Nature for Cooling Challenge (NCC)

Review CEO Approval and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID	11960
Countries	Global (Brazil, Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire)
Project Name	Nature for Cooling Challenge (NCC)
Agencies	UNEP
Date received by PM	6/26/2025
Review completed by PM	
Program Manager	Remy Ruat
Focal Area	Climate Change
Project Type	MSP

CEO Approval Request

Part I - General Project Information

1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/16/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

- Given that the project will intervene in Brazil, Cambodia and Cote d?Ivoire, could you please add these participating countries in the project to the list in the General Project Information table?

- None of the LoEs includes Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) - please remove this for now from the Project Executing Entity(s) field in the General Project Information Table.

- Please remove the yellow shadows in the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view, which is the document circulated to Council for review (see attached pdf document)

8/20/25, FB

Yes.

Agency Response

Response: 15 December 2025

- Countries have been added to the Project Information Table.
- SE4ALL removed from the Executing Entity field.
- Yellow highlights removed from the portal entry.

b) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

cleared

10/21/25, RR

Cleared

8/20/25, FB

1. the project document doesn't seem to cover BD benefits in much detail. There is no explanation of any BD aspect. We would suggest to remove BD as "1".

Agency Response

Removed

2. Project Summary.
a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?
b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project, is well written and is it within the max. of 250 words?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

Cleared

8/20/25, FB

The project summary needs work. please follow this rough structure:

1. short Identification of the problem, 2. description of the proposed multilevel approach, 3 one brief sentence each describing the components. 4. mention of results and expected outcomes/eventual impact. Pls move to a footnote the section referring to the meaning of NbS in the Indian context.

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

Project summary has been re-drafted as recommended.

3. Project Description Overview
a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?
b) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?
c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and appropriately funded?
d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?
e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10%? If above 10%, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/4/2025) RR

Cleared

11/5/2025 RR:

This needs revision. It appears in the slightly updated components that global level work is spread across component 1, 2 and 3 (i.e. every output except output 3.1, the grants), while component 4 is at national level. Per project budget the grants actually going to recipient cities is only 300,000$, which is only 10% of the project amount. This balance is not acceptable and would need to be revised towards a significantly higher share of funding going to recipient cities through the grants.

It should also be clearer what share of the funding is performed at global level, what share by cities, and what share by national governments. Please also consider whether some synergies across the TA related work (including in connection with the SC IP global platform as the revised rationale noted a lot of useful materials, resources and networks already exist) could allow for this enhanced balance with the city-level grant portion to happen - this can include also internalizing in the grant some of what is currently included under TA, but which is actually part of each's grant's impact pathway

8/20/25, FB

1. The structuring of the components is difficult to understand:

a. Component 1 seems to receive the bulk of the financing to do "global level" work, while in reality most of the financing is related to the awards and the direct technical assistance that is to be provided to the selected NCC cities. This is confusing. We suggest reconfiguring the components to have "global" activities in component 1, while NCC awards and related TA activities in component 2. This will help rebalancing components.

b. Output 1.1. is named "Partnerships", while in fact it includes the NCC which is the challenges component, and it is unclear how that relates to partnerships. In addition, Component 3 is also named "Local partnerships", which makes it even more confusing.

c. Component 2: this covers the 12 cities that will be selected through the NCC, but it is unclear how the "technical assistance" referred to in the title is differentiated from the other components. It seems that component 2 will be for all 12 cities, while component 3 may only focus on 3 deep dives, but the naming of the components makes this confused. Suggest readjusting.

Agency Response

Response: 1 December 2025

The grant going to winning proponents has been revised to **340,000** USD per winner (which may be a university, city, municipality, or any other eligible participant to be determined based on the criteria for application). This amount was decided given the project?s envisioned interventions on technical assistance and support (for which additional budget has been allocated) as well as the emphasis on mobilisation of co-financing by each proponent (which would also support the winning proponents in execution of the projects).

In terms of the share of budget being dedicated to various levels of project execution, a rough split is as follows. Please note that this is an indicative split and some activities will occur concurrently at various levels:

- **Global level** (including rapid assessment tool development, monitoring framework, global interventions and guidelines, etc.): 1,055,000 USD (35%)

- **National level** (planned in-country interventions): 540,000 USD (18%)

- **Revised winning proponent grant amount** (which may include cities, universities, or institutions that fulfil the Challenge criteria): 1,020,000 USD (34%)

- **Travel, venues, good, supplies**: 320,000 USD (10%)

- **M&E, Evaluations**: 65,000 USD (2%)

Based on GEF SEC input, some of the budget from global level interventions has been re-allocated towards national level interventions as well as towards the grant to winning proponents/cities, and collaborations will be planned with the GPSC and ongoing initiatives on the ground in order to maximise impact.

Response:15/10/2025

The project components have been slightly revised. Component 1 now focuses on global knowledge generation and dissemination activities, including the formation of the Nature for Cooling Working Group (NCWG) under the Cool Coalition. Component 2 includes the design of the challenge and the selection of projects, along with technical assistance for all winning proponents. Component 3 covers the "NCC awards" and the associated financial support.

