
1. Development of issue based Multi Actor Partnerships (MAPs) involving coalitions of CSOs, citizens and other stakeholders around locally owned policy issues and potential solutions; coaching of MAPs on possible tools and mechanisms to support the implementation of MAPs projects;
2. Capacity building to local government officials on inclusive governance, to support their collaboration with CSOs in the implementation of MAPs;
3. Set-up of district-level InfoHubs, namely civil society outreach centres (to be sustained through criteria-based social enterprise development) providing local, neutral, convening spaces for MAPs and wider citizens’ engagement, as a locale for information sharing, capacity building, coordination, and dissemination;
4. Definition and implementation of frameworks for follow up dialogue with government on specific policy issues at the local level (for instance land policy, justice, use of budgetary resources, environment and climate change, nutrition, as relevant …);
5. Scaling up of MAPs advocacy actions into platforms for policy dialogue at the higher level;

**Result Area 2:** Accountability and responsiveness of government officials raised through enhanced capacity building of decision makers and engagement with CSOs

The Action will build the capacity of government officials at different levels to manage processes and systems with high standards of transparency and accountability. Capacity building will include mechanisms and practical pathways to effectively achieve integrity and responsiveness of government
by ensuring inclusive (by way of CSOs’ engagement) and accountable (by way of making NIS, RTI, CC and GRS functional) governance in Bangladesh. Capacity building will be delivered through the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and the Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA) so as to reach out to a broad number of target groups, ensure greater government’s ownership and sustainability of results. Experience sharing, relation building and networking between GoB officials and EU/EU MS officials on a peer-to-peer level will provide opportunities for mutual learning and pave the way to GoB-EU high level dialogue in the field of democratic governance (contributing to Result Area 3).

Key activities may include the following:
2.1 Training of senior civil servants (Deputy Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, and Secretaries) in consultation, facilitation and management techniques (identification of stakeholders, diversity management, consensus building, management of disputes, transparency and accountability of process);
2.2 Capacity building of senior civil servants in performance management for accountable governance, (with a focus on coordination, policy analysis, change management, management of development dynamics, understanding global perspective, strategic planning) linking staff performance and organization’s performance;
2.3 Continuous professional development on leadership and inclusive governance for key national and local government stakeholders (i.e. Members of Parliament, Upazila chairman, key administrators at district and upazila levels), as well as CSOs and other local non-state actors (e.g. local business representatives).
2.4. Capacity building to government officials on the implementation of the NIS, RTI, Citizen’s Charters and GRS (linked to Result Area 3);
2.5 Capacity building of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and the Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA) to support the institutionalisation of training delivery in agreed areas;
2.6 Capacity building of government officials in communication strategies that positively shape public opinion and experience, using social marketing techniques.

Result Area 3: New tools and policy platforms for more effective dialogue between citizens and government are developed and utilised.

The Action will assist the Cabinet Division in the strengthening of core systems and processes related to the roll out of the NIS. The focus will be on assisting the Cabinet Division to improve sector-specific citizens’ charters and making them functional, drawing from contributions from the civil society. Under Result Area 3, the Action will also assist the Cabinet Division in operationalising a user-friendly web-based Grievance Redress System enabling the citizens to lodge complaints online and to track the actions taken. The CSOs engaged in the project under Result Area 1 will have a strong role in raising awareness, generating demand and facilitating access to these mechanisms thus assisting the Government in their roll-out. The Action will convene relevant CSOs at the national level to review and provide constructive feedback on the implementation of these mechanisms. Common grounds for engagement and a compact for CSO-Government dialogue will be designed, laying the foundations for a more level playing field for CSO engagement in relevant sectors of policy dialogue.

Key activities will include the following:
3.1 Support to the finalisation and implementation of citizens’ charters in ministries, divisions, departments, agencies and local level providers following a participatory approach (engagement of CSOs and citizens).
3.2 Support to the operationalisation of the online GRS system\(^5\), including tracking and monitoring performances of the ministries on implementing GRS;
3.3 Set-up third party monitoring system for NIS, RTI, CC and GRS implementation, progress and performance, with clearly articulated and shared definition of forms of engagement between GoB and CSOs;
3.4 Developing and finalizing a Compact or Policy Dialogue Framework for CSOs engagement in agreed policy spaces;
3.5 Development and institutionalisation of Government-CSO policy dialogue platform(s)

### 4.3 Intervention logic

The intervention logic has been designed taking into consideration the outcomes of preliminary work carried out by the EU Delegation with the launch of a CSO Mapping Study, the CSO Roadmap process, the workshops and the consultations held with GoB and CSOs organised in the framework of the project identification and formulation missions between January and July 2015.

The overall approach is to engage both government and civil society emphasising mutual responsibilities and complementarity of mandates and build respective capacity to engage in more inclusive governance processes before opening spaces for the two interlocutors to interact at the policy level. The Action connects the local level to the national level enhancing links between CSOs, increasing their engagement with local and national government and the range of methodologies that they use to both understand and document the environments in which they work.

The Action strengthens the accountability of CSOs to the communities and their beneficiaries whose voices they can enable to be more appropriately represented. The Action also builds an approach which provides the Government with assurance of good practice of CSOs in their work. Conversely, it creates opportunities for the citizens and CSOs to access government mechanisms which promote transparency and accountability to the citizen and the exercise of their rights of redress.

Finally, interventions build a core understanding between government (at both local and national level) and civil society of the ways in which contributions from civil society to the policy and decision-making processes can be formalised (level playing field). The Action will deliver a compact for engagement on CSO-government relations applicable to policy making across sectors and set the parameters for a future wider, more active, transparent and accountable engagement.

