



GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) Operational Guidelines

Purpose of this Document

These Operational Guidelines are intended to assist GEF SGP National Coordinators/Sub-Regional Coordinators (NCs/SRCs), National Steering Committees (NSCs), Sub-regional Steering Committees (SRSCs), National Focal Groups (NFGs), UNDP Country Offices and National Host Institution (NHI) staff as well as the SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) and the Global Coordinator of the SGP Upgrading Country Programmes in programme implementation.. They are based on the experience and knowledge gained both at the country and global levels through years of GEF SGP programme implementation. They provide the basic framework for operations in relation to the structure, implementation, and administration of the programme. They also address the project cycle and grant disbursement. Programme and project monitoring, evaluation, and reporting are covered in the GEF SGP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The guidelines and models set forth herein are meant to apply generally to all GEF SGP Country Programmes. It is recognized, however, that different contexts and situations will require different responses and adaptations. Any questions about the application of particular provisions of the guidelines or need for adaptation should be referred to the GEF SGP Global Manager and Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) or the Global Coordinator of the SGP Upgrading Country Programmes. On administrative and financial matters, questions may be answered by the UNOPS SGP Standard Operating Procedures and, if necessary, to the respective UNOPS SGP Portfolio Manager.

List of Acronyms

BAC	Budget Account Classification Code
CBO	Community-based Organization
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework
CO	Country Office
COA	Chart of Account (ATLAS)
COB	Country Operating Budget
CPMT	Central Programme Management Team
CPS	Country Programme Strategy
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IOV	Inter-office Voucher
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOD	Miscellaneous Obligation Document
NC	National Coordinator
NFP	National Focal Person
NFG	National Focal Group
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHI	National Host Institution
NPFE	GEF National Portfolio Formulation Exercise



NSC	National Steering Committee
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Programme Assistant
PO	Purchase Order (ATLAS)
REQ	Requisition (ATLAS)
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SGP	GEF Small Grants Programme
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRC	Sub-Regional Coordinator
SRSC	Sub-Regional Steering Committee
SPS	Sub-Regional Programme Strategy
TOR	Terms of Reference
UCP	Upgrading Country Programme
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

PART I: GEF SGP PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

1. The structure of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), implemented by UNDP, is decentralized and country-driven. Within the parameters established by the GEF Council and reflected in the Project Document for an Operational Phase, the programme seeks to provide for maximum country and community-level ownership and initiative. This decentralization is balanced against the need for programme consistency and accountability across the participating countries for the achievement of the GEF's global environmental objectives, and the SGP's particular benchmarks as stated in the Project Document for each Operational Phase.
2. The SGP is a global and multi-focal area GEF project, approved for funding by the GEF Council on a rolling replenishment, implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF partnership, and executed by UNOPS. In the case of Upgraded Country Programmes, UNOPS execution is the recommended option although a country-specific execution modality utilizing a national non-governmental organization or a consortium of non-governmental organizations, selected by UNDP through a competitive process, can be utilized¹. Within the UNDP framework, the SGP, as a global programme, is handled differently from UNDP core national or regional programmes.²
3. The GEF Council approves SGP Project Information Form (PIF), GEF CEO Endorsement request, and SGP Project Document for the SGP Global Programme as well as for all Upgrading Country Programmes for each GEF Operational Phase. The SGP Project Document, whether for the global program or upgrading country programmes, provides the framework for SGP operations in accordance

¹ As per policy approved by the GEF Council Meeting (November 10-12, 2009, Washington DC) based on GEF/C.36/4 Small Grants Programme: Execution Arrangements and Upgrading Policy for GEF-5 (see para 19 and paras 52 - 53). This has been reaffirmed through the approval of the GEF Council Paper GEF/C.46/13 of April 30, 2014 "GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF-6.

² For more information about global programming, please see the UNDP Programming Manual, especially Section 8.3. The Programming Manual is available in UNDP Country Offices and at the following website: <http://www.undp.org/osg/pm/index.htm>



with the GEF mandate, including specific benchmarks for project achievements. It also sets forth many of the programme and financial reporting requirements for which UNDP has legal responsibility.

4. Globally, the SGP brings together country programmes of participating countries across all world regions. The key eligibility criteria for countries to participate in SGP are:
 - ✓ Existence of environmental needs and threats in GEF focal or thematic areas;
 - ✓ Ratification of at least one of the global environmental conventions including the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD);
 - ✓ Government commitment in the participating country and support for the programme's implementation modality according to the operational guidelines;
 - ✓ Potential for strong government-NGO relations and positive support for local Civil Society Organizations;³
 - ✓ Commitment to resource mobilization: the UNDP/CO and government share available funding for SGP delivery from both GEF and non-GEF sources, and support efforts to attract other co-funding sources;
 - ✓ Positive enabling environment.

