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Gender and Social Inclusion Guidelines

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Abstract	The Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Guidelines for GROW set out a pragmatic, policy-aligned framework to ensure equitable access to construction-waste remediation and recycling TVET across Sub-Saharan Africa including a minimum target of 30% female participation.
Keywords	Inclusion, women, girls, gender, construction, Africa, EU, Erasmus+

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SEN	Classified, information as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	
CLASSIFIED R-EU / EU-R	EU RESTRICTED under the Commission Decision No2015/ 444	
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* **R:** Document, report (excluding the periodic and final reports)
DEM: Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs
DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.
DATA: Data sets, microdata, etc.
DMP: Data management plan
ETHICS: Deliverables related to ethics issues
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OTHER: Software, technical diagram, etc.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapid growth of the construction sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, alongside rising construction and demolition waste (CDW), presents both an environmental imperative and a strategic opportunity for green jobs creation. However, women and socially marginalised groups remain significantly underrepresented in construction-related vocational pathways, constraining inclusive growth and limiting the sector's full potential. Within this context, Deliverable D1.2 – the Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Guidelines, directly contributes to the overarching objective of the GROW project to strengthen inclusive, market-relevant TVET systems for a greener construction sector.

The Guidelines were developed through a targeted review of national gender and inclusion frameworks in Nigeria and Mozambique, confirming that meaningful inclusion must be systematically embedded across programme design, delivery, and monitoring. In response, the document operationalises a minimum target of approximately 30% female participation and establishes practical mechanisms to ensure that GESI principles inform the development and rollout of GROW's pilot training programmes in construction waste remediation and recycling.

Designed for integration across all Work Packages (notably T1.4 Programme Social & Gender Inclusion and T3.1 Virtual Learning & Gender, Social Inclusiveness in TVET programmes), the Guidelines provide operational checklists, performance indicators, and reporting templates that enable consortium partners to translate commitments into measurable action. These tools will directly shape trainee selection processes, curriculum delivery approaches, learning environments, and partner engagement strategies, while supporting consistent monitoring of inclusion outcomes across project countries.

The Guidelines conclude that aligning TVET implementation with national GESI policies, supported by clear accountability and performance tracking mechanisms, not only advances equity but also enhances the relevance, quality, and sustainability of training systems. They recommend sustained institutional commitment, capacity strengthening of TVET providers, and the mainstreaming of inclusive practices within partner organisations. In the long term, this approach is expected to influence institutional policies and practices beyond the project lifecycle, contributing to more inclusive TVET ecosystems and ensuring that the green transition in construction generates accessible and decent employment opportunities for underrepresented groups.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDW	Construction and Demolition Waste
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
GROW	Construction Waste Remediation & Recycling Vocational Training in Sub-Saharan Africa
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Guidelines to be applied throughout the GROW project. It defines core principles, targets, operational measures, roles, monitoring indicators and resources required to ensure women, NEET youth and other marginalised groups can access and benefit from training, internships and entrepreneurship support in CDW management in Nigeria and Mozambique.

These Guidelines constitute a set of minimum mandatory operational standards for all consortium partners, particularly in relation to agreed participation targets, inclusive delivery practices, and monitoring and reporting requirements. In addition, they provide a framework of recommended good practices to support partners in going beyond minimum compliance and strengthening institutional approaches to gender equality and social inclusion.

Contextual and EU relevance

GROW aligns closely with national policy frameworks in Nigeria and Mozambique, as well as with European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) priorities on gender equality and inclusive economic development. The GESI Guidelines are designed to operationalise these frameworks by embedding gender-responsive approaches across recruitment, curriculum design, training delivery, and stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

In Nigeria, gender inclusion in employment and skills development is guided by the National Gender Policy (2021–2026) and the ILO-supported National World of Work Gender Policy, which promote equality, non-discrimination, and women's economic empowerment. In Mozambique, gender equality is constitutionally guaranteed and further operationalised through the Revised National Gender Policy and the Gender Strategy for Public Administration. Collectively, these frameworks provide a strong policy mandate for integrating gender-responsive approaches within TVET systems and increasing women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as construction (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021¹; International Labour Organization, 2021²; Republic of Mozambique, 2004³; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, 2018⁴; Government of Mozambique, 2020⁵).

