# OPERATIONAL PHASE 8 (OP8)

# SGP COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY (CPS)

**INDIA**

## Contents

**OP8 Financial Resources - SGP Country Programme (estimated US$)**[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| Total SGP Grants to date since Country Programme start date (1996) | **USD 11,894,224** |
| OP8 GEF Core Funds | USD 681,818 |
| OP8 GEF STAR Funds | **USD 5,000,000** |
| Other funds (secured) | **USD 500,000 (UNDP in-kind)** |
| Other funds (expected/to be mobilized) | **USD 4,800,000 (1:1 grant)** |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Eighth Operational Phase of the Small Grants Programme (SGP OP8) builds on 30 years of successful experience in empowering local civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in designing and leading community driven initiatives that have enhanced household wellbeing, increased awareness and resilience regarding environmental threats, and generated global environmental benefits. With economic development pressures intensifying in many parts of the developing world and the associated rising inequalities, local communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are becoming increasingly marginalized, unable to cope with threats associated with ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change. Lessons learned and experience gained in previous SGP Operational Phases have demonstrated that integrated, landscape-seascape approaches are effective in mobilizing multiple stakeholder collaboration, linking local CSOs/CBOs with enabling partners and achieving mutually supportive livelihood and environmental outcomes at scale.

The objectives of the SGP OP8 is to engage local CSOs/CBOs in landscape-seascape approaches across the world, providing them access to knowledge and information, capacitating them through learning-by-doing, skills development, and delivering technical and grant assistance for interventions that enhance wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits.

The OP8 objectives reflect the key features of GEF Small Grants Programme 2.0, including new approaches to support youth, women and forest-dwelling communities including tribal groups, linking up with complementary mechanisms, such as the Microfinance Initiative and CSO Challenge Programme, cooperating with other GEF Agencies, and leveraging opportunities with GEF strategies, including the delivery of the GEF-8 Integrated Programmes. In addition, OP8 will facilitate opportunities for innovation and scaling up, catalyze multi-stakeholder alliances to test new approaches through CSOs, and leverage its dialogue platforms towards greater impact. OP8 will also align and contribute to the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

Over successive operational phases, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) in India has matured into a robust platform for catalyzing community-led action for environmental sustainability and inclusive development. From fostering participatory planning and democratic governance in its early stages to advancing integrated

[1] The level of SGP OP8 resources is an estimated total of: (a) the GEF8 core grant allocation; (b) approved STAR resources; as well as (c) other sources of cost sharing & co-financing (country, regional and/or global levels). SGP countries with remaining OP7 balances that have not been pipelined will be expected to use these balances in line with the OP8 strategic approach in order to be coherent in terms of SGP programming and results expected.

landscape approaches and cross-sector partnerships in recent phases, the programme has progressively expanded its reach and influence. Civil society organizations and community institutions have been enabled to test and adapt context-specific solutions rooted in traditional knowledge and ecological stewardship. These grassroots innovations have not only addressed biodiversity loss, land degradation, and climate vulnerability but have also empowered local actors to engage more effectively with policy frameworks and market systems. The adoption of landscape-based planning under OP7, along with investments in knowledge management and institutional learning, has laid a strong foundation for deeper and more strategic engagement in OP8.

A range of innovative flagship schemes and missions of the Government of India, now offer strong complementarities with the objectives of the SGP. Programs such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), the Green India Mission (GIM), the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) provide platforms for scaling sustainable agriculture, afforestation, and biodiversity-based livelihoods. Initiatives like the Jal Shakti Abhiyan and MGNREGA contribute significantly to watershed development and natural resource regeneration, while programs such as PM-KUSUM and rooftop solar schemes align with SGP's promotion of clean and decentralized energy. The convergence of these policies with community-driven SGP models presents a timely opportunity to mainstream nature-based solutions, deepen impact at scale, and reinforce India's commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and to the United Nations Convention on Combatting Desertification (UNCCD).

## 2. COUNTRY PROGRAMME SUMMARY: Key results and achievements

2.1 ***The Small Grants Programme in India***:

Over the years, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) in India has emerged as a credible and impactful mechanism for enabling community-based action aligned with the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) focal areas. Through successive operational phases from GEF-3 to GEF-7 (India was not a part of GEF-6), the programme has catalyzed grassroots innovations, strengthened institutional capacities, and promoted sustainable development pathways, particularly among marginalized and resource-dependent communities. With a cumulative portfolio of over 525 projects, SGP India has helped deliver global environmental benefits while concurrently enhancing livelihoods and local governance systems.

In its earlier phases, particularly during GEF-3 and GEF-4, the programme emphasized participatory approaches to project identification and implementation. These phases saw extensive capacity-building efforts to support community ownership, democratic decision-making, and integration of traditional knowledge into environmental solutions. GEF-4 marked a significant shift in expanding outreach to ecologically vulnerable and geographically remote areas, enabling previously unreached populations to benefit from SGP funding. Civil society partners were encouraged to tap into technical, financial, and institutional resources from government schemes, private donors, and development partners. This approach helped amplify the scope and impact of community-led interventions.

GEF-5 further strengthened this foundation by focusing on integrated rural development strategies, market linkages, and mainstreaming of innovations. During this phase, the SGP India programme facilitated access

to markets for nearly 300 different community-based products, empowering producers through entrepreneurship support and value addition. One of the notable successes of this phase was the conservation and branding of Boka Chaul, a traditional rice variety from Assam, which earned the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2018.

2.2 ***Key achievements***:
The programme's contributions over the years, across multiple GEF focal areas, have been substantial. It is estimated that nearly 106,918 hectares of land and 623 hectares of marine areas have been brought under improved management regimes, including afforestation, sustainable agriculture, and watershed restoration. These interventions contributed to enhanced vegetative cover, soil health, and water conservation, particularly in semi-arid and degraded landscapes. Over 345,685 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions have been mitigated through SGP-supported clean energy and climate-smart practices. The program has benefitted around 23,784 individuals till date of which 41% are women.

In terms of gender empowerment and social inclusion, the programme has facilitated the formation and strengthening of over 1,270 women's self-help groups, benefiting over 22,432 women across project landscapes. These groups have played a key role in managing natural resources, promoting sustainable farming, and participating in local decision-making. Community-led projects also led to the conservation of 19 rare and threatened domestic cultivars and livestock breeds, reflecting the programme's commitment to agro-biodiversity conservation. Over 1,271 NGO partners have been supported through structured workshops and mentoring programs to adopt sustainable practices, measure project outcomes using global indicators, and integrate their efforts with mainstream development programs. These engagements not only enhanced local institutional capacities but also promoted long-term partnerships with government departments and technical institutions.

Several projects initiated under SGP have progressed toward institutional sustainability. For example, three NGO partners successfully transitioned into producer companies, enabling them to aggregate local production, scale up operations, and access urban markets. Twenty-two village panchayats mainstreamed sustainable land use practices into their local development planning processes. The programme facilitated the creation of 56 green enterprise models and supported the development of over 200 natural resource-based products, the vast majority of which achieved successful market linkages. To strengthen public engagement and visibility, community products and innovations were showcased through "Green Haats" and other public expositions.

During GEF-5, SGP India also became part of the global Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS), led by UNDP in partnership with the Government of Japan and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This collaboration aimed to enhance socio-ecological resilience through collective, adaptive landscape management. It promoted knowledge-sharing and replication of best practices across project landscapes and aligned well with the landscape-based approach adopted under OP7.

In GEF-7 (OP7), the India SGP Country Programme strategically adopted a clustered, landscape-based approach supporting interventions within selected geographies. 17 Multi-stakeholder Platforms were developed and strengthened at the landscape level. This model enabled synergies between projects, improved coordination among stakeholders, and facilitated more effective delivery of global environmental

benefits. It responded directly to recommendations from earlier reviews, including the GEF-5 terminal evaluation, which emphasized the importance of thematic clustering and institutional partnerships. OP7 also introduced a knowledge management and communications strategy, along with a structured learning forum to document, share, and amplify grassroots innovations.

2.3 ***Lessons learned***:
The SGP programme in India is recognized for effective integration of projects into national policy frameworks and flagship government schemes. The adoption of a clustered, landscape-based approach has also enabled thematic convergence, promoting synergies across projects, and strengthening community engagement. Further, the programme has also succeeded in building capacities of civil society and community-based organizations, fostering innovation in diverse areas such as agro-biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, and ecotourism. Several grassroots innovations supported through the program have achieved recognition from local and national institutions, indicating growing policy relevance and the potential for replication and scale-up. A notable example is from the North-East Region, where an OP7 grantee supported the integration of block plantation of horticulture trees on wastelands into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) – the official planning document for transfer of government funds to village-level Panchayats. This activity was subsequently included in the annual action plan of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), showcasing a successful convergence of community-level planning with government schemes.

Despite these achievements, UNDP recognizes the need for stronger support to implementing NGOs for enhanced thematic depth and technical integration, particularly in linking biodiversity conservation with climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods. Stronger engagement with the private sector to strengthen green value chains, innovative financing, and support mechanisms (such as context-relevant insurance products) still needs more focus. Additionally, more strategic focus and capacity building of NGOs is still required on knowledge management, articulation of outcomes, documentation of best practices, and dissemination of results for broader learning and policy engagement, especially with large-scale government programmes now focussed on previously neglected ecosystems such as wetlands and mangroves.

Overall, the trajectory of SGP India demonstrates a maturing and increasingly strategic programme, grounded in strong community roots and expanding alliances. Its achievements to date have laid a strong foundation for Operational Phase 8, which aims to deepen impact through integrated, inclusive, and replicable models at the landscape scale.

# 3. COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## 3.1 Alignment with national priorities

The Country Programme Strategy aligns with India's national priorities, many of which are coherent with the country's global commitments. Aligning with UNCCD and the Bonn Challenge Restoration Pledge, India is committed to 26 million hectares of land restoration by 2030. Under UNCBD, India is a global forerunner towards operationalization of the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism and Other Effective Area based Conservation Measures. As a signatory to UNFCCC, India's National Determined Contribution includes

a commitment to create an additional 2.5–3 Gt $CO_2$ equivalent carbon sink through forest/tree cover by 2030. Through its Green India Mission (GIM), targets include increasing forest and tree cover by 10 million hectares and improving quality across another 10 million hectares by 2030. India was also the first country to adopt an official national agroforestry policy in 2014, aimed at integrating tree-based systems into farming for sustainability and resilience. Further, the CPS will contribute towards the following United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs): 1-Reducing Poverty, 5-Gender Equality, 7-Affordable and Clean Energy, 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12-Responsible Consumption and Production, 13-Climate Action, 14-Life Below Water, 15-Life on Land, and 17-Partnerships for the Goals.

Relevant Global Conventions and national planning frameworks with which the CPS is well aligned are highlighted in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1. List of relevant conventions and national/regional plans or programmes**

| Conventions + national planning frameworks | Date of ratification / completion |
|---|---|
| GEF-8 National Dialogues | August 2023 |
| Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) | February 1994 |
| CBD National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBSAP) | November 2008 (most recently updated in September 2024) |
| Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) | October 2012 |
| UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) | November 1993 |
| UNFCCC National Communications | December 2023 |
| UNFCCC National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) | June 2008 |
| Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the Paris Accord | October 2015 (updated in August 2022) |
| UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) | December 1996 |
| UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAP) | July 2001 |
| Stockholm Convention (SC) on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) | January 2006 |
| SC National Implementation Plan (NIP) | April 2011 |
| Minamata Convention (MC) on Mercury | June 2018 |
| UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | September 2015 |
| Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the UN SDGs | July 2025 |

### 3.2 Gaps and opportunities

Despite India's robust environmental policy framework and its ambitious global commitments, there remain critical gaps in translating these national priorities into effective, locally rooted action. A key challenge is the limited decentralization of planning and implementation. Many national programs are implemented in a top-down manner, offering limited space for community-led decision-making. At the local level, institutional capacities are uneven and fragmented, which weakens the ability of district and sub-district actors to align with and deliver environmental mandates in an integrated manner. As a result, even progressive schemes such as the Green India Mission or CAMPA are not fully able to reach the most vulnerable populations, including women, tribal communities, and landless workers, who often remain excluded from decision-

making and service delivery. Operational processes for new mechanisms such as the Green Credit Programme and the National Carbon Credit Trading Scheme are still in very early stages of design and roll-out. The capacity constraints of CSOs and community-based organizations also pose a significant bottleneck. Many grassroots organizations working in ecologically sensitive and socio-economically vulnerable areas face limitations in technical know-how, governance, and access to financial resources. In addition to limited perspective regarding concepts such as landscape management, climate mitigation, and market development, their ability to engage with evolving tools such as geospatial mapping, participatory monitoring, and climate risk assessments is also restricted.

SGP OP8 presents a timely and strategic opportunity to bridge these gaps. It will enable localized platforms to operationalize India's global environmental commitments by supporting civil society to lead implementation of integrated, community-driven models for biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable land management. The program will support the formation and strengthening of participatory governance mechanisms such as Biodiversity Management Committees, Village Forest Rights Committees, and Gram Panchayat-level planning forums, embedding environmental objectives within local development processes.

A critical opportunity also lies in building the institutional capacities of CSOs and community groups through structured support on climate-adaptive agriculture, ecosystem restoration, value chain development for green products, and digital tools for mapping and planning. This will unlock the potential of civil society to act as a conduit for convergence of national schemes such as MGNREGA, PM-KUSUM, and NRLM with community needs. Moreover, promoting inclusive green enterprises, particularly those led by women, youth, and local communities including tribal populations, will foster sustainable livelihoods that are aligned with environmental outcomes. The program will also facilitate partnership between communities and the private sector, including linkages with technology providers, support services (such as credit, insurance, etc.) and markets.

Finally, SGP OP8 will play an important role in generating grassroots evidence and learnings to inform national policy processes. Well-documented pilot projects, adaptive learning platforms, and peer exchanges across landscapes can help mainstream community voices into national and sub-national planning. This will also support India's efforts to meet its SDG targets and strengthen future iterations of its Voluntary National Reviews, National Adaptation Plan, and biodiversity and climate action roadmaps.

### 3.3 OP8 strategic priorities of the SGP Country Programme

In alignment with India's environmental commitments and development priorities, the SGP Country Programme under Operational Phase 8 (OP8) will focus on five strategic priority themes. These priorities respond to the need for locally led, scalable, and integrated solutions that contribute to global environmental benefits while advancing community well-being and resilience.

- **Community-based Conservation of Threatened Ecosystems and Species**: This priority aims to strengthen the role of local communities in the equitable governance and protection of biodiversity-rich landscapes and seascapes. The approach emphasizes locally appropriate conservation models that safeguard critical ecosystems and threatened species while ensuring community rights and participation.
- **Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries, and Food Security**: This priority supports the transition to resilient and biodiversity-friendly food systems that sustain livelihoods in vulnerable ecosystems. It will promote

agroecological practices, diversification, and restoration of degraded lands and water bodies, while addressing food and nutritional security.