SGP Headquarters Structure

5. A UNDP/GEF Unit at UNDP Headquarters in New York provides fiduciary oversight for all of its GEF activities, including the SGP. Key UNDP Headquarters staff include the UNDP GEF Executive Coordinator, and his/her Deputy, who are legally accountable to UNDP and to the GEF Council for the utilisation of GEF resources.
6. Overall management of the SGP Global Programme, including operational guidance and support to the country programmes, as well as the identification and establishment of SGP Country Programmes in new countries, are conducted by the SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT). The CPMT is composed of a Global Manager and Deputy Global Manager; Programme Specialists responsible for matrixed country support and focal area guidance, knowledge management, and monitoring & evaluation; Programme Associates; as well as external consultants, as needed. The SGP Upgrading Country Programmes (UCPs), given their financing modality as GEF Full-Size Projects, are managed by a UNDP-GEF UCP Global Coordinator, who provides technical assistance, strategic advice, and resource mobilization support and promotes substantive and strategic alignment and coordination of the UCPs with the Global SGP Programme.
7. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provides programme execution services including administrative, financial, legal, operational, procurement and project management for the SGP as described in detail in the UNOPS SGP Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).⁴ The UNOPS SGP Cluster Coordinator and his/her team work closely with the SGP Deputy Global Manager and CPMT staff, as well as with the SGP UCP Global Coordinator.

³ For the purpose of the SGP and its grant making, CSOs refer to national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with priority on community-based organizations (CBOs), indigenous peoples, farmers, scientific community, women's groups, and youth and children organizations.

⁴https://intrafed.unops.org/ORGANIGRAMME/NAO/SGP/SGP_MANUAL/Pages/default.aspx



8. The SGP Global Manager and his/her alternate, the SGP Deputy Global Manager, are ultimately responsible for the overall management, strategic direction, policy development and resource mobilization efforts of the SGP Global Programme. The Programme Specialists are primarily responsible for guidance on GEF focal areas and thematic directions, Country Programme support, regional coordination responsibilities, knowledge sharing, partnership development and networking. As necessary, the Global Manager and Deputy Global Manager may delegate certain functions to the Programme Specialists.
9. SGP regional teams, composed of at least one staff member from CPMT and from UNOPS, as well as the regional senior SGP National Coordinator as needed, may provide a range of technical advice, operational, management and administrative support to country programmes in each of the six SGP world regions,⁵ divided as follows:
 - ✓ Africa
 - ✓ Arab States
 - ✓ Asia
 - ✓ Europe & CIS
 - ✓ Pacific
 - ✓ Latin America & the Caribbean
10. While for the Global Programme, the CPMT regional focal point focuses primarily on GEF technical and programmatic matters, and the UNOPS regional focal point is responsible for administrative and financial issues, the SGP regional team works collaboratively in advising country programmes with regard to all substantive and operational matters. The regional teams also review the annual SGP country staff performance and recommend ratings for review by the Deputy Global Manager, and his/her counterpart in UNOPS, prior to endorsement and finalisation by the Global Manager.
11. For the Upgrading Country Programmes, the division of labour between the SGP UCP Global Coordinator and UNOPS is similar to those above, as are the collaborative arrangements between UNDP-GEF and UNOPS.
12. SGP Programme Associates are responsible for daily administration, filing and archive management; financial record-keeping and reporting to donors; human resources support; external communications; organisation of meetings; and responses to routine requests for information. The Programme Associates monitor completion of SGP work-plans, and assist in CPMT activities, correspondence, and other assigned tasks.

SGP Country Programme Structure

13. The SGP operates in a decentralized and country-driven manner through a National Coordinator or Sub-regional Coordinator (*both hereafter to be referred as NC*) and National Steering Committee or National Focal Group for those in sub-regional programme modality (*both hereafter abbreviated to*

⁵ For a full list of participating SGP countries see:
http://www.sgp.undp.org//index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=contry_profile



NSC) in each participating country, with some modification in the case of countries in a sub-regional programme modality⁶, with financial and administrative support provided by the UNDP Country Office (CO). In some countries, a National Host Institution (NHI) or host NGO⁷ is responsible for programme implementation in conjunction with the NC and NSC. At the country level, the SGP operates under the overall UNDP SBAA agreement, although the SGP Global Programme is not considered a part of the CCF or UNDP core functions at the country level.

14. The NSC is composed of voluntary members from NGOs, academic and scientific institutions, other civil society organizations, the UNDP CO, and government, with a majority of members coming from the non-governmental sector. The NSC provides overall guidance and direction to the Country Programme, and contributes to developing and implementing strategies for Country Programme sustainability.
15. The technical capacity of the individual NSC members is an important criterion in determining its composition, and to the maximum extent possible the NSC membership should include experts in the relevant GEF focal areas of biodiversity; climate change mitigation; international waters; sustainable land management; sustainable forest management and REDD; persistent organic pollutants/chemicals; as well as capacity development. The inclusion of the government GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) or relevant Convention Focal Point in the NSC is also recommended.
16. The NSC is responsible for the review, selection and approval of projects, and for ensuring their technical and substantive quality as regards the strategic objectives of the SGP. In collaboration with the NC, the NSC contributes to the development of the Country Programme Strategy (CPS)⁸ in accordance with the relevant GEF Project Document for the Operational Phase and national environmental priorities, and oversees its implementation. NSC members are expected to support the Country Programme in resource mobilization and in mainstreaming SGP lessons learned and successes in national development planning and policy-making. NSC members are encouraged to participate in pre-selection project site visits and in project monitoring and evaluation.
17. The NSC may also constitute a Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) with a pool of voluntary experts on call to serve as a technical sub-committee, for review of proposals and in relation to specific areas of programming and partnership development. The TAG can also be tasked by the NSC to provide specific technical guidance in specialised areas of work, such as carbon measurement, payments for ecosystem services, marketing and certification of products, transboundary diagnostic analysis, and other relevant fields. In addition, the TAG may also be formed in response to donor and co-financing requirements mobilised for the SGP country programme.
18. The SGP NC has lead responsibility for managing the development and implementation of the country or sub-regional programme, for ensuring that grants and projects meet GEF and SGP criteria, and for planning and implementation of upscaling strategies. The NC's primary functions include *inter alia*: (i) assisting CSOs in the formulation of project proposals; (ii) serving as the *ex officio* secretariat for the

⁶In the case of SGP Sub-regional Programmes, the Sub-Regional Coordinator (SRC) may manage the programme, while projects are reviewed and approved by a voluntary National Focal Group (NFG) with part-time facilitation by a National Focal Person (NFP). Some countries, with substantial grant making, may decide to shift to a Country Programme modality still linked to the subregional group with a full-time NC or a Community Program Officer and the SRC providing subregional coordination and technical support.

