

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11179
Project title	Restoration and sustainable forest management of the Algerian Aleppo pine forest, ecosystem
Date of screen	May 30, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP welcomes Algeria's project "Restoration and sustainable forest management of the Algerian Aleppo pine forest, ecosystem". To achieve long-lasting outcomes, STAP encourages the project developers to apply a resilience assessment during the design and implementation of the project so that interventions remain robust to uncertainty. Between climate change trends that will exacerbate drivers and pressures of degradation of the forest (e.g. drought, pest diseases) and economic fluctuations, much uncertainty and unwanted changes will impact forest restoration and the livelihoods of communities dependent on the Aleppo pine forests.

STAP is pleased that the project will test gender-focused payment for ecosystem (PES) approaches to incentivize community forest restoration, a strategy that offers significant opportunities for learning. The project's ambition to innovate and scale is commendable, and attention to assumptions, testing, and monitoring will be crucial to its success.

STAP notes the project's intention to deliver multiple benefits, including generating biodiversity, land degradation neutrality, and climate benefits. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the project components be designed following the principles (and guidelines) of the scientific conceptual framework for LDN. These principles align with the outcomes this project aspires to deliver (with emphasis on the nexus between climate change adaptation, safeguarding biodiversity, and addressing land degradation) and are embedded in the logical framework for effective project implementation that considers integrated land use planning, strong monitoring, and adaptive learning. STAP also encourages project developers to source relevant work on climate vulnerability and resilience on the Aleppo Pine Forest to strengthen the project's theory of change.

Below, STAP provides details of its screening to help improve the project design.

Note to STAP screeners: a summary of STAP's view of the project (not of the project itself), covering both strengths and weaknesses.

STAP's assessment*

- Concur - STAP acknowledges that the concept has scientific and technical merit
- Minor - STAP has identified some scientific and technical points to be addressed in project design
- Major - STAP has identified significant concerns to be addressed in project design

Please contact the STAP Secretariat if you would like to discuss.

2. Project rationale, and project description – are they sound?

See annex on STAP's screening guidelines.

The project rationale clearly describes the problem facing the Algerian Aleppo pine forests. The drivers of forest loss and degradation are attributed to unsustainable practices, population pressure on natural resources, pest diseases, and climate change. Overall, STAP appreciates the problem descriptions for each of the target sites and the identification of barriers. To further understand the context influencing the problem, and to design

context-specific solutions that could be 'owned' by the communities that will be part of the participatory approach, it would be valuable to describe the social and economic traits of the communities in each site.

On social traits, STAP welcomes a strong focus on gender throughout the components. Embedding gender explicitly in the theory of change could further strengthen the project logic. Additionally, the project would benefit from a description of simple future narratives. Thinking through simple future narratives can assist with ensuring that project interventions are designed to address uncertainty and plausible changes in the future, including climate risks and macroeconomic risks, which are referred to in the risk table.

As for the project description, STAP appreciates the preliminary theory of change. The theory of change needs to provide a more robust consideration of component 4 (monitoring) and component 3 (Knowledge management and learning). STAP also expects the theory of change to be revised and strengthened to reflect how key trends (e.g., macroeconomic and climate change, pest diseases exacerbated by a changing climate) might unfold in the future. Engaging stakeholders in this process will be necessary, as their diverse and collective perspectives will be an asset in imagining uncertainty or unwanted changes in the future. While the assumptions identified are commendable, STAP is concerned about the reliability of those assumptions to hold given the risk and barriers identified in the PIF. In revising the theory of change, STAP recommends thinking about the essential actions that will need to be in place for the assumptions to hold true and enable the successful implementation of suggested actions. The principles of LDN, the Scientific Conceptual framework, and recent UNCCD SPI publications ([Verburg et al., 2021](#)) emphasise the importance of embedding interventions within existing national or subnational integrated land use planning processes and the use of methodologies that can help guide that thinking process.

STAP welcomes innovative financing mechanisms, including payment for ecosystem services, that aim to strengthen forest restoration and rehabilitation. However, STAP cautions that before designing these mechanisms, preparatory activities focus on delivering assessments to understand the enabling environment (socio-ecological, cultural, and political, including governance) required for those financing mechanisms to be appropriate and successful. Likewise, completing baselines on the current state of the ecosystem and forest degradation and a resilience assessment are essential to set the stage, assess the condition and the potential of proposed actions and set metrics and indicators that will enable the evaluation and monitor the proposed interventions. As the PIF describes, testing new financial approaches is an important element of the project (component 2). Therefore, it is necessary for the project logic to explicitly reflect learning from testing novel approaches and tracking critical assumptions. Learning from these two elements could be more clearly described in the theory of change figure and in its description.

STAP offers advice below on these issues.