- **Low-carbon Energy Access Co-benefits**: Recognizing the link between energy poverty and environmental degradation, this priority focuses on promoting decentralized renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions. Interventions will enhance livelihood opportunities and climate resilience, especially in underserved rural and peri-urban areas.
- **Local to Global Coalitions for Chemicals and Waste Management**: This theme seeks to reduce environmental and health risks by promoting safe, inclusive and circular approaches to chemical and waste management. It will foster community-led innovations and strengthen partnerships to influence broader policy frameworks.
- **Catalyzing Sustainable Urban Solutions**: This priority promotes inclusive, nature-based, and low-emission innovations for sustainable urban development. It aims to demonstrate community-led models addressing challenges such as solid waste, energy, biodiversity loss, and urban ecosystem degradation in India's fast-growing urban landscapes.

SGP OP8 will build on and enable synergies with similar ongoing initiatives to achieve enhanced depth and potential for upscaling beyond SGP support. Listed below in **Table 2** are ongoing projects of UNDP and other agencies which are complementary to the identified strategic priorities of OP8 in India. Linkages with these projects will enable effective outreach and upscaling of SGP efforts.

**Table 2. Complementarity between the SGP Country Programme and Ongoing UNDP, GEF and Other Donor programs in India**

| No. | Ongoing UNDP, GEF and Other Donor Projects in India | Project Objectives & Complementarity with SGP OP8 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Sustainable management and restoration of degraded landscapes for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in India (2024-29)** - UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>• Gujarat (Kachchh and Banaskantha)<br>• Maharashtra (Nandurbar and Aurangabad)<br>• Madhya Pradesh (Chhindwara)<br>Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)<br>Funding Source: GEF<br>Project Budget: USD 6,600,000 | The project aims to achieve land degradation neutrality by creating additional carbon sinks through an ecosystem-based approach for restoring degraded agricultural, forest, pastoral lands, and surface water bodies.<br>The project involves enabling interventions for up-scaling landscape-wide practices in 3 states Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh contributing to the national target of restoring 26 million hectares of degraded lands by 2030. |
| 2 | **Strengthening institutional capacities for securing biodiversity conservation commitments (2025-30)** - UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>• Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu<br>• The Garo Hills landscape of Meghalaya | The project aims to mainstream biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use/management into local level self-governance institutional planning and budgeting systems in two high biodiversity landscapes in India.<br>The project will work with community organizations and panchayati raj institutions, to |

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|---|---|---|
| | Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)<br>Funding Source: GEF<br>Project Budget: USD 4,880,000 | undertake mainstreaming and access finance to protect remaining natural forest areas, strengthen connectivity for wildlife, and create opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and businesses based on biodiversity for women and men, including marginalized tribal communities. |
| 3 | **Strengthening cconservation and resilience of globally significant wildcat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation** - UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>• Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh<br>• Pakke-Eaglenest landscape in Arunachal Pradesh<br>• Ranthambore landscape in Rajasthan<br>Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)<br>Funding Source: GEF<br>Project Budget: USD 1,975,000 | This project will secure the conservation of globally significant Wildcat landscapes through a landscape conservation approach.<br>The project brings together species conservation programmes, connects stakeholders, empowers communities, and operates across protected areas, tiger corridors, and buffer zones. |
| 4 | **Enhancing climate resilience of India's coastal communities** - UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>• Coastal landscapes of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha<br>Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)<br>Funding Source: GCF<br>Project Budget: USD 43,418,606 | The project objective is to enhance the resilience of lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, in coastal areas of India to climate change and extreme events.<br>The project aims to enhanced livelihoods of the highly vulnerable communities, improve resilience of ecosystem and ecosystem services, as well as reduce emissions from sustainable land use and forest/ecosystem management. |
| 5 | **Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Extended Phase II in India** - UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>Implementing Partner: UNDP (DIM)<br>Funding Source: BIOFIN<br>Project Budget: USD 791,639 | The project supports the government in meeting national/international priorities and commitments for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by addressing the biodiversity finance challenge.<br>The project focuses on enhancing the involvement of corporates, including financial institutions, for mainstreaming biodiversity into businesses/ financial tools and technologies as well as mobilizing resources towards agrobiodiversity. |
| 6 | **Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) - Conservation of Biodiversity, its Sustainable Use, Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits in India (CONSERVE)** – UNDP<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) | The project aims to strengthen the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan implementation through integrated spatial planning, community co-management approaches, and innovative financing instruments. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Funding Source: GEF<br>Project Budget: USD 13,820,000 | |
| 7 | **Plastic Waste project** - UNDP<br>Implementing partner: UNDP (DIM)<br>Funding source: HCCB, HUL, HDFC, CCFI, Nayara energy<br>Project budget: USD 17,523,366 | UNDP, in partnership with Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Coca-Cola Foundation India, and Nayara Energy, is implementing a nationwide plastic waste management program to promote circular economy practices and empower Safai Sathis (waste pickers). The initiative focuses on segregation, collection, and recycling of all plastic types, improving resource efficiency and stakeholder accessibility, aligned with Swachh Bharat Mission and Plastic Waste Management Rules. Operating across 23 cities, the project aims to manage 1,40,000 MT of plastic waste over six years while improving the socio-economic conditions of 44,000 Safai Sathis |
| 8 | **Localizing Data Science for Climate Change Adaptation** - UNDP (DIM)<br>Project sites: Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha<br>Implementing partner: UNDP<br>Funding source: BMGF and FCDO<br>Project budget: USD 2,993,778 | The project aims to strengthen climate change adaptation by integrating localized climate science with traditional knowledge, ensuring that adaptation strategies reflect the needs of small and marginal farmers who are most vulnerable to climate impacts. Through a hub-and-spoke model, the initiative will leverage the National Centre of Excellence on Climate Change Adaptation and local research institutions to generate robust, evidence-based recommendations for policy and program design, promoting resilience at district and Gram Panchayat levels. |
| 9 | **Green-Ag: Transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes** - FAO<br>Project sites<br>• National-level<br>• Landscapes in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand<br>Implementing Partner: The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW)<br>Funding Source: GEF<br>Project Budget: USD 33,558,716 | This project aims to mainstream biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable land management objectives and practices in the agricultural sector.<br>The project works to catalyze transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes. |

# 4. OP8 PRIORITY LANDSCAPES/SEASCAPES & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 4.1 Grant making within the priority landscape/seascapes

In alignment with the SGP OP8 strategic direction and the guidance for landscape/seascape-based programming, the India Country Programme will adopt an integrated approach to grant-making, focusing on identified priority geographies that hold critical ecological value, support vulnerable communities, and present significant potential for scalable environmental and socio-economic impact. The landscape/seascape approach offers a framework to enable clustering of grants within ecologically coherent regions, fostering synergies across projects, and enhancing cost-effectiveness, community engagement, and long-term impact. Grant-making will be guided by a participatory baseline assessment and the development of landscape-level conceptual models and strategies, which will anchor project selection and implementation in a common ecological and socio-cultural vision. This process will be undertaken in the initial few months of implementation of the OP8 grant. Emphasis will be placed on supporting civil society and local community action to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability, land degradation, and unsustainable resource use, while promoting inclusive governance, sustainable livelihoods, and social equity.

The Country Programme will allocate core resources to projects within the selected landscapes and seascapes. Project selection will prioritize innovation, community ownership, scalability, and alignment with national environmental priorities and international commitments under the Rio Conventions. Further, the approach will facilitate engagement with multiple stakeholders including local authorities, academic and technical institutions, and private sector actors to support knowledge sharing, policy influence, and co-financing opportunities. The landscape/seascape model is expected to serve as a platform for adaptive management, enabling learning-by-doing and fostering the replication of successful practices at scale. The programme may also support a few projects outside the selected landscapes/seascapes, depending on the strategic significance of the initiative to the programme. This section elaborates the process undertaken to identify selected landscapes/seascapes, strategic initiatives to be undertaken, and important pre-requisites such as inclusion, local stewardship and multi-stakeholder partnerships to be ensured in OP8 projects.

### a) Process for selecting priority landscapes and seascapes

The selection of priority landscapes and seascapes under SGP OP8 in India is based on a rigorous, multi-criteria approach to ensure ecological significance, community engagement, programmatic feasibility, and alignment with national and global priorities. The chosen landscapes reflect a combination of biogeographic and cultural diversity, critical conservation value, and strong potential for community-led action aligned with GEF focal areas. Landscape/seascape selection is guided by the following criteria:

- Ecological significance and presence of global environmental values: Landscapes were prioritized based on their biodiversity richness, endemic or threatened species, forest cover, critical habitats, or designation as Biodiversity Hotspots, Key Biodiversity Areas, Ramsar Sites, Biosphere Reserves, or World Heritage Sites.

- Vulnerability and pressure on ecosystems: Areas facing degradation, habitat fragmentation, or climate change impacts such as floods, droughts, coastal erosion, or glacial retreat merit greater attention for their urgency of intervention.
- High dependence of communities on ecosystems and natural resources: Landscapes where communities, especially tribal communities and other vulnerable groups are highly reliant on ecosystems for food, water, fuel, and livelihoods are prioritized to ensure local ownership and relevance.
- Presence of community institutions and CSO capacity: Regions with an active presence of grassroots institutions such as Biodiversity Management Committees, Van Panchayats, and committed CSOs are favoured to enable effective implementation and scale-up.
- Continuity and potential for scaling from previous GEF efforts: Areas that hosted previous SGP projects with demonstrated success and readiness for replication or scale are considered to leverage past investments and institutional learnings.
- Alignment with national and global environmental priorities: Landscapes that have the potential to contribute more significantly to thematic and geographic alignment with India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and targets under the CBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC.
- Opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships and convergence: Emphasis was placed on regions where SGP interventions could converge with government programs (MGNREGA, NRLM, MISHTI, etc.), CSR, or other GEF/non-GEF initiatives to foster integrated approaches.

The landscape/seascape selection criteria are summarized below in **Table 3** in the context of the global guidelines:

**Table 3. Site selection criteria for SGP OP8**

| SGP-8 Local Criteria | SGP-8 Global Criteria |
|---|---|
| Ecological significance and presence of global environmental values | ● Presence of important ecosystems that are recognized globally and/or nationally<br>● Presence of globally and/or nationally threatened species<br>● Areas recognized as important/priority through international and national processes and institutions (example, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Key Biodiversity Areas, Land degradation (LD) hotspots, deforestation hotspots (SFM), aligned with NBSAP, NAPA, NDC, and other national strategies in relation to MEAs) |
| Vulnerability and pressure on ecosystems | ● Areas of increased threats to ecosystem integrity, connectivity, and resilience<br>● Presence of degraded land areas that are prioritized globally and/or nationally<br>● Areas with low access to grid and clean electricity<br>● Climate change vulnerable areas |
| High dependence of communities on ecosystems and natural resources | ● Areas with high poverty or low Human Development Index (HDI)<br>● Presence of strong traditional systems of governance (e.g., traditional territories, ICCAs)<br>● Presence of important cultural heritage (sacred sites, archaeological features, traditional knowledge, etc.)<br>● Presence of Indigenous Peoples/ vulnerable groups/ethnic minority groups |

| SGP-8 Local Criteria | SGP-8 Global Criteria |
|---|---|
| Presence of community institutions and CSO capacity | ● Presence of local organizations (NGOs, CSOs/ CBOs)<br>● Availability of partner institutions (local governments, CSOs, universities, network of IPs, others) |
| Continuity and potential for scaling from previous GEF efforts | ● Build on gains and networks of previous operational phases<br>● Provides opportunities for deeper impact and broader adoption (scaling up, replication, policy influence) |
| Alignment with national and global environmental priorities<br>Opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships and convergence | ● Presence or potential to collaborate with other large-scale efforts for co-financing and joint initiatives (e.g. GEF and UNDP Projects, multilateral/bilateral donors, private sector, foundation)<br>● Logistical considerations (accessibility, security concerns, infrastructure)<br>● Provides opportunities for capacity building among local communities, stakeholders, and implementing partners<br>● Potential to incorporate innovative approaches<br>● Potential to integrate gender transformative approaches |

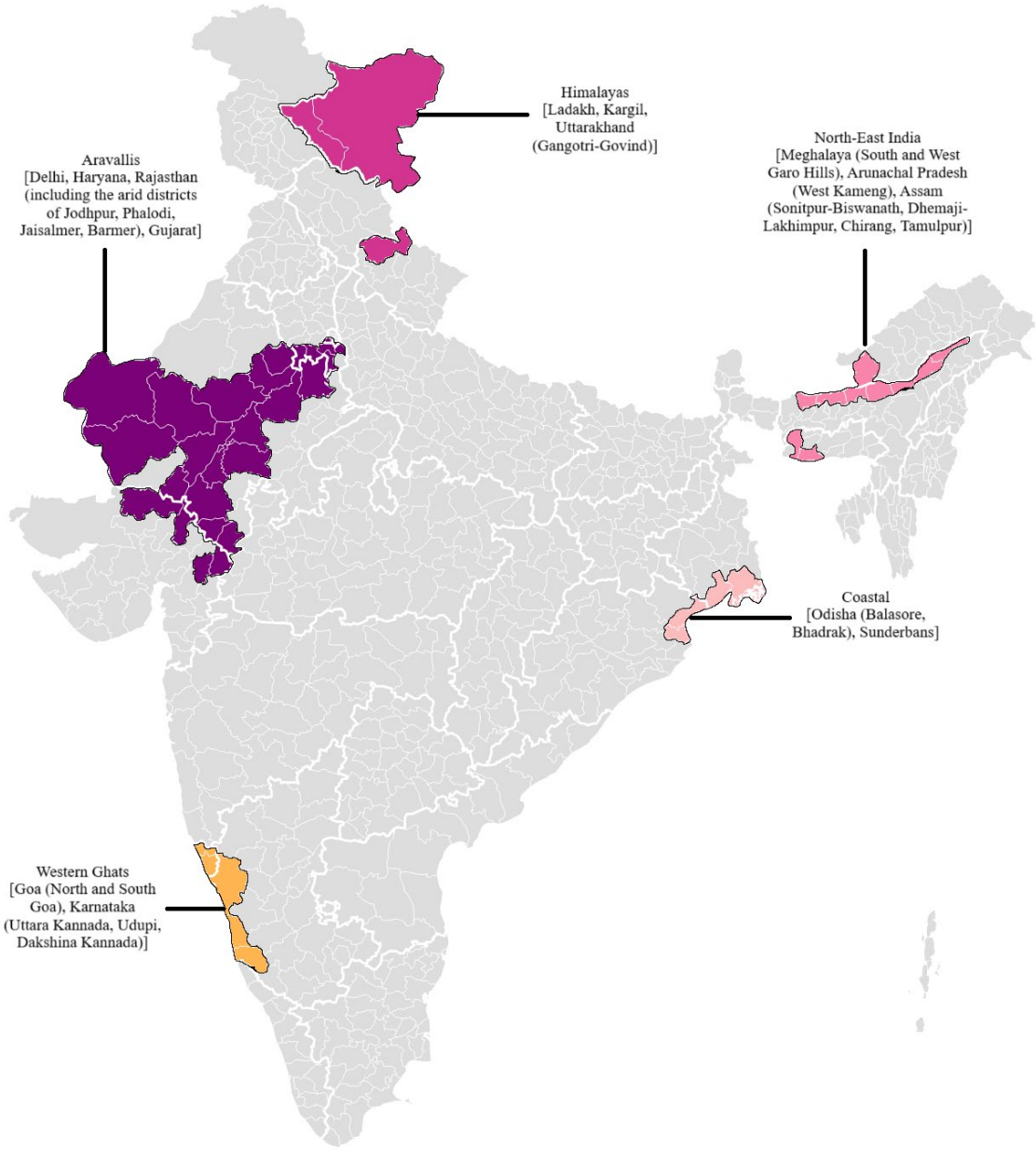
### b) Selected landscapes/seascapes for OP8

The selection of priority landscapes and seascapes under Operational Phase 8 (OP8) of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) in India was guided by a rigorous, multi-criteria assessment based on ecological, socio-economic, and programmatic considerations. Landscapes were prioritized based on their ecological significance, such as presence of biodiversity hotspots, endangered species, and critical habitats, as well as their vulnerability to environmental threats like degradation, climate change, and resource overexploitation. High community dependence on natural resources, presence of grassroots institutions and capable CSOs, and potential for continuity from past GEF-supported initiatives were key determinants. The process also ensured alignment with national priorities (such as the National Biodiversity Action Plan and Nationally Determined Contributions) and global environmental commitments (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD). Further, opportunities for convergence with government schemes, CSR, and other development programs were factored in to foster integrated approaches and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The final selection was informed by national consultations, discussions with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and a systematic evaluation against global and local criteria, resulting in the identification of ecologically diverse and culturally significant landscapes across India for targeted intervention under OP8. A summary of discussions/consultation meetings held for selection of landscapes for OP8 is attached as **Annexure 1**. The detailed landscape baseline assessment process is described in **Annexure 2**.