⁷National Host Institution or NHI and host NGO are used interchangeably in this document because SGP Country Programmes commonly employ both terms.

⁸An Upgrading Country Programme is not required to produce a Country Programme Strategy since it produces a Project Document for the Full Size Project financing their Country Programme for the relevant Operational Phase.



NSC; (iii) ensuring sound programme monitoring and evaluation, including periodic project site visits; (iv) resource mobilization; (v) communication and dissemination of SGP information; and (v) global reporting to CPMT, UNOPS, responding to audits, and other tasks as stipulated in their ToR.⁹

19. The UNDP CO provides management support to the SGP Country Programme as outlined in this document. The UNDP Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator (*hereafter abbreviated to UNDP RR*) in each UNDP CO assigns a senior staff person (typically the Environment Focal Point or head of the Sustainable Development Cluster) to serve as the SGP focal point. The UNDP RR participates in the NSC or may designate the focal point as his/her delegate in the NSC. Each UNDP CO also contributes to monitoring programme activities – usually through broad oversight by the designated focal point as part of NSC responsibilities - facilitates interaction with the host government, and develops links with other in-country financial and technical resources.
20. The UNDP CO is also responsible for providing operational support – the RR signature of grant project MOAs (on behalf of UNOPS); appointment letters of NSC members (on behalf of CPMT); local grant disbursements; HR administration; as well as assisting in audit exercises for the programme. The detailed steps for each operational aspect are described in the UNOPS SGP SOPs. The UNDP CO also plays a fundamental role in launching a new SGP Country Programme in terms of endorsement of the government application to be a participating SGP country and in helping CPMT organize the start-up mission. The UNDP CO also plays a critical role in the proper closing of an SGP Country Programme.

PART II IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SGP COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

In-country institutional arrangements

21. The SGP operates at the country level under the overall UNDP SBAA agreement, however, the SGP Global Programme remains the responsibility of the CPMT/UNOPS SGP Cluster at Headquarters and, like the Upgrading Country Programmes, is accountable to UNDP-GEF in New York, and ultimately, the GEF Council. There are two basic modalities for SGP hosting arrangements for the country programme that, in consultation with country stakeholders, will be decided by CPMT or the UCP Global Coordinator. In most countries, the programme is hosted by the UNDP CO, although this may also mean that the SGP office is physically located outside CO premises. Where there are issues of accessibility and based on consultations with stakeholders, the programme could be hosted in a National Host Institution (NHI), which may be an NGO or academic institution.
22. In case of NHI hosting, UNOPS issues and administers a sub-contract with the NHI that outlines the technical support and administrative services to be provided, as well as the applicable operating budget. In all cases, the UNDP CO provides needed support for SGP in-country operations in coordination with the CPMT or UCP Global Coordinator and UNOPS. Whatever the hosting arrangements, all Country Programmes respond equally to the relevant Operational Phase Project Document (global or national upgrading) and the global SGP Operational Guidelines.
23. As noted above, NCs of Country Programmes in the Global SGP Programme are guided by CPMT regional focal points for the majority of operational and technical matters, whilst reporting ultimately to the SGP Global Manager. NCs of Upgrading Country Programmes are guided by the Global UCP

⁹See full-length version of SGP NC ToRs.



Coordinator. NCs are also accountable to the UNDP RR for country-level programme expenditures and on matters regarding meeting the ethical and professional standards of the UNDP. The UNDP RR, in consultation with members of the NSC, is responsible for preparing the annual evaluation of NC performance and recommendation concerning contractual status for review by either CPMT or the Global UCP Coordinator, and UNOPS.

