



## **COMMUNITY FORUM**

### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

#### **FOR**

#### **GENDER, YOUTH, HEALTH, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**(2020-2025)**

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## ii. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ART	: Antiretroviral Therapy
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
MGDS	: Malawi Growth Development Strategy
UN	: United Nations
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COFO	: Community Forum
IEC	: Information, Education and Communication
HIV/ AIDS	: Human Immuno-Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
SGBV	: Sexual Gender Based Violence
AYH	: Adolescent Youth Health
ARH	: Adolescent reproductive health
YFS	: Youth Friendly Services
VCCT	: Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing
SRHR	: Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
MOH	: Ministry of Health
PLHIV	: People Living with HIV/AIDS
VHW	: Voluntary Health Worker
SEP	: Socio-Economic Profile
SWOT	: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
CSOs	: Civil Society Organizations
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organizations
M&E	: Monitoring and Evaluation

### iii. DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

**Advocacy:** Campaign to win support of others in order to get a change in policy, legislation or programme.

**Affirmative Action:** A commitment to create a state of equality by adopting and implementing deliberate measures that elevate the status of the disadvantaged group or individual.

**Capacity Building:** A process of equipping people with skills necessary to do a particular task efficiently.

**Community Development:** Helping communities develop sustainable solutions. Help people define their problems and identify solutions or ways to address them.

**Community Mobilization:** Bringing people together to identify, plan, and implement programmes and activities that meet their basic collective needs.

**Empowerment:** A process of enhancing people's capacity to participate in their own development.

**Gender:** Is an analytical concept that focuses on socially constructed roles, rights, power, needs, and responsibilities of women in relation to those for men.

**Gender and Community Development:** The concept of gender and community development entails mainstreaming gender in community development activities and programmes geared towards empowering both women and men and applying affirmative action where it is required. It should be noted that in community development, different categories of people in society are considered. These include; women, youth, people with disabilities, children, elderly women and men

**Gender Blind:** Refers to policies and programmes which do not distinguish targets, participants or beneficiaries.

**Gender disaggregated data:** Presentation of statistics or data by male/female classification

**Gender Equity:** Refers to creating fair opportunity and access to productive resources and social services for both men and women

**Gender Equality:** Absence of discrimination between men and women in terms of resource allocation, power, opportunity, benefits or access to service, it means giving an equal visibility, empowerment and participation to both men and women in all spheres of public and private life.

**Gender Issues:** Refers to concerns that arise when there is a felt sense of injustice arising as a result of gender roles and responsibilities.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** A strategy for making the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral part of the designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, programmes and projects. It involves the re-organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated at all levels and at all stages of policy making.

**Gender Planning:** Consists of developing and implementing specific measures and organizational arrangements for the promotion of gender equality, identifying how to incorporate gender concerns into activities and ensuring that adequate resources are earmarked.

**Gender Stereotyping:** Held beliefs, practices and attitudes that males and females by virtue of their sex possess distinct traits and characteristics.

**Gender Violence:** This refers to any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, Sexual or mental suffering is inflicted directly or indirectly through threat, coercion, or any other means on any person with the purpose of intimidating, punishing, humiliating, maintaining sex stereotyped roles, undermining the security of a person self respect or diminishing physical or mental capacities.

**Poverty:** A multi faceted phenomenon that includes inadequate income, deprivation of basic needs and rights, lack of access to productive assets, social infrastructure and markets.

**Poverty Alleviation:** A process of ensuring that all people have sufficient productive resources and income in order to have sustainable livelihoods, access to and control over basic needs which include food, clothing, shelter and social services such as health, education, water and sanitation

**Social Development:** Is concerned with empowerment of all people, men and women, young and old, with particular attention to those that are marginalized or excluded in order to help them develop their capacities and take up opportunities

**Social Transformation:** Is defined as empowering communities to harness their potentials through skills development, cultural growth, labour productivity, and protection of their rights and freedoms particularly for the poor and vulnerable groups for sustainable and gender responsive development.

#### **iv. FOREWORD**

One of the major guiding principles in achieving COFO integration is people-centred development as provided for the establishment of the Community Forum. This principle implies the values of justice, sustainability, participation and inclusiveness which will be achieved through, among others, gender equality, health, youth empowerment, protection and promotion of children's rights, protection for the vulnerable groups, and participation of the citizenry in their own development.

The formulation of the Strategic Plan on Gender, Youth, Children and Community Development is a major contribution to the implementation of the people-centred principle in order to improve the lives of rural citizens in Chikwawa and Nsanje districts in general in Malawi.

The Strategic Plan is in line with the SDGs for the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, National Youth Policy of 2013, The Constitution of Malawi (1994), Gender Equality Act No: 13 (2013), National Gender Policy(2015), MGDS II National Plan of Action to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi(2014-2020), National Youth Friendly Health Services Strategy (2015-2020), Health Sector Strategic Plan II (2017-2022, and has taken into consideration the various legal instruments and commitments made at international and regional levels such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989, the African Youth Charter adopted in 2006 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the same year. Further the conceptualization of the Strategic Plan is based on the Declaration on Social Development that recognizes the significance of social development and human well-being for all and is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals that promote human development as the key to sustaining social and economic development.

