

SuRe – the Standard for Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

1 Overview

SuRe - the Standard for Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure is developed by the Global Infrastructure Basel (GIB) Foundation and its stakeholders as a voluntary standard for the certification of sustainable and resilient infrastructure projects. Its aim is twofold: on the one hand, it guides project owners to develop infrastructure projects that perform high in sustainability and resilience aspects – taking into account social, environmental and governance criteria and best practices. On the other hand, it serves as a tool to communicate the sustainability and resilience benefits to potential investors, thus channelling more financial flows into infrastructure development and boosting sustainable socioeconomic development globally.

The standard builds on the GIB Grading for Sustainable Infrastructure, which has been used by GIB since 2012 as a self-assessment tool for over 150 infrastructure projects. In an effort to create an updated instrument providing a system of independent verification and certification, the SuRe Standard goes one step and follows the guidelines of ISEAL - the umbrella organisation of private sustainability standards.

GIB can build on financial and technical support from a diverse network of partners. Furthermore, the close collaboration with ISEAL helps implementing an effective standard system, creating tangible impacts and ensuring compliance with international best practice. The standard is developed according to the standard-setting procedures available on the GIB website, which also specify how decisions are taken and include details on stakeholder engagement.

A rigorous stakeholder dialogue forms the foundation of the standard, and outlines the strategic positioning and the definition of the sustainability criteria at the heart of the standard. This engagement involves technical and sustainability experts from academia and industry, public sector representatives, financiers, project developers, civil society organisations representing social and/or environmental concerns, as well as regional actors (incl. representatives from China, India, South Africa, Morocco, Colombia).

2 Objectives

With the upcoming adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the current negotiations in the context of the climate convention and the on-going definition on poverty-relevant access to finance in the context of Financing for Development, the crucial role of infrastructure for achieving sustainable development and community resilience has never been clearer. To set course on this sus-



tainable development path, which includes the provision of key public services (including water and sanitation, energy, education and transportation services), massive infrastructure investments are needed globally, and especially in emerging countries. A stronger involvement of private sector finance is widely regarded as the only way to mobilise the needed funds.

While tackling the quantity challenge of infrastructure provision, we also have to approach infrastructure provision from a qualitative point of view – asking what kind of infrastructure we will need in the future: Infrastructure which helps e.g. to achieve the global goal of climate change mitigation, provide inclusive services for various stakeholder groups and help support an ever-growing global population.

This is where the SuRe Standard offers an ideal solution. By providing a tool for assuring that an infrastructure is designed, built and operated in a sustainable and resilient way, the standard offers an assessment and decision support tool for project developers and contractors. Further, it provides a method for investors to choose sound investment opportunities in infrastructure, where risks linked to sustainability and resilience are minimised.

3 Target Groups

The SuRe Standard creates a common understanding between public authorities, project developers, financiers and civil society on what determines a sustainable and resilient infrastructure. It also facilitates the identification of sustainable projects as responsible investment opportunities. As such, it mainly addresses three target groups:

- 1) For the **public sector**, the standard helps to set procurement criteria, project requirements and selection criteria for the preparation of guidelines for the public procurement process and the initial design requirements of sustainable and resilient infrastructure projects. It also provides a tool for comparing and choosing from various project options.
- 2) For **project originators, developers and consultants**, it provides a decision support tool to create more sustainable and resilient projects. Next to increasing infrastructure sustainability and resilience, the standard/label will ease the communication of sustainability benefits to potential investors.
- 3) For **infrastructure investors and financiers**, the standard will provide a tool for identifying sustainable infrastructure investment opportunities. The early consideration of economic/governance, social and environmental challenges thus serves as an instrument for risk mitigation and cost reduction, by anticipating and avoiding potential negative impacts of infrastructure development.

Infrastructure sectors to which the standard can be applied include transportation, utilities (water, sewage, electricity), energy production and social infrastructure (such as health and education infra-



structure), urban as well as rural infra development projects. Furthermore, the standard will be primarily focused on projects in emerging economies.