21. In keeping with the spirit and mandate of the SGP to develop and foster the capacities of CSOs in participating countries, it is expected that as individual Country Programmes mature it will be possible to transfer the hosting arrangements from the UNDP CO to NHIs. Any decision for transfer should be based on a full consultative process and analysis of key factors, and must be approved by the CPMT or Global UCP Coordinator in consultation with the UNDP RR. In certain cases, where the selected NHI does not fully meet performance expectations, and upon consultation with country stakeholders, the contract may be terminated by the CPMT or Global Coordinator, and UNOPS, and hosting will be transferred either to the UNDP CO or to another NHI.
22. The relationship with an NHI may range from the provision of physical office space, with the NC and NSC carrying full responsibility for programme management; one in which the NHI is responsible for providing specifically agreed services, such as technical advice and support; through to one where the NHI carries full responsibility for managing the SGP programme. The extent of responsibility will be clearly defined in the contract for services signed by UNOPS and the NHI and may evolve over time.
23. The identification of a pool of suitable NHIs may be carried out through a process of competitive bidding, or by gradually accumulating a list of available and interested organizations in consultation with key stakeholders. Local representation of international NGOs would not normally be eligible. The legitimacy and neutrality of potential NHIs within the national NGO community are essential qualifications to carry out SGP grant-making activities. Once a pool of organizations has been established, the following factors will be considered by the CPMT or Global UCP Coordinator, and UNDP CO to select the best candidate:
 - ✓ National stature and credibility;
 - ✓ Good working relationships with other CSOs, including participation in environment/development networks;
 - ✓ Demonstrated compatibility with the procedures, objectives, and grant-making functions of the SGP, GEF, and UNDP;
 - ✓ Significant experience in community-based, participatory environment and development;
 - ✓ Substantial involvement and technical expertise in environmental issues related to the GEF focal areas and the Rio conventions;
 - ✓ Proven programme management and administrative capacity with systems in place.
24. The NC is normally an employee of UNOPS whereas the contract is administered locally by the UNDP CO on behalf of UNOPS. In some cases, the NC contract administration can be covered under the terms of the contract with the NHI. The selection of the NC is done through a publicly advertised and competitive selection process. As a general rule, the recruitment process for the NC is managed on behalf of UNOPS by the UNDP CO under the overall supervision of the UNDP RR. This is ordinarily the case even if the NC will be placed in an NHI; however, the NHI, as appropriate and upon approval of CPMT, may manage the NC recruitment. The selection panel submits three of the top applicants to



the SGP Global Manager for final selection and decision. The recruitment process and related guidelines are described in more detail in the UNOPS SGP Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

25. Typically, NHIs do not normally administer grant funds. As Country Programmes evolve and/or upgrade, however, it may become desirable to include direct grants administration as part of NHI responsibilities under UNOPS-issued contracts or other mechanisms, thereby increasing the level of country ownership of, and civil society participation in, the programme. Administrative procedures will need to be devised to ensure that the administration of grant allocations and their transferral to grant recipients remain transparent, accountable and fluid. NHIs cannot be awarded nor use SGP grant funds.

SGP country staff roles and responsibilities

26. The NC is responsible for the overall functioning of the SGP in each participating country, and for the achievement of the benchmarks established for Country Programme implementation in the CPS (Global Programme) or Project Document (UCP) for the relevant Operational Phase. The NC is expected to have full-time dedication to the SGP.¹⁰ The NC is responsible for ensuring sound programme and project monitoring and evaluation, and laying the foundation for programme upscaling and sustainability. In project development, the NC may work directly to assist the proponent CSO to access needed support, including the recommendation of support through planning grants. The NC, jointly with the UNDP CO, bear direct responsibility for all local programme expenditures. A critical aspect of the NC job performance is to carefully monitor and supervise these expenditures under the overall supervision of UNOPS and to ensure accountability and transparency.
27. The NC usually represents the SGP in local and national meetings, workshops, and other events, and may be accompanied by members of the NSC. However, for legal and financial purposes, only the UNDP RR or his/her Officer in Charge (OIC) may represent the SGP in-country (on behalf of UNOPS). Only the UNDP RR or his/her Officer in Charge (OIC) can sign SGP grant Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) and for signing any co-financing arrangements on behalf of SGP. While the NC may initiate and undertake co-financing and other negotiations for the programme, s/he should never officially sign such agreements. The NC, however, may sign non-binding collaborative agreements between SGP and other projects and programs. The NC should consult the CPMT or the Global UCP Coordinator, and the UNOPS SGP Cluster if there is any doubt on signing rules and procedures.
28. The performance of NCs is evaluated annually. The evaluation is undertaken through an online Performance and Results Assessment (PRA) in two parts: a self-assessment by the NC, and a performance evaluation with NSC inputs under the charge of the UNDP RR. These two parts of the evaluation should be completed shortly after the completion of the reporting period. The completed and signed evaluations are submitted to the CPMT or the Global UCP Coordinator. The PRA evaluations are reviewed by the CPMT or Global UCP Coordinator, with UNOPS inputs, and final decisions are then taken for the Global Programme Country Programmes by the SGP Global Manager and Deputy Global Manager on contract renewal, or by the Global UCP Coordinator, as well as other actions that might need to be taken.

¹⁰The NC should not accept any other functions unless a cost-sharing arrangement can be negotiated with the UNDP CO or host NGO and validated by CPMT/UNOPS.



29. In most countries, the NC works with a Programme Assistant/Associate (PA). On behalf of UNOPS, the UNDP CO may hire a PA with technical and/or administrative skills and functions depending on local needs. The NC shall be involved in the selection process and the panel recommendation will be forwarded to CPMT and UNOPS for final approval. The NC will be in charge of the supervision and PRA for the PA. In certain cases, consultants with a technical background, especially in the GEF focal areas, may be recruited to contribute to project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and can be delegated by the NC to provide these services to CSOs and SGP projects as necessary. The recruitment process and related guidelines are highlighted in detail in the UNOPS SGP SOPs.