4. Project Outline
A. Project Rationale

a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?
b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?
c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

1.Cleared

2. and 5. Cleared - it seems that there is strong overlap with already ongoing interventions on nature for cooling in Brazil. It would be useful to assess during inception how this overlap will be addressed.

3. Cleared - reference was however not made to the fact that these thematic areas include urban cooling.

4. Noted - this will have to be further clarified during inception and reflected in project institutional arrangements (which for now do not reflect the linkage with the GPSC global level work)

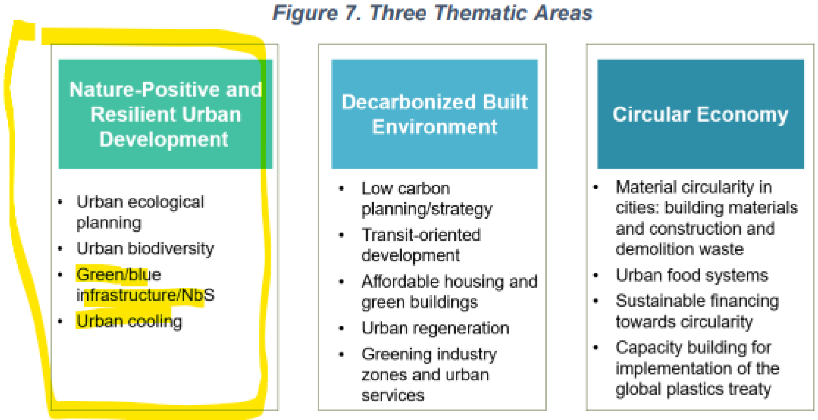
8/2/25, FB

a) the current situation: Cleared.

b) Stakeholder analysis: it is surprising that the GEF SC IP (in its 3 iterations from GEF6 to GEF8) is not covered in any detail in this section. Considering that the GEF invests substantially in this IP, and there are interesting and important linkages that can be made with this proposed initiative, the SC IP needs to be highlighted in this section and much more attention needs to be given to any overlap (current or potential). This is also particularly important given that all three proposed countries are included in one of the SC IP cycles. We recommend to:

1. Construct the SC IP as the overall baseline for this new project, especially in relation to Component 1 where there may be the most overlap.
2. for each of the countries, outline what existing SC IP child projects are doing with respect to urban NbS, and if there is any focus specifically on using them to alleviate UHIE and energy use for cooling issues, as opposed to just BD issues.
3. include in the analysis that the GEF8 SCIP global platform (for which a global coordination project was approved in Dec 2024) proposes to focus one of its Thematic Areas on urban NbS and cooling. The area on greening built environment can also have important linkages.
4. We recommend reaching out to the GEF8 SCIP Lead Agency (WB) and have an in-depth discussion on the specific products/deliverables and outcomes that are already being planned, so that this new project can build on those, and consider those as baseline for additional work. Given that UNEP is the lead agency for GEF7 UrbanShift, we require a much deeper thinking and analysis on how this project can move the needle further on NbS for cooling.

Figure 7. Three Thematic Areas



4. The detailed description of the landscape of policies and initiatives within the 3 pilot countries is appreciated. However, their participation to the GEF SCIP is largely overlooked and buried under a lot of information which is not always relevant to what the project is planning to do. We recommend moving the information on the specific activities that each SCIP child project is supporting as they relate to urban NbS for cooling. If this topic is not covered under the existing SCIP national child projects, please clearly state it. As mentioned before, this should be used as a baseline for any additional country/city level activity that would be supported by this current proposed project.

c) n/a

Agency Response

Response: 1 December 2025

1, 2-5, 4: Thank you; well noted and these points will be addressed during project inception.

3. Reference to Urban Cooling under Thematic Area 1 has now been included.

Response:15/10/2025

1) Reference to the Sustainable Cities Impact Programme (SCIP) has been incorporated into the baseline section, including an overview of the key activities from its coordination platforms from GEF-6 to GEF-8 relevant to this project.
2) An overview of country activities in Brazil and Cote d?Ivoire has also been provided. There is not overlap with activities in Cambodia.
3) A reference has been made to the GEF-8 SCIP and its Thematic Areas.
4) We reached out to the World Bank and shared ideas to collaborate with the GPSC. The potential synergies and collaboration opportunities have been summarized in the section 4.1 Coordination with on-going initiatives.
5) See response under point 2.

5 B. Project Description
5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust solution and listing the key assumptions underlying these?
b) Is there a description of how theGEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?
c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and

critical assumptions and risks are properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?
d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?
e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?
f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?
g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options (as applicable for this MSP)?
h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?
i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component description/s?
j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?
k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?
l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/4/2025 RR

a) Cleared

b) Cleared

c) Cleared

10/21/25, RR

a) The TOC is still not legible, higher resolution is needed

b) This is still inadequate and needs clarification. There are clear explanations of how synergies will be sought with the GPSC, but no explanations of why this global project is needed in spite of the GPSC already including some work on nature based solutions and cooling in its scope. This is unfortunate as the challenge format of this global project is unique and offers a lot of entry points for additionality.

c) This is also still inadequate and needs more work

- the proposal only focuses on how it will invite the GPSC but does not clarify whether similar working group may already be planned under the GPSC, nor how this new working group would contribute to the GPSC umbrella (it is in a sense very much one sided with UNEP inviting World Bank, when the SC IP should as initially noted be the baseline to which this project could contribute).