Based on the identified criteria, national-level consultations, and discussions with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the landscapes identified for focus in OP8, are described briefly below with details summarized in **Annexure 3**. As illustrated in Figure 3, the SGP OP8 will focus on the following landscapes: **Aravallis** - Delhi; Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat; **Western Ghats** - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada); **Coastal** - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), West Bengal (Sunderbans - South 24 Parganas); **North-East India** - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng),

Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur); **Himalayas** - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind - Uttarkashi). The selected landscapes/seascapes are presented in **Figure 1** below:

**Figure 1: Landscapes/Seascapes proposed for SGP OP8 India**



A brief description of each selected landscape/seascape is as follows:

- **Aravallis - Delhi; Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer, and Barmer), Gujarat:** More than 700 km in length, the Aravalli landscape is one of India's oldest and ecologically critical mountain ranges, spanning the states of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. This landscape plays a vital role in ecological security by acting as a barrier against desertification from the Thar Desert, regulating regional hydrology, and serving as a green lung for important urban regions including especially Delhi and Gurugram. Notable biodiversity areas include the Ranthambore National Park, Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary (Delhi, 32 $km^2$), Sariska Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan, 881 $km^2$), Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary (Rajasthan, 610 $km^2$), Khichan Ramsar Site, Kurja Conservation Reserve, and forested patches in southern Haryana and north Gujarat. The range is home to diverse floral and faunal species, including tigers, leopards, caracal, sloth bears, honey badger, Indian pangolin, and several endemic reptiles and birds including the Great Indian Bustard. The Aravallis host over 300 species of birds due to their location along the Central Asian Flyway, an important migration route. The region is also home to several threatened species such as the golden jackal and critically endangered vultures, along with medicinal plants like Commiphora wightii (guggal), Wrightia tinctoria, and Sterculia urens. The arid districts of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, and Barmer, located west of the main Aravalli range, are integral to this landscape due to their ecological connectivity and shared challenges of desertification, water scarcity, and extreme temperatures. These districts represent some of the most drought-prone areas in India, characterized by sandy soils, saline groundwater, and highly erratic rainfall. Traditional rainwater harvesting structures such as taankas, nadis, and beri systems are still in use and offer important insights for climate-resilient water management. Despite harsh conditions, these areas host resilient agro-pastoral systems, including drought-tolerant crops and indigenous livestock breeds like the Tharparkar cattle and Marwari sheep, which contribute significantly to local livelihoods and biodiversity.

  The Aravallis are culturally rich and host several sacred forests (orans), traditional water conservation systems such as johads, and heritage structures including six UNESCO-listed hill forts. Traditional grazing systems and folk healers still exist in rural areas, although these are rapidly declining. The region is socio-economically diverse. Rajasthan and Gujarat host several tribal communities including the Bhil and Garasia tribes. Many of these communities depend on forest produce, marginal agriculture, and livestock for sustenance. In the arid western districts, pastoralist communities such as the Raikas, Meghwals, and Bishnois play a crucial role in ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation, particularly through their traditional practices of livestock breeding and tree protection. The landscape also has a high concentration of Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and Other Backward Class populations, especially among pastoral communities. Parts of this region fall under backward development blocks as per national classifications. Access to clean energy is limited in rural pockets, creating pressure on forests for biomass fuel. The ecosystem is highly vulnerable to climate change-related extreme heat and droughts. The Aravallis are severely threatened by illegal mining, deforestation, linear infrastructure development (such

as highways and windmills), and rapid urban expansion, making them a high-priority area for ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation.

On World Environment Day in 2025, the Hon. Prime Minister of India launched the Aravalli Green Wall initiative to enhance formal efforts towards restoration of the Aravalli ecosystem. Other relevant programs include the Aravalli Biodiversity Park initiatives, Delhi Ridge restoration programs, CAMPA-funded forestry programs, and state-level forest regeneration schemes in Rajasthan and Haryana. The implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and National Mission on Green India also create synergies for landscape-level interventions. The State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) for this region provides an important framework for addressing vulnerabilities. CSOs such as the Foundation for Ecological Security, Seva Mandir, Bhartiya Agro-Industries Foundation, and Tarun Bharat Sangh have been engaged in localized restoration efforts. CAZRI (Central Arid Zone Research Institute), located in Jodhpur, is a key technical institution working on arid ecosystems, desertification control, and climate-resilient agriculture, offering valuable partnerships for OP8 interventions in western Rajasthan. Institutional platforms such as Panchayats, Biodiversity Management Committees, Joint Forest Management Committees, and Eco-Development Committees also provide mechanisms for decentralized governance. Notably, India's first formally recognized OECM, the Aravalli Biodiversity Park, has been established in this region. Past OPs of the Small Grants Programme have supported a limited number of projects in this landscape. Under OP8, innovative initiatives could include the development of additional OECMs, restoration of medicinal plant habitats, pastoral practices revitalization, biodiversity documentation through People's Biodiversity Registers, and use of desalination and horticulture techniques to enhance ecosystem and livelihood resilience. In the western districts, interventions could focus on reviving traditional water systems, promoting drought-resilient crops, and strengthening livestock-based green enterprises rooted in indigenous breeds. Opportunities for convergence also exist with GIZ's Aravalli restoration plan, and gender-focused initiatives can be developed in collaboration with UN Women. The program will draw inspiration from similar efforts such as the Sub-Saharan Great Green Wall for landscape-scale restoration and climate resilience.

- **Western Ghats - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada)**: The Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity, is a critical ecological zone supporting an extraordinary range of endemic flora and fauna. Though the entire length of the Western Ghats is over 1,600 km, SGP OP8 interventions will focus on selected districts in Goa (North and South Goa) and Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, and Dakshina Kannada). These regions represent a rich mosaic of moist deciduous and evergreen forests, estuarine ecosystems, river basins, and marine habitats, forming a vital mountain-to-coast ecological continuum.
  Major protected areas in this region include the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary (240 $km^2$), Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary in Goa, along with Kudremukh National Park (600 $km^2$), Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, and Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka. These habitats are home to the tiger, Indian bison, lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri langur, Malabar giant squirrel,

king cobra, and over 300 species of birds (including all four hornbill species of India), amphibians, and freshwater fish. The landscape has over 700 species of flowering plants including endemics and close to 40 species of pteridophytes, presenting exceptional floristic richness. Unique freshwater ecosystems such as the Myristica swamps, endemic to the Western Ghats, are also present along streambeds within the evergreen forests. The adjacent coastal belts feature ecologically significant estuaries, mangroves, and coral patches, particularly in Agonda, Sal, and Chapora estuaries (Goa) and the Aghanashini and Kali estuaries (Karnataka). The Mugli-Apsarakonda Marine Sanctuary hosts olive ridley turtles, humpback whales, rays, seahorses, groupers, and over 80 seabird species. Coral reef species include 14 coral types, 2 seaweed species, and seagrass patches. Marine and coastal ecosystems face challenges from ghost nets, coastal erosion, and climate-induced sea-level rise. There is a growing need for establishing Early Warning Systems (EWS) for fisher communities and promoting climate resilience. The region is marked by significant tribal populations including the Kunbi, Velip, and Siddis, and fisher communities along the coast. Agriculture, fisheries, plantation crops (especially arecanut and coconut), and eco-tourism are important livelihood sources. Goa and Karnataka are comparatively better off economically but still face disparities among tribal and rural communities. Traditional knowledge systems related to biodiversity conservation, including those associated with sacred groves and local crop varieties, are still prevalent in this landscape.

The region is under pressure from unplanned urbanization, mining, forest degradation, unsustainable tourism, and saline intrusion. Additionally, the coastal zones are highly vulnerable to sea-level rise, monsoon variability, and cyclonic disturbances. Recognizing this, SGP OP8 will adopt an integrated mountain-coast, landscape-seascape approach to enhance ecosystem resilience, promote biodiversity-based livelihoods, and support climate adaptation in both forested uplands and vulnerable coastal communities. SGP India supported initiatives in this landscape during OP5 through eco-restoration, sustainable tourism, and forest-based enterprise models. OP8 builds on these experiences by incorporating coastal and marine themes through partnerships with local CSOs, academic institutions, and Panchayati Raj institutions. Specific thematic interventions will include community-led mangrove restoration, conservation of estuarine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries management, and strengthening of biodiversity governance across the forest–coast interface.

Government and non-government initiatives relevant to this region include the Western Ghats Development Program, State Biodiversity Boards, National Coastal Mission, National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) components such as the Green India Mission, MISHTI – Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes, and coastal livelihood programs supported by NABARD, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and the Mangrove Foundation (Goa) - a government-led initiative under the Goa Forest Department to conserve, manage, and restore Goa's mangrove ecosystems. Goa is also setting up a climate-resilient green fund with support from the World Bank, India's first sub-national facility of its kind. Several CSOs such as ATREE, FRLHT, Girijan Cooperative, MYRADA, NCF, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Bombay Natural History Society are active in this

landscape, working across ecological restoration, sustainable use of medicinal plants, and community-based conservation. Technical institutions like the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) offer potential partnerships for marine research, EWS, and sustainable fisheries innovations. IUCN's 'Mangroves for the Future (MFF)' has also implemented successful pilot projects in the coastal zones of this landscape.

- **Coastal - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas):** The eastern coastal seascape comprises the estuarine and deltaic coastal belts of Balasore and Bhadrak districts in Odisha, and the Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. In Odisha, Bhitarkanika National Park, established on September 16, 1998, spans approximately 145 km² and is nested within the larger Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary (672 km²). The park comprises India's second-largest mangrove ecosystem, featuring dense mangrove networks intersected by creeks from the Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, and Pathsala rivers. Chandipur, Dhamra estuary, and the Baitarani Delta form ecologically significant zones vulnerable to sea-level rise, cyclones, and saline intrusion. The Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha protects the world's largest Olive Ridley turtle nesting site. The Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ramsar Site, is the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest (around 10,000 km² including India and Bangladesh), home to the endangered Royal Bengal Tiger, estuarine crocodiles, and hundreds of aquatic species. The Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve comprises of the Sundarbans National Park, Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary, Lothian Island Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Haliday Island Wildlife Sanctuary. Key mangrove and associated species include Sundari (Heritiera fomes), Avicennia species, Rhizophora species, and Bruguiera species. Key mammals include the Royal Bengal Tiger, Fishing Cat, and Smooth-coated Otter. The Saltwater Crocodile, Water Monitor Lizard and Irrawaddy Dolphin are also found here. The region is also home to rare aquatic species including the Gangetic dolphin and the Ganges shark. Fish species found include the Pondicherry shark, white-spotted shovelnose guitarfish, bull shark, hammerhead shark, black tip shark, pale-edged stingray, and black-edged stingray. The flora also includes salt-tolerant crop varieties, particularly traditional rice varieties adapted to brackish water conditions.
  The Odisha and Sundarbans coasts host highly vulnerable populations, including Scheduled Tribes like the Lodhas and other marginalized fishing and farming communities, mainly from the Scheduled Caste communities. Poverty levels are high, and traditional livelihoods are under severe climate stress. In the Sundarbans, access to fresh water is limited, contributing to a range of health issues in an area already marked by inadequate health infrastructure. Development indicators are low, and traditional community-based governance systems have weakened, limiting adaptive capacities.

  The SGP has in the past, supported limited initiatives in coastal West Bengal, and OP8 offers a strategic opportunity for scaling up community resilience through mangrove restoration, disaster risk reduction, salinity-resistant agriculture practices, and biodiversity-based value chains. Key government and non-government initiatives include the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Program (ICZMP), NABARD-supported mangrove projects, and Odisha Climate Resilience Mission. UNDP has also previously

supported initiatives in Bhitarkanika and is currently implementing a Green Climate Fund-supported project in coastal Odisha. The Namami Gange programme has undertaken ecosystem restoration work in parts of the Sundarbans. SGP OP8 will synergize with these, promoting resilient livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and participatory risk reduction, particularly among women and local fisherfolk. WWF-India, Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS), Vasundhara, and Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) are the key CSOs engaged here in mangrove restoration and related livelihoods. Other relevant institutions include the Foundation for Ecological Security and Jadavpur University.

- **North-East India - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur)**: Part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot region, the North-East Indian landscape is among the most biologically diverse and culturally rich regions of India. SGP OP8 will target the districts of South and West Garo Hills in Meghalaya; West Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh; and Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, and Tamulpur in Assam. Important protected areas include Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (West Kameng, 217 km²), Pakke Tiger Reserve, Balphakram National Park (220 km²), Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary and Nameri National Park. These areas are home to the Asian elephant, Hoolock gibbon, clouded leopard, Bengal slow loris, Capped langur, Golden langur, and Indian pangolin. Hornbills (3 species), Bengal Florican, Ward's Trogon, Satyr Tragopan, and Blood Pheasant, are found here in addition to freshwater species such as the Assam Roofed Turtle and the Golden Mahseer. Medicinal and endemic plants such as Taxus wallichiana, Paris polyphylla, and Zanthoxylum species are also found here along with endemic orchids and ferns.