Lastly, I would like to confirm the COFO's commitment now than ever in collaborating with key stakeholders in its activities and programmes in order to improve the well-being of the rural citizens.

**Joshua Adrian Malunga**



**Executive Director**

**COMMUNITY FORUM**

## **v. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Community Forum has demonstrated deliberate commitment to develop policies and programmes that facilitate the participation of a cross range of citizens in the advancement of the COFO integration agenda. COFO highlights gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights as one of the fundamental principles that will govern the COFO integration process. Also COFO emphasizes the role of youth and women in socio-economic development and in business as a core issue to the effective cooperation and development of the Partner States.

The constitution of Community Forum clearly spells out that the Partner States shall closely cooperate in the field of social welfare with respect to among others, the development and adoption of a common approach towards the disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including children, the youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities through rehabilitation and provision of among others, foster houses, health care, education and training. In addition, also makes reference to collaboration by the Partner States in putting in place education and training programmes for people with special needs and other disadvantaged groups.

The COFO Strategic Plan on Gender, Youth, Children, Health and Community Development therefore complies with the agreement for the establishment of the Community Forum. The strategic plan spells out key interventions in six distinct components namely gender, youth, children and community development.

Under the gender thematic area, the strategic plan envisages to promote gender equality, equity and women and girls' empowerment as normative in the COFO partners states by mainstreaming gender into all strategic interventions and sectors of the community, promoting women in socio-economic development and women in business and promoting the participation of the citizenry in COFO processes.

Under the component on youth, this strategic plan intends to promote the socio economic and community development of the youth within the Community Forum region. It targets the harmonization of regional youth offices and legal frameworks, promotion of strategies for youth employment creation and mainstreaming youth issues in the planning and budget processes of six priority sectors of COFO including health, agriculture, peace and security, trade and infrastructure. The strategic plan provides for measures to facilitate capacity building of youths in vocational skills, ICT, e-commerce and other special tailored programmes.

Regarding the issues of children, they constitute the majority in the population and they have special needs that have in many cases not been adequately met. Children are therefore exposed to many development challenges, including lack of adequate food, health and education. Children are also faced with abuse, violence, exploitation and sexual abuse, and child labour. Disabled children and are the most affected by the foregoing challenges. Many children also live and work on the streets and are victims of trafficking. This strategic plan therefore seeks to develop a comprehensive, coherent and harmonized regional policy on children to promote children's rights among partner states.

The plan further urges the COFO Partner States harmonise legislation on implementation of international conventions on the protection of children's rights with emphasis on children, orphans, those with disabilities, other vulnerable children as well as those infected with HIV/AIDS.

Community Development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to affect change in their own communities. It involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. This plan seeks to enhance communities to identify and develop sustainable and inclusive solutions to their social development challenges. The strategic plan will develop a legislative framework for community development and develop a capacity building programme for Community Development and engage more community development stakeholders.



## 1.0 PREAMBLE

Community Forum is not for profit grass root organization which works to contribute towards community driven approach for sustainable development through interventions in women and girls rights promotion, Education and vocational skills enhancement, Food Security, Health and Nutrition promotion including HIV/AIDS awareness raising and prevention. It was incorporated in Malawi as Not-for-Profit Company limited by guarantee in June 2018. To achieve its objectives, Community Forum works very closely with the community at grass roots in collaboration with the government structures at local and national levels alongside international, and national non-governmental and community based organizations sharing the vision for humanity in Malawi and the world. Community Forum recruits members virtually from around the community it works and the strategy to realize the mission lies in community involvement during project development. Community Forum is confident that, to change community attitudes and strengthen their skills and knowledge, there is need to take into account their potential and involvement to become enlightened, healthy and democratic community free from SGBV, child marriage, hunger, disease and poverty.

### 1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

- To challenge the socio-economic inequalities and enable the vulnerable sections of society towards the goal of self-reliance.

### 1.2 VISION

- We envision a community where all community have the opportunity for a high quality of life, including but not limited to:
  - Education
  - Employment/entrepreneurship
  - Health (HIV/AIDS, SRHR)
  - Rich cultural offerings
  - Gender (reduce SGBV)

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF COFO

1. To provide opportunities for ideas and experiences for promoting literacy to be shared at community level.
2. To promote education and training in formal and informal society
3. To amplify community awareness on SRHR, gender, hygiene, PMTCT, HIV and AIDS prevention and behaviour change interventions amongst adolescent and community.
4. To promote entrepreneurship among the youth and community groups
5. To improve the health of the communities by addressing issues that undermine their good health such as access to health services, SRHR, good nutrition, HIV & AIDS, counselling, safe water, sanitation and management of preventable and treatable diseases.

### 1.4 OUR VALUES

**S: Social Justice:** We provide differently able individuals equal access to resources.

**H: Honesty and Hard work:** We work with great passion and interest.

**A: Affection & Trust:** We believe in the basic human values rooted in trust building & love.

**R: Respect for Human Rights:** We strive for maintaining respect for human rights.

**E: Excellence:** We give our best to the community.

## **2.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS**

### **2.1 Overview**

A number of instruments, declarations and protocols have been developed in the Community and in Partner States to address the issue of gender, youth, children, social protection and community development. While there has been notable progress on some of global, regional, national and community commitments in each Partners, many others have lagged behind, given inadequate opportunities for economic and social mobility, ineffective and unaccountable institutions and widespread social tensions.