At EU level, the GROW GESI approach is fully aligned with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy (2020–2025)⁶ and the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III)⁷, both of which prioritise women's economic empowerment, equal access to skills, and participation in the labour market. In addition, the Guidelines directly support the Erasmus+ horizontal priority on Inclusion and Diversity, which requires projects—particularly under Capacity Building in VET (CB-VET)—to ensure equitable access, participation, and outcomes for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. By embedding a minimum target of 30% female participation and integrating inclusive delivery mechanisms, GROW contributes to these contractual expectations by translating inclusion commitments into measurable and reportable actions within the project framework.

Furthermore, EU policy frameworks emphasise the systematic mainstreaming of gender across externally funded programmes, including the use of sex-disaggregated data, removal of structural

barriers, and targeted measures to open non-traditional sectors to women. GROW operationalises these principles through its GESI toolbox, including inclusive recruitment strategies, gender-sensitive

¹ Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, National Gender Policy (2021–2026).

² International Labour Organization, Nigeria National World of Work Gender Policy.

³ Republic of Mozambique, Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique.

⁴ Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, Revised National Gender Policy.

⁵ Government of Mozambique, Gender Strategy for Public Administration (2020–2024).

⁶ European Commission. Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

⁷ European External Action Service. EU Gender Equality Action Plan III (GAP III) — 2021–2025. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/gender-action-plan-iii-its-key-areas-eu-engagement_en



pedagogy, targeted support measures (such as flexible learning arrangements and childcare considerations), and structured employer engagement through internships and mentoring.

By aligning its GESI framework with national policies, EU gender strategies, and Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity priorities, GROW strengthens its compliance with programme requirements while enhancing its contribution to inclusive green growth. This integrated approach supports not only the effective delivery of pilot training programmes but also the longer-term institutionalisation of inclusive practices within partner organisations, contributing to more resilient and equitable TVET ecosystems beyond the project lifecycle.

2.OBJECTIVES

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Mainstream gender equality and social inclusion across all GROW activities, ensuring systematic integration throughout project design, delivery, and monitoring, and reflected in project KPIs related to participation, completion, and beneficiary satisfaction.
- Increase equitable participation of women, NEET youth, and other underrepresented groups in TVET programmes, including achieving and monitoring the project's minimum target of 30% female participation, alongside disaggregated data on enrolment, retention, and completion rates.
- Identify and reduce structural and practical barriers to access, retention, and completion in vocational education and training, with progress tracked through indicators such as dropout rates, participation of marginalised groups, and uptake of targeted support measures.
- Support inclusive green job creation by facilitating access to skills development, internships, and entrepreneurship opportunities in the circular construction economy, measured through indicators on job placement, internship participation, and post-training employment outcomes.
- Provide consortium partners with practical, operational guidance to implement, monitor, and report on inclusive practices, ensuring alignment with Erasmus+ reporting requirements through the use of standardised indicators, periodic progress reporting, and evidence-based documentation of results.

These guidelines aim to:

- Support long-term gender-sensitive TVET reforms
- Promote inclusive green job pathways
- Enable replication of inclusive training models beyond the project
- Strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming.

3. TARGETS AND QUOTAS

GROW prioritises inclusion of the following groups:

- Women
- Unemployed youth (NEETs)
- Informal construction workers
- Persons from low-income or marginalised communities
- Individuals with limited access to education or digital tools

A minimum of 30% female participation is targeted across training, capacity-building, and pilot activities (T1.4, T3.1, T3.4, T4.2, T4.3, and T4.4).

Globally, female participation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) remains uneven: UNESCO-UNEVOC reported that women make up only about 43% of students in upper-secondary vocational programmes, and they are significantly underrepresented in technical, engineering and construction streams (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2021⁸). This gender gap in TVET translates directly into fewer women qualifying for skilled trades and green construction roles, constraining both their employment prospects and the talent pool needed for circular-economy growth. For GROW, this underlines the programmatic necessity of targeted outreach, quotas and industry partnerships to shift enrolment patterns and open credible career pathways for women.

In many low- and middle-income contexts the mismatch between TVET supply and labour-market demand compounds the gender problem: recent joint analysis by the World Bank, UNESCO and the ILO highlights that TVET systems frequently fail to attract and retain women in higher-value technical streams and that reforms must combine demand-led curricula with active measures to increase female participation (World Bank, UNESCO & ILO, 2023⁹). These findings justify GROW's dual emphasis on (a) demand-driven curricula and employer engagement in construction waste management, and (b) gender-responsive incentives (stipends, flexible timetables, mentorship) to convert enrolment into completion and decent employment for women graduates.