  Over recent years, the loss of forest cover in Northeast India is estimated to be around 0.4 % annually, mainly due to shifting cultivation impacts, forest conversion, riverbank erosion, and expansion in agriculture areas. The ecosystem is rapidly deteriorating due to increasing rates of deforestation, especially from coal and limestone mining, as well as pressure from monoculture plantations. Wildlife corridors (e.g. between Pakke-Nameri and Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong) are severely degraded, leading to rising human-wildlife conflict. Due to climate change, rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns have altered cropping cycles in Garo Hills and parts of Assam. Flash floods and landslides during monsoon are becoming frequent in West Kameng and Garo Hills, increasing soil erosion and biodiversity stress. The Assam plains are also highly prone to siltation, riverbank erosion, and seasonal flooding due to glacial-fed rivers, with notable impacts in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, and Sonitpur.

  The region is home to diverse tribal groups such as the Garo, Bodo, Nyishi, and Mishing with more than 80% tribal population in the landscape covered by Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. Tribal communities in these regions have deep-rooted traditional ecological knowledge and practice community conservation. Traditional institutions, such as the Nokma Councils in Garo Hills, continue to play an important role in resource governance and conflict resolution. However, despite rich resources, poverty rates remain high in many parts, exacerbated by geographical isolation, weak infrastructure, and climate

vulnerability. Poverty rates in the landscape are over 35% (way above national averages). Landscape districts include the aspirational (most backward in India) districts of West Garo Hills, Biswanath, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur. Access to reliable electricity remains limited in some areas, especially in remote parts of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. Livelihoods are largely agrarian with a mix of shifting cultivation, forest produce collection, livestock, and eco-tourism. Bamboo-based value chains, traditional weaving, and medicinal plant harvesting are also practiced in parts of the region.

SGP India has been active in parts of this landscape under OP5 and OP7 through biodiversity documentation and traditional farming promotion. The region benefits from programs such as the North-East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) - Ministry of DoNER, Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North-Eastern Region (MOVCDNER), National Bamboo Mission, Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming Systems in the North-East (FOCUS) program of IFAD, as also JICA-Assisted Forestry and Livelihood Projects. UNDP also implemented a GEF-supported project on medicinal plant conservation in this region, and TERI has worked on decentralized energy access here. There are quite a few CSOs working in the landscape on nature restoration, sustainable agriculture, and disaster resilience. Prominent among them are Bethany Society, North-East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS), Aaranyak, and Balipara Foundation.

- **Himalayas - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind)**: The Western Himalayas, part of the Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot region, represent a fragile high-altitude ecosystem spanning Ladakh (including Kargil) and the Gangotri-Govind landscape in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. Biodiversity significant areas include the Govind Pashu Vihar Wildlife Sanctuary (958 sq. km), Gangotri National Park (2,390 sq. km), Hemis National Park in Ladakh (4,400 sq. km), Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuary (5,000 sq. km), and Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary. These regions are characterized by glacial rivers, alpine meadows, and unique high-altitude biodiversity, including endangered species such as the Snow leopard, Himalayan wolf, Himalayan musk deer, Blue sheep (Bharal), Tibetan antelope, Bearded vulture, and Himalayan monal. Endemic high-altitude flora includes significant medicinal plants such as Picrorhiza kurroa, Aconitum heterophyllum, Nardostachys jatamansi, and Saussurea costus.

  The areas face challenges such as glacial melt, erratic weather, overgrazing, and pressure from tourism. More than 60% of rangelands in Ladakh-Kargil show signs of moderate to severe degradation due to high livestock pressure and absence of rotational grazing. Habitat shrinkage threatens snow leopard, bharal, and marmot populations, leading to conflicts with herders due to declining wild prey base. 27% of forest area in the Gangotri-Govind landscape is degraded or under open canopy cover leading to frequent landslides in monsoon. Further, overharvesting of high-altitude medicinal plants in the landscape has led to severe pressure on 15–20 species. Glaciers here are retreating at an average rate of 10–20 meters/year due to which snowmelt-dependent streams show 30–40% reduced flow in summer. There is also an increase in the frequency of landslides and flash floods in monsoon.

As per NITI Aayog (2021) close to 25% of households in the landscape fall under multi-dimensional poverty. Harsh terrain, limited connectivity, and high-altitude climate result in poor access to health, education, and livelihoods. While Kargil is included under the Aspirational Districts Programme, Uttarkashi is classified as a Backward Himalayan District under various central schemes. Close to 80% population in Ladakh-Kargil is tribal belonging to Brokpa, Bhotia, Balti, Changpa groups. Communities in Uttarkashi include Bhotiya and Jaunsari. However, many forest-dependent communities are economically and socially marginalized though not classified as tribal. Livelihoods include transhumance, medicinal plant collection, marginal farming, and spiritual tourism. Infrastructure and market access remain major challenges, contributing to economic vulnerability.

This region was supported during OP7 through initiatives in Uttarakhand and Ladakh under the MoEFCC-GEF-UNDP SECURE Himalaya Project. Further, convergence will be built with government programs such as the National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (under NAPCC), National Mission on Himalayan Studies, Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project (JICA-assisted), and the KfW-supported "Eco-tourism and Livelihoods" Initiatives in Ladakh. OP8 will build on these initiatives to support community-led biodiversity stewardship, eco-restoration, and value chain development for high-altitude NTFPs and eco-tourism. Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, Ladakh Ecological Development Group, The Mountain Institute India, Himmotthan Society (a Tata Trusts initiative), and Centre for Ecology Development and Research are some of the significant CSOs working on the landscape towards natural resource management, ecosystem restoration, livelihoods, and inclusion of marginalized groups.

A summary of the assessment done of proposed landscapes along selection criteria for OP8 landscapes has been attached as **Annexure 3** to this document. A more detailed assessment and planning process will be undertaken for each landscape at the project inception.

### c) OP8 Strategic Initiatives in the landscapes/seascapes

Aligned with the Global OP8 priorities, the strategic priorities to be focussed on in India are detailed below, along with key interventions to be supported.

- ***Strategic Priority 1: Community-based Conservation of Threatened Ecosystems and Species***

  India is home to four global biodiversity hotspots and over 90,000 animal and 45,000 plant species, yet faces growing threats from habitat loss, species decline, and fragmented ecosystems due to rapid land use changes, unsustainable resource use, and climate impacts. The critical role of tribal and other local communities in conserving these threatened ecosystems and species is increasingly recognized, including through the global momentum around Nature-based Solutions and Locally Led Adaptation.

  Building on successful interventions during SGP OP7, SGP OP8 will further strengthen community-led actions for biodiversity conservation by enhancing equitable and inclusive governance systems. It will

recognize and support the stewardship roles of local communities. Customary institutions, traditional ecological knowledge, and participatory mechanisms will be promoted to ensure sustained conservation outcomes and improved community wellbeing. SGP OP8 will also support biodiversity-friendly and ecosystem-based livelihood models that integrate conservation with sustainable use, such as climate-resilient agriculture, non-timber forest produce (NTFP)-based value chains, nature-positive tourism, and blue economy models including sustainable coastal fisheries, mangrove restoration, and marine biodiversity monitoring. These will be particularly implemented in the biodiversity-rich and ecologically sensitive landscapes and seascapes that are selected around Biodiversity Hotspots. Targeted efforts will be made to protect and recover populations of threatened, rare, endemic, and endangered species, with special emphasis on participatory species monitoring, habitat restoration, and mitigating threats like poaching, invasive species, and habitat degradation. Collaborations with State Biodiversity Boards, research institutions, and community-based organizations will be leveraged to deepen these interventions. The program will also invest in community-based documentation, awareness generation, and campaigns to promote positive conservation behaviour, particularly among youth and children.

In all interventions, SGP will prioritize equity, gender responsiveness, and participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups. This thematic focus will contribute directly to achieving India's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and national strategies such as the National Biodiversity Action Plan and State Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (SBSAPs).

- ***Strategic Priority 2: Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries, and Food Security***

  India's agricultural and fisheries sectors are not only central to national food security and rural livelihoods but also deeply intertwined with environmental sustainability. However, these sectors face mounting challenges due to climate variability, land degradation, water stress, declining agrobiodiversity, and overexploitation of fisheries. Marginal and smallholder farmers, tribal communities, and traditional fishing communities are especially vulnerable, with limited adaptive capacity and declining access to resources and markets. Building on tested models from OP7, SGP OP8 will focus on strengthening community-led innovations that promote sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems.

  SGP OP8 will support agroecological and climate-resilient production systems that enhance food security while restoring ecosystem services in vulnerable landscapes such as the Western Himalayas, Aravallis, North-East India, and coastal seascapes. Priority will be given to improving productivity and efficiency across food value chains in ecologically sensitive areas, especially in mountainous, rainfed, and coastal zones. Projects will focus on reducing external input dependence, promoting soil and water conservation, traditional seed and breed conservation, organic and natural farming practices, and climate-smart agriculture techniques adapted to local contexts. The programme will promote diversification of livelihoods through support to integrated farming systems, agroforestry, indigenous crop and livestock varieties, and sustainable inland and marine fisheries. It will also foster women-led and youth-led microenterprises across the agri-food and fisheries value chains, contributing to economic

empowerment and resilience of rural communities. Special emphasis will be placed on regions and communities with high levels of poverty, malnutrition, and vulnerability to climate and market shocks.

To address the environmental footprint of food systems, SGP OP8 will promote interventions aimed at eliminating deforestation from agricultural value chains and upscaling landscape restoration through farmer-led approaches. This includes regenerating degraded lands, enhancing agroecosystem services, and incentivizing community participation in forest-agriculture interface management.

Community-based institutions such as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), women's SHGs, and fishing cooperatives will be supported to build capacities in sustainable production, post-harvest processing, marketing, and value addition. Digital tools for farm monitoring, local biodiversity mapping, and early warning systems may also be introduced. SGP will leverage partnerships with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMAs), ICAR institutions, and State Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries to align with national priorities under the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, Blue Revolution, and other food security programs.

Through this thematic priority, SGP OP8 aims to demonstrate that community-led food production systems can be ecologically sustainable, economically viable, and socially inclusive, directly contributing to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and India's commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

- ***Strategic Priority 3: Low-Carbon Energy Access Co-Benefits***

  India's developmental ambitions are closely intertwined with its commitments to low-carbon pathways and climate resilience, as reflected in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Energy poverty continues to be a major barrier in achieving equitable development, particularly in remote rural, forest and hilly regions, where grid connectivity is limited or unreliable. There is a pressing need for decentralized, affordable, and clean energy solutions that not only reduce emissions but also provide direct socio-economic co-benefits such as improved livelihoods, reduced biomass extraction from forests, women's empowerment, better health outcomes, and educational access.

  Building on the successful pilots under SGP OP7 such as community-managed micro-hydro systems, biogas digesters, and solar-powered cold chains, SGP OP8 will scale up access to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies in underserved regions. Special attention will be paid to supporting local innovations and partnerships for the delivery of solar lighting, solar irrigation pumps, efficient cookstoves, and clean cooking solutions in forest and mountain communities. These interventions will be co-designed with community institutions, ensuring ownership, sustainability, and alignment with national missions such as the National Solar Mission, UJALA scheme, and PM-KUSUM for solar-powered agriculture. The programme will also prioritize off-grid energy systems for productive uses in rural and peri-urban areas, including powering agri-processing units, eco-tourism enterprises, and community centres. Women's self-help groups, forest-dependent communities, and youth-led enterprises will be supported in integrating low-carbon energy solutions into their economic activities. Skill-building, training, and maintenance support will be integral components to ensure long-term viability. Furthermore, SGP OP8 will catalyse learning platforms and knowledge exchange among grantees and stakeholders to document

and share best practices on low-carbon energy transitions. These community experiences will contribute to national and global dialogues on energy access and climate mitigation. The programme will work closely with local governments, CSR initiatives, and climate-focused institutions to mobilize co-financing and enhance convergence with broader clean energy initiatives.

Through this strategic priority, SGP OP8 will support India's efforts to operationalize its NDCs by reducing GHG emissions and advancing just energy transitions, particularly in ecologically fragile and socio-economically vulnerable regions. The programme will contribute directly to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), while delivering inclusive and transformative local impacts.

- ***Strategic Priority 4: Local to Global Coalitions for Chemicals and Waste Management***

  India faces growing challenges in managing chemicals and waste due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the intensification of agriculture. These challenges manifest in the form of plastic and solid waste accumulation, widespread use of agrochemicals, contamination of soil and water resources, and associated health risks to vulnerable communities. Many of these issues disproportionately affect women, tribal communities, coastal and mountain communities, and those engaged in informal sectors such as waste picking. In this context, the SGP OP8 will prioritize actions that support community-led, gender-responsive, and locally appropriate approaches for managing chemicals and waste while contributing to global multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as the Stockholm, Basel, and Minamata Conventions.

  Building on interventions piloted under OP7 in agrobiodiversity-rich landscapes and coastal ecosystems, SGP OP8 will support communities in adopting circular economy principles through decentralized solid waste management, especially around Protected Areas, ecotourism sites, and rural clusters. Community-based waste management models will include composting, segregation, recycling enterprises, and awareness-building campaigns, particularly involving women's groups, youth, and school children. The programme will also promote sustainable agriculture by reducing or eliminating the use of synthetic agrochemicals. This includes support for the promotion of natural farming, organic inputs, integrated pest management (IPM), and training programs for farmers and extension workers on safe and sustainable alternatives. These actions will align with and complement national initiatives such as the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), and the Jaivik Bharat platform. SGP OP8 will foster coalitions and platforms that connect grassroots innovators with policy makers, researchers, and private sector actors, building momentum for stronger chemicals and waste governance. It will actively contribute to national dialogues, including those around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), state-level plastic action plans, and efforts to phase out single-use plastics. Demonstration projects will serve as replicable models to influence state and national policies, and promote alignment with India's obligations under the UN SDGs, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Beyond 2020 framework, and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

Through this strategic priority, SGP OP8 will not only reduce environmental and health risks in target landscapes but also elevate community voices and innovations into national and global platforms, contributing to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The SGP will continue to act as a catalyst for locally rooted, globally relevant solutions in the management of chemicals and waste.

- ***Strategic Priority 5: Catalyzing Sustainable Urban Solutions***

  India's rapid urbanization presents both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. With urban areas projected to house over 40% of the country's population by 2030, cities face growing pressures related to waste and chemical management, energy demands, air and water pollution, loss of urban green spaces, and vulnerability to climate impacts such as heatwaves and urban flooding. Marginalized communities especially the urban poor, informal workers, migrants, and waste-pickers bear a disproportionate burden of these environmental stresses.

  SGP OP8 recognizes the need for community-led, socially inclusive urban innovations to support India's transition to low-emission, climate-resilient urban development. OP8 will demonstrate scalable, bottom-up models for integrated urban sustainability. These efforts will complement ongoing national schemes like the Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Under this strategic priority, the programme will strengthen capacities of community-based organizations, local urban institutions, and informal sector groups to adopt nature-based and low-carbon solutions. Pilot interventions may include decentralized composting and plastic recycling units, urban biodiversity corridors, sustainable transport and mobility innovations, rooftop gardening for food and cooling, and urban wetland restoration. SGP OP8 will prioritize convergence with municipal governments, private sector partners, and research institutions to co-create and replicate successful models.

