



**CASE**  
**(Civic Action for Security and Environment)**  
**Small Grants Programme**

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**CASE-AZERBAIJAN NATIONAL STRATEGY**

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# 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## 1.1. Launching of the CASE Initiative by OSCE

**Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** is the world's largest security organization with 56 participating states from Europe, Central Asia and North America. Cooperation and security is at the centre of OSCE mandate. Its 19 field missions in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia act as pre-eminent instruments for early warning, conflict prevention, conflict management and post conflict rehabilitation. OSCE deals with three dimensions of security, namely the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimension. Through these dimensions, it addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities.

Through its involvement in the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative covering the Central Asia, South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Eastern Europe regions, OSCE has been addressing a variety of environmental problems which pose security risks to communities within and across national borders. OSCE has also taken various initiatives in the areas of hazardous waste management, management of transboundary waters, environmental governance and environmental public awareness.

OSCE, within the framework of its mandate, has a growing engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in both operational and policy work that cuts across the three dimensions of security, namely the politico-military, the economic-environmental and the human. Issues related to “environment and security” offers a distinctive entry point for OSCE to establish a strategic, mainstreamed partnership with CSOs as well as to facilitate partnerships of CSOs with Governments, academia, business community and donors.

In this respect, OSCE has developed and launched **CASE – Civic Action for Security and Environment**, which has been designed as a small grants programme.

The overall objective of CASE is to create an enabling environment for CSOs to be a strong partner primarily to the government as well as to other stakeholders in collaboratively addressing environment and security challenges. This objective is intended to be achieved primarily through awareness programmes on the linkages between environment and security, capacity building of CSOs and providing grants for their projects that demonstrate such linkages.

In line with these basic means of attaining its overall objective, the target outputs of CASE are identified as follows:

- Output 1:** Increased public and political awareness on the linkages between environment and security;
- Output 2:** Strengthened capacity of CSOs in the field of environment and security;
- Output 3:** Rendering financial and technical assistance to CSOs on projects demonstrating Co-operation in the field of environment with government organizations, NGOs, private sector and international financial organizations.

Primary target beneficiaries of CASE are the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), which are defined as non-state actors whose aims are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power. They comprise the full range of formal and informal organizations within civil society, including but not limited to Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-based Organizations (CBOs), academia, journalist associations, trade unions, and trade associations.

**Azerbaijan** is one of the pilot countries selected for the initial implementation of the CASE Initiative.

## 1.2. CASE Guidelines

The CASE Project Document lays down that Technical and Administrative Instructions will be formulated by Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities OCEEA in order to provide guidance for strategic and operational implementation of CASE at the regional and country levels.

In line with the CASE Project Document, CASE Guidelines that provide a framework for the implementation of CASE, comprising technical and administrative aspects, as well as operational procedures to facilitate their practical application at regional and national levels were prepared by OSCE/OCEEA.

The content of the CASE Guidelines encompass, *inter alia*, the following:

- **Background information** on CASE, including the launching of CASE, objectives and target outputs, target beneficiaries, and implementation modality.
- **Strategic background** for CASE, including the strategic outputs of OSCE, UNECE Environmental Conventions, and OSCE-supported initiatives.
- **Roles and responsibilities**, including OSCE/OCEEA, OSCE Field Operations, CASE Country Officers, and National Screening Boards.
- **CASE Country Strategy**, including the formulation and content of the CASE Country Strategy.
- **Framework for small grants**, including the general thematic priorities and cross-cutting themes.
- **Eligibility**, including the CSOs eligible for application to the small grants, and eligible projects.
- **Provision of small grants** to projects, including the guiding principles in the provision of grants, and amount of small grants.
- **CASE project cycle**, including the application for small grants, preparation and selection of projects, and implementation of projects.
- **Project reporting**, including the function and importance of project reporting, and Technical and Financial Reports.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation framework**, including the project-level, country-level and corporate-level M&E.

The CASE Guidelines have the following complementary Attachments:

- **CASE Communications Strategy** is intended to establish and maintain clear and regular channels of communication with the broad spectrum of OSCE partners at all levels, including CSOs in pilot countries as well as other stakeholders towards attaining the goals and target outputs of the CASE Initiative.
- **Capacity Building Framework** is intended to provide a basis for consideration by OSCE/OCEEA (and its country networks), with a view towards improving the operational aspects and contributing to the successful conduct of the capacity building activities planned under the CASE Initiative.
- **Sustainability Framework** is intended to provide a basis for consideration and discussion by OSCE/OCEEA (and its country networks) for ensuring the sustainability of the CASE Initiative and its successful conduct in the subsequent phases.

### 1.3. Purpose of CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy

It is stipulated in the CASE Guidelines that a CASE Country Strategy shall be formulated for each pilot country based on the national policies, strategies and priorities in the area of environment, sustainable development and security, taking into consideration regional and global commitments of the country.

In this context, the **CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy** has been prepared through a consultative process, and finalized by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.

The CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy identifies the technical and operational issues related to the implementation of CASE in Azerbaijan. The CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy gives special consideration to the following:

- Ensuring the congruence of operational modalities and projects under CASE-Azerbaijan with the overall objectives and implementation modalities of CASE.
- Giving due emphasis under CASE-Azerbaijan to the implementation of relevant UNECE Environmental Conventions.
- Giving due emphasis under CASE-Azerbaijan to the outcomes of the ENVSEC Initiative, and avoiding duplications and overlaps with this initiative.
- Giving due emphasis under CASE-Azerbaijan to the role of Aarhus Centres in Azerbaijan, and to the potential of CASE in serving as an effective operational tool for these Centres.
- Giving due emphasis under CASE-Azerbaijan to the roles of different stakeholders in the country.
- Ensuring that the full range of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participate in CASE-Azerbaijan as the target beneficiaries.
- Identifying priority thematic areas for the small grants for CASE-Azerbaijan in the light of the general themes identified for CASE.
- Focusing on cross-cutting themes for CASE-Azerbaijan, in particular on the integration of youth and gender concerns and perspectives into environment and security initiatives.
- Specifying the eligibility criteria for projects to be supported under CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Specifying the full project cycle for CASE-Azerbaijan, including the application, selection and implementation stages, and grant-making procedures.
- Identifying the mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of CASE-Azerbaijan implementations.
- Providing the general framework for the CASE-Azerbaijan Communications Strategy, in line with the general CASE Communications Strategy to be subsequently developed.

## 2. STRATEGIC BACKGROUND FOR CASE-AZERBAIJAN

### 2.1. Environmental Situation in Azerbaijan

Some of the environmental challenges facing Azerbaijan now are legacies of its Soviet past. However, as stated in 'The Complex Plan of Measures to Improve Ecological Situation in Azerbaijan for 2006-2010', economic development, including fast growing extractive industries and processing, and construction, pose new threats to environment. The country's most acute environmental problems are in the area of environmental preservation.

Land erosion, salinization, contamination of soil with hazardous waste, desertification and water pollution are some of the acute environmental challenges facing the country. The country has limited water resources. Its main rivers, Kura and Araz, are extremely contaminated by transboundary, as well as internal public and industrial waste. Around 43% of the Republic's territory is exposed to erosion processes of various intensity. The area of salinized lands all over the Republic is almost 1.5 million hectares. The country has a low share (11%) of woodland; in 1990s inadequate energy supply led to felling of timber for fuel. Inadequate handling and utilization of waste, especially in big cities, exacerbate the environmental pollution.

In response to these and other environmental challenges, the Government of Azerbaijan has adopted several national/state programmes and action plans. Among the key documents in this area are as the followings:

- The National Programme of the Azerbaijan Republic on Environmentally Sustainable Social-economic Development (2003-2010).
- Complex Plan of Measures on improving ecological situation in Azerbaijan Republic (2006-2010).
- National Programme on Rehabilitation and Development of Forests in Azerbaijan Republic (2003-2008).
- State Strategy on Management of Dangerous Waste in Azerbaijan (2004-2010).
- Master Plan and National Strategy on Protection and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity (2006-2009).
- Additional Measures on Issues Arising from International Environmental Conventions and Treaties Ratified by Azerbaijan Republic (2006-2010).
- State Programme on Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy in Azerbaijan Republic (2004-2013).
- State Programme on Rational Use of Winter and Summer Pastures and Prevention of Desertification in Azerbaijan Republic (2004-2010).

### 2.2. Integration of UNECE Environmental Conventions

The Government of Azerbaijan has ratified all the five environmental treaties negotiated by UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, all of which are now in force. Parallel to the CASE Initiative, CASE-Azerbaijan aims at contributing to the implementation of these UNECE Environmental Conventions which consist of the following:

- **UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution** has addressed since 1979 some of the major environmental problems of the UNECE region through scientific collaboration and policy negotiation. The Convention has been extended by eight protocols that identify specific measures to be taken by Parties to cut their emissions of air pollutants. The aim of the Convention is that Parties shall endeavour to limit and, as far as

possible, gradually reduce and prevent air pollution including long-range transboundary air pollution.

- **UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context** (Espoo Convention) was drawn up in 1991 in Espoo (Finland) and entered into force in 1997. The Espoo Convention is a key step to bringing together all stakeholders to prevent environmental damage before it occurs. It sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning. It also lays down the general obligation of States to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.
- **UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes** (Water Convention) is intended to strengthen national measures for the protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary surface and ground waters. The Convention obliges Parties to prevent, control and reduce water pollution from point and non-point sources. The Convention also includes provisions for monitoring, research and development, consultations, warning and alarm systems, mutual assistance, institutional arrangements, and the exchange and protection of information, as well as public access to information.
- **UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents**, entering into force in 2000, was created to protect human beings and the environment from the consequences of industrial accidents. The Convention's main objectives are to prevent these accidents where and whenever possible and to mitigate their effects should they occur. The Convention devotes particular attention to the transboundary context, since cross-border coordination is more difficult. An Assistance Programme was launched in 2004 for countries with economies in transition, which often face problems in implementing the sometimes complex requirements of the Convention.
- The **UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)** was adopted on 25 June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in the "Environment for Europe" process. By setting principles for "access to information", "public participation in decision-making" and "access to justice", the Aarhus Convention provides OSCE with a unique tool to support environmental governance processes at the national level which in turn contributes to the countries' efforts in addressing environment and security challenges. OSCE, as part of its support to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, has been supporting the creation of Aarhus Centres in various countries, in close co-operation with the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative.

## 2.3. Integration of OSCE-Supported Initiatives

### 2.2.1 ENVSEC Initiative

The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative is an inter-agency partnership which facilitates co-operation on critical environmental issues as a way to promote peace and security in four regions: Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and South Eastern Europe. Recognizing that environmental problems do not stop at national borders, ENVSEC partners (OSCE, UNDP, UNEP, REC, UNECE, and associate partner NATO) have developed a platform that turns the potential for conflict between states into opportunities for confidence-building and co-operation.

ENVSEC contributed to increasing public awareness and participation in environmental affairs, primarily through the establishment and operation of Aarhus Centres, which constitute one of the potential pillars of the CASE Initiative.

The CASE-Azerbaijan aims at benefiting significantly from the experience and outcomes of ENVSEC.