Note: provide a general appraisal, asking whether relevant screening guideline questions have been addressed adequately – not all the questions will be relevant to all proposals; no need to comment on every question, only those needing more attention, noting any done very well, but ensure that all are considered. Comments should be helpful, evaluative, and qualitative, rather than yes/no.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

STAP recommends the following points to be addressed during the project design:

1. STAP is pleased to see that gender is mainstreamed throughout the components. To ensure that gender is a central part of the project logic, STAP recommends embedding gender in a revised theory of change. For example, it would be helpful to describe the socioecological systems of each target site as part of the theory of change. Gender and other social aspects (e.g. cultural values, institutional arrangements) will be relevant to identify as they impact how the problems and solutions affecting

forest restoration are defined. STAP recommends drawing from its [theory of change](#) primer for further guidance.

2. STAP welcomes the description of the climate change trends, and how they have affected forests in Algeria. Population and socioeconomic needs were also identified as causes driving degradation and deforestation of the Aleppo Pine forest, which is valuable. As the project is designed, consider how these main drivers of change would interact in the future. This analysis will help shape a simple future narrative, which is necessary to make the project resilient to different plausible futures and uncertainties. STAP recommends, therefore, describing a future narrative as part of the project rationale – and identifying responses to make the outcomes resilient to plausible futures. This includes unwanted change due to a changing climate that increases vulnerability of the targeted ecosystem and populations, which are certain to occur and lead to STAP’s guidance on [future narratives](#) is recommended as a resource, as well as the [World Bank’s resilience methodology](#).
3. When describing the simple future narratives, the climate risks and macroeconomic risks that are currently part of the risk table should be built in. These are two drivers that should be addressed by applying resilience through the project – that is, climate change is certain to affect the Aleppo pine forest given climate change trends. The risk table should mainly address risk associated with project implementation.
4. As mentioned above, STAP recommends working further on the theory of change diagram. Give more attention to component 4 and reconsider the assumptions so they are part of the causal chain. That is, assumptions that are critical to achieving the causal chain leading to the outcomes should be considered. STAP’s [theory of change](#) primer provides further information about building in assumptions into a project’s causal chains.
5. If this project is to deliver on its aspirations, the knowledge management component needs improvement. STAP strongly suggests engaging local universities and research centres in the design and implementation of this component and applying the principles of triple-loop learning (see the LDN Scientific Conceptual framework for an example of application). Knowledge management and learning are more than the outputs highlighted in 3.1.1.
6. For component 1, carry out a policy analysis that looks at policies influencing sustainable forest management – their coherence and incoherence. This analysis can help identify leakage risks from deforestation or land use, which will undermine the effectiveness of this component. [STAP’s policy coherence advisory document](#) includes steps to follow for a policy cycle that may be helpful to the project – even though the policy cycle is aimed at the national level.
7. STAP notes that component 2 largely focuses on forest restoration, including support for community-based reforestation activities, such as tree nurseries. Given the climate change trends characterizing Algeria and Northern Africa will likely affect Aleppo pine forests, STAP recommends developing this component by applying resilience methods, such as the [World Bank’s resilience methodology](#). As recommended above, future planning (i.e., simple future narratives) and resilience can assist in defining interventions that are robust to unwanted change. Consideration of the interactions between climate change and market/economic fluctuations will also be important as this component is expected to improve socioeconomic livelihoods.
8. Research on afforestation (or improved tree cover) of drylands suggests that [albedo changes](#) can decrease climate benefits in drylands. The project should consider this emerging evidence in its design and consider ways to draw from this science and contribute to it. At the very least, the project should define afforestation leading to GEBs as an assumption. The project developers could consider how interventions could help complement evidence from the study with downscaled climate data, and land cover data.