  Special attention will be given to participatory urban planning processes that amplify the voices of marginalized groups and women in shaping resilient cityscapes. The programme will also promote partnerships for sustainable urban livelihoods, including through green skilling, upcycling-based enterprises, and circular economy solutions. Models for low-carbon energy access and energy-efficient housing in informal urban settlements will be explored through public-private-CSO collaborations.

  Knowledge-sharing platforms, peer-learning networks, and national dialogues will be supported to enable policy uptake of local innovations and lessons learned. These urban pilots will contribute to India's broader commitments under SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), while addressing pressing local needs and enhancing urban ecosystem resilience.

- While the current Country Programme Strategy (CPS) has been developed for implementation under SGP OP8-Part 1, an additional grant of USD 255,682 is expected to be received under SGP OP8-Part 2. This additional funding presents an opportunity to strategically upscale few, selected, successful community-led models developed under Part 1, thereby enhancing impact and enabling broader replication. This will be achieved through support to selected SGP OP8 grantees who have demonstrated strong upscaling

potential through convergence with government and private sector programs. A brief detailing related to the use of funds that may be received through OP8-Part 2, has been included as **Annexure 5**.

### d) Grantmaking outside the priority landscapes/seascapes

Up to 30% of the India SGP OP8 resources may be allocated for grant making outside the identified priority landscapes, with a focus on strategic and catalytic interventions. These grants will primarily be administered as strategic grants to reputed and experienced civil society organizations (CSOs) to provide targeted training, mentoring, and technical backstopping to implementing partners across all landscapes. Such support will strengthen capacities in key thematic areas aligned with the OP8 strategic priorities such as community-based conservation, sustainable agriculture, low-carbon development, waste management, and urban solutions. These grants will be deployed in the early stages of the OP8 implementation. Additionally, innovative and inclusive pilots with high demonstration value may also be supported outside the priority landscapes, particularly where they offer replicable models or support knowledge exchange that contributes back to the program's core landscapes. These efforts will ensure that resources allocated outside priority areas are used in a strategic, enabling, and complementary manner, ultimately enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of the SGP portfolio.

## 4.2 CSO-government-private sector dialogue platforms

During OP8, the SGP India Country Programme will prioritize the establishment and strengthening of multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms that bring together civil society organizations (CSOs), government agencies, and private sector actors. These platforms will serve as critical spaces for policy engagement, knowledge exchange, and collaboration aimed at scaling up grassroots innovations and influencing environmental governance. The dialogues will create opportunities for CSOs and local communities to articulate their experiences and priorities, thereby enabling a two-way flow of information between grassroots initiatives and national or sub-national policy-making processes.

Thematic dialogue platforms will be developed around key strategic areas such as biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable land management, agroecology, and nature-based enterprises. These will include national and regional-level events, roundtables, and consultation workshops that align with important policy processes such as the updating of India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and other climate and environmental frameworks like the National Adaptation Plan and the Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS).

SGP India will also engage with existing networks, such as agroecology coalitions, women's producer networks, and biodiversity management committees, to ensure representation of community voices. Lessons and innovations from SGP-supported projects will be synthesized into policy briefs, case studies, and dialogue inputs to inform national positions in global environmental conventions such as CBD COPs, UNFCCC

negotiations, and SDG forums. The program will also explore collaborations with platforms like the SDG India Index, State Action Plans on Climate Change, and thematic working groups under national flagship schemes.

### 4.3 Promoting social Inclusion, including gender equality and women's empowerment

SGP OP8 in India is committed to embedding inclusive, rights-based, and community-led approaches across all its priority landscapes and seascapes. These regions are ecologically critical and home to diverse tribal communities, women-led resource-dependent households, youth populations, and socially marginalized groups including persons with disabilities. The Country Programme will adopt a multi-pronged strategy to ensure equity, empowerment, and full participation of these groups in project design, implementation, and governance.

**Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality**

Women in the selected landscapes face intersecting vulnerabilities due to limited land ownership, restricted access to decision-making forums, high dependency on natural resources, and increasing climate-induced risks. For example, in the Sundarbans and Aravallis, women are key custodians of seed systems, fuelwood collection, and community water management, yet are underrepresented in institutional structures. In the North-East and Western Ghats, women from tribal communities often preserve traditional ecological knowledge but have limited access to markets and value chains. SGP India will actively promote women's leadership and empowerment by ensuring that at least 80% of supported projects include focused interventions to advance gender equality. The programme will strengthen women's participation in biodiversity-based micro-enterprises and nature-based solutions by supporting women's producer groups, self-help groups (SHGs), and cooperatives. Targeted capacity-building initiatives will be undertaken to enhance women's skills and engagement in natural resource governance, market access, digital literacy, and leadership roles within local institutions such as Biodiversity Management Committees and Van Panchayats. Furthermore, gender-responsive approaches will be mainstreamed across all stages of project design, implementation, and monitoring, supported by the appointment of a dedicated Gender Focal Point in the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the systematic collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data.

**Empowerment of Local Communities including Tribal Groups**

Local communities including tribal groups are key custodians of biodiversity and ecological knowledge in India, particularly in the North-East, Western Himalayas, and the tribal belts of the Aravallis and Western Ghats. However, they often face exclusion from decision-making, limited recognition of customary rights, and inadequate support to uphold their conservation practices. SGP India will promote the empowerment of local communities by recognizing and supporting community-led conservation through targeted grants and by establishing policy linkages to strengthen their rights and conservation efforts. The programme will facilitate fellowships, internships, and exchange programs to document, preserve, and disseminate traditional ecological knowledge. It will also ensure the active inclusion of local community institutions in the design of projects and the planning of landscape-level interventions. All activities involving local

communities including tribal groups will be undertaken in full compliance with the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), thereby upholding their autonomy, cultural values, and decision-making rights.

**Empowering Youth**

Youth in rural, forested, and coastal areas are often disengaged from environmental governance due to migration, lack of incentives, or absence of platforms for participation. However, they hold immense potential to drive innovation, digital solutions, and community mobilization. SGP OP8 will actively engage youth by supporting youth-led environmental start-ups and social enterprises that align with the program's biodiversity and sustainability goals. Eco-leadership programs and fellowships will be launched in project landscapes to build the capacities of young people through mentoring, digital literacy, and leadership development. The programme will promote youth participation in community-based monitoring, biodiversity documentation, and local advocacy initiatives, empowering them as key stakeholders in environmental stewardship. Additionally, SGP will facilitate peer learning opportunities, hackathons, and youth exchanges with other SGP countries and Indian states to foster innovation, cross-cultural learning, and collaboration.

**Participation of Persons with Disabilities**

In rural areas, persons with disabilities (PwDs) often face barriers to inclusion in livelihood programs, community governance, and environmental education. Their unique perspectives and needs are seldom reflected in project planning or delivery. SGP India will promote disability inclusion by encouraging grantees to integrate persons with disabilities (PwDs) into project design and implementation, ensuring accessibility in training programs, infrastructure, and information dissemination. The programme will support the development of inclusive value chains, particularly in sectors such as eco-tourism and the processing of biodiversity-based products, where PwDs can play an active role. Strategic partnerships will be fostered with disability-focused civil society organizations and relevant government schemes to provide complementary support and enhance impact. Furthermore, the concerns and perspectives of PwDs will be represented within the National Steering Committee (NSC) or relevant project advisory groups to ensure inclusive and responsive decision-making.

All grantees will be sensitized and capacitated on inclusion frameworks during inception and M&E workshops. Inclusive participation and empowerment will be a core criterion in project selection and evaluation. The India Country Programme will also develop a Portfolio Inclusion Strategy with clear targets and indicators, to be monitored annually.

### 4.4 Knowledge Management

The SGP OP8 Country Programme in India will place strong emphasis on capturing, systematizing, and disseminating the wealth of knowledge, innovations, and community-based best practices emerging from its portfolio. Knowledge management will be an integral, ongoing process aimed at enhancing program quality, enabling replication and upscaling, and informing national and global policy processes.

Each project will be required to integrate a structured knowledge documentation component from inception. SGP India will facilitate orientation and capacity-building workshops for grantees on capturing learnings, case documentation, and impact storytelling. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes will also contribute systematically to knowledge generation, with field insights from participatory monitoring informing broader reflection. Cross-learning among CSOs working in similar themes or landscapes will be promoted to encourage synthesis of effective models and approaches.

To reach diverse stakeholders, a variety of user-friendly, multi-format knowledge products will be developed. These will be produced in both English and regional languages to support local dissemination and use. The products to be developed include:

- Illustrated case studies and success stories
- Policy briefs and thematic synthesis reports
- Photo essays and short video documentaries
- Field toolkits and operational guidelines
- Periodic newsletters and infographics

Knowledge products and insights will be shared through the following channels:

- A dedicated SGP India website linked to UNDP India's website
- Webinars and national dissemination events involving government, academia, private sector, and CSOs
- Participation in regional and global SGP knowledge platforms and webinars
- Use of social media and digital campaigns to engage wider audiences

Special emphasis will be given to demonstration sites across selected landscapes that can serve as learning labs and experiential knowledge hubs for visiting CSOs, students, policy makers, and private sector actors. In addition to successes, innovations and especially failures emerging from project initiatives will also be documented to enable deeper learning.

Learning Exchanges and Fairs: The programme will organize annual or biennial Knowledge Fairs at national and landscape levels, where grantees, government officials, researchers, and private sector representatives can share innovations and tools. Peer-to-peer and South-South learning exchanges will be facilitated with other SGP countries and comparable national programs, enabling cross-contextual learning and adaptation of successful models.

Policy Linkages and Upscaling: Knowledge and evidence generated through the SGP portfolio will be synthesized into actionable recommendations and shared with policy stakeholders to influence programmatic and regulatory change. SGP India will collaborate with state biodiversity boards, planning departments, and national line ministries to integrate successful community models into relevant policies and schemes, to enable upscaling and achieve wider impacts.

## 5. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Effective communication will be essential to the success of SGP OP8 in India, supporting transparency, community engagement, knowledge exchange, and policy influence. The programme will adopt a multi-tiered communication strategy targeting community stakeholders, civil society organizations, technical institutions, media, government agencies, donors, and the public. The communication strategy will prioritize the documentation and dissemination of successful community-led practices, landscape-level innovations, and policy-relevant insights. Communication activities will emphasize inclusive narratives showcasing women, youth, local communities including tribal groups, and persons with disabilities as key agents of change. Communication will also support scaling and replication of promising models by connecting grassroots stories with policy dialogue and development planning processes at state and national levels.

A range of communication tools and platforms will be deployed, including radio, photo stories, policy briefs, digital toolkits, regional workshops, and social media campaigns. Strategic partnerships with media houses, academic institutions, and youth networks will be explored to broaden outreach and influence. The communication approach will integrate traditional knowledge with modern storytelling formats and promote the visibility of India's contribution to global environmental goals. **Table 5** below details communication products that will be developed and disseminated through the project.

**Table 5. Communication products and dissemination strategy for SGP OP8 in India**

| Communication Product | Purpose | Target Audience | Dissemination Channels |
|---|---|---|---|
| Project Briefs / Fact Sheets | Overview of SGP OP8 strategy, landscapes, results | Policymakers, partners, donors | Website, printed handouts, workshops |
| Landscape Success Stories | Showcasing community-led innovations and results | General public, CSOs, media | Social media, newsletters, expositions, radio |
| Photo Essays/ Human Interest Stories | Visual storytelling of project impact | Development actors, local stakeholders | Social media, exhibitions, community platforms |
| Policy Briefs | Translate project learnings into policy insights | Line ministries, planning departments | Email campaigns, policy dialogues, UNDP forums |
| Audio-visual Documentaries | Document and promote replicable models | General public, academia, government | Social media, screening events, SDG-related forums |
| Green Haat Catalogues/Product Showcases | Highlight eco-products and market models | CSR actors, retailers, consumers Events, | CSR networks, e-commerce |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Annual Programme Updates / Reports | Share cumulative progress and outcomes | GEF, UNDP, NSC, stakeholders | PDF reports, NSC meetings, online portals |
| Training & Knowledge Toolkits | Build capacities and replicate best practices | CSOs, CBOs, local institutions | SGP website, workshops, WhatsApp, Telegram |
| Interactive Digital Maps / Dashboards | Showcase geographies, indicators, impact | Grantees, donors, academia | Online SGP dashboard, open-access GIS portals |

## 6. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP PLAN

### a) Secured and planned cash and in-kind co-financing

The India SGP OP8 Country Programme will leverage significant co-financing through both cash and in-kind contributions from a range of partners. These include national and state government departments, academic and technical institutions, private sector CSR funds, multilateral and bilateral donors, and civil society organizations. In-kind contributions are expected to include technical expertise, training facilities, personnel time, and logistical support, while cash co-financing may be secured through aligned government schemes, CSR investments, and ongoing donor-funded projects operating in selected landscapes.

### b) Co-financing opportunities

To ensure the financial sustainability and scalability of the SGP OP8 programme in India, a comprehensive co-financing strategy will be pursued through multiple channels. These co-financing efforts will not only supplement GEF resources but also enhance synergies with ongoing national and international development initiatives, thereby contributing significantly to India's achievement of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A preliminary listing of 'Potential landscape-level convergence for cofinancing from government, private sector and other relevant programs' has been done in **Annexure 4**. Structured efforts will be especially made to facilitate convergence of SGP initiatives with government programmes at the landscape/district level. In addition to ensuring co-financing, these linkages will also enable upscaling of SGP initiatives.

- **Mobilizing GEF and Non-GEF Resources**: The program will align with ongoing related GEF projects being implemented by UNDP and other agencies in India. Some of these projects have been enumerated in Table 2 of this document. Strategic outreach will be undertaken to attract resources from bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations (e.g., HCL Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation, etc.), and other philanthropic sources aligned with environmental and community development priorities. Emphasis will be placed on showcasing successful SGP pilots as replicable models to encourage investment into thematic areas such as biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and circular economy practices.

Proposals will be developed for donor-funded programmes that align with SGP's focus areas, with the intent of integrating SGP-supported CBOs/CSOs as implementing partners. SGP will also explore facilitating participation of beneficiary NGOs in donor roundtables and thematic funding calls.

- **Cost Recovery and Shared Financing of Non-Grant Components**: To support the operational and non-grant expenses of the SGP Country Programme (e.g., coordination, M&E, capacity development, communications), efforts will be made to establish cost-sharing agreements. This includes:
  - Negotiating partial resource support from the National Host Institution and relevant government departments for staff and overheads
  - Seeking allocations under UNDP core or thematic funds
  - Developing proposals to bilateral donors and foundations for dedicated support to capacity development and knowledge management
- **SGP as a Delivery Mechanism for Other Projects and Programs**: SGP's robust community-level implementation systems and extensive network of CSOs/CBOs position it as a cost-effective and credible delivery mechanism for other donor and government programs. SGP India will actively seek partnerships with ongoing initiatives under flagship schemes such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Green India Mission, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and state-level climate action plans. Joint implementation frameworks will be proposed to integrate SGP's methodologies and local networks into these larger schemes. Specific opportunities include convergence on community-based landscape restoration, climate-smart agriculture, and renewable energy promotion.
- **Mobilizing Private Sector and CSR Support**: The SGP will explore partnerships with private companies under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) mandates, particularly those operating in or near project landscapes. Co-financing will be sought for interventions that align with CSR goals, such as water conservation, women's entrepreneurship, and biodiversity protection. In addition, efforts will be made to engage private sector impact investors and venture philanthropies in scaling up green enterprises or eco-innovation pilots supported under SGP. Platforms such as CII's India Business and Biodiversity Initiative (IBBI) will be leveraged to identify potential private sector partners and investors.