### **2.2.2 Aarhus Centres**

OSCE, as part of its support to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, has been supporting the creation and functioning of Aarhus Centres in Azerbaijan, in close co-operation with the ENVSEC Initiative. These centres provide a bridge between the Government and the civil society on the issues related to the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention, namely access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice.

In this context, Aarhus Centres currently functional in Azerbaijan in Baku, Ganja and Gazakh (and others that may be established in due course) are expected to play a facilitation role in the implementation of CASE-Azerbaijan.



### 3. CASE-AZERBAIJAN: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the overall supervision of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), CASE-Azerbaijan shall operate through the **CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer** and **CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board**, and with management and administrative support from the OSCE Office in Baku.

In line with the Management Structure identified in the CASE Project Document, the different yet mutually-reinforcing roles and responsibilities expected to be assumed by OCEEA, OSCE Office in Baku, CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer and CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board are provided hereunder.

#### 3.1. OCEEA

**The Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)** shall have the responsibility for overall supervision of CASE implementation and provision of political and technical support and guidance. With regard to CASE-Azerbaijan, this responsibility shall include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Ensuring the preparation of efficient, transparent, flexible and broad-based guidelines to facilitate the implementation of CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Assisting in the formulation of CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.
- Ensuring coherence among the CASE project portfolios of different countries.
- Guiding the establishment and functioning of CASE National Screening Boards in general, and the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board in particular.
- Preparing standard formats (fiches) separately for project concepts and project proposals, as well as for project reports.
- Preparing user-friendly formats for the evaluation of Project Proposals for facilitating, as well as ensuring the consistency of the process in different contexts.
- Participating in and providing guidance to the decision-making process to be conducted by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board in relation to the review and selection of the project proposals submitted by CSOs.
- Reviewing the approved project proposals in Azerbaijan.
- Providing guidance and assistance to the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer in disbursing grant instalments to grantee CSOs on the basis of performance reporting.
- Overseeing and coordinating the general implementation of CASE Communications Strategy. Communicating the Strategy to the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer and providing guidance in the appropriate incorporation of this Strategy within the CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.

#### 3.2. OCSE Office in Baku

**OSCE Office in Baku**, within the context of its mission to promote the implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments in all OSCE dimensions, including the human, political, economic and environmental aspects of security and stability, shall provide administrative and programmatic support to CASE.

Such support shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Providing support in establishing and maintaining contacts with governmental agencies, local authorities and the CSOs in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan implementations.
- Facilitating contacts and promoting information exchange and co-operation with international and national organizations and potential donors.
- Organizing capacity building programmes, regional events and site visits to support implementation of CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Ensuring the linkages of CASE-Azerbaijan with other OSCE-supported programmes and projects in the country.
- Ensuring project-level Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).
- Disbursing grant instalments to grantee CSOs on the basis of performance reporting.

### **3.3. CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer**

**CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer** shall be responsible for supporting the OSCE Office in Baku in implementation of CASE in Azerbaijan through ensuring the technical and substantive quality of CASE grants and projects. This responsibility shall include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Contributing to the drafting (and revision) of the CASE Country Strategy for Azerbaijan (to be subsequently discussed and finalized by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board).
- Contributing to the effective functioning of the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.
- Announcing the CASE-Azerbaijan “call for project proposals” through CSO networks, Aarhus Centres, media and other channels.
- Working in close partnership with CSOs to help them formulate their project proposals.
- Responding to requests for information and guidance from CSOs in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan implementations.
- Reviewing/pre-screening the project proposals and informing the relevant CSOs (if needed) to revise and complete their project proposals before their evaluation by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.
- Subsequent to the selection of projects, notifying the grantee CSOs of this decision and providing guidance on the next steps of the CASE-Azerbaijan project cycle.
- Preparing respective Memoranda of Agreement with grantee CSOs for signature (duly signed copies to be forwarded to OCEEA).
- Supporting the approval and disbursement of grant instalments to grantee CSOs on the basis of performance reporting.
- Ensuring sound programme monitoring and evaluation, in particular on the basis of the criteria and indicators developed/refined in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Contributing to the organization of capacity building programmes under CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Overseeing the implementation of the CASE Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework in Azerbaijan.
- Supporting the promotion of the goals and activities of CASE in general in Azerbaijan.

- Supporting the establishment of partnerships and the mobilization of additional resources in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan implementations.
- Conducting regular and occasional site visits (to be accompanied by relevant members of the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board) to overview and support the grantee projects.
- On the basis of the CASE Communications Strategy, coordinating the development and implementation of a Communications Strategy for CASE-Azerbaijan.

### **3.4. CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board**

**CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board**, serving on a voluntary basis, shall be responsible for policy guidance, project screening and programme promotion, and shall have, among others, the following roles and responsibilities in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan:

- Participating in and contributing to the development and revision of the CASE Country Strategy for Azerbaijan.
- Establishing eligibility criteria for projects under CASE-Azerbaijan on the basis of the general CASE Guidelines.
- Evaluating/selecting the project proposals on the basis of the selection criteria developed in the light of the general CASE Guidelines.
- Ensuring that the relevant Board members participate in and contribute to site visits to be conducted by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer in relation to grantee projects.
- Contributing to and taking active part in the development and implementation of the Communications Strategy for CASE-Azerbaijan.

## 4. FRAMEWORK FOR SMALL GRANTS

### 4.1. Priority Themes for Small Grants

In the light of the CASE Guidelines, priority thematic areas of CASE-Azerbaijan have been identified through participatory processes, and finalized by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.