The Action acknowledges the importance of knowledge and attitudes as drivers for engagement and action. Interventions will need to build the capacity of all stakeholders in managing the perceptions of their interlocutors as a trigger for changing behaviours.

A key emphasis of the project is on building the capacity of CSOs and Government so that these skills go beyond the lifetime of this project. The interventions will be fully documented, evaluated and reviewed, to provide a clear route map and framework for future interventions.

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\(^5\) It has been clarified with the Cabinet Division that under no circumstances will the EU be expected to work on software development.
5. Implementation

5.1 Financing agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country, referred to in Article 184(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

5.2 Indicative implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this Action, during which the activities described in section 4.1 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 48 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission’s authorising officer responsible by amending this decision and the relevant contracts and agreements; such amendments to this decision constitute technical amendments in the sense of point (i) of Article 2(3)(c) to Regulation (EU) No 566/2014.

5.3 Implementation Modalities

5.3.1 Indirect management with a Member State agency

This Action may be implemented in indirect management (delegation agreement) with the British Council in accordance with Article 58(1)(c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012. This implementation entails capacity building to empower citizens and CSOs to interact with the decision makers at the central and the local level; developing standards for CSOs that enhance their governance, the quality of their services and their accountability to the beneficiaries; provide capacity building to government institutions, civil servants, elected leaders and the CSOs to operationalise the National Integrity Strategy, the Right to Information Act, Citizens Charters and Grievance Redress System with participatory approach; develop common rule for engagement between government and CSOs for CSOs’ participation in policy dialogue; achieving effective, strategic platforms for dialogue, informed by evidence derived from practice.

This implementation modality is justified because the British Council is considered to have the required experience and capacity to strengthen governance and the civil society in Bangladesh. The British Council currently engages with civil society across a broad range of nationwide programmes. The EU intervention will largely benefit from the British Council's Active Citizens' programme which provides wide access and networks to local civil society and stakeholders at the government level across 54 out of 64 districts in the country. The British Council is an implementing partner on the DFID-funded Community Legal Services (CLS) programme, with responsibility for capacity-building and developing quality ‘operational’ standards and leads on the delivery of the DFID-funded TARIF (Transparency, Accountability, and Right to Information Fund) programme, which supports a coherent set of government and civil society initiatives to improve transparency and accountability in targeted thematic areas. Through the above programmes but also a long-standing presence in country (with offices in Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong) and its in-house Civil Society team, the British Council has established very good relationships and networks at all levels, whether at grassroots or government (e.g. Cabinet Division) level, and gained trust and engagement of stakeholders to ensure the necessary buy-in and support. It also has extensive experience in project start up and implementation.
The entrusted entity will carry out the following budget implementation tasks, notably: conducting procurement, awarding grant contracts, managing the resulting contracts and carrying out payments to contractors and beneficiaries.

5.4 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.

The Commission’s authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

5.5 Indicative budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation modality</th>
<th>EU contribution (amount in EUR)</th>
<th>Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 - Indirect Management with British Council (Delegation Agreement)</td>
<td>12 650 000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 – Evaluation, 5.9 - Audit</td>
<td>150 000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 – Communication and visibility</td>
<td>200 000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Euro</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 000 000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 Organization Set up and Responsibilities

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be set-up by the implementing partner, the British Council, to oversee project coordination and implementation among ministries and divisions. It will provide overall strategic guidance, policy guidelines, assess aspects of project progress against targeted results for government-related aspects. The PSC will meet at least once a year. Ad hoc meetings will be organised whenever necessary. The PSC will be chaired by the Cabinet Division and co-chaired by the EU represented by the EU Delegation. The PSC membership will include the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance and officials from line Ministries and government bodies that will be involved in the implementation of the Action. Some CSO representatives and other relevant stakeholders may also participate as members. The membership will be defined in detail during the project inception phase.

A Supervisory Management Board (SMB) chaired by EU and comprising of representatives from GoB, CSOs and the implementing partner (British Council) will be set up to provide the overall strategic guidance for the project in order to guarantee overall coherence. The SMB will cross-check all deliverables to ensure consistency at the different implementation levels – central and local. The SMB should ideally meet every four months. The SMB will be informed about project proceedings and milestones to ensure that innovative approaches are adopted and fed into the policy dialogue. The EU will retain an active participation and engagement in the project management in line with the policy dialogue process.

The British Council will establish a separate project office in Dhaka which will be light touch, with clear roles and oversight mechanisms. It will consist of a mix of core positions (full time) and key
advisory positions (part time), with significant Bangladesh and/or Civil Society/Government capacity-building experience. The British Council will establish an internal Quality Assurance Group (QAG) with the purpose of reviewing and ensuring balanced collaboration between civil society and government participants and other diverse stakeholders involved in delivering the three results areas.

5.7 Performance Monitoring and Reporting
The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this Action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner’s responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the Action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the Action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) or the list of result indicators (for budget support). The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the Action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the Action implementation.

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).

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

The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 2 months in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports 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.

Indicatively, one service contract for evaluation services shall be concluded at the end of the implementation period.

5.9 Audit
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. Indicatively, one contract for audit services shall be concluded at the end of the implementation period.
5.10 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 5.5 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.

The Action has allocated an indicative budget of EUR 200 000 (section 5.5 above) for communication and visibility activities to be implemented in direct management through one service contract, tentatively in the first quarter of the first year of implementation.