

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE SGP COUNTRY PROGRAMME IN ARMENIA

This section describes operational frameworks, i.e. principles, procedures, criteria, grant application mechanisms as well as overall management process of the SGP country programme in Armenia. General transparency of the programme and clear understanding of its administration by the stakeholders is crucial for its successful implementation.

1. Principles of the SGP Armenia implementation

SGP Armenia sets a number of principles for the programme implementation, which adopts the global principals of the GEF, while considering local specifics.

- The projects, funded by SGP Armenia should support community-based initiatives and result in global environmental benefits in the GEF focal areas, while contributing to poverty reduction and empowerment of local population.
- Only registered national NGOs¹ without foreign founders are eligible to apply for SGP Armenia grants.
- Project beneficiaries shall be deeply involved in all stages of the project cycle, including development, implementation and monitoring. This will ensure the community “ownership” of the project.
- The successful projects shall focus on addressing causes instead of consequences of the problem.
- The projects demonstrating innovative approaches and practices will be given advantage.
- Project sustainability is one of the eligibility criteria. The projects shall prove sustainability, i.e. the positive impact will continue after the end of the project implementation. The applicant must describe in detail how sustainability of the project will be ensured beyond the SGP funding.
- The project implementation will be subject to strict monitoring, to ensure correct use of SGP funds and coherence with the Country Programme Strategy (CPS).
- Transparency is a key for all activities of SGP. The stakeholders will be notified of SGP Armenia programme progress, projects' status, news and other relevant information via the SGP country programme and UNDP CO (www.sgp.am and www.am.undp.org) web-sites, as well as other electronic networks and media.
- Duration of the project normally will not exceed 24 months.
- Maximum size of the grant cannot exceed US\$50,000 equivalent.
- Projects are expected to ensure 1:1 co-funding ratio, evenly divided between cash and in-kind (work, use of own machinery, materials etc.). SGP does not provide core

¹ The term “Public organization” is used in Armenian national legislation and identical with the generally accepted term of “Non-governmental Organization”. Civil Code of RoA creates legal basis for establishment of public organizations. Article 3 Point 1 of the RoA Law “On Public Organizations” defines the legal status of a public organization.

funding of a project, i.e. - any grant provided by the programme should be additional, incremental in nature. However, once adequate level of funding is mobilized at the country programme level, cash co-financing requirement will not be applied for good quality projects in vulnerable communities.

2. Procedures of the SGP Armenia implementation

SGP Armenia sets a number of procedures to be applied to each stage of a project cycle with no exception.

Project Development Stage

- Project development stage starts upon official announcement of the SGP Armenia contest. The announcement will be widely distributed through electronic networks, published on the SGP country programme and UNDP CO websites (www.sgp.am and www.am.undp.org) and other media.
- The projects must clearly demonstrate involvement of the local communities in the project preparation stage. While developing the project, the applicant should make sure that it complies with the main 2 selection criteria: the project is within the SGP country programme niche for grant-making and/or significantly contributes to one or more SGP OP6 Strategic Initiatives (see Section 4 of the CPS) and is in line with the Principles of the SGP Armenia implementation, mentioned above.
- During the project development stage, the applicant may seek consultancy of SGP country team and will be provided any necessary information support for development of competitive and high-quality application.
- In certain cases, the applicant may also apply for financial assistance, i.e. a project preparation (planning) grant, for successful development of project proposal. The cases mainly include involvement of external experts for specialized studies, development of technical design, carrying out consultations in a community or with other stakeholders. However, the financial assistance is limited and may not exceed US\$5,000 depending on the size and type of the project. Co-financing is not required for project preparation grant, however it is counted as a part of the intended full-scale project. Duration of project preparation grant is also limited and should not exceed 3 months. Approval of project preparation grant by the National Steering Committee (NSC) does not guarantee approval of the full-scale project proposal.
- The applicants must use standard SGP grant application form. Applications in other formats will not be accepted.
- The amount of remuneration and other administrative expenses shall be realistic, well justified and reasonably budgeted depending on specifics of a project. Overestimated administrative expenses may lead to rejection of the application.
- In-kind contribution should be based on real-life prices and be calculated in consultation with the SGP country team². Detection of overestimated costs may lead to rejection of the application.
- Applications are available in the Armenian and English languages.