In this framework, the following eight priority themes have been incorporated in the CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy to constitute the thematic priorities for small grants to be provided under CASE-Azerbaijan:

- **Priority Theme 1: Sustainable management of natural resources** (including integrated water resources management, protection of water sources and water quality, fostering co-operation for river basin management, sustainable development of mountain ecosystems, biodiversity conservation, development of forest resources/reforestation, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 2: Combating land degradation** (including the improvement of soil management, preventing, controlling and reversing desertification/land degradation, combating soil contamination, combating salinization, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, improving soil fertility management, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 3: Natural and man-made disasters** (including earthquake-based environmental risks, potential impacts of disasters on migratory pressures, reducing flood risks, strengthening community-level disaster preparedness, reducing disaster-prone health risks, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 4: Management of hazardous wastes and chemicals** (including the mitigation of risks from cross-border wastes, reducing pollution from heavy metals, recycling/disposal of hazardous wastes and chemicals, reducing the pollution of soils due to oil exploitation/spills and toxic waste, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 5: Mining** (including the reduction of the negative impacts of mining on the environment, encompassing soils, water and vegetation, as well as air pollution, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 6: Sustainable transportation** (including the addressing of transboundary and country-level transportation security issues, promoting environmentally sustainable means of transportation such as bicycle pathways, pedestrian walkways, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 7: Climate change** (including the strengthening of partnerships that foster exchanges of experience and expertise on climate change, public awareness-raising, promoting carbon offsetting programmes, local climate change activities that are linked to market mechanisms and policy interventions, etc.)
- **Priority Theme 8: Energy** (including the improvement of energy efficiency in order to meet sustainable energy objectives, integrating policies on energy, focusing on alternative renewable energy resources, demonstrations of energy efficient technologies and practices at the community level, etc.)

Each project to be submitted under CASE-Azerbaijan should specifically target one of the priority themes delineated above, and display the explicit linkages of the targeted priority theme with the interface of environment and security issues.

### 4.2. Cross-cutting Themes

Coupled with the identified priority themes above, four cross-cutting themes have also been identified for CASE-Azerbaijan, encompassing the following:

- **Cross-cutting Theme 1: Support to Environmental Governance** may be addressed by the proponent CSOs through, *inter alia*, seeking improved dialogue between different stakeholders on priority themes, targeting incremental improvements likely to pave the way for longer-term institutional and policy changes, streamlining with the activities of the Aarhus Centres, stimulating the implementation of relevant UNECE Environmental Conventions, seeking tangible improvements in environmental governance, etc.
- **Cross-cutting Theme 2: Social Aspects of Environmental Security** may be addressed by the proponent CSOs through, *inter alia*, considering the potential impacts of environmental security on migration, seeking to contribute to the initiatives toward transforming environmental risks into co-operation in pertinent areas, introducing innovative tools and approaches to highlight social aspects of environmental security, etc.
- **Cross-cutting Theme 3: Role and Participation of Women** shall be considered not as an optional but as a pre-conditional cross-cutting theme in terms of the assessing the eligibility of projects. The proponent CSOs may address this cross-cutting theme through, *inter alia*, ensuring that women's organizations are consulted during the course of the project, ensuring that the project design provides opportunities for women to participate equally, highlighting the gender perspective in all events, incorporating gender perspectives/analysis in projects, obtaining women's opinions and perspectives on environment/security issues and concerns, etc.
- **Cross-cutting Theme 4: Role and Participation of the Youth** shall also be considered as a pre-condition for the eligibility of projects. The proponent CSOs may address this cross-cutting theme through, *inter alia*, ensuring that youth organizations are consulted/involved during the course of the project, targeting the youth as a major group amongst the beneficiaries of the project, obtaining the opinions and contributions of the youth on environment/security issues and concerns, involving special activities for awareness-raising and capacity building of the youth in pertinent priority themes, etc.

## 4.3. Eligibility

### 4.3.1 CSOs Eligible for Application

As the primary target beneficiaries of CASE-Azerbaijan, the full range of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating in the country shall be eligible to apply to the CASE Small Grants Programme.

In line with the definition of CSOs provided in the CASE Project Document, the primary eligibility criterion for a CSO is to be a **non-state actor whose aim is neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power**.

In this context, CASE-Azerbaijan shall be open to applications from CSOs comprising the full range of formal and informal (registered and non-registered) organizations within civil society, including but not limited to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), academia, journalist associations, trade unions, and trade associations.

### 4.3.2 Eligible Projects

CASE-Azerbaijan shall be open to project applications within the following context:

- The project is submitted by CSO(s) eligible for application, as identified above. (In case the project partners include institutions that do not have a CSO status, the lead/signatory institution should be an eligible CSO.)
- Problem to be addressed by the project is linked to **only one** of the priority themes identified above. (Projects should specifically focus on a **single priority topic**, and should not attempt to cover multiple topics at once.)

- The project adequately addresses cross-cutting themes, in particular the integration of youth and gender concerns under the targeted priority theme.
- The nature of the project is either one or a combination of the following types of projects: “demonstration project”, “capacity building and networking project”, “awareness-raising project”, “dissemination of lessons learned project” and “policy dialogue project”.
- The project is developed (and designed to be implemented and monitored) through a participatory process involving the partner CSOs, as well as (to the possible extent) the representatives of target groups and stakeholders.
- The project incorporates mechanisms for “partnership” with other CSOs, private sector, academia, etc. (Such mechanisms are expected to be based on written agreements or protocols describing the nature and sustainability of partnerships.)
- The project provides a practical opportunity to build and strengthen a network of CSOs (also other stakeholders, as appropriate) around the targeted priority theme.
- The project complies with, and/or compliments, the respective policies of the Azerbaijan Government in the specific area of activity.
- The project aims at establishing direct linkages between CASE and ENVSEC Initiatives.
- The project aims at contributing to the activities of the Aarhus Centres in Azerbaijan.
- The project does not duplicate other ongoing efforts. In particular, projects previously supported (or considered to be supported) by similar grant programmes shall not be deemed as eligible.
- The project introduces an innovative approach to the interface of environment and security issues, and has the potential of constituting a “best practice”.
- The project incorporates basic tools and mechanisms for ensuring the sustainability of its impacts.

