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GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) Terms of Reference of the National Steering Committee

Functions and Duties

1. The SGP National Steering Committee (NSC) serves as the main decision-making body of the SGP at the country level, and provides overall oversight, guidance, and direction to the Country Programme. NSC composition and operation will conform to the relevant sections of the GEF SGP Operational Guidelines. The SGP Operational Guidelines is appended to the Terms of Reference (TOR), and available [here](#).
2. The NSC member's principal roles include the following:
 - (i) Provide overall guidance and strategic direction of the Country Programme, including the development, implementation, and periodic review and revision of the SGP Country Programme Strategy (CPS).
 - (ii) Review and approve projects in alignment with the CPS following participatory, democratic, impartial, and transparent procedures in line with the SGP Operational Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures.
 - (iii) Provide technical support to project oversight and implementation at the country level in accordance with the SGP Project Document for the operational phase, including project monitoring and evaluation (e.g. field visits).
 - (iv) Link the SGP operations to the relevant global, regional, and national policies and strategies of the GEF and other third-party co-financing.
 - (v) Support partnership development and resource mobilization efforts for the SGP at project and country levels.
 - (vi) Support scaling up efforts to mainstream SGP lessons learned and successes in national development planning and policy-making.

Selection and Appointment

3. For new country programmes, the selection of NSC members is led by the UNDP Country Office (CO) with support from the National Coordinator (NC), in close consultation with the SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) and a wide circle of stakeholders. The composition and appointment of a newly established NSC is

subject to review by the CPMT Regional Focal Point (RFP) and final approval by the SGP Global Manager. Based on the approval by the Global Manager, the UNDP RR provides the appointment letters on behalf of the SGP. For UCPs, approval is provided by the UCP Global Coordinator.

4. For an existing NSC, the selection and rotation of new NSC members will be facilitated by the UNDP Resident Representative (RR) or his/her designated delegate, with support from the standing NSC and NC, in consultation with a wide and representatives group of stakeholders at the national level. For existing NSC, appointments and updates will be approved by the responsible CPMT Regional Focal Point (RFP). Based on the approval by the RFP, the UNDP RR provides the appointment letters on behalf of the SGP. For UCPs, approval is provided by the UCP Global Coordinator.
5. For both new and existing NSC, nomination and selection of non-governmental NSC members should be undertaken in a transparent manner through as wide a consultation as possible with country stakeholders. Unless an exception is granted by the CPMT based on the country context, an open call for nomination of NSC member (i.e. email among CSO networks and partners, communication through the print media, radio and other relevant channels) along with clear selection criteria and the due process for selection will be undertaken.
6. The existing NSC reviews the nominations and provides a recommended composition to the UNDP RR, considering both the expertise and qualifications of the individual candidates, and the overall composition and balance of the committee. The UNDP RR, in consultation with the NC, will review and agree upon the recommended list of new NSC members, which is then submitted to the CPMT or UCP Global Coordinator for final approval, and inclusion in the SGP database. The SGP database should be updated in a timely manner, including terms and contact information.
7. The NSC non-governmental members must have high credibility and wide experience working with CSOs, CBOs, and indigenous peoples in the country and can thus represent the needs and interests of the constituency in committee discussions. Strong, experienced, and technically competent civil society representation on the NSC is crucial as a means of keeping the SGP responsive to its mandate to work with CSOs, CBOs and indigenous peoples. These members must also have the requisite knowledge of GEF Focal Areas and/or specific themes such as gender, sustainable livelihoods, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management.

Term of Service

8. NSC members serve for a period of three years, with a possibility of one-time renewal. Serving more than two terms in a consecutive manner is not allowed, unless approved by the SGP Global Manager or UCP Global Manager on an exceptional basis.
9. It is recommended that at least one term gap (3 years) is provided before the individual may come back as a NSC member, even in a new capacity. Inviting new members is a sound and healthy policy that brings new ideas and expertise to programme implementation.

10. Rotation of the members should be planned on a regular basis, and roughly one quarter (2-3 members) of the NSC may rotate in any given year in order to avoid drastic change in members at any one time.
11. Participation in the NSC is voluntary, without monetary compensation. Travel expenses for project site visits or to NSC meetings can be covered by the SGP country operational budget (COB) as relevant and should be reflected as part of the annual work plan and COB planning exercise.
12. The NC, after due consultation with other NSC members of good standing, including the UNDP RR, may recommend changes of the NSC member if it becomes clear that a particular member's participation is not contributing to the programme. An NSC member who does not participate in three consecutive meetings, without citing a valid reason, may be considered for rotation or renewal. The final decision is endorsed by the SGP Global Manager or the UCP Global Coordinator, and a letter to the outgoing member should be signed by the UNDP RR.
13. In accordance with the UN rules on ethical conduct, all members of the NSC must declare any conflict of interests, actual or potential, with respect to concepts or proposals submitted for consideration. All NSC members must sign a Declaration of Conflict of Interest (COI) statement at the time of their appointment, as well as for each sitting of the NSC which reviews and approves projects. A conflict of interest may involve a range of circumstances including inter alia: (i) the presence of relatives or family members connected with the proposal; (ii) a financial or personal interest in the applicant organization; (iii) political, reputational and/or other ethical considerations. For more details, please refer to the UNOPS SOPs. [NSC no-Conflict of Interest Statement](#)