² Framework for the calculation of the in-kind contribution is available at the SGP Armenia office.

Project Submission Stage

- The applications shall be submitted only by registered NGOs and CBOs. In the event of project idea coming from a group of people, the initiative group should be registered as a non-governmental organization according to the national legislation.
- The project applications shall be fully completed and accompanied by a cover letter addressed to the SGP National Coordinator in Armenia. Applications can be submitted electronically to the following e-mail address of the National Coordinator (hovhannes.ghazaryan@undp.org), or delivered in hard copy to the UN House Security Desk (14, P. Adamyan Str.) to the attention of Mr. Hovhannes Ghazaryan, GEF SGP National Coordinator.
- The NC conducts screening of the received grant applications and notifies the applicants on the compliance/non-compliance with the SGP requirements.
- In case of minor technical non-compliance of the project with SGP requirements, the applicant may be asked to amend the application based on the NC's recommendations.
- In case of compliance of the project with SGP requirements, it is subject to NSC consideration.

Project Consideration Stage

- The NSC receives the pre-selected proposals for consideration two weeks prior to the meeting session. The NSC meets on regular basis, at least quarterly. However, if necessary, the NSC may have also ad hoc meetings.
- The NSC evaluates proposals and fills out a standard assessment form regarding each of the application and makes one of the following decisions: approval, rejection or reformulation.
- The decision is made based on the consensus of the members, or, in some cases, by means of voting procedure.
- The NC will inform each applicant about the NSC decision in written form.

Project Implementation Stage

- Project implementation starts with signing of Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the grantee and the UNDP on behalf of UNOPS.
- Payment schedule will be specified in the respective MoA for the project funding. As a rule, the disbursement scheme will be as follows:
 - ✓ 50%- upon the MoA signature between the UNDP and the applicant
 - ✓ 40%- upon the approval the First Interim Report by the NC
 - ✓ 10%- upon the approval the Final Report by the NC
- Monitoring and evaluation of the project throughout all implementation stages is one of the key elements of the Programme and will be implemented by the NC and/or NSC members (see Section 6 of the CPS).
- In case of non-compliance of the project implementation with the approved project application or any other misuse of SGP funds revealed by the NC, the NSC may decide

to terminate the grant project MoA. In case of serious embezzlement, the grantee may have a legal liability for the misused allocations.

Project Completion Stage

Upon the completion of the project, the grantees together with the NC will produce a project completion report. The report will include different aspects of the project, lessons learned, challenges, gained knowledge, benefits, perspectives for replication etc. This experience may serve as a useful reference material by perspective applicants and other stakeholders in Armenia. The report will also be submitted to the NSC.

3. Institutional set-up of the SGP in Armenia

The National Coordinator has the leading role in managing the implementation of the SGP country programme. Major tasks performed by the National Coordinator include raising awareness of the GEF/SGP's objectives and procedures among key stakeholders, assisting NGOs and CBOs in the formulation of proposals, screening project proposals, facilitating the work of the National Steering Committee, supporting NGOs and CBOs with access to technical support services, ensuring sound programme monitoring and evaluation, and laying the foundation for programme sustainability.

The National Steering Committee is the central element of the SGP comprised of voluntary members from the NGO sector, government, academic/scientific and donor organizations, and UNDP, with a major share of them coming from non-governmental sector. The Committee - provides overall guidance to the country programme and is responsible for selecting projects. NSC members may also be involved in pre-selection, and project monitoring and evaluation. NSC operating regulations and ToR are provided in the SGP-Armenia website (www.sgp.am).

The SGP Central Programme Management Team (CPMT), based in New York, is responsible for global programme management and support of the country programmes. The CPMT focuses on providing strategic and operational guidance, on coordinating and supporting the ongoing country programmes, and on documenting and disseminating lessons from the Programme's community-based experiences.

The UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS), based in New York, provides overall administrative and financial support services for programme execution.

The UNDP Country Office provides overall programmatic and management support to SGP operations. The country office environment focal point is a member of the NSC. The Country Office helps to monitor programme activities, facilitate interaction with the host government, and develop links with other in-country financial and administrative arrangements for the GEF/SGP. The Resident Representative signs the Memorandum of Agreement on behalf of UNOPS, with the NGO/CBO grantees.