### **2.2 Gender**

The Community Forum has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. It highlights gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights as one of the fundamental principles that will govern the COFO integration process. The agreement emphasizes the role of women in socio-economic development and in business as a core issue to the effective cooperation and development of the Partner States.

In addition to the accord, there is a Forum responsible for social development which facilitates a harmonized approach for programme development; implementation and monitoring between inter related sectors of gender, health, education, water and environment. The recommendations of this forum are forwarded to the Council for consideration and further action. Further, a Sectoral council on Gender, Youth, Children, social protection and community development was established to articulate gender issues among others.

Therefore, it is worthwhile mentioning that gender equality is still a challenge. Imbalances persist in terms of gender disparity in resource distribution, harmful traditional and cultural practices, inadequate budgetary allocation for national gender machineries, inadequate gender expertise and lack of gender disaggregated data for proper planning among others. Therefore this justifies the need for the strategic plan to have a gender focus.

### **2.3 Youth**

The Socio-Economic Profile (SEP) analysis of the region indicate that the youth are faced with the following social development challenges: lack of continuing opportunities for education and skills development, lack of access to affordable health notably HIV/AIDS, reproductive health including teenage/adolescent motherhood and fatherhood, drug and alcohol abuse and gender based violence.

Youth unemployment and underemployment, lack of adequate skills for employment, lack of access to finance and entrepreneurial opportunities and in a few cases vulnerability to political manipulation are the major social development challenges facing the youth in the Chikwawa and Nsanje districts. The recommendations in the document single it out as a critical issue to address.

In Malawi the Government responded to high youth unemployment by introducing a youth employment scheme to cushion them against the impact of the multiple crises of food due to drought, post-election violence, and the global financial and economic crises.

Across all SEPs despite expansions of democratic governance on the region and the increasing priority attached to youth participation in policy-making, youth structures and processes are seldom sufficiently resourced – and young people often lack the capacity or know-how to function independently or to implement programmes envisioned by policies. This is a critical area to address in the next 5 years.

## **2.4 The health status of young people in Malawi**

The main problems faced by young people are intentional and unintentional injuries, consequences of interpersonal violence, risk taking behaviours resulting in sexual and reproductive health problems including unintended pregnancies and its consequences, HIV/AIDS, substance use (tobacco, alcohol and other substances) and substance use disorders, mental health problems, under nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, and infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria. In addition, many common symptoms such as headache and fatigue, problems such as skin conditions and excessive or painful menstruation are poorly managed. Malaria is one of the major public health problems in the Republic of Malawi. The trend of malaria cases and deaths is on the decline in the recent years but Malawi has by far the greatest burden of malaria in the GMS

## **2.5 Children**

Children constitute more than 50% of the population in Malawi, However, infant and childhood mortality rates are very high by any standards. In addition, the lives of children in the region are made unsafe by health situations and many are orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many more are affected by abuse; neglect; child labour child trafficking; family separation; harmful cultural practices; child prostitution; targeted killing of albino children; natural and man-made disasters; preventable diseases and poverty.

Despite the above situation there is a lot of work that has been done by Partner States to bring about better living conditions for the children, these include ratifying the international instruments and implementing the different protocols and develop legal and policy frameworks in order to make region more children friendly.

There are other emerging issues that are facing the young children. The issue of child labour still seems a big problem in the region, HIV AIDS and the structures it is leaving in its wake (child headed households, grandparent headed households, street children etc.) all show that the increased need to proactively address issues surrounding children more fervently.

## 2.5 SWOT Analysis

### 2.5.1 Internal Environment

The Table bellows highlights the SWOT analysis of COFO environment with regard to implementation of policies and programmes.

**Table 1: Strategic SWOT Analysis of COFO implementation, issues and opportunities**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political will exhibited by Partners in the COFO establishment;</li> <li>• New experiences brought to the fold;</li> <li>• COFO Collaboration coordinating body – the secretariat generating ideas and following through with growing degrees of success;</li> <li>• Policy and legal frameworks to guide broad implementation (in socioeconomic development) are in place in all partners</li> <li>• Regional CSO/ partners with programming capacity and desire to work on the issues presented in the Socio Economic framework;</li> <li>• Existence of District Development Plans.</li> <li>• Common language that could be exploited further to gain regional integration;</li> <li>• Common Market (under implementation) that can lead to great economic opportunities, wider/bigger markets (with resultant spin offs and trickle down effects);</li> <li>• Young and energetic population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient enforcement of some polices at National level;</li> <li>• Insufficient budget allocations to identified priority areas</li> <li>• Widespread disparities in partners in certain aspects (thematic areas)</li> <li>• Inadequate social mobilization to sustain community interest and involvement;</li> <li>• Inadequate disaggregated data at community levels hence an insufficient picture of progress by gender, disability and age in critical thematic areas of interest;</li> <li>• No systematic templates of reporting hence the data collection is not standardized and gives no proper basis for comparison and collation;</li> <li>• Weak institutional structure and inadequate capacity in some Partners.</li> <li>• Some Partners have not ratified some international instruments and protocols</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in knowledge and awareness of and commitments to Rights and obligations of states to their people;</li> <li>• Good relationship with other regional economic NGOs</li> <li>• Collaboration with national and International Agencies and Development Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmful cultural and traditional practices that affect women's health and entrenched beliefs that re-enforce disparities and vulnerability;</li> <li>• World economic crisis and its macro effects and ramifications (i.e. in budget allocations, employment opportunities);</li> <li>• High unemployment levels</li> <li>• Foreign influences that are contrary to existing cultural norms , beliefs and practice</li> <li>• growth that can easily escalate the dependency ratios in the region;</li> <li>• Ethnic tensions and insecurity that periodically erupt in civil unrest and gender-based violence at local level</li> <li>• Effects of climate change on socio-economic development</li> </ul>