#### **4.3.3 Number of Projects to be Submitted by Eligible CSOs**

In line with the principles endorsed by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board, there will be no limitations with regard to the number of projects that any eligible CSO may submit under CASE-Azerbaijan.

However, regardless of the number of projects submitted, each eligible CSO shall be entitled to receive grants (if selected) for only one specific project in each project selection cycle under CASE-Azerbaijan.

## **5. CASE-AZERBAIJAN PROJECT CYCLE**

### **5.1. CASE-Azerbaijan Project Cycle: Summary of Basic Steps**

CASE-Azerbaijan Project Cycle shall consist of the following basic steps:

- Preparing the ground for CASE announcement (in this context, the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer has been appointed, the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board has been established, and the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Strategy has been formulated).
- Announcement of the “Call for Project Proposals”.
- Submission of the Project Proposals by CSOs.
- Review of the Project Proposals by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board (endorsement/elimination).
- Signing of the Memoranda of Agreement with CSOs for approved projects.
- Release of the first grant instalment.
- Commencement of project implementation.
- Interim project reporting and subsequent grant disbursements.
- Site visits by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer and/or members of the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.
- Final project report, followed by the final grant disbursement.

### **5.2. Preparation and Selection of Projects**

#### **5.2.1 Call for Project Proposals**

The announcement of the call for Project Proposals shall be made by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer through CSO networks, Aarhus Centres, media and other channels. The announcement for the call for Project Proposals shall include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Background information on CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Eligibility criteria for applications (eligible CSOs).
- Eligibility criteria for projects.
- Priority (and cross-cutting) themes.
- Deadline for applications.
- Ceiling of grants to be provided to projects under CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Evaluation criteria in relation to Project Proposals.
- Information on the evaluation process and calendar in relation to the review/selection of Project Proposals.
- Standard fiche for Project Proposals (to be filled out by proponent CSOs).
- Guidance/complementary information on how to prepare and submit Project Proposals.

### **5.2.2 Preparation of Project Proposals**

The CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall provide guidance and assistance to the proponent CSOs in the preparation of their Project Proposals, if required/requested. However, such guidance and assistance shall by no means be interpreted as an assurance for the selection of the respective Project Proposals.

The Project Proposals shall include the following:

- Basic information on the proponent CSOs (separately for the lead and partnering CSOs, including the allocation of responsibilities under such partnership).
- Signatures of consent of all the partners (non-signature parties shall not be deemed as “partners” of the proposed project).
- Name and communication details of the Project Manager.
- Priority theme targeted by the project.
- Description of how the project would contribute to the interface of environment and security issues under the targeted priority theme.
- Description of primary goals/objectives and targeted outputs of the project.
- Description of how the project would address cross-cutting themes, in particular the integration of youth and gender concerns under the targeted priority theme.
- Description of the linkages with OSCE-supported initiatives in Azerbaijan, in particular with ENVSEC and Aarhus Centres.
- Description of the linkages of the project with the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Strategy.
- Project implementation framework (Target outputs, indicative activities and inputs in relation to the project should be written in a complete, balanced and explicit manner.)
- Project calendar/workplan (timing should be provided on a monthly basis for each activity indicated in the project implementation framework).
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan, together with resources allocated for this purpose.
- Description of how communications and outreach activities have been incorporated in the project.
- Description of how the sustainability of project would be achieved subsequent to its completion.
- Summary project budget (distribution of the project budget in terms of main expenditure items should be indicated.)
- Project budget (distribution of the project budget in terms of different budget items should be indicated in a detailed and explicit manner.)

The Project Proposals to be prepared by CSOs shall be submitted before the indicated deadlines to the designated addresses of the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer. Project Proposals shall be reviewed by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer to ensure their compliance with the required format and content prior to their evaluation by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board. Proposals that are incomplete in certain aspects shall not be categorically rejected, but instead, the applicant CSOs shall be notified of the deficiencies and be requested to remedy them within a given deadline. Regardless of the extent to which the applicant fully addresses the deficiencies (or, if no revisions are made by the applicant in due time), the Project Proposals shall be submitted to the Board in their present state.



### 5.2.3 Selection of Projects

Project Proposals submitted by CSOs shall be subject to the review and selection by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board. Based upon its review, the National Screening Board shall decide to eliminate or endorse, as appropriate, the Project Proposals.

In relation to the Project Proposals selected/endorsed by the Board, the following alternative paths shall be followed: (1) The Board shall finalize its decision to award a grant to the selected project; or (2) the Board shall only provisionally select the Proposal, subject to its reformulation for further improving its content and remedying the identified deficiencies. In the latter case, the Country Officer shall notify the proponent CSOs of the Board's request and provide them with appropriate guidance and assistance for the reformulation of the Proposal within the specified deadline. Regardless of the extent to which the deficiencies are remedied, another request for reformulation shall not be asked, and the Board shall make its final decision on the basis of the reformulated Proposal as to select or eliminate the project, as appropriate.