4 Creating Impact

The SuRe standard has the power to realise the potential of infrastructure as a driver for sustainable development:

- 1) In the subject area of **good governance**, the standard aims at enhancing project and sustainability management processes, including accountability and anti-corruption policies as well as stakeholder engagement.
- 2) In the subject area of **societal value**, the standard not only aims to make sure an infrastructure project meets public needs, is inclusive and socially justified, but also assesses the project's respect for labour rights according to ILO Core Labour Standards and its contribution to socioeconomic development. Furthermore, the standard looks at impacts on communities, indigenous peoples and cultural heritage.
- 3) As regards **environmental aspects**, the standard aims to mitigate negative environmental impacts of infrastructure development following the mitigation hierarchy of avoidance, minimisation, restoration and offset. It covers aspects such as environmental, ecosystem and biodiversity protection, resource efficiency, climate protection and resilience, as well as land use criteria.
- 4) The combination of governance, social and environmental aspects in the scheme shall increase the potential of an assessed project to contribute to a community's **resilience** to shocks and sustainability risks, and set it on a path towards long-term sustainable development. Issues like redundancy, modularity and robustness are considered under this aspect.

The material criteria assessing a project's performance in these dimensions of sustainability are chosen based on existing guidelines, ratings and safeguards, such as those provided by MDBs, the ILO, GRI and others. This enhances the coherence and complementarity of SuRe requirements.

5 SuRe Principles

The SuRe Standard for Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure is developed according to the following principles:

- 1) Inclusive: The standard aims to unite the stakeholders involved in infrastructure development around a common understanding of sustainability by involving them throughout the process and including their requirements and expectations. The standard system will set

up a performance system of (1) Critical issues reflected in minimum requirements, (2) International good practice and (3) Aspirational practice (reflected in the achievement levels “certified”, “silver” and “gold”).

- 2) Bridge to finance sector: The aim of the SuRe Standard is to provide a bridge between internal sustainability management and access to external sources of finance, as for example provided by multilateral development banks (MDBs) and private investors. Its criteria are compatible with the environmental and social safeguards of such MDBs.
- 3) Efficient and accessible: SuRe will provide an easy-to-use assessment tool including a set of clear sustainability criteria and corresponding indicators. This can also be applied as a first step leading to more specific assessments with related tools and schemes (such as Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs)).
- 4) Transparent: Many assessment systems are developed and applied by the “mother” organisation (such as an industry association) and not as an independently verified voluntary standard. The chosen scheme for the SuRe Standard with third-party verification will profit from greater legitimacy and transparency, also through the buy-in from developing country partners. Thus, it follows the principle of open dialogue and interaction with its stakeholders.
- 5) International: An internationally applicable tool will be necessary in a globalised economic and investment context to assure a common ground and ease communication and collaboration. The SuRe standard will work as a complementary tool to individual national safeguards, provide additional value and make projects internationally comparable.
- 6) Holistic: Instead of focusing only on “green” infrastructure, the SuRe standard will be holistic in its approach to sustainability, integrating social, governance, environmental and economic factors.
- 7) Comparability: The Standard will serve as a basis for comparison among different projects. Thus, a standardised assessment will set the preconditions for a common understanding of sustainability and will also meet the needs of institutional investors.

6 Scheme Details

The standard’s strength lies in its multi-stakeholder buy-in, its independent verification scheme and in its universal applicability spanning various infrastructure sectors. This creates a common understanding of sustainability and resilience in the infrastructure sector and smoothens the transition to the use of existing sectoral or technical standards.

The certification of SuRe is established on the project level (in contrast to standards applied to firms). SuRe is applicable to all infrastructure projects and investment classes (such as loans, bonds, equity) and is thus not limited to bonds or debt.