The table above shows that key strengths are in the tools that the COFO and Partners are committed to, the integration itself and the Common Market. There is growing experience in the secretariat that is seeing more work being done. There is experience in partners in providing best practice cases – this experience can be shared and replicated in other partners.

The biggest challenges still seem to be the insufficient budgetary allocations. There will be a big need for the partner to show greater commitment to the plan and the strategic goals by availing more funds to execute this strategic plan.

### **2.5.2 External constraints and opportunities**

The growing credit critical situation has had ramifications world over in economic and business circles. Many of the African farmers are badly affected and this was reflected in many job losses and interruptions in the flower and fresh foods industry.

Cultural attitudes that place women at risk are seen to be one of the biggest threats for the successful implementation of the Plan. The empowerment of women is a key strategy to address this challenge. Whereas legislation and policy frameworks serve to protect their rights, it is important that community sensitization and attitude changes are the ones that shall see the perpetual growth in women's empowerment.

## **3.0 THEMATIC AREAS**

This plan will focus on the following four (4) thematic areas: gender, youth, health and children and community development.

### **3.1 Gender**

The Community Forum as a whole remains replete with patterns of inequality not only between the partners but also between women and men, boys and girls in the same partners. The framework highlighted areas for critical interventions and actions. A few are selected for emphasis in this Strategic Plan.

#### **Recommendations for action:**

- a) Mobilise development partners to support government efforts to respond to gender issues;
- b) Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system with gender specific indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, and an inbuilt review system;
- c) Develop monitoring and evaluation tools for gender mainstreaming;
- d) Conduct periodic gender impact assessment studies and gender audit;
- e) Co-ordination of the Gender Responsive Budgeting process with clear guidelines to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated in a gender responsive manner;
- f) Facilitate increased budgetary allocation to District Machinery in partners and strengthen national capacities in gender Mainstreaming;
- g) To facilitate collection and utilization of sex/gender desegregated data in partner States;
- h) To provide enabling mechanisms to address gender based violence in all situations;

- i) Promote innovation on the development of technologies that will help to reduce women's workload, and
- j) Design and implement interventions that protect and empower the girl child.

### **3.2 Youth**

Around the world the terms "youth", "adolescent", "teenager", and "young person" are interchanged, often meaning the same thing, occasionally differentiated. Youth generally refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood, but rather, somewhere in-between. The age in which a person is considered a "youth," and thus eligible for special treatment under the law and throughout society varies around the world. According to the United Nations General Assembly the youth comprises those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive while according to World Bank the term "youth" in general refers to those who are between the ages of 15 to 25." –however in the African Union Commission and African States have agreed to consider as Youth any person within the age range of 15-35 years and it is this definition that the COFO and Partners adopt in the Framework.

In Chikwawa and Nsanje districts, the youth are faced with social development challenges; lack of continuing opportunities for education and skills development, lack of access to affordable health, notably reproductive health, including teenage/adolescent motherhood and fatherhood. Youth also face HIV and AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse and gender based violence. Youth unemployment and underemployment, lack of adequate skills for employment, lack of access to finance and entrepreneurial opportunities and in a few cases vulnerability to political manipulation are the major social development challenges facing the youth in the region.

### **Recommendations for action**

- a) Develop a comprehensive, coherent and harmonized youth policy that also provides a binding framework for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes and projects;
- b) Ratify and implementation of the African Youth Charter;
- c) Establish youth resource centres and a regional mechanism that will promote and sustain youth culture, values, morals and ethics;
- d) To address youth unemployment and ensure that all categories of youth have equal access to opportunities;
- e) Identify community, district, regional and national markets for youth products;
- f) Institute policies and programmes to promote and protect the physical, mental and spiritual health of young people, with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS; and
- g) Increase investment in youth development and empowerment including through the provision of sufficient and sustainable resources for technical and professional skills development and youth employment.

### **3.3 Children**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as all persons aged under-18. Given the high fertility levels in Malawi, children constitute the majority in the population and they have special needs that have in many cases not been adequately met. The lives of many children in Malawi are subject to a number of challenges ranging from high infant mortality rates, malnutrition, preventable diseases, child neglect and abuse, child trafficking and child sacrifice among others.

#### **Recommendations for action**

- a) Develop a comprehensive, coherent and harmonized regional policy on children to promote children's rights among partners;
- b) Increase resource allocation to support child development interventions;
- c) Improve service delivery so that children no longer need to go long distances to get wood or water for the family;
- d) Put in place adequate infrastructure and services in rural and urban areas for children to participate in sport, physical education, cultural, artistic, and recreational and leisure;
- e) Provide protection to children in conflict situations, orphans, vulnerable and street children; including protection and rehabilitation to children in conflict with the law;
- f) Provide social security to vulnerable children and adolescents including those with disabilities to ensure food security, clothing, housing and other basic needs;
- g) Develop harmonized child protection system within partners; and
- h) Strengthen families and ensure care for children without parental care through social support and establishment of systems for good alternative family care.