## 7. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SGP OP8 in India presents a unique opportunity to foster transformative partnerships that enhance the effectiveness, scale, and sustainability of community-led environmental action. Recognizing that meaningful impact requires convergence across multiple actors and sectors, the programme will work under the guidance of the National Steering Committee (NSC), Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Regional Advisory

Committees (RACs) to strategically engage with a diverse ecosystem of partners to co-create solutions, co-finance initiatives, and amplify reach.

Government partnerships will focus on aligning with flagship national missions such as the Green India Mission, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, and National Biodiversity Action Plan, leveraging schemes like MNREGA, PM-KUSUM, and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission for convergence. Collaboration with national and state biodiversity boards, forest departments, and district planning bodies will strengthen local governance and ensure long-term sustainability of results. SGP will also deepen engagement with academic and technical institutions such as Wildlife Institute of India, Indian Institute of Forest Management, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, and Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, to enhance the scientific rigour of landscape-level assessments, impact monitoring, and knowledge management. At the landscape level, mapping of potential government programs for convergence will be done to enable linkages and monitoring of the same. A small geography 1-3 Panchayats) within each landscape may be selected to demonstrate effective convergence. Further, integration of conservation practices into prevailing tools such as the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) will enable stronger action on ground. Civil society networks and grassroots organizations will remain core partners in implementation, capacity building, and community mobilization.

New partnerships will be explored with CSR units/Foundations of private sector entities, impact investors, philanthropic institutions, and cooperatives to catalyse co-financing and enterprise development around green livelihoods. In addition, SGP will collaborate with media, youth platforms, and art collectives to mainstream environmental consciousness and inspire public action. Through these diverse partnerships, SGP OP8 aims to create resilient, inclusive ecosystems of innovation, aligned with India's national priorities and global environmental goals.

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The successful implementation of the SGP OP8 Country Programme Strategy in India requires proactive identification, assessment, and management of potential risks that may affect project performance, stakeholder participation, and long-term sustainability. These risks may stem from social and environmental factors, climate-related events, governance and institutional dynamics, or unforeseen natural disasters. In alignment with UNDP's Social and Environmental Safeguards, this section outlines key anticipated risks along with appropriate mitigation strategies and describes the system that will be used to monitor, review, and adjust risk responses throughout the project cycle. **Table 6** below lists some of the significant risks associated with the proposed initiative.

**Table 6. Description of risks identified in OP8**

| Describe identified risk | Degree of risk (low, medium, high) | Probability of risk (low, medium, high) | Risk mitigation measure foreseen |
|---|---|---|---|
| Resistance from communities due to lack of trust, conflicting interests, or socio-cultural norms. | Medium | Low | Early stakeholder mapping and engagement, use of participatory planning tools, FPIC, and engagement of local CSOs. |
| Environmental risks due to unintended impacts on sensitive ecosystems. | Medium | Low | Rigorous environmental screening of projects using SGP Safeguards Checklist; periodic field validation and technical reviews. |
| Climate-related events (floods, droughts, extreme heat) impacting project implementation. | Medium | Medium | Incorporate climate resilience into project design; flexible timelines; emergency response protocols; climate risk training. |
| Political or administrative changes delaying approvals or disrupting coordination. | Medium | Low | Regular engagement with local and state administration; maintain institutional memory through strong documentation. |
| Inadequate technical capacity of grantees leading to poor project quality. | Medium | Medium | Comprehensive capacity development plan; ongoing technical support; peer learning and mentoring. |
| Natural disasters (earthquakes, landslides, cyclones) causing destruction of assets or displacement. | Medium | Low | Risk-informed site selection; climate and disaster resilience integration; insurance exploration for community assets. |
| Delays or shortfalls in co-financing from government, CSR, or private sector. | Medium | Medium | Early engagement with co-financing partners; track financial leverage; diversify resource mobilization strategies. |
| Marginalization of vulnerable groups such as women, tribal communities, and persons with disabilities. | Medium | Low | Enforce inclusion targets and ethical safeguards; empower community resource persons and CBOs. |
| Project activities and approaches might not fully incorporate or reflect views of women and girls and ensure equitable opportunities for their involvement and benefit. | Medium | Medium | This risk be managed through the Gender Action Plan and incorporated in the landscape strategies. The project decision-making structures, including the multi-stakeholder |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | platforms in the intervention landscapes will have equitable representation by women. |

The SGP OP8 Country Team will track the identified risks through a risk log integrated into the annual monitoring system. Risks will be reviewed as part of the Annual Country Programme Review and during the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) preparation. During these reviews:

- The degree and probability of each risk will be reassessed based on field realities and lessons learned.
- New risks may be added if emerging, and outdated ones may be removed.
- Each risk will have corresponding mitigation actions, timelines, and responsible entities.
- Risks will also be monitored during project cluster review meetings and during field monitoring visits by SGP staff and technical partners.

Specific risks related to community welfare and ethical safeguards will be reviewed using participatory monitoring tools, including focus group discussions with marginalized stakeholders. The approach will be to ensure that the risk management process remains adaptive, participatory, and ethically grounded, and aligns with UNDP's "do no harm" and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles.

# 9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

## 9.1 Monitoring approaches at project and country levels

Building on processes established in OP7, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for SGP OP8 will play a crucial role in ensuring effective implementation, transparency, learning, and adaptive management of the Country Programme. It is designed to align with the global GEF SGP OP8 Results Framework, while remaining responsive to local contexts, community ownership, and the needs of diverse stakeholders. The M&E approach will be structured across three levels: project level, landscape/cluster level, and country portfolio level, while maintaining alignment with the global SGP results framework and the GEF-8 Monitoring Guidelines. The project activities, along with associated risks and mitigation measures, will be regularly discussed with tribal communities during stakeholder engagement and FPIC processes. This ensures that tribal communities fully understand the inherent risks of the project, enabling them to make informed decisions about their consent. These discussions would be conducted through community consultations and online training sessions for NGOs to effectively carry out and document the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. A project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) will also be established to address stakeholder concerns transparently and equitably.

At the project level, each approved initiative will be required to develop a robust M&E plan with clearly defined baselines, outputs, and outcomes that align with SGP OP8 indicators. CSO partners will be trained in developing these frameworks, which will include both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Participatory approaches such as community mapping, focus group discussions, and reflective learning tools will be used to track changes and outcomes that matter most to local stakeholders. To ensure participatory and community-owned monitoring, monitoring plans will be co-designed with project beneficiaries. These plans will recognize and incorporate traditional knowledge systems, gender-sensitive indicators, and the specific priorities of tribal communities, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Local communities will be actively engaged in defining results, collecting data, and validating progress during regular project reviews.

Each project will be monitored at least once during its life cycle by the SGP India Country Team. For selected landscapes or projects of special interest (e.g., innovation, scale-up potential, high-risk areas), additional site visits and cluster-level joint monitoring missions will be planned. These may be carried out in collaboration with academic institutions, other donor programs, government departments, CSR and private foundations to enhance learning and cost efficiency. At the landscape level, clustered monitoring across projects will facilitate synthesis of landscape-level outcomes and enable the identification of synergies or duplication. The program will also institute annual portfolio learning reviews to capture outcomes at the landscape level, identify best practices, and enable adaptive programming. These reviews will include regional or national level "SGP Learning and Knowledge Forums" involving grantees, government partners, knowledge institutions, and other stakeholders.

At the country portfolio level, the National Host Institution (NHI) will collate and aggregate data across all projects using the SGP database, generating periodic progress reports for the National Steering Committee (NSC), UNDP Country Office, and the GEF SGP Programme Management Team. To further enhance the credibility and impartiality of the M&E system, the India SGP Country Team may engage an independent third-party monitoring agency to assess select projects annually and provide evidence-based recommendations. These findings will feed into internal reviews, country portfolio evaluations, and global reporting to the Central Programme Management Team (CPMT).

A dedicated M&E Inception Workshop will be organized for each cohort of grantees to build capacity on the M&E strategy, indicator development, outcome mapping, and use of the SGP digital database. This workshop will introduce ethical guidelines for data collection, the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and approaches to safeguard the dignity and rights of local populations. These efforts will be complemented by periodic refresher trainings and individualized mentoring by the SGP National Coordinator and Technical Advisory Group.

The SGP digital database will be the primary repository for real-time tracking of project-level progress and aggregation of results at the national level. All grantees will be trained and supported in using this platform to enter data regularly, upload reports, document case studies, and capture photographs and stories of change. The National Host Institution will be responsible for verifying data quality, ensuring consistency, and flagging issues for early resolution. All M&E activities will adhere strictly to ethical guidelines ensuring cultural sensitivity, voluntary participation, and protection of community rights and privacy. Monitoring will be used not only as a tool for accountability but also to enable reflection, celebrate success, and enhance

the capacity of community partners to drive lasting environmental and social transformation. **Table 7** below provides an overview of the M&E plan for OP8 in India.

**Table 7. M&E Plan at the Country Programme level**

| M&E Activity | Purpose | Responsible Parties | Budget Source | Timing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country Programme Strategy elaboration | Framework for action including identification of community projects | National Coordinator, NSC, country stakeholders, grantees | A SGP planning grant to engage consultants may be used to update OP8 CPS | At start of OP8 |
| Annual CPS Review (as part of NSC meetings) | Assess effectiveness of projects and portfolio; enable learning, adaptive management, and strategic course correction | National Coordinator, NSC, UNDP CO. Final deliberations shared/analyzed with CPMT | Staff time, Country Operating Budget | At least once annually |
| Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) Survey | Efficient reporting to SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT)/GEF; analytical presentation of aggregated results to donors | National Coordinator in close collaboration with NSC; CPMT for guidance and final review | Staff time | Once per year (June–July) |
| Country Portfolio Review | Capture impact-level change and adoption trends; inform CPS adjustments and reporting to stakeholders | National Coordinator, NSC, with CPMT support; external consultants as needed | SGP planning grant (consultants), staff time | Once per operational phase |
| SGP Database Entry and Review | Ensure complete and high-quality data recording at project and country levels | National Coordinator | Staff time | Throughout the OP; QA in May–June annually |
| Monitoring Visits to Project Clusters | Field verification, community feedback, documentation of good practices; enhance grantee mentoring | National Coordinator, Technical Advisory Group (TAG), NSC representatives | Country Operating Budget | At least once per project; cluster-based visits twice a year |

| M&E Activity | Purpose | Responsible Parties | Budget Source | Timing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Third-Party Monitoring and Evaluation Support | Independent validation, participatory assessments, and learning synthesis | Independent evaluators in coordination with National Coordinator; consult CPMT for TOR | SGP Planning/Operating Budget or co-financing | Mid-OP8 and end of OP8 |
| M&E Capacity Building Workshop for Grantees | Strengthen grantee capacity in M&E strategy, data tools, participatory and ethical monitoring | National Coordinator, CPMT, external trainers/partners | Country Operating Budget or technical co-financing (e.g., academia) | Within first 6 months of OP8; refreshers as needed |
| Participatory Community Monitoring | Enable community-led monitoring using simple tools; increase ownership and inclusivity | Grantees, CBOs, SHGs, with facilitation by National Coordinator | Staff time; local resources | Bi-annually at project level; integrated into reports and learning events |
| Local stakeholder engagement and FPIC | Ensure compliance with SES standards | Grantees, CBOs, SHGs, with facilitation by National Coordinator | Country Operating Budget and Project Grant | Throughout the OP |
| Audit | Ensure compliance with standards; financial accountability | External auditors; National Coordinator for coordination | Global Operating Budget | Annually (as per global risk-based selection) |

### 9.2 CPS Results Framework

The Results Framework outlined below in **Table 8** provides the strategic structure for tracking outcomes and impacts of the SGP OP8 Country Programme in India. It aligns with the global SGP OP8 Theory of Change as well as with the UNDP Country Programme Document for India. It is designed to reflect the integrated landscape-seascape approach adopted by the programme. The framework links key outputs and outcomes across the GEF focal areas of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land and seascape management, and chemicals and waste, while also emphasizing social inclusion, institutional strengthening, and knowledge sharing.

The indicators presented in this framework are intended to support robust monitoring, enable aggregation of results at the national and global levels, and ensure accountability to stakeholders. They will also serve as a basis for adaptive management and evidence-based learning throughout the implementation of OP8.

**Table 8: Results Framework of SGP OP8 Country Programme Strategy**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Alignment with SDGs**<br><br>The CPS will contribute to the following SDGs: 1-Reducing Poverty, 5-Gender Equality, 7-Affordable and Clean Energy, 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12-Responsible Consumption and Production, 13-Climate Action, 14-Life Below Water, 15-Life on Land, and 17-Partnerships for the Goals. | | |
| **Synergy with UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD):**<br><br>By 2027, Government of India, state governments, communities, private sector and other actors take informed actions to address climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss and restore ecological integrity through improved knowledge, capacity and mainstreaming of relevant actions across sectoral programmes, policies and plans. | | |
| **OP8 SGP Programme Goal:** Engage local CSOs/CBOs in landscape-seascape approaches across the world, providing them access to knowledge and information, capacitating them through learning-by-doing, skills development, and delivering technical and grant assistance for interventions that enhance wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits. | | |
| **1**<br><br>**OP8 SGP CPS Strategic Initiatives** | **2**<br><br>**CPS Indicators and Targets** | **3**<br><br>**Means of Verification** |
| Strategic Initiative 1:<br><br>Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species | 30,000 hectares of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (GEF core indicator 4.1 and 4.3)<br><br>1,500 hectares of marine protected areas created or under improved management (GEF core indicator 2)<br><br>3,500 hectares of marine habitat under improved practices (GEF core indicator 5) | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports)<br><br>Baseline assessment comparison variables (use of conceptual models and partner data as appropriate)<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |
| Strategic Initiative 2:<br><br>Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security | 4,000 hectares of land and ecosystems under restoration (GEF core indicator 3.1)<br><br>5 (number of) partnerships to advance sustainable agriculture and fisheries and/or food security (such as diversification, sustainable intensification, sustainable fisheries management, agroecological farming practices, climate-smart agriculture, | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports)<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | certification programmes, local sourcing initiatives, waste reduction and circular economy, etc.) | Socio-ecological resilience indicators for production landscapes (SEPLs) |
| Strategic Initiative 3:<br><br>Low-carbon energy access co-benefits | 49,275 metric tons of CO2 emissions (lifetime) mitigated/avoided (GEF core indicator 6)<br><br>1 MW increase in installed renewable energy capacity from community-scale systems (e.g., biomass, micro-hydro, solar, etc.)<br><br>10 (number of) locally adapted solutions promoting low-carbon technologies (such as new/modified biogas technology, locally developed energy-efficient stoves, innovative uses of solar/wind energy, etc.) | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports)<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Strategy Review<br>(NSC inputs) |
| Strategic Initiative 4:<br><br>Local to global coalitions for chemicals and waste management | 2 (number of) policy recommendations or advocacy initiatives related to land-based pollution as a result of SGP project<br><br>2 (number of) local to global coalitions for chemicals and waste management strengthened and/or established | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports)<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |
| Strategic Initiative 5:<br><br>Catalyzing sustainable urban solutions | 4 (number of) community-based sustainable solutions in urban landscapes (e.g., transport, biodiversity conservation, chemical and waste management, energy efficiency, watershed protection, etc.)<br><br>10% (number of) projects with targeted urban solutions focus | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |
| Strategic Initiative 6:<br><br>CSO-Government-Private Sector Policy and Planning Dialogue Platforms | 15 (number of) CSO-government-private sector dialogues formed or strengthened<br><br>1,500 (number of) representatives from social inclusion group (Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, persons with disability, farmers, other marginalized groups) meaningfully engaged in multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strategic Initiative 7:<br><br>Enhancing social inclusion | 15,000 (number of) people (7,500 women) benefitting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (GEF core indicator 11)<br><br>80% projects with focused interventions promoting gender equality and women's empowerment<br><br>50% (number of) projects that demonstrate models of engaging (a) Local community and tribal groups, (b) youth, and (c) persons with disabilities.<br><br>30% grants with targeted support for 1) women or women groups; 2) youth or youth-led groups; 3) Local community and tribal groups<br><br>30% of total grant portfolio accessed by 1) women or women groups; 2) youth or youth-led groups; 3) Local community and tribal groups | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |
| Strategic Initiative 8:<br><br>Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Management | 50% (number of) projects with meetings involving local CSOs/CBOs or communities to monitor project results, assess impacts, and identify lessons learned<br><br>10 (number of) knowledge exchange/sharing events with participation of local communities<br><br>1 (number of) online knowledge repository developed as a result of SGP project<br><br>5 (number of) country impact reviews conducted with evidence of SGP impact and lessons learned.<br><br>2 (number of) South-South exchanges between communities, NGOs/CSOs, or other partners within or across countries to transfer knowledge, replicate technology, tools or approaches on global environmental issues | Individual project reporting by SGP country teams<br><br>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database<br><br>Country Programme Review |