National Steering Committee procedures

30. The NSC is a central element of the SGP and provides the primary substantive contribution and oversight to the programme, in coordination with the NC. While staffing and operational management of the SGP is undertaken through UNDP/UNOPS structures, no SGP project may be undertaken at the country level without the approval of the NSC. As such, the NSC must do its best to ensure the technical and substantive quality of SGP grants, and the administrative and financial capacity, either actual or potential, of the CSO grant recipients. The UNDP RR, or his/her delegate, as well as other members of the NSC, are encouraged to provide any relevant information about these concerns, especially the financial and organizational integrity of CSOs. Operationally, the decisions of the NSC are considered final provided they are consistent with these operational guidelines, the SGP Project Document for the GEF Operational Phase and the Country Programme Strategy (or UCP Project Document). However, neither the NSC nor its individual members as programme volunteers, hold any legal or fiduciary responsibility for the SGP or its activities.
31. The selection of NSC members is normally done by the NC in consultation with the UNDP RR. For new country programmes, the NSC is often established as a result of a preparatory mission or in the initial stages of launching the programme. NSC members should have an abiding interest and commitment to working with communities and share a vision of what sustainable development and "*thinking globally, acting locally*" might mean in terms of linking the GEF focal areas with community needs and concerns. NSC non-governmental members must have high credibility and wide experience working with local communities and CSOs in the country and thus can represent their needs and interests in committee discussions. Strong, experienced, and technically competent civil society representation on the NSC is crucial as a means of keeping the SGP responsive to its mandate to work with CSOs, CBOs and indigenous peoples. These members must also have the requisite knowledge of GEF Focal Areas and/or specific themes such as gender, sustainable livelihoods, and knowledge management. Governmental and donor agency members should hold positions relevant to the work of the SGP and at a level where they could make decisions on behalf of their agencies, particularly when assessing proposals which they are being asked to fund. NSC members on the whole must be able and willing to discuss constructively and develop consensus decisions. The NSC, with the NC, are responsible for ensuring participatory, democratic, impartial, and transparent procedures for project review and approval, as well as all other aspects of programme implementation at the country level in accordance with the SGP Project Document for the relevant Operational Phase.
32. The composition of a newly established NSC is subject to ratification by the SGP Global Manager or the Global UCP Coordinator while subsequent appointments can be ratified by the responsible CPMT Regional Focal Point for global programme countries and by the Global UCP Coordinator for



upgrading country programmes. In general, only one government representative on the NSC is required. However, depending on the circumstances, country programmes can have additional government representatives such as Convention focal points, although whatever the case, the majority of members must be non-governmental. The UNDP RR provides the appointment letters on behalf of the SGP.

33. NSC members usually serve for a period of three years. Each country or sub-regional programme must decide whether this term is renewable, and how eligibility for renewal is determined. In general, periodically inviting new members is a sound and healthy policy that brings new ideas and expertise to programme implementation, and roughly one quarter of NSC members may rotate in any given year. Changing the entire membership at any one time should be avoided.
34. Participation in the NSC is without monetary compensation. Travel expenses for project site visits or to NSC meetings can be covered by the SGP country operational budget.
35. NSCs adopt decisions under the principle of consensus and rarely resort to voting to determine whether a project is approved or a particular course of action is taken. To facilitate meetings, the NSC may decide to select its Chairperson(s) in the following way: (i) one of the most committed expert members to Chair for a particular period of time; (ii) members to chair meetings on a rotating basis to enhance each member's participation; and (iii) on a co-chair approach with government and non-government representation to promote civil society leadership and CSO-government collaboration which are institutional objectives of the programme.
36. The NC serves ex officio on the NSC, participating in deliberations, but not in decisions in the project selection process. The NC usually convenes the NSC and functions as its secretariat, including preparing minutes of meetings and maintaining a historical record of programme decisions and implementation. A copy of NSC minutes, signed by the members, and other pertinent material should be filed at the UNDP CO.
37. In as wide a consultation as possible with country stakeholders, the NC shall prepare a long list of possible volunteers to the NSC. From this, the NC in consultation with the UNDP RR prepares the list of NSC members to be nominated for approval by the SGP Global Manager by considering both the expertise and qualifications of the individual candidates, and the overall composition and balance of the committee. While certain institutions (the UNDP, and appropriate governmental ministry or agencies, the NHI) must be represented in the NSC, members should also be chosen who as individuals, including from the private sector and donor community, would contribute significantly to the committee and the programme's various expertise needs (e.g. on GEF focal areas, sustainable livelihoods, gender considerations, communications, resource mobilization, capacity development). The NC, after due consultation with other NSC members of good standing and the UNDP RR, may recommend changes in the composition of the committee to CPMT if it becomes clear that a particular member's participation is not contributing to the programme.
38. The objectivity, transparency and credibility of the NSC is of paramount importance to the success of the Country Programme, and to maintaining good relations among stakeholders. As a general rule, Country Programmes cannot consider proposals associated with organizations of sitting NSC members. A CSO may nonetheless submit proposals when its representative has finished the term of service and is no longer on the Committee. On an exceptional basis, and under specified conditions



pre-approved by CPMT or the UCP Global Coordinator, CSOs with members in the NSC can submit proposals.