⁸ UNESCO-UNEVOC. (2021). Biennial report / TVET and gender participation (upper secondary vocational enrolment figure). https://unevoc.unesco.org/pub/Biennial_report_2020-2021.pdf

⁹ The World Bank, UNESCO & ILO. (2023). Building Better Formal TVET Systems: Principles and Practice in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099071023170038531/pdf/P1755661f4d04f421eb1f14f0418c9f11f7905051f48.pdf>

4. KEY PRINCIPLES

All partners shall apply the following principles:

1. Gender Equality

- Equal access to training, resources, and leadership opportunities
- Promotion of women's participation in non-traditional roles in construction
- Gender-sensitive content and delivery methods

1. Non-Discrimination

- Zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status
- Transparent and fair participant selection processes

2. Accessibility

- Use of inclusive language and communication
- Flexible training schedules where possible
- Blended learning approaches to accommodate different needs

3. Participation and Empowerment

- Active involvement of beneficiaries in learning and decision-making
- Encouragement of women's leadership and entrepreneurship
- Safe and respectful learning environments

5. GENDER AND INCLUSION MEASURES BY WORK PACKAGE

1. Project Management and Governance (WP1)

- Gender-balanced representation in project meetings where possible
- Inclusion considerations integrated into planning and decision-making.
- Appointment of a gender and inclusion focal point (where feasible).

2. Skills Needs Assessment (WP2)

- Collection of sex-disaggregated data
- Identification of gender-specific barriers in construction and waste management
- Consultation with women-led organisations and community groups

3. Capacity Building for Trainers and Managers (WP3)

- Gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches
- Training on inclusive teaching methods
- Encouragement of female trainers and managers to participate

4. Pilot Training Programme (WP4)

- Targeted outreach to women and vulnerable youth
- Inclusion of role models and success stories
- Support for women's participation in work-based learning

5. Dissemination and Communication (WP5)

- Balanced visual representation of women and men
- Gender-inclusive language in all materials
- Dissemination materials available in English and Portuguese

6. PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

All partners commit to:

- Providing a safe and respectful environment
- Preventing harassment, exploitation, and abuse
- Establishing clear reporting and response mechanisms
- Ensuring confidentiality and protection for complainants

Any reported cases will be handled according to institutional and national regulations.

7. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND KPIS

Gender and social inclusion will be monitored through:

- Sex-disaggregated participation data per cohort
- Inclusion indicators in project reporting annually
- Feedback from beneficiaries at intervals
- Periodic internal reviews by the coordination team on a quarterly basis

To operationalise the above commitments, GROW will monitor the following gender indicators:

- ≥30% female participation across all training and WBL cohorts (minimum compliance threshold).
- ≥40% female participation in internships and LAWMA Academy placements where feasible.
- Retention rate of female trainees equal to or higher than male trainees.
- Number and proportion of women trainers, mentors, and assessors involved in programme delivery.
- Post-training outcomes, disaggregated by sex (employment, self-employment, further training).
- Gender-responsive learning environment indicators, including availability of mentorship, flexible scheduling, and safeguarding mechanisms

These indicators directly respond to Erasmus+ requirements on gender equality, inclusion, and evidence-based impact monitoring

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Project Coordinator:** Provides overall oversight of GESI implementation, ensures compliance with Erasmus+ requirements, and monitors progress against agreed inclusion targets and indicators
- **GESI Focal Point (Project Level):** Coordinates implementation across Work Packages, ensures consistency of approach, supports partners, and consolidates GESI monitoring and reporting
- **Work Package (WP) Leaders:** Integrate gender equality and social inclusion into planning, delivery, and monitoring of activities, and report on progress against defined indicators
- **All Consortium Partners:** Apply the GESI Guidelines in implementation, including inclusive recruitment, training delivery, and data collection, and contribute to periodic reporting.

9. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AND BEST PRACTICES

As the consortium lead for the GESI deliverable, AREA demonstrates a strong and credible institutional commitment to gender equality that is fully aligned with Erasmus+ gender-mainstreaming principles. AREA implements the Ruralities smallholder farmers project across rural communities in Europe and 20 African countries, with an overwhelmingly female-beneficiary target, reflecting an intentional organisational strategy to promote women's empowerment and equitable employment within traditionally male-dominated sectors.