- the same goes for the repository/library, which should also be connected and interoperable with the website used under the sustainable cities IP global platform - this can be addressed during inception

- The budget for city grants should be further increased as noted above - this is still not acceptable and needs revision.

- Please also see comments below regarding use of the term NBS if no biodiversity objectives is sought and opportunity to include project level indicators to guide impact on that regard. This can be addressed during inception as needed.

8/15/25, FB

a). the ToC is outlined and it appears well constructed. the barrier analysis is clear and complemented by components that respond to each barrier in a logical manner. Please note that the TOC table included is not legible. Please use a higher resolution image.

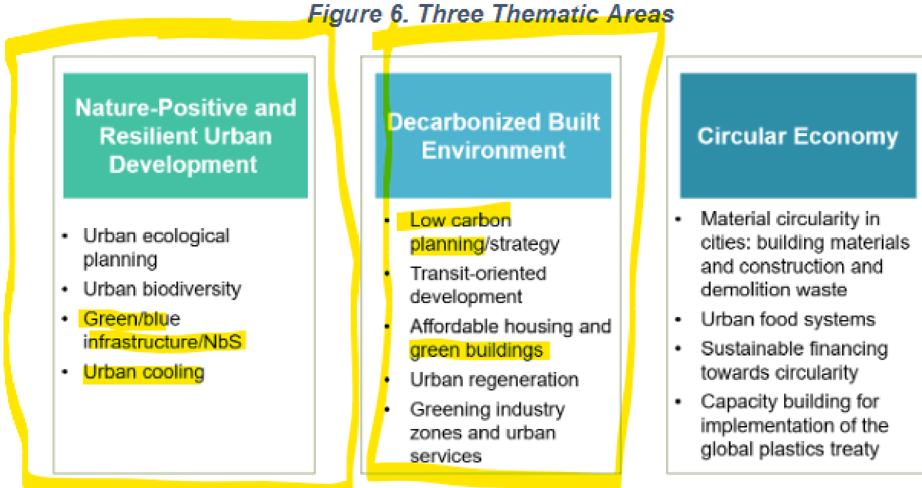
b) No, the description of how the GEF alternative builds on previous GEF projects is not adequate, as outlined in the comments to section above (4. Project Outline).

c) Components:

Component 1:

1.1. We encourage the Agency to discuss with WB SC team about their plans for the Thematic Area 1, particularly on urban cooling and NbS. Also, please discuss the extent to which thematic area 2 (Decarbonized Built Environment) will also cover the main topic of this current proposal. After all overlaps (existing or potential) are identified, please discuss with the WB team a way forward to ensure the new initiative builds on and strengthen the existing baseline work.

Figure 6. Three Thematic Areas



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1.2. Regarding the new Working Group (NCWG) under the Cool Coalition, also please check with the WB that a similar working group is not being created under the GEF8 GPSC. Also, please provide a short overview of the existing structure of the Cool Coalition, so that it is clearer where the new WG will be inserted. A short TOR of the WG should also be provided.

1.3: Regarding the proposed new global knowledge management platform: Is this really needed? Can this knowledge not be hosted within an existing platform, either in the SCIP GP (preferably) or within the Cool Coalition KM platform? 100k for a new website seems quite expensive and not the best solution in terms of sustainability and fragmentation.

1.4: Component 1 Budget: The budget that will be awarded for the 3 deep dive cities seems very limited compared to the overall budget for component 1, and in line with what was originally discussed when the idea for this project was outlined. Please consider increasing that. Also, please can you clarify what is the award amount to be used for? What should be invested in?

1.5: In urban planning, responsibility for land, water, built infrastructure is often distributed across multiple agencies, which makes the adoption of integrated NbS approaches particularly challenging at the planning stage. It?s important to understand how Component 1 proposes solutions to address this ?coordination? challenge to ensure effective design and implementation.

Component 2:

2.1: Please consider including a simple table that help differentiate the differences (e.g. awards, technical services etc) being awarded to deep dive vs light touch cities. This information is scattered in several places and it's difficult to have a general overview.

2.2: The budget for component 2 and 3, considering it includes the resources for the challenge's awards (both in cash and in TA services) seems underestimated. Please consider rebalancing with Component 1.

2.3: at present, it is not clear how the selected pilots, once supported, will translate into broader city-wide or national models of investments, nor how government and private sector stakeholders will be engaged in scaling these results through city master plans or large urban programs. While component 2 refers to ?promoting an enabling environment for scale-up,? it would be beneficial to explicitly articulate how the outcomes of the pilots will be integrated into city level planning frameworks (master plans etc.) to ensure sustainability and wider replication.

2.4. re: output 2.2, we understand the rationale to organize match-making activities between projects and potential financiers. However, this doesnt seem to appreciate the fact that NbS projects do not generally generate cashflows or returns, which is what "investors and banks" would typically need to see. Public budget from local and national governments, as well as regulatory requirements for developers, seems to be more likely drivers for the implementation of NbS solutions for cooling. How is this aspect considered in the project?