## 10.GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The governance and management structure of the SGP OP8 in India builds upon the robust institutional architecture established in previous operational phases, ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective coordination across national and local levels. The programme will be executed nationally by the UNDP India Country Office, in collaboration with a designated National Host Institution (NHI) and guided by a multi-stakeholder National Steering Committee (NSC). The role of NHI will continue to be played by TERI, which

has been the NHI during OP7 in India. The NSC will continue to serve as the apex decision-making body responsible for strategic direction, grant approvals, oversight, and policy-level guidance. It will comprise representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, and local communities, ensuring diversity, gender balance, regional and any other representation as appropriate. The NSC will be chaired by a senior government representative from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), and co-chaired by a civil society member to reflect a participatory governance approach. Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings bring together subject matter experts, research institutions, and development practitioners to provide technical inputs and advisory support. The TAG is responsible for the final technical evaluation and selection of NGOs for grant allocation. Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) facilitate landscape-level decision-making and provide technical recommendations for project interventions in different themes. The RAC is responsible for conducting regional-level technical evaluations and selecting NGOs for grant allocation.

The National Coordinator (NC), supported by a small team, will manage day-to-day operations, including project cycle management, M&E, knowledge management, and reporting, under the oversight of the UNDP Country Office. The NC will work closely with the NHI, which will provide administrative and logistical support, and with local partners in each of the selected landscapes and seascapes. The NHI will host the NC and provide fiduciary oversight of grant disbursement and financial management, aligned with UNDP policies. To ensure regional implementation and responsiveness, decentralized support mechanisms (e.g., local advisory committees, field coordinators, and technical partners) may be established for each priority landscape and seascape. These mechanisms will provide field-level inputs, facilitate community engagement, and support technical quality control during project implementation.

The SGP India Country Programme will maintain strong coordination with the UNDP Country Office, the Global SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT), and relevant GEF operational focal points. Regular monitoring, annual reviews, audits, and mid-term/terminal evaluations will be conducted to assess performance and support adaptive management. The governance system will also support active partnerships with government schemes, academic and research institutions, civil society coalitions, and private sector platforms, enabling co-financing, policy influence, and upscaling of successful models. Institutional transparency and ethical safeguards, including free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), environmental and social safeguards, and grievance redress mechanisms will be enforced across all programme components.

Multi-stakeholder governance platforms are planned in each of the three intervention landscapes, and include representation by local governments, CBOs/NGOs, agricultural associations, and private sector enterprises Establishment of landscape level multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral platforms is an integral part of the project strategy, aiming to strengthen socio-ecological resilience of local communities. These platforms will ensure inclusive participation of landscape-level stakeholders.

## 11. NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT

Note: The signatures of NSC members are required as endorsement of the complete final CPS duly reviewed and agreed at the National Steering Committee meeting.

| **NSC members involved in OP8 CPS development, review and endorsement** | **Signatures** |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| (Add more rows as necessary) | |

# ANNEXES

**Annexure 1:** Summary of consultations undertaken for development of the CPS for SGP OP8 India

**A. Summary of Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on SGP OP8 –** *Bengaluru, 26–27 June 2025*

The meeting convened stakeholders including RAC members, technical experts, bilateral institutions, and UNDP representatives. NGO participants in the meeting, included current OP7 grantees. A draft of the CPS was reviewed by the participants before and during the meeting.

**Key Suggestions and Discussions:**

- Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge and strengthening of gender mainstreaming practices carried over from OP7.
- Continuation of OP7 landscapes was recommended by TERI.
- The role of district-level nodal officers was acknowledged as critical for government co-financing.
- Early engagement with partners during project design was encouraged for effective outcomes.
- Strategy grants should be used from the start to support implementing NGOs, with RACs providing oversight.
- More flexible partner selection norms for North-East India were recommended due to local capacity needs.
- Learning from IUCN's MFF programme, stakeholders proposed:
  - Ongoing proposal development with handholding support.
  - Fixed-interval application rounds and regular NGO training.
  - A 6-month inception phase before project start.
- Formal engagement with NITI Aayog's innovation programs was suggested.
- Proposal to extend project duration to 3 years and increase the budget ceiling to USD 80,000.
- Emphasis on private sector co-financing, exploring tools like carbon finance and insurance.
- Qualitative indicators should supplement quantitative ones for better impact tracking.
- SGP should expand its work with urban bodies, especially around urban water bodies.
- A review of the NCS and RAC roles was recommended to improve project selection.
- Emphasis on working with contiguous districts in selected landscapes to enhance convergence.
- Projects should strengthen community institutions and governance via mechanisms like GPDP.
- Upscaling innovations was prioritized, including an assessment of technological and capacity gaps.
- Interconnectedness across SGP initiatives and stronger landscape-level governance mechanisms were emphasized.
- Use of regional interns from academic institutions was suggested to support project operations.

**The following landscapes were proposed for OP8 through inputs from the experts present:**

1. **Aravallis:** Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat
2. **Western Ghats:** Goa (North & South), Karnataka (Dharwad, Udupi, Mangaluru)
3. **Coastal:** Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas), Odisha

4. **North-East India:** Meghalaya (South & West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur–Biswanath, Dhemaji–Lakhimpur)
5. **Himalayas:** Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri–Govind

**B. Summary of the National Project Steering Committee meeting of SGP OP7** – *Mumbai, 25 July 2025*

Participants included senior officials from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India (including the NPSC Chairperson), the NHI (TERI), and UNDP. In addition, NPSC representatives from selected NGOs and technical experts were also present in the meeting. The draft CPS had been circulated to participants in advance of the meeting and was discussed in detail.

**Key Suggestions and Discussions on the OP8 CPS:**

- The SGP OP8 CPS was broadly acceptable subject to the suggestions given below.
- Traditional knowledge of local communities must be incorporated in SGP projects
- Convergence with government programmes and with private sector needs significant focus to enable convergence as also stronger and more wide-spread outcomes.
- Innovative ideas must be promoted and mentored.
- More detailed analysis of SGP projects is required to collate the learning and take it to Government schemes for adoption and upscaling.
- Create digital modules for capacity building and upscaling through CSOs
- Mainstreaming of project implementation processes is required with GPDP, and development of a digital tool for mapping government schemes at the local level.
- Stronger integration of the SGP programme is required with CSR initiatives.
- There must be scope to analyze and draw learning from failures faced by SGP projects.
- It was also suggested to add some of the arid districts of Rajasthan contiguous to the Aravalli landscape, to ensure adequate attention to ecosystem restoration in the landscape.

**Annexure 2: Landscape Baseline Assessment Process**

**A. Objective of landscape baseline assessment:**

The landscape baseline assessment was conducted to identify priority geographies for implementation under SGP OP8 in India. The aim was to ensure that selected landscapes offer significant opportunities for community-led action on biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management, and protection of international waters, while addressing local livelihood challenges and social inclusion imperatives.

**B. Methodology for landscape selection and profiling:**

The assessment process followed a multi-criteria approach involving the following steps:

- **Preliminary identification of candidate landscapes** based on:
  - Ecological and cultural significance
  - Vulnerability to climate change and land degradation
  - Presence of vulnerable communities and high poverty incidence
  - Potential for community-led action and replication
- **Desktop review and spatial analysis**, including:
  - Overlay of Biodiversity Hotspots, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Ramsar sites, Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks
  - Review of climate vulnerability indices, land degradation maps, and forest cover data
  - Consultation of national-level development and ecological rankings
- **Consultations with stakeholders**:
  - Engagement with experts, government agencies, CSOs, and members of the National Project Steering Committee, and Regional Advisory Committees
  - Insights from previous SGP phases and other donor-funded initiatives
- **Final selection based on landscape-level potential**, focusing on:
  - Representation of India's major eco-regions
  - Balance across biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation focal areas
  - Opportunities for convergence with government schemes and donor initiatives

**C. Government and official sources referenced as Baseline:**

To ensure evidence-based identification of landscapes and their characteristics, the following data sources and references were used:

| Reference | Type of Information Used |
|---|---|
| India Biodiversity Portal | Species occurrence, ecosystem types, endemic and threatened species |
| Forest Survey of India – State of Forest Report (2021 & 2019) | Forest cover, forest types, deforestation hotspots |

| | |
|---|---|
| Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India (2021) – ISRO | Land degradation hotpots, land use change data |
| Census of India (2011) | Demographic data, Scheduled Tribe/Scheduled Caste distribution, rural/urban status |
| NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme | Developmental gaps and poverty indicators |
| India State-Level Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (2021) – DST & IISc Bangalore | Composite vulnerability index of states and districts |
| Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) & Botanical Survey of India (BSI) | Species richness and threatened taxa data |
| Wetlands of India Portal | Data on wetlands of international importance |
| India Meteorological Department (IMD) | Rainfall anomalies, temperature extremes, agro-climatic zones |
| National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) – ICAR | Agro-climatic stress zones and adaptive farming technologies |
| International databases (e.g., IUCN Red List, GBIF, BirdLife International) | Global conservation status and species distribution |
| Indian Agricultural Statistic Research Institute | Agro-biodiversity hotspots and distribution |
| National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management | Mangrove areas under threat in India |
| UNDP SGP OP7 Project Document and Mid Term Evaluation | Historical SGP project footprints and OP7 learning |

**D. Landscape-level profiles and customization:**

Each selected landscape was profiled based on ecological characteristics, dominant communities and livelihoods, key threats and vulnerabilities, and institutional capacities. This profiling informed the strategic priority setting for OP8. The final list of selected landscapes covers ecologically diverse systems including the Himalayas, Aravalli hills, Western Ghats, Sundarbans and Odisha coast, North-East India, and dryland districts of western India. Additionally, convergence opportunities were identified with national programs such as CAMPA, Green India Mission, MGNREGS, and state-level forestry and tribal development schemes.

**Annexure 3:** Summary of assessment done of proposed landscapes/seascapes along OP8 selection criteria

| Aravallis – Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat | Western Ghats - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada) | Coastal - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas) | North-East India - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur) | Himalayas - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Biodiversity Hotspot and KBAs*** The Aravalli is recognized as one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. It has important protected areas such as Ranthambore National Park, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary; Khichan Ramsar Site, Kurja Conservation Reserve. Fragmented but ecologically critical habitat corridor. | ***Biodiversity Hotspot and KBAs*** The selected landscape is part of the Western Ghats Biodiversity Hotspot; Comprises the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, Mollem National Park, Kali Tiger Reserve, Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary; Mugli–Apsarakonda Marine Sanctuary. | ***Biodiversity Hotspot and KBAs*** Comprises the Bhitarkanika National Park, the Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve (the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest). | ***Biodiversity Hotspot and KBAs*** Part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot region and the Eastern Himalaya Key Biodiversity Area; Comprises of Nokrek Biosphere Reserve, Pakke Tiger Reserve, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park. | ***Biodiversity Hotspot and KBAs*** Part of the Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot. KBAs include Gangotri National Park and Govind National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuary, Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary, and Hemis National Park. |
| ***Threatened species*** Tiger, Leopard, Caracal, Sloth Bear, Grey Wolf, Honey Badger Indian pangolin, vultures (White-rumped, Egyptian Vulture); endemic flora | ***Threatened species*** Lion-tailed macaque, Malabar civet, hornbills, freshwater fish species Indian bison, Malabar giant squirrel, pangolin, and others. The sanctuary also shelters over 200 bird species (e.g., all 4 hornbill species of India, paradise flycatcher). The marine landscape includes olive ridley turtles, | ***Threatened species*** Key mangrove and associated species include Sundari (Heritiera fomes), Avicennia species, Rhizophora species, and Bruguiera species. Key mammals include the Royal Bengal Tiger, Fishing Cat, and Smooth-coated Otter. The Saltwater Crocodile and Water | ***Threatened species*** Asian Elephant, Hoolock gibbon, clouded leopard, Bengal slow loris, Capped langur, Golden langur, Indian pangolin, Three species of hornbills, Bengal Florican, Ward's Trogon, Satyr Tragopan, and Blood Pheasant. Assam Roofed Turtle and the Golden Mahseer are freshwater | ***Threatened species*** Snow leopard, Himalayan wolf, Himalayan musk deer, Blue sheep (bharal), Tibetan antelope, bearded vulture, Himalayan monal. Endemic high-altitude flora includes significant medicinal plants such as Picrorhiza kurroa, Aconitum |