### **3.4 Community Development**

Community Development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with skills they need to affect change in their own communities. It involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channeled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. They create opportunities for the community to learn new skills and, by enabling all people to act together, community development helps to foster social inclusion and equality in Community development will provide a platform for popular engagement of all stakeholders in social development-to participate in planning, budgeting and implementation.

It ensures accountability for equitable and efficient utilization of public investments geared towards social development. In COFO, Community Development will help communities to identify and develop sustainable and inclusive solutions to their social development challenges. Through community mobilization people will come together to identify, plan and implement their programmes and activities that meet their basic collective needs.

## **Recommendations for action:**

- a) Identify institutional bottlenecks that infringe on the rights of the poor and marginalized to access social services and empower them to participate in Community Development;
- b) Develop a capacity building programme for Community Development and engage more community development officers;
- c) Set one day aside every month for voluntary Community Development;
- d) Set up a monitoring and evaluation framework for Community Development; and
- e) Partners should increasingly encourage communities to work with various stakeholders to deliver social development particularly in hard to reach areas.

## **4.0 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **4.1 Vision, Mission and Priorities**

#### **4.1.1 Vision**

The vision for this strategic Plan is “a community where economic prosperity, equality and social justice prevail”.

#### **4.1.2 Mission Statement**

- i. To enhance community empowerment through people centred and gender responsive development that creates opportunities to harness potentials necessary for equitable and Sustainable Development.
- ii. To improve the quality of life of women, men, boys and girls, youth and persons with disabilities through community and economic empowerment, gender mainstreaming and social protection.

#### **4.1.3 Goal**

- To promote people centred development through mainstreaming Gender, Youth, Children and Community Development in the COFO structures, programmes and projects.

#### **4.1.4 Specific Objectives**

- a) To promote gender equality, equity and women & girls empowerment as normative in the COFO and Partners.
- b) To promote the economic and social development of youth and community within the Community Forum to self-sufficiency;
- c) To promote the protection of children, respect of their rights and foster their development and social wellbeing;
- d) To improve the conditions of the vulnerable members of society through the effective introduction and implementation of social protection programmes within the region;
- e) To improve the infrastructure of communities as a pre-requisite to increasing access to social services and improving the quality of life and living conditions of the population;



## **4.2 Priority Areas**

The implementation of the strategic plan shall be guided by priority considerations. For the next 5 years period, 6 key areas have been identified as cross cutting issues and these are:-

- a) Institutional and legal Framework;
- b) Empowerment of individuals, households and communities, including Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons;
- c) Mainstreaming Gender, Youth, Children, health and Community Development in macro-economic and sector policies and programmes;
- d) Promoting the participation of the Citizenry, the CSOs and the Private sector; and
- e) Research and Documentation

### **4.2.1 Institutional and Legal frameworks**

There is need to complement and put in place legal and policy frameworks that shall govern the community as a unit. The Partners shall equally develop standardized monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to facilitate tracking of progress.

### **4.2.2 Empowerment of individuals, households and communities**

The five year strategic plan will place emphasis on tangible improvement of the living conditions of individuals' households and communities. This will be done by developing, programmes, projects and partnerships aimed at reducing poverty within the Community in a sustainable way.

### **4.2.3 Mainstreaming Gender, Youth, Children and Community Development in macro-economic and sector policies and programmes**

The strategic plan designs interventions to address the social and development concerns in the areas of gender, youth, Health, Children and Community Development.

### **4.2.4 Research and Documentation**

The COFO framework proposes a growth in /and emphasis on research and documentation. This is to ensure that the work carried out is evidence based, precise and target specific among others. There will be emphasis laid on sharing of information – consequently many of the reports (research and programme reports) will be shared within the partners and other stakeholders such as the Civil Society Organisations, government officials and bilateral partners. There will be emphasis on the disaggregation of data (e.g. by age, sex and disability). This is designed to ensure that programme designed thereafter will have specific and accurate focus since they will be based on specific analysis and targeted recommendations.