2.5. related to the previous point, it is important to note the mismatch between the institutions/actors that will finance the NbS infrastructure (government or developers) and those who will in theory reap the potential energy savings benefits from the reduced electricity bills. How is this aspect considered in the project and what can be done to address this?

Agency Response

Response: 1 December 2025

Additionality in the context of GPSC: While the GPSC will include a thematic emphasis on urban cooling, a global project such as NCC remains crucial. The following text has been included in Section B4.1, Table 9 to emphasize the additionality of such a project further ? ?through its unique ?challenge? format as well as its commitment to providing targeted technical assistance and support to participating actors, the NCC project will seek to, (a) engage a broad range of stakeholders including universities, academic institutions, cities or municipalities (any entity/proponents that fits the criteria for the Challenge), (b) demonstrate technological solutions showcasing the viability of **NbS for Cooling** (without focusing on **urban design** in particular), (c) at the policy level, focus on financial incentives and mechanisms to direct investment towards cooling technologies and solutions.?

Synergies and collaboration with the GPSC: Thank you for this observation. The project now notes in the Project description section and in the description of the relevant deliverables (as well as Table 9 on coordination with existing initiatives) that during the project inception phase, discussions with GPSC and World Bank will be pursued, and in case a similar working group is planned under Thematic Pillar 1 on Urban Cooling, the NCC project will seek to establish a joint management structure and explore opportunities for combining the various work streams. Similarly, the possibility of an interoperable platform will be explored with the GPSC during project inception as project interventions are concretized further.

Budget for grants: The grant budget has been increased three-fold and will include any university, academic institute, city, municipality (or other proponent/entity that fits the criteria for the challenge).

Biodiversity indicators: As noted by the GEF SEC, during project inception as winning projects for deep dive and light touch support are identified, biodiversity indicators at the project level will be designed and monitored (based on the nature of intervention, the scale of biodiversity related impacts, the context of implementation of the given intervention, etc.). Additional text clarifying this alignment has been included in Section C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming.

Response:15/10/2025

a) The ToC has been slightly modified to reflect the changes in the components, and a high-resolution image has been provided.

b) The GEF SCIP has been incorporated into the baseline as described earlier.

c) Components

Component 1

1.1. References have been added throughout the project description to highlight potential synergies with the WB GEF-8 GPSC, including but not limited to: i) knowledge exchange among members of the Cool Coalition Nature for Cooling Working Group; ii) use of the GPSC network to disseminate the Challenge call for proposals in Brazil, C?te d?Ivoire and India, where GPSC has operated; iii) examine and review both experiences from GEF-6 and GEF-7 in applying Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in urban contexts and materials such as the Framework on NbS to be developed under the GEF-8, with the aim of identifying success factors that can inform the potential selection criteria of the Challenge; iv) use of GPSC platforms to share lessons learned and project results. A table has been also developed under the coordination with on-going initiatives section providing an overview of the potential synergies with the Thematic Area 1 of the GPSC.

1.2. The structure of the Cool Coalition was provided to clarify where the NCWG will be located. Terms of Reference are provided in Annex N. Its mandate will be unique, focusing on technology solutions that reduce cooling and energy demand in the built environment through the integration of nature, extending beyond the traditional scope of urban planning. The NCWG will welcome the participation of the World Bank GPSC and seek collaboration and knowledge exchange with its forthcoming Network of Expertise on Urban Nature-Positive, to be established under the GEF-8 SCIP. Among other objectives, this group will aim to identify knowledge and financing gaps in the cooling sector to inform the development of the Nature for cooling Challenge but also opportunities for scale-up through upcoming funding cycles.

1.3. The budget for the Knowledge Management platform has been reduced to 25K, and its scope has been revised to serve as a single resource library. Similar to the working group, there remains a gap in establishing a repository dedicated specifically to cooling, despite the global demand for such resources. This will be co-financed by the Cool Coalition, as it will be hosted on its website. A reference has also been made to its connection with the SCIP GP.

1.4. The budget allocated for grants has been increased to USD 100,000 for each winning proponent. To facilitate tracking, an additional output has been created under Component 3 with deliverables to monitor the use of funds. The grants will support the piloting of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), covering costs such as NbS products (e.g., green walls and roofs, shading trees), design, construction and operation, permit applications and inspections, and monitoring equipment. Proponents, potentially private developers and public institutions will be required to submit a detailed workplan and budget breakdown, which will be reviewed by Cool Coalition international and local experts prior to implementation.

1.5. This project focuses specifically on cooling technologies, with the city serving as the primary entry point. Accordingly, rather than being addressed under Component 1, this will be taken up under Component 3 (Deliverable 3.4.1), where proposals for regulatory and financial incentives will target this aspect. In addition, under Component 4 (deliverable 4.1.2) will establish national multistakeholder platforms to bring together government representatives from the relevant fields. This has been further clarified.

Component 2

2.1. The Figures 6 and 7 have been created to provide an overview of the project cycle and the differences between light touch and deep dive winning proponents.