AREA's combination of formal policy commitments and demonstrated organisational practice positions it as the most appropriate partner to lead the gender drive underpinning GROW's objectives, including the project's minimum 30% female participation target and its broader GESI requirements. Importantly, this leadership is reinforced across the consortium. In Nigeria, the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) operates the LAWMA Academy, which delivers structured internship and mentorship programmes and has shown strong outcomes in attracting young women, with female interns frequently dominating cohort intakes (LAWMA, 2024¹⁰). In Mozambique, Universidade Zambeze (UniZAM) contributes complementary capacity through circular-economy, entrepreneurship, and incubation initiatives that explicitly prioritise women and youth, providing pathways from training into employment and self-employment (UniZAM, 2023¹¹).

Collectively, these institutional strengths ensure that gender promotion in employment under GROW is not aspirational but operational, measurable, and scalable across partner countries.

¹⁰ Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), LAWMA Academy internship and mentorship programmes, as described in the GROW project proposal (Erasmus+ CB-VET), 2024.

¹¹ Universidade Zambeze (UniZAM), Circular economy, entrepreneurship, and incubation initiatives targeting women and youth, as described in the GROW project proposal (Erasmus+ CB-VET), 2023

10. COMPLIANCE NARRATIVE

To ensure that gender equality and social inclusion commitments under GROW are implemented in a systematic, measurable and accountable manner, the consortium has developed an **Operational GESI Compliance and Performance Checklist (Appendix A)**. This tool translates the policy commitments articulated in Deliverable D1.2 into concrete institutional actions, verifiable indicators and evidence requirements aligned with Erasmus+ results-based management principles and the programme's Inclusion and Diversity priority.

The checklist serves as both a quality assurance instrument and a risk mitigation mechanism to be integrated into project work packages. It enables partner institutions to integrate GESI considerations across the full training cycle—from outreach and recruitment to delivery, retention and transition to employment—while generating sex-disaggregated data and documentation required for performance monitoring and EU reporting. By linking each operational requirement to defined outputs, outcomes and impact indicators, the framework ensures that inclusion targets (notably the minimum 30% participation of women) are not aspirational but monitored, justified and, where necessary, corrected through documented mitigation measures.

Importantly, the checklist strengthens institutional accountability beyond project compliance. It embeds inclusive governance structures, safe learning environments, equitable recruitment practices and labour market engagement mechanisms into partner systems, thereby contributing to sustainability and scalability of results beyond the project lifecycle. Through this structured approach, GROW ensures that its gender drive is operationalised, evidenced and aligned with European Union standards for transparency, performance and long-term impact.



11. CONCLUSIONS

The GROW Gender and Social Inclusion Guidelines provide a shared commitment and practical framework to ensure that project activities are equitable, inclusive, and impactful. By embedding gender equality and social inclusion across all stages of implementation, GROW contributes to fairer access to skills, decent work, and sustainable development in Nigeria and Mozambique.



12. APPENDIX A

Operational GESI Compliance and Performance Checklist

This operational checklist serves as a **results-based implementation and verification tool** to ensure that Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) commitments under GROW are systematically integrated, monitored and reported across relevant Work Packages, particularly:

- WP1 – Programme Social & Gender Inclusion (T1.4)
- WP3 – Virtual Learning & Gender, Social Inclusiveness in TVET Programmes (T3.1)
- WP4 – Students Recruitment (T4.2), Pilot Training Programme (T4.3) and On-the-Job Experience (T4.4).

The checklist translates D1.2 policy commitments into **measurable outputs, outcome indicators and evidence requirements**, consistent with Erasmus+ principles of:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Quality assurance
- Impact measurement
- Sustainability and scalability

It features performance indicators and reporting templates so consortium partners can track progress, demonstrate impact, and scale successful approaches.

TABLE 1 - RESULTS FRAMEWORK ALIGNMENT

Erasmus+ Level	GESI Operational Focus
Output	Gender-responsive recruitment, inclusive learning environments, institutional safeguards
Outcome	Increased participation, retention and completion of women and underrepresented groups in green construction TVET
Impact	Improved access to decent employment opportunities in the green economy
Horizontal Priority	Inclusion and Diversity

1. Operational Compliance Checklist (completed checklists to be consolidated by WP3 Lead and submitted on a quarterly basis.)