Evaluation and selection of projects by the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board shall be done on the basis of the following criteria:

- Assessment of the eligibility of the proponent organizations.
- Assessment of the eligibility of the project.
- Assessment of the conformity of the project to the CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.
- Assessment of whether the Project Proposal clearly articulates its potential contribution to the interface of environment and security issues under the targeted priority theme.
- Assessment of the proposed project activities as to whether they would be adequate to attain its objective(s) and target outputs.
- Assessment of the project calendar/workplan as to whether a realistic time frame and deadlines are provided to undertake the proposed activities.
- Assessment of the project budget as to whether it is adequate to attain its objective(s) and target outputs, whether the budget items and cost estimates are realistic vis-à-vis the activities, and whether the proposed expenditures primarily relate to the project content rather than reflecting institutional overheads of proponent CSOs.
- The overall evaluation of the Project Proposal (general quality of the Project Proposal, its comprehensiveness in addressing environment and security challenges, the coherence and integrity of its content, etc.)

In addition to the criteria delineated above, the following points shall be taken into consideration as an integral aspect of the evaluation and selection process, with a view toward providing extra or "bonus" points, and having a positive impact on the "score cards" to the extent of their realization:

- *Participation*: The extent to which the project has been developed (as well as designed to be implemented and monitored) through a participatory process involving the partner CSOs, constituents of relevant CSO networks, and the representatives of target groups and stakeholders.
- *Partnership*: The extent to which the project is based upon a "partnership" arrangement (i.e. the collective strength and potential synergy of the proposed partnership).
- *Networking*: The extent to which the project provides a practical opportunity to build and strengthen a network of CSOs (and other stakeholders, as appropriate) around the targeted priority theme.

- *Cross-cutting themes*: The extent to which the project adequately addresses one of the cross-cutting themes identified in the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Strategy, and particularly the integration of youth and gender concerns under the targeted priority theme.
- *Innovative approach*: Whether and the extent to which the project introduces an innovative approach to the interface of environment and security issues.
- *Outstanding features*: Whether and the extent to which the outstanding features of the project display a potential for being a “best practice”, as well as a potential to augment the visibility and credibility of the CASE-Azerbaijan.
- *Explicit/direct linkages with OSCE-supported initiatives*: The extent to which the project includes specific activities/component aimed at establishing direct linkages between CASE and ENVSEC Initiatives, as well as specific activities/components aimed at contributing to the activities of the Aarhus Centres in Azerbaijan.
- *Sustainability*: The extent to which adequate means and mechanisms are introduced to ensure the sustainability of the project subsequent to the termination of the CASE grant.

### 5.3. Implementation of Projects

#### 5.3.1 Signature of the Memorandum of Agreement

Subsequent to the finalization of the selection process, the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall promptly notify in writing all proponent CSOs about the outcome.

Along with this notification, the CSOs whose projects have been selected shall be provided with the necessary information and guidance in relation to the next steps to be taken prior to actual implementation of their projects. The **Memorandum of Agreement** to be signed between the grant recipient CSOs and the OSCE Office in Baku shall also be forwarded.

The Memorandum of Agreement shall be signed by the designated representative of the lead/grantee CSO(s) and returned (within a given deadline) to the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer for signature by the Head of Mission. A copy of the Agreement shall be forwarded to OCEEA by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer subsequent to the completion of its signature by the parties.

#### 5.3.2 Disbursement of Grants

The CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall be responsible for supporting the disbursement of grants for selected projects. The schedule indicating the grant disbursements for each selected project shall be included in the respective Memorandum of Agreement.

Prior to the release of the grant instalments, the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall prepare a table indicating the total grant disbursements, and forward it to OCEEA for consent. The grant disbursements table shall include, *inter alia*, project names, project identification numbers, grant recipients, total amount and the breakdown of grants, and copies of Memoranda of Agreement encompassing the duration of projects/grants, disbursement schedules, etc.

On the basis of the endorsed grant disbursement tables, grants shall be disbursed in instalments based on performance reporting, as delineated in Section 5.4 below.

For practical reasons, alternative arrangements for grant disbursements shall be applied for longer/larger projects and shorter/smaller projects. In this context, projects encompassing 3-4 or more quarters of actual implementation (as well as having a budget near to the specified ceiling), the following disbursement schedule shall be applied:

- 30% upon signature of the Memorandum of Agreement, as advance payment.
- 30% upon the review and acceptance of the first interim quarterly technical and financial reports.
- 30% upon the review and acceptance of the second interim quarterly technical and financial reports.
- 10% upon the review and acceptance of the final technical and financial reports, as the final instalment under the project.

With regard to projects encompassing a relatively short duration (around or less than 6 months) of actual implementation (as well as having a considerably smaller budget), the following disbursement schedule shall be applied:

- 40% upon signature of the Memorandum of Agreement, as advance payment.
- 40% upon the review and acceptance of the first (and only) interim technical and financial reports.
- 20% upon the review and acceptance of the final technical and financial reports, as the final instalment under the project.

### **5.3.3 Project Execution**

Projects supported under CASE-Azerbaijan shall be executed by the Project Manager, whose name has been provided in the respective Project Proposal. The responsibilities of the Project Manager shall include the issuing of payment orders under the project. To this purpose, the Memoranda of Agreement shall include provisions on the means of changing the Project Manager by the grantee CSOs, if deemed necessary.

The transfer of the grant instalments shall be made to the specific project account to be opened by the grantee CSO. (In case of partnerships or an unregistered CSO platform, the account shall be opened by a leading partner or a CSO designated to act on behalf of the whole platform.) All payments under the project shall be made exclusively from this account. The Project Manager shall be the only person authorized to issue payments from this account. The project account shall not be used for purposes other than the project.