Country Programme Strategy

39. Before any grant-making or other programme activities may take place, each SGP participating country must have an approved Country Programme Strategy or Sub-regional Programme Strategy (abbreviated here to **CPS**). The development/revision of the CPS is designed to ensure congruence with the SGP Project Document for the relevant Operational Phase; the strategic planning frameworks associated with the relevant Rio Conventions;¹¹ as well as with the GEF National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (NPFE) where relevant.
40. For Upgrading Country Programmes, a standard UNDP-GEF Project Document is produced that reflects the Country Program strategy that is broadly coherent with the SGP Global strategic initiatives announced at the commencement of each Operational Phase. The Project Document is formulated after approval of the corresponding PIF and is approved by UNDP and the GEF CEO as per standard GEF and UNDP procedures. In the development of the Project Document, the same multistakeholder, participatory approach is followed as that of Country Program Strategy development.
41. For new SGP Country Programmes, the development of a CPS is one of the first tasks to be undertaken by the NC and newly-formed NSC. In both new and continuing SGP Country Programmes, it is important to involve key stakeholders in the CPS revision/elaboration process, and to fully engage and involve the NSC. In this regard, the CPS may be considered a living document, and shall be revised or updated in every operational phase of SGP, or as deemed necessary by the NSC, to align country programme priorities with GEF policies and priorities, and those included in the relevant SGP Project Document.
42. As described in the CPS Guidance framework, the development or revision of the CPS serves several broad purposes to:
 - ✓ Identify the national circumstances and priorities of the country vis-à-vis the Project Document for the relevant Operational Phase;
 - ✓ Provide stakeholders with a framework document to understand the priorities for SGP funding for strengthened country relevance and ownership;
 - ✓ Provide a strategic framework for allocating resources, especially selection of SGP projects, through a bio-geographic and/or thematic focus;
 - ✓ Serve as the framework for Country Programme operations and guiding programme implementation;
 - ✓ Constitute the basis for the assessment of country programme achievements and impact.
43. The development/revision of the CPS (or UCP Project Document) should be undertaken as a participatory process that engages the full range of non-governmental and government stakeholders in the country. The CPS preparation should be seen not only as a document to satisfy global programmatic requirements, but as a country-led process which has value in its own right. The key players in the process are the NC (who facilitates the process, and is responsible for the majority of

¹¹ These include the GEF National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) process; the CBD National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs); the UNFCCC National Communications; the UNCCD National Actions Programmes (NAPs); and the Stockholm Convention National Implementation Plans (NIPs).



the drafting), and the NSC (which provides input and guidance throughout the process, and endorses the end product).

44. The CPS should contain: (a) background situation of the country which the SGP country programme has to consider; (b) key objectives vis-a-vis the country situation and the objectives of the global SGP Prodoc for the operational phase; (c) geographic (with maps) and/or thematic focal areas; (d) priority activities to be supported by grantmaking; and (e) expected outcomes, indicators, and M&E plan. For formulation of a UCP Project Document (ProDoc), the standard UNDP-GEF format is followed.
45. Recommended steps to developing the CPS or ProDoc are as follows:
 - ✓ NC prepares an initial CPS or ProDoc draft for consultation with the NSC based on the current SGP Project Document or the approved PIF in the case of UCPs;
 - ✓ Wide stakeholder consultations held with key CSO, government, academic and other concerned parties to discuss relevant issues (where possible, these consultations to be linked to the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (NPFE) of the GEF in the country);
 - ✓ Incorporation of stakeholder inputs into the draft CPS or ProDoc by the NC, and initial approval of the document by the NSC;
 - ✓ Submission of the draft CPS to the CPMT Regional Focal Point for comment and review; draft ProDoc submitted to the UCP Global Coordinator for comment and review;
 - ✓ Further CPS or ProDoc revision as necessary based on comments and recommendations by the CPMT or UCP Global Coordinator, respectively;
 - ✓ Submission of the revised CPS or ProDoc by the NC for formal endorsement by the NSC;
 - ✓ Final approval of the endorsed CPS by the SGP Global Manager, or delegated CPMT Regional Focal Point; final approval of the endorsed ProDoc by the UCP Global Coordinator and submission to the GEF for CEO Endorsement and to UNDP for approval;
 - ✓ Posting and circulation of the final version of the CPS as a public document; posting of ProDoc on GEF Website.

Country Operating Budget

46. The Country Operating Budget or Sub-regional Operating Budget (abbreviated here to COB) is the financial provision for country, or sub-regional, programme implementation. The COB is prepared by the NC, and reviewed and approved by the CPMT and UNOPS. The COB should allow the effective operation of the country or sub-regional programme in implementing activities in support of the objectives of the Project Document, as well as to be responsive to specific country circumstances and needs, as reflected in the CPS. In countries where a NHI hosts the SGP, the COB is generally covered by the terms of the contract for services between the organization and UNOPS. The COB process and related guidelines are highlighted in detail in the UNOPS SGP SOPs.
47. The budget for operations of Upscaling Country Programmes is approved as part of the Project Document and is subject to revision on an annual basis along with approval of Annual Work Plans and requests for annual Authorized Spending Limits. UNOPS, as executing agency, manages the budget in direct contact with the National Coordinator and in collaboration with the relevant UNDP Country Office.