## 4.3 Thematic Logical Frameworks

### 4.3.1 Gender Thematic Area

**Table 2: Logo frame for Gender thematic area**

NARRATIVE SUMMARY	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (Assumptions)
<b>Goal (Broad Objective)</b>  To promote gender equality, equity and women and girls' empowerment as normative in the community level.	<b>Conditions that show Goal attainment:</b> The extent to which the lives and livelihoods of women, men, boys and girls are transformed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Reports on Gender issues and human development indices;</li> <li>COFO and Partners reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional performance of policies that provide framework for operation;</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Objectives</b>  1. To mainstream gender into all strategic interventions and sectors of the community. 2. To promote women in socio-economic development; women and youth in business. 3. Promote the participation of the citizenry in COFO processes	<b>Performance Indicators:</b>  1. Number of gender sensitive Policy and legal instruments developed in the COFO 2. Number of priority sectors with increased budgetary allocation on gender issues 3. Percentage of women and youth participating in regional trade and business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COFO and Partners reports</li> <li>Budget/financial reports from Partners</li> <li>Policies printed and circulated;</li> <li>COFO secretariat narrative (analytical) reports,</li> <li>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation reports,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment of Partner States</li> <li>Availability of skills and competences at the COFO Secretariat</li> <li>Commitment of CSOs to the Dialogue framework</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>  1. Gender mainstreamed into all strategic interventions and priorities of the community 2. Women in socio-economic development and women in business enhanced	<b>Magnitude and Quality</b>  1. Number of Policy and legal instruments by 2025 2. Number of policies, programmes and institutions promoting women in business and regional trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COFO reports</li> <li>Gender Budget statement (GBS) in all sectors by June 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political will and commitment</li> <li>Adequate budgetary allocation</li> </ul>

3. Participation of the citizenry in COFO processes enhanced	3. Percentage increase in CSOs/CBOs participation in COFO processes		
<b>Result Area 1; Mainstreaming Gender into all strategic interventions and priorities of the community</b>			
<b>Activities</b>  1.1 To undertake Gender Audit and disseminate the report by July 2024 1.2 Develop an COFO Protocol on Gender, Youth, Children, Health and Community Development by December 2023 1.3 To establish an COFO Women Council by June 2024 1.4 Hold Sectoral Council meetings on Gender, Youth, Children, Health and Community Development 1.5 Regional awareness campaigns on gender equality, women's empowerment, women's right issues and COFO integration processes 1.6 Strengthen the Gender Unit/Department at COFO Secretariat by December 2023 1.7 Establish and M&E system to track the implementation of policies and legal frameworks and progress in the Gender sector. 1.8 Conduct a research on gender gaps in women's socio-economic and political advancement in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Audit Report in place and disseminated</li> <li>• Gender Analysis report in place</li> <li>• COFO Protocol on Gender, Youth, Children, Health and Community Development approved by Council and disseminated by June 2024</li> <li>• Number of priority sectors plans and budgets reflecting gender issues</li> <li>• COFO Women Council approved by Council</li> <li>• Number of meetings held</li> <li>• Number of regional campaigns developed and implemented</li> <li>• Number of staff recruited</li> <li>• Percentage increase in budgetary allocation to the department</li> <li>• M&amp;E framework developed and operationalised</li> <li>• Research conducted and disseminated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit Report</li> <li>• Partners' Reports</li> <li>• COFO reports, Publications</li> <li>• Approved Protocol</li> <li>• Budgets, Financial reports</li> <li>• Council Reports</li> <li>• Meeting Reports</li> <li>• Media articles, reports, meeting reports</li> <li>• Staff in place</li> <li>• Approved Budget for the unit</li> <li>• Meeting/Council Reports</li> <li>• Study Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of Human resource and funds</li> </ul>

<b>Result Area: 2 Promoting Women in socio-economic development and women in Business</b>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>			
2.1 Formulate a policy on promoting women in socioeconomic development and business 2.2 Expand financial infrastructure to increase women's access to financing and credit 2.3 Facilitate the formation of Women in Business associations and networks at national, regional international level 2.4 Facilitate trainings on Business Development Skills (BDS) (including ICT skills) for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy approved and implemented</li> <li>• Programme established and implemented</li> <li>• Percentage increase of women accessing financing and credit facilities</li> <li>• Number of women business associations formed and strengthened</li> <li>• Number of women trained in BDS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy on promoting women in socioeconomic development and business</li> <li>• Partners socio-economic reports</li> <li>• COFO and Partners Reports</li> <li>• Training reports</li> <li>• Impact study reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women shall have the desire to do business at senior and competitive levels;</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.2 Youth Thematic Area

**Table 3: Logical framework for Youth Empowerment**

<b>NARRATIVE SUMMARY (Youth)</b>	<b>OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS</b>	<b>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</b>	<b>CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (Assumptions)</b>
<b>Broad Objectives</b>  To promote the socio-economic, and political development of Youth within the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in the quality of youth livelihoods;</li> <li>• Percentage of youth participating in COFO processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional and National Situation Analysis reports</li> <li>• COFO and Partners reports</li> <li>• Publications by National Investments Authorities and private sector agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained socio-economic growth in the region</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate Objectives</b>			

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Develop and strengthen strategies for youth employment creation</li> <li>2 Mainstream youth issues in the planning and budget processes of the priority areas.</li> <li>3 Promote youth participation in the COFO integration process</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies for youth employment creation developed and implemented by 2025</li> <li>• Youth issues integrated in COFO priority sectors by June 2024</li> <li>• Youth participation in the COFO integration processes enhanced by 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFO and Partners reports;</li> <li>• Evaluation reports and Impact study reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained economic growth in the COFO region</li> <li>• Political will and commitment</li> <li>• Availability of expertise and financial resource</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Strategies for creating and strengthening youth employment opportunities developed</li> <li>2 Macro-economic sector policies and programmes aligned to reflect youth issues</li> <li>3 Youth participation in COFO integration processes enhanced</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies for youth employment creation developed and implemented by 2025</li> <li>• Youth issues integrated in COFO priority sectors by June 2024</li> <li>• Youth participation in the COFO integration processes enhanced by 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFO and Partners reports;</li> <li>• Evaluation reports and Impact study reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained economic growth in the COFO region</li> <li>• Political will and commitment</li> <li>• Availability of expertise and financial resources</li> </ul>
<b>Activities :</b>  Strategies for creating and strengthening youth employment opportunities developed <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Facilitate capacity building of youth in vocational skills, ICT, e-commerce and other special tailored programmes</li> <li>1.2 Institute a regional incentive scheme for employers to invest in the skills development of employed and</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of youth trained</li> <li>• Number of exhibitions held</li> <li>• Number of youth participating in annual exhibition</li> <li>• A regional incentive scheme instituted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFO and Partners Reports, Guidelines</li> <li>• Workshop reports</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners and Stakeholder commitment</li> <li>• Youth commitment</li> </ul>

