

capable of contributing to the development of a cohesive society adapted to a world in constant transformation.' It upholds three objectives: (i) Ensure inclusion and equity in access, participation and retention; (ii) Ensure the quality of learning; and (iii) Ensure transparent, participatory, efficient and effective governance.

Against this background, SER will contribute to strengthening the Mozambican education system with a focus on basic education, supporting the implementation of the ESP, including the expansion and quality improvements of the education system. The proposed action will contribute to the Education Sector Support Fund (FASE), **which is fully on-budget, on-system and on-report, but with additional safeguards to reduce fiduciary risks.** It will also include a specific component focused on equity to address the needs of children living in the most vulnerable situations.

This is in line with Commission objectives and priorities including the commitment of allocating at least 20 % of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to social inclusion and human development. At global level, the EU has chosen to place education at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery, increasing by 32 % its contribution to education for the period 2021-2027, through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In Mozambique, the GPE support is channelled through FASE whereby the EU together with Member States will be able to monitor and follow up.

The **EU-Africa: Global Gateway Investment Package on Education & Training**, as a new European strategy places education at the heart of the collective Africa–Europe efforts with EU investment in quality education, including digital education, paying particular attention to the inclusion of girls and women and other persons living in vulnerable situations. This is translated in SER via the two components and particularly the equity piece to ensure no one is left behind. It is also aligned with the **EU Gender Action-Plan (GAP) III**²⁵ which recognises education as a key policy area to accelerate progress towards gender equality in EU external action. The EU Communication on **Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (COM/2018/304 final)** reinforces EU commitments in education and reflects its efforts to increase funding and support to countries most in need. SER will seek to be complementary to the programming of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) in Education in Emergencies.

G7 Ministerial Declaration on girls' education (May 2021) recommends a focus on cementing girls' education as central to COVID-19 recovery.

The Working Better Together approach is being implemented at the practical level to improve the overall coherence of the collective EU effort in Mozambique. This action will further promote aid effectiveness principles and strengthen cross-sectoral working by joining forces with 5 Member States in FASE policy dialogue.

SER is relevant for the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. It contributes primarily to the progressive achievement of SDG(s) Goal 1: No poverty, Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, while also contributing to Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 10: Reducing inequality within and among countries; Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts and Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation. Education is a strategic investment for addressing global challenges and achieving sustainable development.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Several analyses²⁶ contribute to a common understanding of key bottlenecks, particularly in basic education:

- **Very low primary completion rates.** The national retention rate in grade 3 is 70 %; in grade 5, it is 50 % and only 1 out of 3 children make it to grade 7. While 97 % of children enrol in primary education, only 42 % graduate. Dropout rates for primary education are very high, with large regional disparities (20.8 % in Cabo Delgado and 1.3 % in Maputo). There are many possible factors behind this, starting with low school readiness opportunities and very low pre-primary coverage. Poverty is the main driver, contributing to a number of demand side factors; malnutrition is critical, the indirect costs of schooling, and other factors including early marriages, adolescent pregnancies and sexual gender-based violence and abuse, ranging from sexual harassment to forced marriages. There is also low coverage of secondary schooling, both in terms of supply

²⁵ EU Gender Action-Plan (GAP) III – An ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action (2020-2024)

²⁶ World Bank Public Expenditure Review in the Education Sector, 2017; WB Service Delivery Indicators Study, 2015; 2017 Assessment of education sector conducted by Ireland; UNESCO Education Policy Review (2108), MINEDH Education Sector Analysis (July 2019).