All expenditures to be made from the project account shall be based upon the payment order to be signed by the Project Manager. The payment order is expected to include the date of issue, accountancy number, budget item, description of expenditure and other relevant information, as well as the amount of payment in local currency and its equivalent in EUR, calculated on the basis of the exchange rate to be specified by OSCE. Each payment order is expected in turn to be supported by attachments, including the bank receipt, the invoice, bids received, tickets, contracts with experts and other supporting documents, as appropriate.

The implementation of the project shall commence upon the release of the first grant instalment, and the confirmation by the Project Manager that the pertinent advance has been received and recorded in the project account.

Interim project reporting shall constitute the basis for evaluating project progress, and releasing the next grant instalment. Pertinent evaluation to be made by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall be based on the required content of the reports (as delineated in Section 5.4 below), as well as on the M&E Framework (as delineated in Section 5.5 below), including the site visits.

Upon the completion of project activities, the final technical and financial reports shall be prepared and submitted by the Project Manager. (In case the full amount of the grant that has not been utilized for any reason during the approved implementation period of a project, the balance shall be returned to the main account from which the grant instalments have been forwarded by the OSCE Office in Baku.)

The project(s) shall be deemed to be completed subsequent to the review and acceptance of the final technical and financial reports by the OSCE Office in Baku, and the disbursement of the final grant instalment.

## **5.4. Project Reporting**

Grantee CSOs shall submit quarterly technical and financial reports (interim project reporting and subsequent grant disbursements, as well as the final project report followed by the final grant disbursement).

### **5.4.1 Technical Reports**

The Technical Reports shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- A brief statement on whether the project is progressing as initially planned.
- Description of activities conducted during the reporting period, including an account of the differences between planned and realized activities (on the basis of the project implementation framework delineated in the project proposal).
- Description of project outputs achieved during the respective period (on the basis of the project implementation framework delineated in the project proposal).
- An account of major problems encountered during project implementation, and what has been done to overcome them.
- Description of activities planned to be conducted during the next quarter (in the format of a Work Plan).
- Any request for a revision/change in the duration and/or activities of the project, and their justification.
- Supportive material at attachments to the report (as appropriate, copies of the publications, brochures, visual material, newspaper articles, etc.)
- Suggestions of the grantee CSOs in relation to further developing and refining CASE Implementations (if any).

### **5.4.2 Financial Reports**

The Financial Reports shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- A brief statement on whether the level of project expenditures conform to the project budget provided in the project proposal.
- Description/statement of expenditures made during the reporting period (in spreadsheet format), including an account/display of the differences between planned and realized expenditures.
- Project expenditures summary (in a cumulative format, including the amount indicated in the approved project budget, expenditures in previous quarters of implementation, expenditures in the current quarter, total expenditures made to date, and the remaining balance in the budget.)
- Supporting documentation including original invoices, bills and receipts pertinent to the transaction.

- Any request for a revision/change in the budget items (provided that a request for increasing the total amount of grant is not made).

## **5.5. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

In order to establish a comprehensive basis for assessment of CASE-Azerbaijan achievements and impacts, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) shall be conducted both at the project level, and country level, as delineated below.

### **5.5.1 Project-Level M&E**

The quarterly technical and financial reports to be submitted by grantee CSOs shall serve as the primary tool for project-level M&E, reinforced by other M&E activities to be conducted mainly by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer.

The following points shall be taken into consideration with regard to M&E of the grantee CSO's reporting and presentation of financial statements in connection with the project:

- Compliance of the project with CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.
- Overall quality of the report, including adequate description and documentation of project activities.
- Level of performance and timeliness of project activities, as well as the achievement of target outputs, on the basis of the project implementation framework and workplan.
- Level of expenditures and their consistency with the project budget and workplan.
- Reasons for diverging from the planned activities and budget, if any.
- Consistency of the activities planned to be conducted in the subsequent quarter (next steps) with the project implementation framework and workplan.
- Assessment of major problems encountered during project implementation, and what has been done by the grantee CSOs to overcome them.
- Assessment of any request of the grantee CSOs for a revision/change in the project.
- In relation to the Final Project Report in particular, assessment of the overall success of the project, and identification of best practices and lessons learned.

Project-level M&E shall also include the following:

- Site visits to the projects at least once in the project life-time and report on their findings, to be conducted by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer and/or members of the CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board.
- Assessment of the extent to which women and youth (and their organizations) are consulted for their opinions and perspectives during the course of each project.
- Identification of innovative approaches introduced in the interface of environment and security issues in connection with the projects supported under CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Assessment of the extent to which the projects supported under CASE-Azerbaijan display notable differences from projects supported under other similar initiatives.
- Press/media coverage and visibility of the projects supported under CASE-Azerbaijan.

### 5.5.2 Country-Level M&E

The technical and financial reports to be prepared by the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer on a 6-monthly basis in relation to the implementation of CASE-Azerbaijan shall serve as the primary tool for country-level M&E. These reports shall include, *inter alia*, information on the following:

- Information on country-level activities conducted within the framework of CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Information on the CASE-Azerbaijan projects under implementation (including the level of progress, achievements, problems and bottlenecks and solutions to overcome the problems).
- Assessment of the overall technical content and quality of the CASE-Azerbaijan projects portfolio and the identification of significant lessons learned, in the light of periodic project reporting as well as pertinent site visits.
- An overview of the general interest of target CSOs in the CASE-Azerbaijan Initiative.
- Progress on the involvement of women and youth and gender mainstreaming in CASE-Azerbaijan activities.
- The extent to which CASE-Azerbaijan has responded to the specific needs of CSOs in the country.
- The quantifiable impact of CASE-Azerbaijan on the establishment of CSO networks in the country.
- Number of stakeholders and the quality of their involvement in national-level capacity building activities in Azerbaijan.
- The extent to which capacity building programmes have contributed to the improvement in the development and management of projects on priority areas.
- Direct linkages of CASE with the ENVSEC Initiative in Azerbaijan.
- Direct linkages of CASE with the Aarhus Centres in Azerbaijan.
- The status of implementation of the CASE Communications Strategy adopted for Azerbaijan.
- Addressing of relevant UNECE Environmental Conventions under CASE-Azerbaijan.
- Progress achieved in resource mobilization in relation to CASE-Azerbaijan.
- A breakdown of country level expenditures (including grant disbursements) during the reporting period and commitments for the next reporting period (financial report).