Composition

14. It is recommended that the NSC is composed of about 7 to 12 members. However, variance from this could be accepted as membership could vary by country context. Membership should be large enough to include a majority of civil society members, as well as members from the government and UNDP CO.
15. A majority of NSC members should be from the non-governmental sector. The NSC is composed of voluntary members from the CSO sector (including NGOs, academic and scientific institutions, indigenous peoples, women groups, and others); UNDP Country Office (RR and/or the designated SGP focal point in the country office); and the GEF Operational Focal Point (or his/her designee), and others including private sector, donor institutions, experts, and limited number of additional government members as appropriate.
16. The UNDP RR and GEF OFP are considered to be institutional members. All other NSC members are invited to join in their personal capacity. To the maximum extent possible the NSC membership should reflect expertise on relevant GEF focal areas of biodiversity; climate change mitigation; international waters; sustainable land management;

sustainable forest management; chemicals and wastes, and other thematic areas that the country programme is focused on.

17. One of the NSC member should be designated as the focal point to provide expertise on gender issues. It is also recommended to designate a youth and indigenous peoples focal point in the NSC.
18. In general, only one government representative (GEF Operational Focal Point or Political Focal Point) is required as an institutional member. Depending on the circumstances, additional government representatives such as the Ministry of finance, Convention Focal Point(s), and/or other relevant members may be considered. Governmental members should hold positions relevant to the work of the SGP and at a level where they could contribute to strategic and technical discussions, particularly when assessing and approving proposals.

Meetings and Rules of Order

19. NSCs adopt decisions under the principle of consensus and rarely resort to voting to determine whether a project is approved, or whether a particular course of action is to be taken. NSC members on the whole must be able and willing to discuss constructively and develop consensus decisions. In order to make consensual decisions, it is recommended that participation of the majority of NSC members, including a balanced representation of non-governmental and government members, is secured.
20. To facilitate the meetings, the NSC may decide to select its Chairperson(s) by having: (i) one of the most committed members to Chair for a particular period of time, but strongly recommended for no more than one term or 3 consecutive years; or (ii) members to Chair meetings on a rotating basis to enhance each member's participation. In case the Chair is selected from the government, a co-chair approach between the government and non- government representation is highly recommended to promote civil society leadership and CSO-government collaboration which are institutional objectives of the programme.
21. The NSC meets at least on a biannual basis (or as determined by the NSC) to provide strategic guidance to the SGP, review and approve grant proposals and to conduct other activities within its terms of reference.
22. Regular meetings of the NSC ordinarily may include the following agenda items:
 - (i) Report on status and progress of the country and global SGP.
 - (ii) Status reports and updates on projects and activities in implementation.
 - (iii) Financial report on execution of grant allocation.
 - (iv) Presentation of project proposals for consideration.
23. NSC minutes concerning meetings in which projects are approved should be as detailed and specific as possible following the standard SGP NSC minutes template by listing each project considered and including all NSC recommendations or observations about each

- project. The NSC decision about each project should be clearly noted, including any reformulations required before final approval. The list of approved projects should include the budget amount approved. The minutes should be signed by all NSC members present.
24. The NSC should review and sign-off on project proposals that are reformulated or adjusted after being provisionally approved by the NSC, prior to submitting them to the UNDP Resident Representative for MOA signature. A formal meeting is not required, and the review may be done on a no-objection basis.
 25. No SGP project may be undertaken at the country level without the approval of the NSC. Operationally, the decisions of the NSC are considered final provided they are consistent with the SGP Operational Guidelines, the SGP Project Document for the GEF Operational Phase and the Country Programme Strategy (or UCP Project Document).
 26. As such, the NSC must do its best to ensure the technical and substantive quality of SGP grants, and the administrative and financial capacity, either actual or potential, of the CSO grant recipients. The UNDP RR, or his/her delegate, as well as other members of the NSC, are encouraged to provide any relevant information about these concerns, especially the financial and organizational integrity of CSOs. However, neither the NSC nor its individual members as programme volunteers, hold any legal or fiduciary responsibility for the SGP or its activities.
 27. The objectivity, transparency, and credibility of the NSC is of paramount importance to the success of the SGP Country Programme, and to maintaining good relations among stakeholders. As a general rule, Country Programmes cannot consider proposals associated with organizations of sitting NSC members. A CSO may nonetheless submit proposals when the associated NSC member finished the term of service and is no longer on the Committee.

National Coordinator Responsibilities

28. The NC serves in an ex-officio capacity on the NSC, participating in deliberations, but not in decisions regarding project selection.
29. The NC usually convenes the NSC and functions as its Secretariat, including inter alia in:
 - (i) Managing communication between and among NSC members, for sending out notices of meetings,
 - (ii) Answering technical questions from the NSC members on a range of topics relating to the functioning of the SGP as a global programme.
 - (iii) Providing clarifications on the pipeline of project concepts and proposals received, including planning grants provided.
 - (iv) Providing information on the existing cohort of approved SGP projects under implementation.
 - (v) Present substantive reports on the status and progress of the SGP and its activities,

(vi) Prepares the summary of the main NSC decisions and discussion to be shared with UNOPS and uploaded to the SGP database. A copy of the NSC summary of key decisions, presented in the standard SGP template, including list of appraised project concepts and decisions, must be reviewed, and signed by all the members present.