2.2. The budgets for all components have been reviewed and adjusted to ensure a balanced allocation.

2.3. The findings from the implementation of the pilots will inform the recommendations under outcome 3.4, with a focus on integrating NbS into urban design and planning frameworks (targeted at the subnational governments where the pilots are implemented), as well as under outcome 4.2 on procurement (targeting national governments). References have been added accordingly.

2.4. The scope of the output (now output 2.4 given the changes in the logframe) has been revised. It will focus on facilitating a "NbS financial dialogue" where proponents (e.g. developers) and city/national governments exchange their ideas on potential financial incentives and mechanism (e.g. floor area ratio bouns programme according to the extent of NbS implementation to balance both environmental agenda and property revenue). This would cover the discussion such as ideal green coverage rate, building heights, floor area ratio (FAR), green products, and combination with inclusive design, etc.). The dialogue would also cover public buildings (if a proponent is purely a public sector), and its potential application of NbS solutions and their impact on cost (saving energy and electricity cost). The ultimate goal of this activity is to agree on the promising financial shcemes to promote NbS by drafting recommendations and its future integration into building regulations/policies.

2.5. In this project, three potential scenarios for proponents are considered: 1) a developer, 2) a city, or 3) a joint proposal by a developer and a city as a public?private partnership (PPP). This has been further clarified in the Annex N ToRs fo the Nature for Cooling Challenge.

i) Developer: If a developer is the proponent, they invest in landscapes and green facades/roofs at their own cost. They need to be paired with policy-makers who can create realistic green financial incentives and programs (e.g., FAR bonus schemes) to ensure cash flow sustainability and generate a positive return on investment when developing buildings.

ii) City government: If a city government is the proponent, it invests in nature-based solutions (NbS), such as green facades or walls on public buildings, and benefits financially through reduced electricity costs. In this case, the city?s property management department should be matched with the building design/construction department to assess the cost-effectiveness of NbS and integrate solutions into future projects or retrofits. Inter-departmental discussion is therefore key to facilitating financial dialogue.

iii) PPP (Public-Private Partnership): If a proposal is submitted jointly by a city and a developer (e.g., sharing land ownership), it combines public budgets with private investment. The structure varies depending on local context: both parties may act as investors (building owners) and beneficiaries (tenants), making the financial arrangements more complex. However, successful projects can serve as valuable case studies for replication. Financial dialogue is critical to exploring potential collaboration between the public and private sectors.

We anticipate many applications from developers, given that they construct more floor area than public bodies. Engaging developers also provides a strategic opportunity to design financial incentive programs that can drive large-scale replication nationally and beyond.

5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.
a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?
b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?
c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/16/2025

noted

12/11/2025

UNEP is requesting the dual implementation/execution role for this project. Please provide justification and to which exception UNEP is referring to in order to undertake the dual role (e.g. global project), which should fit one of the 5 criteria exception approved by Council in June 2025).

10/21/25, RR

1. This should be further discussed during inception for a role that goes beyond knowledge sharing and that ensures additionality.

2. This is insufficient and will have to be addressed as well, as noted in the rationale section

3. and 4. cleared

8/15/25, FB

1. Considering the risks / opportunities related to the potential topic overlap with the SCIP, we recommend that UNEP should explore ways to work more closely with the WB, to ensure there is no replication of what is being done with the SCIP. Please consider making WB a core partner for this project, including the possibility of invite them to the project steering committee or to the NCWG, to ensure regular exchanges/coordination touch points. This is particularly important as the implementation period of the SC IP and this MSP may coincide, so we need to ensure a parallel execution does not create confusion for recipient countries, but it is rather used to reinforce the respective workplans.

2. Regarding the in country work of this MSP, considering that all three participating countries are also SC IP child projects, please outline what coordination measures will be in place to ensure coordination and synergies between stakeholders and national institutions that will be participating

to the MSP national components and the IP child projects. This is all the more important since UNEP is also GEF agency for the SC IP child projects in Brazil and India. While this may help leverage investments and relationships, there needs to be clear institutional and communication arrangements to avoid confusion. The pilot NbS solutions being promoted may be similar what is being supported by SCIP, although considering these are large countries, of course more can be done. In this context, the MSP should support highly innovative NbS projects targeting urban heat and related energy consumption and work closely with institutions involved in the SCIP child projects.

3. Regarding the modalities of the NCC launch and advertising, we suggest making use of the SCIP child project existing institutional arrangements/network to make sure the notification reaches as many eligible local/city governments as possible in each of the 3 countries. At the same time, it is important to avoid confusion regarding what is already being implemented in each of the 3 countries as part of the SCIP and what "additional/new" activities will be done in through the new project.

4. MDBs and IFIs are identified as key stakeholders for several of the outputs, specifically under component 2. What discussions have taken place with these actors and what level of engagement/contribution is expected or has been agreed with them?