While being project-oriented, the standard also furthers an integrated approach to sustainable infrastructure development strategies, assessing how well the project is integrated into a wider system of sustainable and resilient infrastructure, thus creating synergies and creating impacts on a wider scale. Such an integrated and holistic approach to infrastructure helps to maximise infrastructure assets' potential for driving sustainable development.

SuRe provides an intuitive and easy to apply scheme without compromising the comprehensiveness of the sustainability assessment. This will ensure an efficient and accessible certification process, which can also be used by projects planning to go through a heavier and more time-consuming technical assessment (e.g. in the context of a due diligence process) at a later stage.

Depending on the stage of the life cycle of an infrastructure project, the user can choose between three certification modules:

1. PP DESIGN	2. AB AS BUILT	3. OP OPERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment performed at the end of the planning and design phase - In parallel to ESIA (standardised approach) and due diligence processes - Awarded on the basis of design documentation and construction requirements - Temporary: Must be replaced by As Built certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment performed at the end of the construction phase - Awarded on the basis of project plans and measured sustainability performance - Replaces the "Design" award, but can also be performed if no previous assessment has been done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment after at least 1.5 years of operation of the infrastructure - Awarded on the basis of the measured sustainability performance of the infrastructure - Replaces the "Design" or "As Built" award, but can also be applied if no previous assessment has been done - Has to be recertified after 4 years so as not to lose label

Even though a SuRe assessment will be possible at every project stage, the SuRe standard focuses especially on the early stage, where sustainability and resilience benefits can be maximised. It is therefore encouraged to enter the SuRe process as early as possible in the project development cycle. Thanks to the application of life cycle thinking at an early stage of the project design the use of SuRe methodology contributes to the optimal setup of the project.

Independent of the project stage, it is possible to use SuRe as a self-assessment tool. Thus, a project originator can assess and maximise the project's sustainability without going through certification, in order to widen the impact of the scheme and create influence even where the entry barrier for certification is too high. For that purpose, a self-assessment tool and an accompanying manual will be provided.

Certification and performance levels:

"CERTIFIED"	"SILVER"	"GOLD"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum requirement/threshold to get certified (> 60% of overall points plus certain minimum requirement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International good practice (> 75% of points) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best in class (> 90% of points)



at the level of each theme) - Constitutes international benchmark in the sector		
--	--	--

A successful SuRe certification communicates the qualities of the infrastructure asset to stakeholders and potential investors, and in particular the benefits the project creates for sustainable socio-economic development and resilience in relation to international best practice.

It is important to note that the standard does not replace legal requirements or applicable law, nor will it safeguard requirements of a financial institution investing in a given project.