unemployed youth 1.3 Establish infrastructure that would lead to innovation and easy access to information for the youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource centre, ICT parks, IEC materials</li> </ul>		
<b>Activities :</b> Macro-economic sector policies and programmes aligned to reflect youth issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of macro-economic sectors that have integrated youth issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macro-economic policies Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COFO, Regional and National Reports</li> </ul>
2.1 Develop guidelines and work plans for mainstreaming youth issues in all COFO sectors  2.2 Train and facilitate key COFO Secretariat and Partners staff on mainstreaming youth issues in all COFO sectors and programmes;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of guidelines developed</li> <li>Number of work plans and budgets with mainstreamed youth issues</li> <li>Number of COFO and Partners trained on mainstreaming youth issues into sectors and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines</li> <li>Sector plans and budgets mainstreamed</li> <li>Narrative progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of funds and expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Activities :</b> Youth participation in COFO integration processes enhanced			
3.1 Facilitate the participation of the youth in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development plans, policies and poverty reduction strategies 3.2 Facilitate learning exchange visits between partners 3.3 Conduct awareness and sensitization on youth issues 3.4 Strengthen youth sporting activities in the region  4.6 Establish mechanisms to promote a culture of volunteerism and tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of youth participating in the design, monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans at regional levels</li> <li>Number of learning exchanges held</li> <li>Number of sensitisation campaigns implemented</li> <li>Number media articles and activities, IECs</li> <li>Number of sporting activities held</li> <li>Number of structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COFO and Partners reports</li> <li>Media reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of funds and expertise</li> <li>Commitment of Partners</li> <li>Availability of funds</li> <li>Availability of expertise</li> </ul>

amongst youth that discourages participation in negative cultural attitudes and acts of violence, racial discrimination and gender-based discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established</li> <li>Number of mechanisms developed</li> </ul>		
<b>Inputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resource,</li> <li>Consultants (legal and community development experts)</li> <li>Operational fiancés (Budget)</li> <li>Capital items,</li> <li>Office equipments, Visual aids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human resource recruitment</li> <li>Country Budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial reports (periodic)</li> <li>Audit accounts and reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional NGOS shall avail budgets that shall lead to quick and timely implementation of the plan</li> </ul>

### 4.3.3 Community Development Thematic Area

**Table 4: Logical framework for Community Development**

NARRATIVE SUMMARY (Community Development)	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVIs)	MEANS OF VERIFICATIO	CRITICAL ASSUMPTION
<b>GOAL</b>  To empower individuals, groups and communities to participate in socio-economic development	<b>Conditions that show Goal attainment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved communications in Rural communities;</li> <li>Improved service delivery and access to social services in the rural areas;</li> <li>Communities that are able to meet livelihood needs;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Situation Analysis reports</li> <li>COFO and Partners reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of funds and expertise</li> </ul>

<b>Specific Objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and address institutional bottlenecks that infringe on the rights of the poor and marginalized to access social services and empower them to participate in Community Development</li> <li>• Develop a regional capacity building programme for Community Development.</li> <li>• Set up a monitoring and evaluation framework for Community Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guideline for enhanced access to social services by the poor and the marginalized developed</li> <li>• COFO guidelines for capacity building for community development available</li> <li>• Community development monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFO and Partner State reports</li> <li>• Publications by National Investments Authorities and other private sector agencies;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners commitment</li> <li>• Availability of funds and expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Macro-economic sector policies and programmes have community development issues</li> <li>2. Civil Society participation</li> <li>3. Monitoring and Evaluation framework in place</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 trainings for 50 participants, at least 50% of whom are women</li> <li>• 8 priority sectors' budgets reflect issues of community development</li> <li>• Research findings documented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFO reports, Economic reports,</li> <li>• Partners reports</li> <li>• Training reports, Meeting reports</li> <li>• M&amp; E reports</li> <li>• Financial reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of communities</li> <li>• Availability of fund</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Magnitude and Quality of Outputs</b>		