Agency Response

Response: 15 December 2025

Additional justification regarding UNEP?s role in execution has been added to Section B4.1. The following text has been included to strengthen the justification for dual implementation and execution for global and regional interventions planned under the project:

?UNEP requests the dual implementation and execution role for this project in alignment with GEF policy (GEF/C.70/Inf.18: Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy) paragraph 9 which notes that this dual function may be permitted in case of ?(d) Global or regional coordination child projects for Programs, global or regional platforms for knowledge sharing and Umbrella Enabling Activities for a group of countries.? To this end, UNEP?s Cool Coalition Secretariat will lead execution for the global and regional interventions planned under the project. As noted previously, country partners and co-executing entities will be identified during project implementation to support the execution of national-level interventions in Brazil, Cambodia and Cote d?Ivoire.?

Response: 1 December 2025

Thank you for the feedback; points well noted for consideration during the project inception phase.

Response:15/10/2025

1. The detailed TORs outlining the functioning of the PSC will be adopted at the first PSC meeting. They will include a knowledge-sharing segment, which the World Bank will be invited to co-chair, to facilitate exchange between this project and the GPSC and to ensure alignment with GPSC activities. They will also be invited to join the NCWG as described earlier.

2. An overview of SCIP country activities in Brazil and C?te d?Ivoire has been provided in the baseline section. A reference has been added to highlight the importance of using the networks

established by that project to disseminate the Challenge while also leveraging finance and partnerships.

3. The NCC Challenge will leverage the existing institutional arrangements and networks of the SCIP child project in Brazil, C?te d?Ivoireand India to support the launch of the competition. Text has been added regarding this in both the description of Output 2.1 and the section on coordination with ongoing initiatives.

4. The Cool Coalition engages with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) through its Sustainable Cooling Initiative and will work with them to explore potential investment opportunities, leveraging their support for the pilot projects. By involving IFC in the pre-feasibility assessments, the project will explore ways to align the pilots with potential investment opportunities.

5.3 Core indicators
a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?
b) Are the project?s targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable? Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

Cleared - please consider during inception whether this project can really claim leveraging Nature Based Solutions if the project objectives, Rio marker selection, and indicators do not reflect significant benefits for biodiversity and land degradation. Perhaps there are project level results indicator (other than core indicators) which could be derived to reflect/and guide such (positive) impact.

8/15/25, FB

1. The main assumptions and methodologues used to estimates GHG emission reductions are reasonable.

1.a: Please also include an estimate of the $ value of the savings that could be realized in each city and in total, as additional socio economic benefits.

2. Regarding BD core indicator 4.1, the guidelines require that "the project should qualitatively describe the benefit provided to biodiversity through a change in management." This is not described in the project. either explain this, or remove this indicator. Please also endure consistency with the Rio Markers selection.

Agency Response

Response: 1 December 2025

Thank you for the feedback and suggestions which are well noted; as mentioned above, biodiversity impact indicators will be developed at the project level during the inception phase depending on nature, scope and aim of the planned intervention.

Response:15/10/2025

1. The GHG emissions reductions have been revised to reflect the updated grant values.

1.a. An estimate on the potential savings has qbeen incorporated in section B1.2. Socio-economic benefits.

2. Indicator 4.1. has been removed.

5.4 Risks
a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission?
b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?
c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately screened and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/17/2025

cleared

1216/2025

The rating still appears as low on the portal view

Environmental and Social	Low	Risk: The proje During the con and disturbanc these areas, pe practice appro impacts early i organizations inputs shape t Establish clea construction a

12/12/2025

Whereas the ESS rating is low, the rating of the Environmental and Social risk category in the key risk table is Moderate. Please ensure these two ratings are aligned as per guidance in the GEF Risk Appetite (GEF/C.66/13).

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency Response
Response: 15 December 2025

Thank you for this observation ? the rating has been adjusted to ?Moderate? to reflect the ESS assessment.

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or LDCF/SCCF strategy?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency ResponseN/A

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency ResponseN/A

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

Although there may be BD-related benefits from the project's interventions, this project is not expected to make substantial contribution to the GEF8 BD core indicators as it will mostly be implemented in urban areas.

Agency ResponseN/A

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency ResponseN/A

7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/16/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

On Gender, we see opportunities in the below entry points and wished to request the following clarifications :
- Under 2.1.2 Partnership Dialogue events, could you please clarify whether the dialogue events may allow for exchange on the gender dimensions to be considered in implementing and scaling the challenge?
- Under 4.1.2, could you please clarify whether gender equality and women's empowerment-related lessons and best practices are expected to be featured in the stakeholder exchanges and sharing of knowledge and best practices ?
- In Output 4.3, could you please confirm that women's groups representation is ensured and that gender perspectives are expected to be captured and integrated in the drafts to be produced?

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency Response

<u>**Response: 15 December 2025**</u>

Thank you for these inputs that help enrich the gender-related interventions planned under the project. The following clarifications have been included in the selected outputs/deliverables:

- 2.1.2: Point well noted on including gender considerations in the planned exchanges during the Partnership Dialogues; an indicator has been included in the Gender Action Plan accordingly.

- 4.1.2: This is indeed planned and has been included as an indicator in the Gender Action Plan.

- Output 4.3: Thank you for this observation, an indicator under Deliverable 4.3.2 has been added to the Gender Action Plan.