PART III IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SGP GRANTS



SGP grants and project cycle

48. Each SGP Country Programme should, after adopting or revising its CPS or Project Document, prepare and issue an SGP programme announcement. Information in the call for proposals should clearly state that the SGP makes grants to eligible CSOs¹², or to individuals, as in the case of fellowships, with priority for the poor and vulnerable in the GEF focal areas, with a maximum grant amount for a project of US\$50,000¹³. The subsequent process of developing an SGP grant project should then take place in a transparent manner covering the: (i) project preparation guidelines setting forth the eligibility criteria; (ii) application/proposal review process and calendar; (iii) formats for project concept and proposal development, and; (iv) co-financing requirements in cash and/or in-kind.
49. Project concepts from eligible CSOs may be screened by the NC or jointly with the NSC. Each country programme should determine which screening modality it will follow, and periodically review this decision to make sure that the modality chosen is working well. In both cases, project concept selection should be done on the basis of established eligibility and selection criteria in accordance with the CPS or UCP Project Document. At the very least, project concepts should be relevant to one or several of the GEF focal areas and reflect the needs of the community or communities and/or stakeholders that would be involved. Once the concepts have been selected, the proponent organizations will be notified of this decision and asked to develop complete project proposals.
50. It is critical for all project proposals to meet the GEF and SGP criteria. While it is an important part of the NC responsibilities to assist CSOs in proposal development, sometimes additional assistance is nonetheless required. In such cases, two options may be considered: (i) a local consultant may be hired or a capable “assisting NGO” may be contacted to help the CSO/CBO/communities according to terms of reference that the NC elaborates in coordination with the proponent organization; and (ii) the SGP planning grant modality may be used.
51. In support of regional or global scaling up, mainstreaming, replication, and broader adoption of SGP successes and lessons learned, as well as to leverage resources and utilize strategic opportunities at these levels, grants for regional or global initiatives¹⁴ can be provided. For the Global SGP, guidance for proactive or responsive modalities as well as procedures for this will come from the SGP CPMT in consultation with involved SGP Country Programmes and/or relevant Programme stakeholders and partners.

¹² The term civil society organization (CSO) herein refers to the definition of major groups agreed by Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 to include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmers, women, the scientific and technological community, youth and children, indigenous peoples and their communities, business and industry, workers and trade unions and local authorities. For SGP, their eligibility for grants follows the practice of the GEF (for the purpose of CSOs attending/observing Council meetings) which defines them as ‘non-profit organizations’. Local authorities shall include traditional or indigenous governance units and their proposals to be eligible should refer to meeting the needs of communities under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, international NGOs and for-profit business and industry groups are not directly eligible for SGP support, but may co-finance the Programme’s grant projects. Priority grant-making should also be directed at grassroots groups such as community-based organizations (CBOs), indigenous peoples, farmers, women, youth and children, and workers. Those that are especially vulnerable because of poverty, social exclusion, or disability should also be provided priority.

¹³ The SGP Country Programme could provide grants above this maximum amount for “Strategic Grants” that can be up to \$150,000 under a special provision for this category of grants and following guidance from CPMT or the Global UCP Coordinator as relevant.

¹⁴ The allocated funds for this should not exceed 10% of the available GEF global core grant allocation for an operational phase.



Planning Grants

52. The NC or NSC may authorize planning grants¹⁵ once project concepts have been selected. CSOs such as CBOs, indigenous peoples' organisations and communities with little experience in project design and management receive priority to benefit from this assistance. Hence, the planning grant has an important capacity-building function which in itself is an important SGP objective. The NC makes recommendations to the NSC about which proponent organizations would require a planning grant.
53. A planning grant can be used by an eligible CSO to organize stakeholder workshops or meetings to design the project in a participatory manner. The planning grant can be used to contract an experienced NGO or local consultant to work with the project proponents to elaborate the project, to undertake baseline assessments, develop a business plan (for projects with strong sustainable livelihood elements), and through learning-by-doing, build capacity in proposal design including the development of indicators and a monitoring and evaluation plan.
54. Administratively, a planning grant is a grant like any other SGP grant, and therefore can only be made to eligible CSOs. The project document for the planning grant specifies the activities to be undertaken, and the responsibilities of the parties concerned. The NSC generally approves the planning grant, although the NSC can in certain instances also delegate approval to the NC for certain exceptional cases (e.g. time-sensitive activities, smaller amounts). The process follows the modus operandi of SGP facilitative grant-making and is explained in detail in the UNOPS SGP SOPs.

Project proposals

55. SGP provides grants to support activities that help achieve the programme objectives outlined in the CPS and the global SGP project document or the UCP Project Document for the Operational Phase. In terms of helping achieve global environmental benefits, the SGP's starting point is to ensure that each project proposal fits the GEF criteria and that each proposal clearly articulates how project objectives and activities would have a positive effect in the relevant GEF focal areas. To create sustainability and impact beyond the project, SGP projects can combine demonstration, capacity-building, network building, awareness raising, and dissemination of lessons learned as integral components. Given this comprehensive approach, while a logical framework is not formally required, it would be advisable to include a Monitoring and Evaluation work plan in each proposal (see SGP M&E Framework).
56. As a demand-driven programme, SGP projects endeavour to address both the GEF criteria, as well as community needs and initiatives. The SGP usually works with communities and localities that confront a multitude of social and economic development problems that impact on concerns related to global environmental conventions. For SGP interventions to have relevance and utility at the community level, these non-GEF circumstances are taken into account in project design. A key guiding philosophy of the programme has been to reach the marginalized poor and vulnerable communities, especially when there are no other donors present, and where development baseline conditions have not been met. Typically, the SGP will therefore need to mobilize additional resources to help provide the co-financing, technical assistance, capacity-building, gender training, income-generation

¹⁵ Planning grants are usually in the range of \$2,000 to \$5,000 depending on the capacity of the proponent and additional work that has to be done. The NSC should decide how to make the provision of planning grants in the most facilitative way such as allowing the NC to make planning grant decisions and reporting on these in NSC meetings.



component, or whatever non-GEF element may be necessary for a project's success. These project components are vital to achieving local acceptance, ownership, and sustainability of SGP interventions.