<b>Result Area 1: Macroeconomic sector projects and programmes have community development issues</b>			
1.1 Conduct studies to undertake a situational analysis of community development issues in COFO Partners 1.2 To conduct participatory assessment of capacity needs 1.3 Review and harmonise curricula for Community development training in the COFO Partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research reports and publications</li> <li>• Assessment report</li> <li>• Curriculum in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines;</li> <li>• Finance records and reports</li> <li>• Meeting minutes</li> <li>• COFO and Partners report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of funds and expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Result Area 2. Promoting the participation of CSOs/Community Based Organizations in COFO processes</b>			
2.1 Facilitate implementation of the dialogue framework for Civil Society and the Private Sector participation on components of gender in the COFO integration process 2.2 Adopt and disseminate an COFO Civil Society Mobilization Strategy by June 2025 2.3 Convene an annual meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue framework approved and implemented</li> <li>• COFO Mobilisation Strategy adopted and implemented</li> <li>• Number. of meetings held</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue framework</li> <li>• Dialogue meeting and sector reports • Partners States Reports</li> <li>• COFO Mobilisation Strategy</li> <li>• COFO and Partners Reports</li> <li>• Meetings reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of resources</li> </ul>
<b>Inputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Resource,</li> <li>• Capital items, Office equipments,</li> <li>• Visual aid materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human resource recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting reports • Procurement records</li> <li>• Finance reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation in place</li> <li>• Enabling Policies in place</li> </ul>
2.4 Develop and dissemination M&E Framework to Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring framework in place and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of funds an</li> </ul>

	operationalised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COFO reports and Partners reports</li> </ul>	expertise
<b>Inputs</b>  Human Resource, Capital items, Office equipments, Visual aid Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human resource recruitment</li> <li>Budgets</li> <li>Procurement of materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting reports;</li> <li>Procurement and other finance records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningful budget allocation for community development shall be forthcoming;</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.4 Health Thematic Area

**Table 5: Logical framework for Health**

Priority areas	Outcome indicator	Output indicators	Means of verification
<b>1. Improve sexual and reproductive health Rights</b>			
a. Reduce adolescent pregnancy,	Adolescent birth rate	Percentage of adolescents with correct knowledge on complication and risks of early pregnancy	Periodic reports Financial reports
		Proportion of married adolescent using modern method of contraception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periodic reports</li> <li>Articles</li> <li>Health reports</li> </ul>
	Prevalence of Adolescents who have begun child- bearing		
	Contraceptive prevalence rate among sexually active young people	Percentage of adolescents with correct knowledge of at least one modern method of contraception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periodic reports</li> <li>Articles</li> <li>Health reports</li> </ul>

		Condom use at first sexual intercourse among adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
	Unmet need for family planning among youth	Demand for contraception satisfied among adolescents aged 15-19 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
b. Prevent poor reproductive health outcomes in adolescents	Proportion of adolescent pregnant mother who received antenatal care services	Number of antenatal care visits among adolescent pregnant mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
		Proportion of adolescent pregnant mother who received antenatal care from any skilled service provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
2. Prevent and effectively manage HIV			
a. Prevent new HIV infections in young people,	proportion of young people with correct knowledge of SRH & HIV/AIDS	Comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
	Condom Use at last higher risk sex	Sexual intercourse and condom use among never married adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
b. Increase their access to HIV testing and counselling, and	Coverage of prior HIV testing among adolescent girls	Self-reported prevalence of sexually-transmitted infections (STI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>
		Percentage of adolescents aware of at least one symptom of RTI/STI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Periodic reports</li><li>• Articles</li><li>• Health reports</li></ul>

## 5.0 FINANCING

The COFO and other stakeholders need to develop strategies for mobilizing resources for implementing the framework. One of the initiatives should be a donor round table dialogue organized by the COFO secretariat to discuss areas of possible collaboration. Some of the groups that should be invited include: Governments, Development Partners, Private Sector, Civil Society and Community Forum structure and other Institutions.

### 5.1 Financing Procedures and commitments

The Directors shall comply with the requirements of the Companies Acts as to maintaining a members' register, keeping financial records, the audit or examination of accounts and the preparation and transmission to the Registrar of Companies and the Regulator of:

- ✓ Annual reports;
- ✓ Annual returns; and
- ✓ Annual statements of account.

Contributions by the Partners have been supplemented by the goodwill of development partners through the partnership with donors, individuals and other agencies. This fund is in form of basket funding with no conditional ties attached by the donors or earmarking for specific projects and programmes.

Other possible source of funding is through the private sector by way of formalizing public private partnerships.

### 5.2 Indicative Budgets and Targets

In order to implement the Strategic plan, there are those critical activities that must be accomplished in the 1<sup>st</sup> year without which the plan will not be achieved in the intended 5 years.

Strategic activities therefore have been selected for the initial year and the corresponding budget is proposed.

**Table 6: Budget**

COMPONENTS	AMOUNT ( US\$)
Gender and Women in Socio-Economic Development	225,405.00
Youth Empowerment	245,665.00
Health	264,535.00
Community Development	254,000.00
Participation of the citizenry	234,600.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,224,205.00</b>

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The strategic plan has been developed to give concrete direction as to which action should be taken by the Secretariat. It takes into account that there are actions that shall be done by the Members states of which the secretariat shall act as a catalyst but not a primary enforcer. In line with the Gender and Community Development framework, Partner States need to start the necessary process to strengthen the capacity of various Ministries to implement the recommendations of the framework.

The plan calls for a lot of collaboration between the various stakeholders. A forum for collaboration - -meeting to share experiences and progress on various projects and activities; a standardized monitoring format are among some of the actions and tools proposed for the successful implementation of the plan.