7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

Cleared

8/15/25, FB,

Yes, a brief stakeholder engagement plan is uploaded. However, there is a notable gap in the engagement with private sector developers and actors, including FIs. The project TOC articulate several barriers and activities around involvement of financial institutions as well as private developers in the project, a necessary activity for the project success. However, despite the fact that the answer to the policy question on P.Sec engagement is "yes", there is no mention in the stakeholder engagement plan of any engagement with these actors, which is necessary to get their buy in both for global and local project activities.

The lack of engagement (or description of any engagement that may have taken place) is also to be noted in the context of the cofinancing: cofinancing ambition seems quite low, and there is a notable lack of private sector.

Please address these issues at resubmission.

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

The project will mobilize investments from the private sector investments during its execution, in line with the GEF guidelines on co-financing (FI/GN/01, paragraph 9) (GEF, 2018). These investments will primarily come from private investors involved in the proposals of winning proponents, who are likely to be private developers. To be selected for the challenge, they will be required to provide co-financing at a 1:6 ratio. This is expected to generate approximately $0.9M in additional co-finance, distributed across all components (C1?C4). The final co-financing amounts will depend on the selected proponents, with a 1:6 in co-finance ratio anticipated (e.g., $300K co-finance for each $50K GEF grant), particularly for the deep dive proponents.

The Cool Coalition already engages with a broad network of private sector entities, including manufacturers, district cooling utilities, energy efficiency and cooling technology providers, engineering and consulting firms, finance and investment actors, developers and foundations. This network supports the Global Cooling Pledge and provides a platform to raise awareness of the business case for investing in nature-based sustainable cooling solutions while addressing gaps in knowledge that currently limit capital flow to NbS solutions. Building on two on-going effort - the existing partnership with the IFC?s Sustainable Cooling Initiative and the Beat the Heat COP30 initiative - the project will seek additional co-financing from technology providers and private sector companies. The project will primarily benefit from IFC?s Sustainable Cooling Initiative in its focus on cooling for green buildings. The pre-feasibility studies of the pilot projects will be shared with IFC to explore potential investment opportunities, while also leveraging IFC?s five modes of engagement: 1) providing thought leadership; 2) developing transformative cooling systems; 3) enhancing investment readiness of innovators and adopters of cooling solutions; 4) de-risking finance; and 5) operationalizing and scaling up investments.

The project will also leverage a partnership with Google as described in the support letter provided by them.

8 Annexes
Annex A: Financing Tables
8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from

(mark all that apply):
STAR allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency ResponseN/A
Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A
LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A
SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A
Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

This project is proposed to be financed with FA set aside resources given its global nature and potential to generate global lessons through the locally implemented pilots.

Agency ResponseN/A
8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)
a) Is PPG reimbursement requested and if so, is it within the eligible cap of USD 50,000?

b) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/16/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

Please use the eligible categories included in Guideline as well as to provide details on each category. > There should be a purpose for each of the expenses in line with guidelines (e.g. travel for what purpose, consultant for what purpose, etc).

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency Response

Response: 15 December 2025

Thank you ? the PPG budget table has been adjusted as requested.

8.3 Source of Funds
Does the sources of funds table match with the OFP?s LOE? Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country?s STAR allocation

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A

8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines? e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/5/2025 RR

Note - Given the 1:6 ratio expected from winning proponents, the expected leverage will now be around 3M instead of 0.9M.

It is difficult to understand the difference in treatment between the OHEL co-financing and the Urbanland one (e.g. why the entire 17.3M$ is accounted for in the Urbanland letter and not in the OHEL one). During implementation please ensure to update and to report only the share of the financing that can be attributed to the GEF project (in the case of use of premises the entire cost of equity should not be accounted for for example).

Please also ensure the co-financing letter from ministry of cote d'Ivoire is updated.

10/21/25, RR

Awaiting Brazil's co-financing letter. Is it expected before project start?

Current co-financing is not in line with GEF guidelines, possibly due to categories used by proponents being different. Please ensure to upload up to date co-financing numbers and corresponding letters through the portal during implementation, including from recipients but also for the ones currently and previously listed.

8/15/25, FB,

1. As noted above in this review sheet, the project appears to be low on ambition with little meaningful co-financing from any stakeholder other than government actors, despite significant global efforts on addressing urban heat. A long list of initiatives is provided in the MSP, but none of them are included as co-financing. Likewise, despite the importance of private sector and FIs in the project TOC, there is no mention of how these actors have been engaged, and how they may contribute financing either directly or through initiatives that align with the project's objectives. Please address this in the resubmission.

2. Brazil co-fin letter: the letter seems to include several elements that are listed separately. Most of them do not appear to fit the definition of "in-kind/recurrent expenditures". Please disaggregate them as relevant and revise the in-kind/recurrent expenditures classification as appropriate.

3. India co-fin letter: Please confirm that the entire amount listed under several initiatives in the letter are in fact to be consider relevant cofinancing. Also, please address the following areas:

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Others	National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) (TBC)	Other	Recurrent expenditures	68,500,000.00

Agency Response

Response: 15 December 2025

Thank you for this observation ? the point regarding the co-financing ratio expected is well noted.

On co-financing from private sector: this observation is also duly noted and co-financing that is attributable to the GEF project will be distinguished and reported accordingly.