| Aravallis – Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat | Western Ghats - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada) | Coastal - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas) | North-East India - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur) | Himalayas - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | humpback whales, rays, seahorses, groupers, and over 80 seabird species. Coral reef species include 14 coral types, 2 seaweed species, and seagrass patches | Monitor Lizard, Irrawaddy dolphin are also found here. | species found here. Medicinal and Endemic Plants such as Taxus wallichiana, Paris polyphylla, and Zanthoxylum species. | heterophyllum, Nardostachys jatamansi, and Saussurea costus. |
| ***Degradation of natural resources*** Reduction in forest area by close to 35% over the last 50 years; Land degradation due to mining, urban expansion, groundwater depletion. | ***Degradation of natural resources*** Over the last century, the Western Ghats has lost more than 40% of its original natural vegetation due to agricultural expansion, monoculture plantations, infrastructure, and dams; Forest fragmentation, riverine sand mining, pressures from tourism | ***Degradation of natural resources*** Over the last 20 years, Sundarbans lost around 2% of its mangrove cover due to erosion and human encroachment. Cyclone damage, salinity intrusion, mangrove degradation, erosion are prevalent here. Lack of solid waste management in the delta islands has led to plastic and non-biodegradable waste choking tidal creeks and mangroves. | ***Degradation of natural resources*** Over recent years, the loss of forest cover in Northeast India is estimated to be around 0.4 % annually, mainly due to shifting cultivation impacts, forest conversion, riverbank erosion, and expansion in agriculture areas. Wildlife corridors (e.g. between Pakke–Nameri) are severely degraded leading to rising human-wildlife conflict. | ***Degradation of natural resources*** 60–70% of rangelands here show signs of moderate to severe degradation due to high livestock pressure. Habitat shrinkage has led to increased conflicts with herders due to declining wild prey base. 27% of forest area in Uttarkashi district is degraded leading to frequent landslides in monsoon. Overharvesting of high-altitude medicinal plants. |
| ***Climate-related risk*** High risks of water scarcity, heat stress, erratic rainfall. | ***Climate-related risk*** Coastal flooding, cyclones, landslides, rainfall extremes | ***Climate-related risk*** Very high recurring risk of cyclones, sea level rise, tidal surges. | ***Climate-related risk*** Highly vulnerable to climate change. Increasing temperatures and changing rainfall patterns leading to crop changes, floods, and landslides. | ***Climate-related risk*** Glaciers retreating at an average rate of 10–20 meters/year due to which dependent streams show 30–40% reduced flow in summer. Increased frequency of landslides and flash-floods in monsoon. |
| ***Poverty incidence*** Semi-arid/Arid region; Presence of tribal communities (mainly | ***Poverty incidence*** Tribal communities (Gauda, Kunbi, Siddi) have a population of around | ***Poverty incidence*** The percentage of Scheduled Caste is high in the selected landscapes | ***Poverty incidence*** High tribal population (Garo, Bodo, Nyishi, Mishing) - more | ***Poverty incidence*** Due to the remoteness of the region and limited livelihood |

| Aravallis – Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat | Western Ghats - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada) | Coastal - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas) | North-East India - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur) | Himalayas - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bhil) - upto 50% population in districts like Udaipur; Significant presence of other marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes (10-15%) and pastoral communities; high urban-rural disparity. | 5-7% in the selected landscape districts. | (more than 20% of the district population), mainly engaged in fishing and agriculture, both highly climate-vulnerable livelihoods. | than 80% in Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh parts. Poverty rates in all selected districts are over 35% (way above national averages); Aspirational (most backward in India) districts - West Garo Hills, Biswanath, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur. | options, more than 25% of households in the landscape are classified as poor. Kargil included under Aspirational Districts Programme and Uttarkashi classified as a Backward Himalayan District. Close to 80% population in Ladakh-Kargil is tribal belonging to Brokpa, Bhotia, Balti, Changpa groups. |
| ***Presence of CSOs*** Significant NGOs such as Foundation for Ecological Security and Sewa Mandir working here on commons and natural resource management; Other CSOs working on mining restoration, urban greening, forest rights. | ***Presence of CSOs*** Strong networks in sustainable tourism, fisheries, forest governance led by CSOs such as ATREE, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Bombay Natural History Society. | ***Presence of CSOs*** Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS), Vasundhara, and Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD). | ***Presence of CSOs*** Quite a few CSOs active in the landscape on nature restoration, sustainable agriculture, and disaster resilience. Prominent among them are Bethany Society, North-East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS), and Aaranyak. | ***Presence of CSOs*** Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, Ladakh Ecological Development Group, The Mountain Institute India, Himmotthan Society (a Tata Trusts initiative), and Centre for Ecology Development and Research are some of the significant CSOs here. |
| ***Previous SGP Intervention*** OP5 and OP7 (Delhi ridge greening, mining reclamation in Rajasthan, water governance) | ***Previous SGP Intervention*** OP5 and OP7 (community-managed eco-tourism in Uttara Kannada, coastal ecosystem restoration in Goa) | ***Previous SGP Intervention*** OP5 and OP7 (Sundarbans wetland livelihood pilots, Odisha turtle protection initiatives). | ***Previous SGP Intervention*** OP5 and OP7 (bamboo-based livelihoods, forest rights strengthening, sustainable agriculture). | ***Previous SGP Intervention*** OP5 and OP7 (pasture regeneration, snow leopard conservation, spring rejuvenation) |
| ***Convergence with Government and other Donor programs*** | ***Convergence with Government and other Donor programs*** | ***Convergence with Government and other Donor programs*** | ***Convergence with Government and other Donor programs*** | ***Convergence with Government and other Donor programs*** |

| Aravallis – Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer), Gujarat | Western Ghats - Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada) | Coastal - Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas) | North-East India - Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur) | Himalayas - Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CAMPA, National Afforestation Programme, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, Green India Mission, Aravalli Green Wall. | Mangrove Cell (Goa), MISHTI – Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes, SDMA projects. | ICZMP, MISHTI, National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), SDMA, NABARD coastal resilience projects, and the government's Blue Economy program. | North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) – Ministry of DoNER, Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North-Eastern Region (MOVCDNER), National Bamboo Mission, Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming Systems in the North East (FOCUS) program of IFAD, JICA-Assisted Forestry and Livelihood Projects. | National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (under NAPCC), National Mission on Himalayan Studies, Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project (JICA-assisted), and the KfW-supported "Eco-tourism and Livelihoods" Initiatives in Ladakh, are Government programs with which convergence will be sought. |

**Annexure 4: Potential landscape-level convergence for cofinancing from government, private sector and other relevant programs**

| Selected Landscape | Potential Convergence Opportunities | | |
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| | **Government and State-Level Programs** | **Donor Initiatives** | **Private Sector and CSO Initiatives** |
| **Aravalli -** Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan (including the arid districts of Jodhpur, Phalodi, Jaisalmer, and Barmer), Gujarat | **National Afforestation Programme -** Supports JFMC-based reforestation.<br>**Rajasthan's Rajiv Gandhi Jal Sanchay Yojana -** Water harvesting and recharge structures in arid zones.<br>**Gujarat's Vanya Prani Mitra Scheme -** Community incentives for wildlife protection.<br>**Delhi's Ridge Management Policy -** Ridge zone biodiversity conservation.<br>**Haryana's Mera Pani Meri Virasat Scheme -** Promotes crop diversification and water conservation.<br>**MGNREGS -** Extensively supports water conservation and plantation in desert-prone villages.<br>**Rural Development Ministry's Rurban Mission -** Focuses on integrated village clusters near urban fringes. | **World Bank-supported Rajasthan Water Sector Livelihood Improvement Project.**<br>**FAO-GEF project Green-Ag: Transforming Indian Agriculture for Global Environmental Benefits**<br>**GIZ "RECAP4NDC" Initiative in Aravallis** - Large-scale ecological restoration and policy support across Rajasthan and Haryana.<br>**TNC–Rajasthan Forest Dept "Aravalli Lifeline" Restoration** - Ongoing joint restoration project under the Aravalli Green Wall initiative covering around 7 lakh ha. in Rajasthan.<br>**Rajasthan Forestry & Biodiversity Project Phase-2 (JICA & Forest Dept.)** - Focuses on afforestation, soil/water conservation and biodiversity restoration across degraded Aravalli tracts.<br>**UNDP-GEF project on Strengthening conservation and resilience of globally significant wildcat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation.** | **Ambuja Cement Foundation -** Groundwater recharge and agriculture in Gujarat.<br>**Sewa Mandir -** Commons restoration in Udaipur and tribal Aravallis.<br>**Tarun Bharat Sangh -** Revival of traditional water systems (johads)**.**<br>**Cairn Foundation (Barmer) -** Pastoralist livelihoods and women's SHGs.<br>**Hindustan Zinc Limited** - Multi-sectoral initiatives. |
| **Western Ghats -** Goa (North and South Goa), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada) | **Karnataka's Krishi Bhagya Scheme –** Rainfed agricultural resilience.<br>**Western Ghats Task Force (Karnataka) –** Biodiversity and eco-sensitive zone coordination. | **ADB-supported Integrated Urban Planning in Western Ghats Eco-sensitive areas (Goa).** | **Wipro Earthian & Azim Premji Foundation -** Eco-restoration and education.<br>**Biodiversity Management Committees in Goa -** PBRs and coastal forest monitoring**.** |

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| | **Goa Forest Department's Sacred Grove Conservation Program.**<br>**National Medicinal Plants Board Projects in the Western Ghats.**<br>**Minor Irrigation and Watershed Development Departments -** Soil and moisture conservation. | | **Rainmatter Foundation -** Grants for climate action in Western Ghats. |
| **Coastal -** Odisha (Balasore, Bhadrak), Sunderbans (South 24 Parganas) | **National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Programme (NCRMP) -** Shelter belts and green infrastructure.<br>**Odisha's Ama Jangala Yojana -** JFMC-led forest protection and incentives.<br>**Mangrove Plantation & Restoration Schemes** (Balasore, Kendrapara)**.**<br>**Department of Fisheries' Integrated Coastal Aquaculture Programs -** Sustainable aquaculture in mangrove ecosystems.<br>**West Bengal's Matir Srishti Scheme -** Converts fallow saline lands to income-generating green zones. | **World Bank's ICZMP Phase II** (underway in West Bengal).<br>**KfW-funded Climate Adaptation and Livelihoods programs** (West Bengal and Odisha).<br>**UNDP-GCF project on Enhancing climate resilience of India's coastal communities.** | **ITC Mangaldeep CSR Program -** Agroforestry and coastal protection.<br>**Chilika Development Authority (Odisha) -** Fisheries and wetland conservation.<br>**DRCSC, NEWS, and Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) -** Community-based climate adaptation. |
| **North-East India -** Meghalaya (South and West Garo Hills), Arunachal Pradesh (West Kameng), Assam (Sonitpur-Biswanath, Dhemaji-Lakhimpur, Chirang, Tamulpur) | **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North-East Region (MOVCDNER) - MoAFW.**<br>**Integrated Basin Development and Livelihoods Program (IBDLP, Meghalaya) -** Flagship for integrated natural resource management.<br>**Assam's Forest Fringe Community Livelihood Program.**<br>**Arunachal's State Medicinal Plant Board Projects and Village Biodiversity Management Schemes.**<br>**Bamboo Mission of India and State Bamboo Missions -** Sustainable resource use. | **JICA-funded Forestry Project (Assam).**<br>**IFAD's FOCUS Program in Arunachal, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya** - Climate-resilient agriculture.<br>**GIZ HWC Mitigation Pilots (Assam and Meghalaya).**<br>**GIZ Climate Change Adaptation North-East Programme** - Water and aquatic-ecosystem resilience interventions across multiple states.<br>**World Bank-funded Integrated Forest Management Programs (Meghalaya).** | **North-East Slow Food Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS) -** Traditional food systems.<br>**North-East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA) -** Community-based value chains.<br>**WWF, WCS, and Aaranyak -** Wildlife corridors, conflict mitigation, biodiversity monitoring. |

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| | **North-Eastern Council (NEC) -** Livelihoods, HWC mitigation, eco-tourism. | **UNDP "bio-cultural treasure" -** 9-project cluster across North-East tribal landscapes for integrated agro-eco restoration.<br>**UNDP-GEF project on Strengthening institutional capacities for securing biodiversity conservation commitments.** | |
| **Himalayas -** Ladakh, Kargil, Uttarakhand (Gangotri-Govind) | **Kargil Renewable Energy Development Agency (KREDA) -** Solar and hydro microgrids.<br>**Van Panchayats in Uttarakhand -** Community forest governance.<br>**Integrated Livelihood Support Project (ILSP) -** Agriculture, livestock, and NTFP value chains.<br>**Livelihoods in Hilly Areas Program (MoRD).**<br>**Ladakh Greenhouse and Solar Mission -** Climate-resilient food production.<br>**National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) -** Knowledge partnerships. | **World Bank's Integrated Project for Source Sustainability (IPSS) in Uttarakhand.**<br>**KfW-funded Eco-tourism and Sustainable Resource Use in Cold Deserts Project.**<br>**ICIMOD Transboundary Landscape Programmes (Kailash Sacred Landscape).**<br>**FAO's Mountain Partnership Programs in India -** Community-based resilience.<br>**WWF "Reviving Trans-Himalayan Rangelands" Project** - Restoring cold desert grasslands in Ladakh and Kargil through community stewardship.<br>**UNDP - Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Extended Phase II in India.**<br>**UNDP-BMGF-FCDO project on Localizing Data Science for Climate Change Adaptation.** | **Himmotthan Society (Tata Trusts) -** Water security and agro-enterprises.<br>**Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) -** Eco-tourism and sustainable energy.<br>**Waste Warriors and Hanifl Centre -** Youth, waste, and environment action. |

**Annexure 5: Strategic Use of Additional Grant that may be available under SGP OP8 – Part 2**

This Country Programme Strategy (CPS) has been developed for SGP OP8-Part 1 of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in India. An additional grant allocation of USD 255,682 under SGP OP8-Part 2 is expected to be released to the India program, subject to endorsement by the GEF CEO. If received the grant will be used to further strengthen the country programme's impact. This complementary funding will be strategically deployed to support the upscaling of four high-impact projects already implemented under OP7 or OP8-Part 1, and which have demonstrated significant potential for replication, policy influence, and convergence with government/private sector programmes. Each selected project will be supported through a project grant of up to USD 60,000, to be utilized within a duration of two years.

This approach aligns with the SGP's core principle of catalysing and demonstrating innovative community-based solutions with strong potential for broader uptake through partnerships and knowledge sharing. The objective of the additional grant is to enable the upscaling and institutional anchoring of selected, high-impact SGP OP8 projects by:

- Expanding the geographic and thematic reach of proven models
- Deepening convergence with public programmes and private sector investments
- Enhancing sustainability and policy integration of community-led initiatives
- Documenting and disseminating good practices and lessons for national and global learning

These projects will be selected through a competitive, transparent process, overseen and endorsed by the National Steering Committee (NSC). Interested grantees will submit a detailed proposal and budget for the upscaling phase, clearly indicating linkages with national/state priorities and co-financing opportunities. The National Host Institution (NHI) will develop a streamlined results framework and M&E plan for these grants, aligned with SGP global reporting systems. Each grantee will be required to submit periodic progress reports and a final technical and financial report, contribute to national and global knowledge platforms, and participate in peer-learning exchanges and thematic workshops facilitated by the NHI. A portion of the allocation (USD 15,682) will be utilized for monitoring, documentation, and dissemination of lessons emerging from the upscaling experiences. This will contribute to the overall learning agenda under SGP OP8 and inform design of future programmes.