9. STAP supports the project's aim to test a gender-focused PES approach to incentivize communities to adopt forest restoration practices. STAP encourages the building of the key assumptions associated with changing mindsets and norms of communities so they attain new practices on forest rehabilitation and restoration that remain when payments stop. Monitoring this and other key assumptions associated with testing a PES approach will also be necessary to generate learning that is required for wider adoption and scaling.
10. STAP recommends that this project leverage learning, as appropriate, from FAO's project submitted to the GEF work program in February 2024, titled "Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security". This project appears absent from the list of baseline initiatives.
11. STAP notes that the whole PIF has been developed without a scientific peer-reviewed citation, and it recommends that the PPG devote time to a thorough desktop review of the latest knowledge reported in the literature. Some examples are presented below and could inform the design of enduring interventions to achieve the set objective of promoting inclusive conservation, restoration and sustainable management of the Alegerna Aleppo pine forest ecosystem in tandem with delivering the Global Environmental Benefits outlined in this PIF.
 - a. Moumeni L, Gastebois A, Gillmann L, Papon N, Benia F, Bouchara J-P, Bounechada M. 2021. Investigating the prevalence of Bark beetles of *Pinus halepensis* in the North East semi-arid region of Algeria. *Biodiversitas* 22: 2755-2762.
 - b. Goubi, Mostefa, Abdallah Bentouati, Dalila Kherchouche, and Tahar Sghaier. "Volume tables for individual specimens of Aleppo pine, *Pinus halepensis* Mill., in Algeria's Aurès mountains." *Bois et Forêts des Tropiques* 339 (2019): 45-59.
 - c. Gazol, Antonio, Jonàs Oliva, Cristina Valeriano, Michele Colangelo, and Jesús Julio Camarero. "Mixed pine forests in a hotter and drier world: the great resilience to drought of aleppo pine benefits it over other coexisting pine species." *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change* 5 (2022): 899425.
 - d. Morcillo, L., Muñoz-Rengifo, J. C., Torres-Ruiz, J. M., Delzon, S., Moutahir, H., & Vilagrosa, A. (2022). Post-drought conditions and hydraulic dysfunction determine tree resilience and mortality across Mediterranean Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) populations after an extreme drought event. *Tree Physiology*, 42(7), 1364-1376.
 - e. P.H. Verburg, G. Metternicht, E. Aynekulu, X. Deng, S. Herrmann, K. Schulze, F. Akinyemi, N. Barger, V. Boerger, F. Dosdogru, H. Gichenje, M. Kapović-Solomun, Z. Karim, R. Lal, A. Luise, B.S. Masuku, E. Nairesiae, N. Oettlé, A. Pilon, O. Raja, N.H. Ravindranath, R. Ristić and G. von Maltitz. 2022. The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry Points and Support Tools. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn, Germany. <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-09/UNCCD%20Integrated%20Land%20Use%20Planning-rev.pdf>

Note: number key points clearly and provide useful information or suggestions, including key literature where relevant. Completed screens should be no more than two or three pages in length.

*categories under review, subject to future revision

Project rationale

1. How well does the proposal explain the problem and issues to be addressed in the context of the **system** within which the problem sits and its drivers (e.g. population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, and technological changes), including how the various components of the system interact?
2. Does the project indicate how **uncertain futures** could unfold (e.g. using simple **narratives**), based on an understanding of the trends and interactions between the key elements of the system and its drivers?
3. Does the project describe the **baseline** problem and how it may evolve in the future in the absence of the project; and then identify the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve, how these outcomes will change the baseline, and what the key **barriers** and **enablers** are to achieving those outcomes?
4. Are the project's **objectives** well formulated and justified in relation to this system context? Is there a convincing explanation as to **why this particular project** has been selected in preference to other options, in the light of how the future may unfold?
5. How well does the **theory of change** provide an "explicit account of how and why the proposed interventions would achieve their intended outcomes and goal, based on outlining a set of key causal pathways arising from the activities and outputs of the interventions and the assumptions underlying these causal connections".
 - Does the project logic show how the project would ensure that expected outcomes are **enduring** and resilient to possible future changes identified in question 2 above, and to the effects of any conflicting policies (see question 9 below).
 - Is the theory of change grounded on a solid scientific foundation, and is it aligned with current scientific knowledge?
 - Does it explicitly consider how any necessary **institutional and behavioral** changes are to be achieved?
 - Does the theory of change diagram convincingly show the overall project logic, including causal pathways and outcomes?
6. Are the project **components** (interventions and activities) identified in the theory of change each described in sufficient detail to discern the main thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they address the problem, their justification as a robust solution, and the critical assumptions and risks to achieving them?

7. How likely is the project to generate global environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF project (**additionality**)?
8. Does the project convincingly identify the relevant **stakeholders**, and their anticipated roles and responsibilities? Is there an adequate explanation of how stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of the project, and how they will benefit from the project to ensure enduring global environmental benefits, e.g. through co-benefits?
9. Does the description adequately explain:
 - how the project will build on prior investments and complement current investments, both GEF and non-GEF,
 - how the project incorporates **lessons learned** from previous projects in the country and region, and more widely from projects addressing similar issues elsewhere; and
 - how country policies that are contradictory to the intended outcomes of the project (identified in section C) will be addressed (**policy coherence**)?
10. How adequate is the project's approach to generating, managing and exchanging **knowledge**, and how will lessons learned be captured for adaptive management and for the benefit of future projects?
- 11. Innovation and transformation:**
 - If the project is intended to be **innovative**: to what degree is it innovative, how will this ambition be achieved, how will barriers and enablers be addressed, and how might scaling be achieved?
 - If the project is intended to be **transformative**: how well do the project's objectives contribute to transformative change, and are they sufficient to contribute to enduring, transformational change at a sufficient scale to deliver a step improvement in one or more GEBs? Is the proposed logic to achieve the goal credible, addressing necessary changes in institutions, social or cultural norms? Are barriers and enablers to scaling be addressed? And how will enduring scaling be achieved?
12. Have **risks** to the project design and implementation been identified appropriately in the risk table in section B, and have suitable mitigation measures been incorporated? (NB: risks to the durability of project outcomes from future changes in drivers should have been reflected in the theory of change and in project design, not in this table.)