Response:15/10/2025

1) Please refer to comment on the stakeholder engagement section 7.3.

2) The letter has been reviewed but is pending signature from the Government.

3) The co-finance letter from NIUA has been removed due to the change in the country. Please refer to the point 1) in the Agency Response to the 8.5.

Annex B: Endorsements
8.5 a) Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

RR (12/4/2025):

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

Noting pending LOE from Brazil.

The other two LOE are missing the usual footnote - please obtain an email confirmation confirming acceptance of the footnote, as an alternative to receiving a new LOE.

8/15/25, FB:

1. There are two letters of support, included only in the agency ProDoc. Please note that these are not Letters of Endorsement. Per GEF guidelines, a LOE following the templates available on the GEF website must be provided for global projects with activities in countries. For this project, considering that the activities are not clearly distributed / allocated to the participant countries but across the Countries, the LoE for each participant country should include the total amount of the GEF Financing, PPG and Associated fees.

2. Please upload the letters as separate document in the portal, and not only as attachment to the agency prodoc.

3. Please include the missing LOE from India.

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

1. A country change has been made, with Cambodia replacing India. This revision was necessary due to challenges within the Government of India, which was unable to provide the endorsement letter before the established deadline. During this period, Cambodia expressed strong interest and submitted the required endorsement letter on time. Accordingly, the project has been revised to include Cambodia. India remains an important partner and will be considered for inclusion in future funding cycles. We have requested Letters of Endorsement (LoEs) from the three countries, using the official template as required. To date, the LoE from C?te d?Ivoire and Cambodia have been received, while the Brazil one still pending signature by the GEF OFP. Recent changes in the OFP have delayed the signing process; however, support for the project has already been confirmed through Letter of Interest. The LoE will be shared as soon as they are received.

2. The letters have been uploaded as attachments.

3. Please refer to the response of point 1) above.

b) Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

see above under (a).

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

b) Please refer to the response of point 1) above

c) Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

see above under (a).

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

c) Please refer to the response of point 1) above

8.6 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project before the PIF submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A

Annex C: Project Results Framework
8.7 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included?
b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of the budget (too high? Too low?)
c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?
d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

10/21/25, RR

Cleared

8/20/25, FB:

1. Outcome 1: it should be specified that "stakeholders" is to be intended as "institutions" and not "people/persons".

2. Outcome 3: we note that only 2 cities out of 3 deep dive cities are expected to integrate monitoring frameworks to track NbS. This should be 3 since these systems are going to be provided by the project.

3. Outcome 4: consider raising the ambition of the # of countries with national strategies/policies/etc, from 2 to 3.

4. Output 3.2: 12 participants per country would be a total of 36, not 46. Please correct the typo.

Agency Response

Response:15/10/2025

1) to 4) revised accordingly.

Annex E: Project map and coordinates
8.8 Are geo-referenced information and maps provided indicating where the project interventions will take place ?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency ResponseN/A
Annex F: Environmental and Social Safeguards Screen and Rating
8.9 Have safeguard screening document and/or other ESS document(s) attached and been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/16/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

Could you please confirm whether any risk was identified in regards to informal settlers (given interventions might cover investment in green spaces in large cities) and if so whether and how the project design engaged so far with informal settlers, representatives of informal settlers or civil society organizations working with informal settlers and how it would plan to do so during project implementation? If no risk is identified, please disregard.

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency Response

<u>Response: 15 December 2025</u>

While this is a pertinent concern, no such risk is currently anticipated at this stage. However, the project will continue to collaborate and engage with civil society organizations in order to pre-empt and address any such risks that may arise during project implementation. This strategy has also been noted as a risk mitigation measure under Environmental and Social risk category in the Risk Identification table.

Annex G: GEF Budget template
8.10 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?
b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?
c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Cleared

12/16/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

a. There are two different formats of budget table in the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view - please remove UNEP's format template, which presents the expenditures per year.

b. The grant for winning proponents s noted to having been revised to $300,000. Nevertheless, in the budget provided in Annex G it looks like the amounts is $340,000. Can you please correct where necessary for consistency?

8/15/25, FB,

yes.

Agency Response

<u>Response: 15 December 2025</u>

a. UNEP format template for the budget has been removed.

b. Thank you for this observation ? the project grant per proponent has indeed been revised to $340,000 and has been updated across the document for consistency.

Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes
8.11 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.
b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.
c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency ResponseN/A

Additional Annexes
9. GEFSEC DECISION

9.1.GEFSEC Recommendation Is the project recommended for approval

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

RR (12/17/2025)

Technically cleared

RR (12/16/2025)

Final formatting pending (ESS risk) - while exception for dual execution is being considered in parallel.

RR (12/11/2025):

Project sent back to address final policy review comments

RR (10/21/2025):

Not yet, agency is requested to resubmit.

8/25/25, FB,

not yet, the agency is requested to address the comments raised in this review sheet and resubmit.

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Please see above. In addition

- Please include reporting on gender results in MTR and TE.

9.3 Review Dates

	1SMSP CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	8/25/2025	10/14/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/5/2025	12/1/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/4/2025	12/15/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/16/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)		