TABLE 2 - INSTITUTIONAL READINESS (PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE)

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Output Indicator	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action (if unmet)
☐	Institutional Gender Focal Point formally designated	Governance structure supports inclusion priority	Appointment letter	TVET Lead / Partner Director	Formal designation issued
☐	≥30% female participation target integrated in project planning	Inclusion target reflected in WP planning	Approved work plan	Project Coordinator	Revise cohort targets
☐	Safeguarding / anti-harassment policy in place	Safe and inclusive learning environment ensured	Policy + induction materials	HR / Admin	Policy adopted & disseminated
☐	Trainers oriented on inclusive pedagogy	Staff capacity strengthened	Attendance sheet	WP3 Lead	Conduct refresher session

TABLE 3 - INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT & OUTREACH

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Outcome Indicator	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action
☐	Targeted outreach to women and marginalised groups conducted	Improved equitable access to training	Outreach materials, photos	Communications Lead	Additional outreach round
☐	Gender-neutral selection criteria applied	Fair selection process ensured	Selection matrix	Selection Panel	Revise criteria
☐	Sex-disaggregated data collected at application stage	Monitoring framework operational	Application database	M&E Officer	Update forms
☐	≥30% women shortlisted per cohort	Participation target met	Shortlist register	Project Coordinator	Implement affirmative adjustment

TABLE 4 - INCLUSIVE TRAINING DELIVERY (IMPLEMENTATION PHASE)

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Indicator	Output	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action
☐	Facilities safe and accessible	Quality learning environment ensured		Site inspection checklist	Operations	Upgrade facilities
☐	PPE available in inclusive sizing	Equal access to practical training		Procurement records	Logistics	Additional procurement
☐	Virtual materials accessible and inclusive	Digital inclusion ensured		LMS screenshots	WP3 Lead	Content revision
☐	Confidential grievance mechanism active	Learner protection assured		Grievance log	Programme Lead	Activate reporting system

TABLE 5 - RETENTION & COMPLETION MONITORING

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Outcome Indicator	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action
☐	Attendance monitored by sex	Retention tracked	Attendance sheets	M&E – WP3 Lead	Early intervention
☐	Drop-out analysis conducted quarterly	Risk mitigation operational	Quarterly report	M&E – WP3 Lead	Targeted support plan
☐	Mentorship / peer-support system in place	Completion rates strengthened	Mentor assignment list	Training Manager	Assign additional mentors

TABLE 6 - TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT (SUSTAINABILITY & IMPACT PHASE)

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Indicator	Impact	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action
☐	Industry partners sensitised on gender inclusion	Inclusive labour market engagement		Meeting minutes	WP Lead	Sensitisation workshop – E5.2, E5.3/E.1
☐	WBL placements monitored by sex	Equal access to employment pathways		Placement register	Employer Liaison	Rebalance placements
☐	Post-training employment tracked (sex-disaggregated)	Employment outcome evidence generated		Tracer study	M&E	Conduct follow-up survey

TABLE 7 - REPORTING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

✓	Requirement	Erasmus+ Monitoring Link	Evidence Source	Responsible Entity	Corrective Action
☐	GESI indicators integrated into WP quarterly reports	Results-based reporting ensured	WP reports	WP Leads	Revise reporting template
☐	≥30% participation achieved or justified with mitigation plan	Performance target verified	Cohort summary	Project Coordinator	Implement corrective outreach
☐	Lessons learned documented and shared consortium-wide	Knowledge transfer and scalability ensured	Knowledge brief	Communications Lead	Produce learning note

2. Performance Verification & Accountability

Each partner institution shall:

- Complete this checklist prior to each cohort launch.
- Update progress quarterly.
- Submit verification documentation to WP1 Lead.
- Integrate GESI findings into internal quality assurance systems. Failure to meet inclusion benchmarks must be accompanied by a **documented corrective action plan**, consistent with Erasmus+ quality assurance principles.

3. Sustainability and Scalability Considerations

To ensure long-term impact beyond project duration, partners shall:

- Institutionalise gender targets within standard TVET admissions policy
- Maintain sex-disaggregated data systems
- Retain inclusive learning adaptations
- Strengthen partnerships with inclusive employers
- Integrate lessons learned into future EU-funded proposals

Appendix Status

This Appendix forms an integral part of Deliverable D1.2 and supports measurable implementation of GROW's commitment to equitable access, inclusion and gender-responsive green skills development.