Funds disbursement

57. The maximum amount for an SGP grant is \$50,000 per project.¹⁶ In special cases, grants for “strategic projects” that consolidate efforts of several communities and CSOs could be provided at a maximum of \$150,000. SGP grants generally only cover a portion of project costs, with other components provided by the CSO partner, the community itself, or by other donors. Since SGP grants fund activities that are directly relevant to the GEF criteria, co-financing must be sought for community baseline or sustainable development needs. However, since it would be unrealistic to require a baseline/incremental cost exercise for each individual project, each country should instead endeavour to mobilize enough funding in cash or in kind to “match” the GEF country grant allocation¹⁷.
58. Once the NSC has approved a project for SGP funding support, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is signed on behalf of UNOPS between the grantee and the UNDP CO. SGP projects normally have a duration of between one and three years. The amounts and schedules may differ, contingent upon the nature and length of project activities, but in no case should the first disbursement be more than 50% of the total project grant amount (except when justified and prior approval from UNOPS has been received). The MOA and grant disbursement process, the applicable templates, and all related guidelines are found in detail in the UNOPS SGP SOPs.
59. A grantee may submit another proposal upon successful completion of an initial project but no grantee can receive funds exceeding US\$50,000 in a given operational phase. Any grantee which has received the maximum \$50,000 in one Operational Phase, may however submit another funding request in the following Operational Phase if the evaluation of project outcomes are positive. .

PART IV REPORTING AND COMMUNICATIONS

60. The NC has lead responsibility for communications between the Country Programme and the CPMT or UCP Global Coordinator. In general, the NC reports on substantive and technical matters to the CPMT or UCP Global Coordinator, and on administrative and financial issues to the UNOPS portfolio manager. The NC should keep the UNDP CO informed of progress in programme implementation, usually through the RR and SGP focal point in the UNDP CO. In particular, the NC and PA are expected to maintain a close working relationship with the UNDP CO regarding the COB and grants disbursements which serves to keep the UNDP abreast of SGP developments.¹⁸ The NC should also endeavour to share relevant SGP reports with the GEF Operational and Political Focal Points as well as global environmental convention focal points.
61. Communications among Country Programmes are facilitated through the global, regional, and sub-regional list servers, the SGP global database and workspace, and the SGP website. Recurring global

¹⁶ In many cases, it may however be advisable to provide smaller initial amounts when the grantee-partners have lower implementation capacity.

¹⁷ The matching of GEF funds with co-financing is finally reckoned at the global programme level so as not to disadvantage new country programmes or those in difficult situations.

¹⁸ SGP Country Programmes are required to monitor the funds (grants and COB amounts) and expenditures allocated to them. Reporting tools and relevant guidelines are provided by the UNOPS SGP SOPs.



reporting requirements, such as annual reports, are complemented by periodic requests by the CPMT, UCP Global Coordinator and/or UNOPS for information on specific subjects, such as reports under preparation for the GEF Council, or for the relevant global environmental conventions. Full guidance on all project and programme reporting is provided in the SGP Monitoring & Evaluation Framework.

62. SGP country teams are responsible for entering detailed information for all prior and current Operational Phases into the SGP database, including the upload of grant project MOAs. Since the database is the foundation for all reporting and communications at the global level, it is imperative that NCs and PAs input the database as soon as projects are approved by the NSC, and keep it regularly updated on the progress of projects. The SGP database and website also includes visual documentation of SGP projects and Country Programmes, accounts of lessons learned, and case studies. Project briefs should be stored in the files of every project for easy use and sharing.
63. The NC is required to report on technical and substantive project and programme progress through the Annual Country Report (GEF Project Implementation Review for UCPs). The ACR complements the information that is entered in the SGP database and should cover progress in meeting the year's deliverables as well as other important information including: (i) assessment of the overall progress for the country programme portfolio; (ii) results of project monitoring and evaluation; (iii) key outcomes of SGP-sponsored events; (iv) progress in strengthening working relationships with CSOs, as well as with government agencies and donors; (v) results of resource mobilization efforts; (vi) development of SGP visibility as a GEF programme and activities to share lessons learned and influence policy; and (vii) any special challenges and difficulties faced.
64. The NC shall take all necessary measures to ensure the visibility of the GEF financing. Such measures shall be in accordance with the need to give adequate publicity to the action being implemented as well as to the support from the GEF. A communication and visibility plan shall be outlined in each project document. This should include, *inter alia*, the compulsory use of the GEF logo on all material, publications, leaflets, brochures and newsletters, websites, business cards, signage, vehicles, supplies and equipment, display panels, commemorative plaques, banners, promotional items, photographs, audiovisual productions, public events and visits and information campaigns. The plan should also include press releases, press conferences and press visits to project sites.
65. The Programme Review is an overall assessment of the Country Programme performance to be undertaken by the NC and the NSC, in consultation with SGP grantees and other stakeholders, at the completion of an SGP Operational Phase. The purpose of the Programme Review is to assess the cumulative progress of the Country Programme in a particular Operational Phase and provide strategic recommendations on the direction for the programme in the next Operational Phase. Once finalized, the Programme Review should be shared by the SGP country team with the country GEF Operational and Political Focal Points and also the relevant Rio Convention focal points.
66. Audits of SGP Country Programmes will be conducted in accordance with the internationally accepted auditing standards, and applicable financial rules and regulations. The SGP audit exercises are designed to improve the transparency, accountability and quality of SGP country and global operations. The audits will cover management, financial, and administrative issues as they relate to the country programme as a whole, and will not normally include provisions for project-level inspection. The principles and processes governing SGP audit operations can be found in the UNOPS SGP SOPs.