NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE (NSC)
MINUTES FOR PROJECT APPRAISAL / APPROVAL

SGP COUNTRY	**Bhutan**
NSC MINUTES NUMBER	Second
DATE	16th March 2026
LOCATION	UN House

ATTENDANCE				
NSC MEMBERS PRESENCE				
#	**Name/Title/Organization**	**Present**	**Absent**	**Recused**
1	Sonam Wangdi, BTFEC (Vice Chairperson)	☒		
2	Namgyel Dorjee, Chief, DMDF, MoF (Chairperson)		☒	
3	Kinga Wangdi, Program Manager, BFL Secretariat	☒		
4	Lhap Dorji, Portfolio Manager, Environment & Livelihood, UNDP	☒		
5	Tandin, Program Coordinator, WWF Bhutan Office		☒	
6	Jigme Tshering, Chief, RSPN	☒		
7	Jamyang Tashi Wangdi, Chief, DoL, MoAL	☒		
NON-NSC MEMBERS PRESENCE				
#	**Name/Title/Organization**	**Present**	**Absent**	**Recused**
1	Tshering Yangtsho, National Coordinator, UNDP	☒		
2	Jamyang Selden, Project Associate, UNDP	☒		

	AGENDA
1	Welcome by National Coordinator (NC), SGP-UNDP
2	Remarks by Chair
3	Adoption of agenda
4	Overview of the First Call for Proposal, OP8 and shortlisted project proposals

5	Review of TAG recommendations and selection
6	Discussion on Grant Ceiling of ICCA GSI
7	Appointment of new chair and vice chair
8	AOB

AVAILABLE FUNDS				
Funding Source	**Operational Phase (OP)**	**Allocation (USD)**	**Commitment (USD)**	**Remaining Balance (USD)**
SGP OP8 Part 1	OP8	USD 456,818		USD 456,818
Total		**USD 456,818**		**USD 456,818**

1. BACKGROUND AND METHOD

Welcome Remarks

The NC welcomed all the esteemed members to the second NSC meeting of the GEF SGP Operational Phase 8 (OP 8) and acknowledged all the members for their continued support and guidance ensuring that the programme effectively supports community-based initiatives that contribute to environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods in Bhutan. NC also extended a warm welcome to a new NSC member, Mr. Sonam Wangdi, the chair of second NSC meeting.

Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all NSC members to the second NSC meeting for Operational Phase 8. The Vice Chair acknowledged and appreciated the members for making themselves available for the first meeting to discuss and endorse the projects under SGP OP 8.

The agenda was adopted without any changes, with other suggestions and remarks to be captured under AOB.

Key Discussion Points

1. **Overview of the First Call for Proposal, OP8 and shortlisted project proposals**
   - 32 proposals were received in the first call for proposal announced in September 2025 and closed on 10th December 2025, of which 16 proposals were screened based on the eligibility criteria and

were reviewed by the internal grant selection committee following which 6 proposals have been submitted for the TAG review. Some proposals have been disqualified as the applicants were from existing grant recipients, proposed similar activities from previous cycles, from well-established organizations already receiving support from other partners and some from government, private and individual (which are not eligible).

Internal Grant Selection checklist included:

1. Alignment with Country Programme Strategy Document
2. Capacity & Inclusiveness
3. Livelihood Enhancement
4. Leveraging Co-financing
5. Social and Environment Impact
6. Economic sustainability
7. Innovative ideas

TAG review checklist included:

1. Alignment with GEF focal areas
2. Technical appropriateness
3. Financial sustainability
4. Agriculture/soil considerations
5. Livestock aspects
6. Biodiversity relevance

- Proposals were reviewed and co-reviewed by TAG members.
- After the TAG meeting, given the feedback, the UNDP internal Grant selection committee which has similar functions agreed to be replaced by the TAG review hence forth.

2. Review of TAG recommendations and selection

- Two proposals within landscape:
  i. Healthy Soil, Wealthy Community: Sustainable Farming for Higher Yields- Pema Gatshel

ii. Women-Led Ornamental Flower Nursery and Eco-Friendly Home Décor Social Venture Lotus Aumsui Detshen- Pema Gatshel

- Four proposals outside landscape
  i. Enhancing Bamboo-Based Rural Enterprise through Machine Procurement and Production Infrastructure Development- Zhemgang
  ii. Expansion of broiler Farming- Chhukha
  iii. Upliftment of rural economy with increased milk production Khangduzhi- Samtse
  iv. Integrated Water Resource Management and Livelihood Enhancement in Drakteng Gewog, Trongsa Dzongkhag - Trongsa
- Total request grant amount from 6 shortlisted proposals is USD 248,534; and available grant allocation under part 1 is USD 456, 818. A second call for proposals will be announced for the remaining balance where applicants from the first round will be encouraged to apply.

Comments from the NSC

- Budget rationalization was recommended by both the TAG and NSC to reduce costs in certain components particularly training, celebrations, capacity building, and salary with the objective of allocating more funds toward on-the-ground implementation activities.
- It was clarified that budgets are transferred to proponents, while capacity building components are mostly supported by the district technical officers depending on the nature of the project as per the approved workplan.
- Some project titles do not align with activities and objectives, which creates inconsistencies in reporting with SGP priorities.
- The proposal from Pema Pineapple requires clarification, as it presents a mix of activities.
- For the nature-based projects, it was recommended to emphasize more import substitution and the development of diversified products, rather than continuing with the same products.
- These proposals often lack sustainability, partly due to the absence of business plans. Business models should be redesigned to reduce reliance on grants, and this shift must be clearly reflected in the proposal workplan.