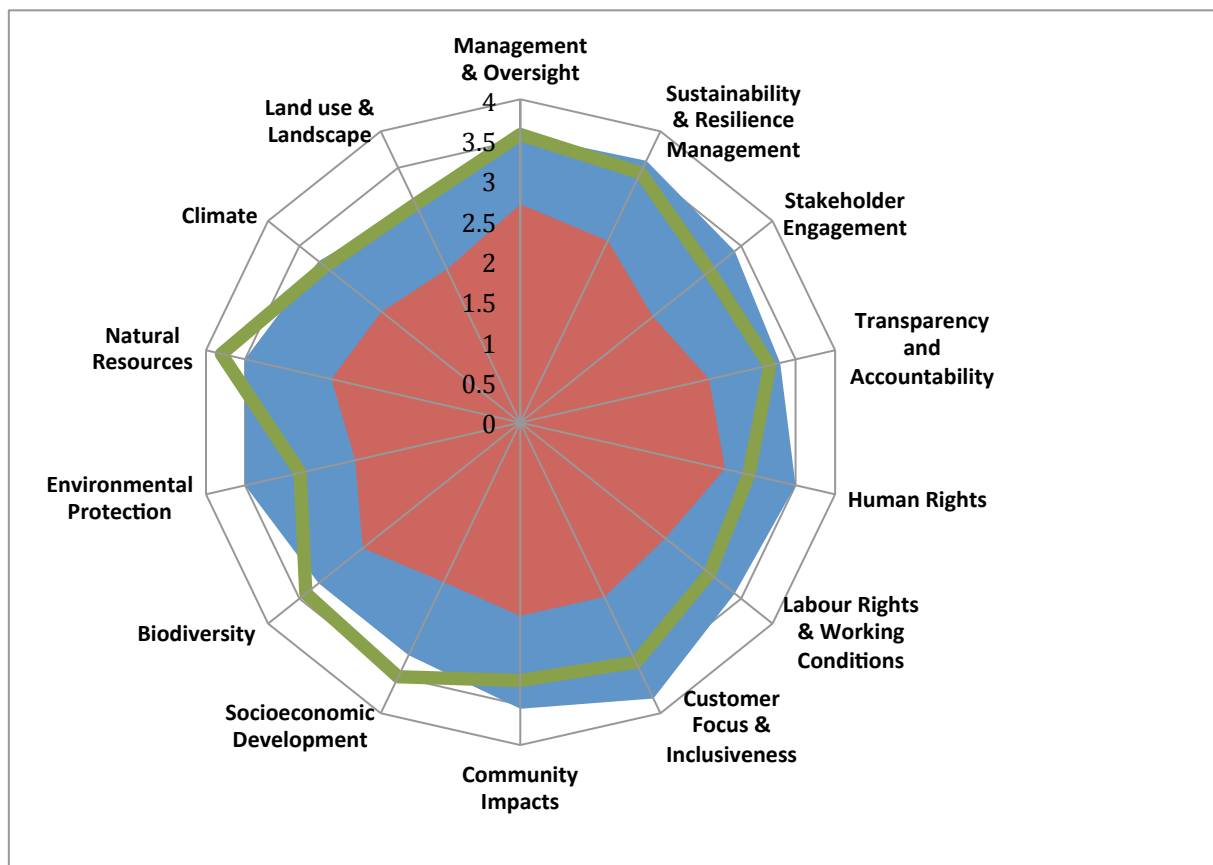
The SuRe certification can be reviewed by the Secretariat if there is cause for concern about the legal compliance of the project, and the certification could be withdrawn in the case of non-compliance.

7 Process and Work Programme

Activity	Time Frame
PHASE 1: PROJECT DEFINITION (completed)	
PHASE 2: STANDARD DEVELOPMENT	
Expert Group and Standard Committee meetings	March – August 2015
First regional input	May 2015
First draft	June – August 2015
Public consultation phase 1	1 September – 31 October 2015
Regional field testing	September – October 2015
Integration of input from consultation phase 1 and regional testing	October – November 2015
Public launch: Publication of version 1 of SuRe at COP 21	Dec 2015
PHASE 3: PILOTING, FINETUNING, DEPLOYMENT	
Public consultation phase 2	March – April 2016
Piloting	As of March 2016
Accreditation of certifiers	As of July 2016

8 Themes

Preliminary Note: Structure of the SuRe Standard



8.1 Governance

8.1.1 Management and Oversight

The issues and criteria under this theme assess the quality of the project management, with the goal of assuring effective management and operation procedures and efficient processes. Recognizing



that only a well-managed infrastructure project can maximize sustainability and resilience benefits, the criteria under this theme examine such issues as skills and know-how, oversight procedures, conflict resolution mechanisms and the level of collaboration.

8.1.2 Sustainability and Resilience Management

The criteria under this theme examine how well sustainability and resilience goals are hard-wired into project management, recognizing the value of dedicated and explicit sustainability management. Next to assessing the existence of a sustainability management system and the incorporation of principles such as whole-of-life and innovation, the issues also look at sustainable procurement practices and the project's contribution to sustainable lifestyles.

8.1.3 Stakeholder Engagement

This theme is giving credit to projects with an active and dedicated stakeholder engagement process, encouraging the participation of various stakeholder groups, including affected parties and vulnerable communities. It thus encourages the proactive pursuit of elements such as informed consultation and coordination of stakeholders, the establishment of accessible grievance mechanisms and the provision of capacity building for stakeholders.