## **6. CASE-AZERBAIJAN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

### **6.1. Background to CASE Communications Strategy**

The CASE Guidelines envisages the development of a specific Communications Strategy for the CASE Initiative, with a view towards establishing and maintaining clear and regular channels of communication with the broad spectrum of OSCE partners at all levels, including CSOs in pilot countries as well as other stakeholders, toward attaining the goals and target outputs of the CASE Initiative.

Pursuant to the draft framework provided in the CASE Guidelines, the CASE Communications Strategy should be developed in a manner to attain the following key objectives:

- Disseminating and sharing a common understanding of the goals of OSCE in general and the CASE Initiative in particular.
- Informing all target audiences, including the OSCE network and CSOs in pilot countries as well as external organizations, in relation to the goals and target outputs of CASE.
- Promoting collaboration with strategic partners, and developing and strengthening regional and country level networks.
- Augmenting the visibility and credibility of the CASE Initiative, particularly on the side of the broad spectrum of CSOs in pilot countries.
- Promoting the emphasis of CASE on the interface of environment and security issues, and enhancing community-level understanding of respective linkages.
- Promoting the special and exclusive importance given by the CASE Initiative on CSOs and their networks.
- Enhancing the sharing of experiences, learning from each other and networking among CSOs in pilot countries, particularly in relation to the interface of environment and security issues.
- Promoting the effective sharing of the lessons learned from the CASE Initiative, not only within each pilot country but also in other countries in the OSCE region.
- Sensitizing decision-makers to policy measures and legislative/operational improvements required for the integrated approach to environment and security issues.
- Raising the media's level of interest and responsiveness to the CASE Initiative in order to increase and sustain positive media coverage.
- Identifying the outstanding challenges and opportunities in relation to CASE.
- Meeting the time frame and deadlines identified to attain the target outputs of CASE.
- Meeting resource mobilization targets of CASE, both in the initial stage of implementation, as well as in subsequent phases.

## **6.2. Content of CASE Communications Strategy**

Pursuant to the draft framework provided in the CASE Guidelines, the CASE Communications Strategy should have the following content:

- Purpose of the CASE Communications Strategy.
- Target Groups: For the purposes of CASE, the target groups (or “audiences”) of the Communications Strategy should encompass the full spectrum of institutions, networks and other stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels with whom the pertinent information is intended to be shared and a synergy is sought to be developed.
- Key communication principles underlying the CASE Communications Strategy.
- Challenges and bottlenecks in relation to the CASE Initiative that needs to be addressed.
- Opportunities and strengths upon which the CASE Initiative can confidently build its future communications activities.
- Identification of the specific means/tools of the CASE Communication Strategy that are appropriate for the target audience of the CASE Initiative.
- Messages: The CASE Communications Strategy should underline and amplify the main messages that are intended to be given by the CASE Initiative.
- Outreach and Visibility: CASE should expand its outreach and enhance its visibility by effectively utilizing specific communications tools and means in an intertwined manner.
- The implementation arrangements in relation to the CASE Communications Strategy.
- M&E of the Communications Strategy: As an integral aspect of the CASE Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process, special emphasis should be placed on overseeing and M&E of the implementation of the CASE Communications Strategy.
- Funding of the Communications Strategy: An appropriate portion of the CASE budget should be allocated to support the realization of the Communications Strategy.
- Preparation of CASE Communications Strategy Action Plan for the implementation of the CASE Communications Strategy.

## **6.3. Development & Implementation of the Communications Strategy**

The arrangements in relation to the development and implementation of CASE Communications Strategy, and in this context, CASE-Azerbaijan Communications Strategy, shall be as follows:

- OSCE/OCEEA, charged with the responsibility for the overall supervision of the CASE Initiative, shall be responsible for ensuring, coordinating and overseeing the development and subsequently the implementation of the CASE Communications Strategy.
- As part of this responsibility, OSCE/OCEEA shall be responsible for communicating the CASE Communications Strategy to CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer, and shall provide guidance in the appropriate incorporation of this Strategy within the CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.
- The CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall ensure the appropriate incorporation of the CASE Communications Strategy within CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy. In this context, the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall coordinate the preparation of CASE-Azerbaijan Communications Strategy to be subsequently incorporated into the CASE-Azerbaijan National Strategy.



- Subsequent to the preparation and incorporation the CASE-Azerbaijan Communications Strategy, the CASE-Azerbaijan Country Officer shall ensure the internalization of this Strategy in regular reports on implementation and monitoring, and to effectively utilize it in building partnerships, mobilizing additional resources and promoting CASE activities in Azerbaijan.
- The CASE-Azerbaijan National Screening Board, established in Azerbaijan for policy guidance, project screening and programme promotion, is expected to take the Communications Strategy into consideration in fulfilling its envisaged functions.
- OSCE Office in Baku is also expected to take the Communications Strategy into consideration as an integral part of its significant role in providing administrative and programmatic support to CASE-Azerbaijan.