- Coordination issues persist, as some proposals demonstrate engagement at the gewog level but lack coordination at the dzongkhag level. A clear coordination mechanism involving both gewog and dzongkhag administration is needed. Although GEF-SGP proposal submissions require applicants to indicate the extent of consultations with gewogs and dzongkhags, this is currently not included as a parameter in the TAG evaluation criteria.
- For project components involving the procurement of machinery, the requirements for operation and maintenance should be clearly outlined in the proposals. Field verification prior to NSC selection was also recommended to avoid assumptions about proposed activities.
- Activities related to lake revival, plantation, and the construction of water storage facilities need to be further detailed particularly with regard to community clearance, site identification for water storage, and post-maintenance of the plantation.
- The UNDP SGP team will facilitate technical support and link proponents with relevant experts where they have limited technical capacity to implement activities including the guidance from the TAG.

3. Discussion on Grant Ceiling of ICCA GSI

- The Global Support Initiative to territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (ICCA-GSI), is a multi-partnership initiative that is delivered by the GEF-SGP under its operational phase 8 and implemented by UNDP.
- ICCA GSI is funded by the Government of Germany, through its Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV).
- Bhutan is also a grant receipt of ICCA GSI phase two, with grant allocation of USD 200,000. The grant ceiling has been proposed to USD 75,000 per project, which will be eligible only for CSOs.
    - The project landscapes include Monpas, Gongdueps, Oleps, and Taba Dumtey identified based on the key criteria of ICCA GSI which includes biodiversity significance (key biodiversity areas), presence of vulnerable groups, poverty, limited access to services, climate change impact, geographic isolation and rich in traditional knowledge.
    - The proposal submission by the applicants will be guided by the Country Programme Strategy for Global ICCA support Initiative Phase 2.

- It was noted that, based on past experience, the spending capacity of proponents should be carefully assessed against the project timeline to ensure realistic implementation and effective fund utilization. Accordingly, the meeting agreed to maintain a 24-month implementation period, with a mid-term review at 12 months to ensure projects remain on track.

Key Decision from the Meeting

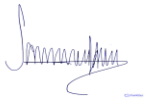
1. Six proposals from the first call for proposal are endorsed in principle with the following recommendations:
    ii. Reappropriate costs and diversify activities with increase in cost-sharing to strengthen project sustainability.
    iii. Incorporation of business plans and a review of business models for the proposed nature-based enterprises.
    iv. Rationalize budget and activities, with sustainability aspects detailed out for each activity.
    v. Requirements for operation and maintenance of equipment/activities should be clearly outlined in the proposals.
    vi. An in-person review will be organized after the incorporation and revision of the comments and recommendations from the TAG and NSC with the proponents by UNDP, with additional focus on 'within-landscape' proposals for strengthening.
    v. Activities lacking sufficient clarification will be dropped, and the corresponding funds will be reallocated to the second call for proposals.
    vi. Third NSC meeting may be held if time permits; otherwise, revisions will be circulated to NSC members for formal endorsement and final grant selection.

2. Future project proposals: Longlisting for future call for proposals under SGP OP8 and ICCA-GSI will be conducted by NC and PA based on eligibility criteria, followed by TAG technical review and submission to the NSC.

3. Fund disbursement under OP 8: UNDP appraised NSC on the fund disbursement through the LVG modality for SGP OP8 and ICCA-GSI through direct granting, which involves fund release directly

to grantees via purchase orders (POs) and deliverables-based milestones, but all fund details and expenditure reports shall be shared with the MoF.

4. ICCA GSI Grant Ceiling: The maximum grant ceiling of upto USD 75,000 and implementation period of 24 months for ICCA-GSI projects was agreed.
5. Appointment of New Chair: Namgyel Dorjee, from Ministry of Finance, the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP), RGoB, was unanimously appointed as Chair, while Sonam Wangdi from BTFEC was appointed as Co-Chair.
6. Second call for proposals from the first tranche: As only six projects have been screened, a second call for proposals can be initiated. The announcement can proceed in parallel, with the expectation that the award finalization from the first call will be completed by the time proposals from the second call are ready for review.
7. Follow up action on the past NSC minutes: For future NSC meetings, a brief action points from the previous NSC meeting minutes will be presented.

I. SIGNATURES OF NSC MEMBERS (Attendance Sheet signed is attached)			
#	**Name**	**Signature**	**Signature Date**
01	Sonam Wangdi, Chief, BTFEC (Vice Chairperson)		
02	Lhap Dorji, Portfolio Manager, UNDP		30 March 2026
03	Kinga Wangdi, Program Manager, BFLFS		30 March 2026
04	Jigme Tshering, Chief, RSPN		30 March 2026
05	Jamyang Tashi Wangdi, Chief, DoL, MoAL		30 March 2026

ANNEXES AND RELEVANT DOCUMENTS (If Applicable)

Minutes prepared by:



Name: Tshering Yangtsho
Title: National Coordinator
Office: UNDP GEF SGP, Bhutan