8.1.4 Transparency and Accountability

This theme recognizes the risk of corruption in infrastructure development, and assesses the measures taken by the project owner / project team to prevent corruption and bribery. Issues such as financial transparency and transparent procurement practices are included under this theme, as well as the project owner's disclosure policies.

8.2 Society

8.2.1 Human Rights

This theme recognizes the project owner's responsibility to respect and protect human rights of people and communities directly or indirectly affected by the project. The criteria under this theme ask e.g. for a clear commitment to human rights and an implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by the project owner, and sets out a zero tolerance for human rights violation charges.

8.2.2 Labour Rights and Working Conditions

The criteria under this theme assure that infrastructure development and provision respects core labour rights and provides reasonable and safe working conditions. They include such issues as the protection of workers along the value chain, the prohibition of forced labour and exploitative child labour, non-discrimination criteria and the provision of fair wages.

8.2.3 Customer Focus and Inclusiveness

The issues under this theme measure the extent to which the project is responding to real needs, is oriented towards the customers in their variety, and is inclusive to users from different population groups, including the vulnerable or poor. Next to criteria examining the level of inclusiveness, physical and economical accessibility and poverty responsiveness, the theme also assesses the customer-focus of the project, including e.g. integration of customer feedback.

8.2.4 Community Impacts

This theme looks at the social impacts of an infrastructure project, and the level to which the project follows a dedicated mitigation strategy according to the mitigation hierarchy to avoid negative impacts. Issues such as the avoidance of involuntary resettlements, the pursuit of development benefits for indigenous peoples and the preservation of cultural heritage are included under this theme.

8.2.5 Socioeconomic Development

Finally and crucially, an infrastructure is sustainable and contributes to community resilience when it has a positive contribution for the socioeconomic development of the region and community it is located in. This is assessed under this theme by the examination of issues like the economic and social justification of the project, its employment creation, its stimulation for businesses and industry. Further, the enhancement of social integration by the project as well as its contribution to local skills and capabilities find their place under this theme.

8.3 Environment

8.3.1 Biodiversity

This theme urges project owners to assess the infrastructure's impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, mitigate negative effects and enhance ecosystem health wherever possible. Issues such as the protection of endangered species, the introduction of invasive species or the conservation of critical habitats and ecosystems.

8.3.2 Environmental Protection

This theme promotes the projects dedication to environmental protection, including such issues as the management of waste and waste water, the avoidance of pollution to air, water and soil, but also the often neglected issues of pollution by noise light and vibration.

8.3.3 Natural Resources

The criteria under this theme assess the project's natural resource use, giving credit to resource efficient designs and efforts for life-cycle consideration of material uses. Next to the protection of natural resources and water management, issues such as the handling of invasive species and locally sourced materials find their place in this theme.



8.3.4 Climate

Given the important contribution smart infrastructure design and management can make to climate change mitigation and adaptation, a whole theme is dedicated to climate-related issues. The included criteria assess emissions reductions, the use of energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources, the project team's assessment of climate risks faced by the project and their efforts to achieve long-term resilience and adaptability as well as preparedness for short-term hazards.

8.3.5 Land use and Landscape

Given the risk of sprawl and the potentially large impact certain infrastructures can have on the soil and land they occupy, this theme aims on the one hand at minimizing land-use (especially by preserving greenfields) and on the other hand at mitigating negative impacts such as erosion and occupation of cultivable soils. It also looks at the visual integration of the project into the landscape.

9 How to Contribute

A public consultation on a draft of the standard will open by September 2015, information on which will be available on GIB's website. Especially during the upcoming public consultation phase (1 September – 31 October 2015), GIB welcomes comments on the available documentation at any time, and will include them in the next review process. Please submit comments by email or mail to the address below:

standard@gib-foundation.org

or:

Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation
Elisabethenstrasse 22
4051 Basel
Switzerland