

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10863	
Project Title	Towards Land Degradation Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience	
Date of Screening	November 9, 2021	
STAP member screener	Graciela Metternicht	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Durón	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Concur</p> <p>STAP welcomes FAO’s proposal “Towards Land Degradation Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience”. The project aims to mainstream sustainable land management (SLM) into national planning and policies to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), food and nutritional security. The project is expected to generate co-benefits to improved food security and nutrition, livelihoods, equity, overall resilience, including to the impacts of climate change that will contribute to the global environmental benefits.</p> <p>STAP commends the project team for a clear articulation of a LDN methodology that supports Cape Verde’s LDN targets, while seeking to generate local benefits and global environmental outcomes. The proposal applies an LDN conceptual framework based on its decision hierarchy (avoiding, reducing and reversing) that seeks to test, validate, and prioritize actions. STAP welcomes the project team’s initiative to complement the LDN framework by applying the LDN interpretation matrix. The project team is encouraged to document learning from the application of these two processes, and share this learning through the project’s knowledge network.</p> <p>In this vein, the LDN decision support system is welcomed, along with its objectives to collect data on</p>	

LDN metrics to track Cape Verde’s progress on meeting its LDN targets, and contributions to SDG 2, 13 and 15.

To inform the project design, STAP welcomes the baseline studies on an assessment of the land potential in the targeted landscapes and analyses of the social and gender contexts. These studies will help articulate further the project activities, and how they will lead to outputs, outcomes, and, ultimately, the desired change. The clearer these causal linkages are articulated, the easier it will be to identify meaningful indicators that complement the LDN metrics and core indicators to monitor the changes resulting from the complex socio-ecological interactions described in the project. The same rationale applies to the expected co-benefits the project seeks to achieve. On co-benefits, STAP also recommends the PPG considers indicators and associated metrics to estimate and report on these benefits.

STAP highly appreciates the recognition and planned inclusion of behavioral insights in the project design phase, given the assertion that dryland crops like maize and beans continue to be cultivated more for cultural than economic value, making them an important consideration when promoting SLM and LDN. It is, hence, important that the PPG identifies behavioral changes that may need to be fostered to ensure durability of outcomes, respectful of the socio-cultural context. It also encourages the team to realise the innovation that it proposes, and develop the PPG activities accordingly (“Analysis of the policy options may include examination of the dynamic system behavior”).

STAP also encourages the project team to better reflect scaling in the theory of change. This could be done by developing a separate scaling pathway that articulates how the project aims to scale, based on an understanding of how the causal links may develop in the future across sectors (e.g. agriculture, forestry, groundwater), and spatial scales (e.g. watershed, island, national level). STAP

	<p>provides below initial advice on developing alternative pathways, along with other recommendations.</p> <p>As the project is designed, STAP encourages the project team to develop the project with the same rigour as was demonstrated in the development of the PIF.</p> <p>Below, STAP details further its guidance.</p>	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary	What STAP looks for	Response
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes, the objective is clearly defined, and consistently relates to the problem analysis. A minor point, the objective is stated differently in the PIF and in the theory of change annex. Please amend as necessary.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes, the planned activities support the project objective.
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?</p>	Yes, the outcomes focus on avoided land degradation.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, with good monitoring and evaluation.
Outputs	<p>A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project.</p> <p>Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?</p>	<p>Yes. STAP recommends the team develops national level indicators of LDN, complementary to the 3 global indicators. Those indicators should capture the pressures and drivers of land degradation in Cabo Verde (e.g. soil salinization, soil erosion), and the ecosystem services that can be affected (positively or negatively) through the planned LDN interventions.</p> <p>STAP recommends to use Landsat or Sentinel-2 time series satellite imagery (for trends in landcover/land use change), rather than coarse spatial resolution MODIS, which is not suitable for the catchment scale adopted for this project.</p>

Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Yes, the objective is clearly defined, and consistently relates to the problem analysis. STAP welcomes the clear description of the biophysical and socioeconomic context, influencing the degradation of land and livelihood constraints. The land degradation trends, and how climate change is (will) affect land degradation, (drought and extreme rainfall events) are also specified, and support the planned activities. An analysis is also provided of how the targeted watersheds were identified using baseline data from 2016, and other key indicators (e.g. NDVI data, population data, fuelwood consumption, and others).
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	Non-applicable.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes. The project defines the baseline using LDN indicators (land cover change, land productivity, soil organic carbon), and erosion rate.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Yes.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes. The LDN indicators are linked to global environmental benefits – e.g. soil organic carbon is needed for carbon storage and sequestration.
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	Non-applicable.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	A baseline description is provided of local and international initiatives that are tangential to this project. During the project development, please

		elaborate how this project will build on lessons learned from the other initiatives. Placing this information in a table will be helpful – i.e. adding a column specifying lessons, and how this project will be influenced by this learning.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	See above.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>STAP welcomes the theory of change figure, and encourages the project team to write a narrative to accompany the figure during the PPG phase.</p> <p>The theory of change describes three causal pathways. The first pathway is focused on achieving LDN governance and planning. The project plans to mainstream LDN into policies and planning processes across scales and sectors, while enhancing local capacity to carry out LDN. The second pathway is focused on LDN demonstration. Increased SLM practices and technologies will be targeted, and upscaled as appropriate. Nature-based Solutions will be promoted. The third pathway will assess LDN by establishing monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. Data and information on LDN will be the focus of this pathway. Combined, the pathways seek to mainstream SLM in national planning and policies to achieve LDN for food and nutritional security.</p>
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	Together, the three pathways will achieve the project objective on achieving LDN and resilience, through SLM and landscape restoration, for food and nutritional security.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Three assumptions are identified initially in the theory of change. During the project development, STAP suggests revisiting these initial assumptions, and asking whether there are additional underlying conditions, or resources, that need to exist for

		<p>planned changes to occur. For example, are there other assumptions besides stakeholder willingness that underpin the development of land use plans, the adoption and the scaling of SLM?</p> <p>In addition, STAP welcomes FAO's and Cape Verde's plans to revisit the theory of change once a land potential analysis is conducted, and a gender assessment is completed.</p> <p>The theory of change also should be adjusted to reflect the identification of LDN metrics, and adjusted as needed based on the testing and adjustment of these metrics (component 1).</p>
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Yes, the project recognizes that adaptations might be required due to climate change. However, it would be good for the project team to also consider other potential drivers of change – such as population changes, fluctuations in the economy, among other elements.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Yes with careful monitoring and evaluation and learning as described throughout the project, particularly in component 3.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Non-applicable.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes. Co-benefits also are identified. STAP recommends thinking on indicators and metrics to report on those co-benefits (see earlier comments)
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits	Yes. The project will measure and monitor the voluntary LDN indicators on land cover change,

	will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	<p>land productivity, and soil organic carbon. The project also will apply the LDN response hierarchy of avoid, reduce, reverse land degradation. The EX-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT v9.0) will be used to estimate and monitor soil carbon benefits. Other national indicators linked to SDG 15.3 will also be identified during the project development.</p> <p>See earlier comments on developing national LDN indicators complementary to the three global indicators.</p>
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project plans to rely on technologies that further enhance the resilience of the land to negative impacts from climate change, including relying on nature-based solutions, conservation agriculture, and other practices. The climate risk assessment also provides detailed recommendations on practices and technologies the project could usefully adopt to increase the project's resilience to climate change.
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	<p>Yes. The project aims to mainstream SLM into national and planning processes to contribute to Cape Verde's LDN targets, achieve landscape restoration, and a number of co-benefits linked to food security, improved livelihoods, and resilience. The project's LDN decision support system is also innovative and integral to the project's management of knowledge and learning, and ultimately scaling on SLM, local benefits (e.g. food security) and global benefits (e.g. carbon sequestration).</p> <p>There will also be additional innovation if the project pursues the stated analysis of policy options accounting for the dynamic system behavior.</p>
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Partly. The intention to define explicitly a vision for scaling SLM will be defined at a later stage. As part of this effort, STAP suggests describing

		pathways associated with scaling SLM in the theory of change along with assumptions and risks affiliated with scaling SLM across sectors and scales.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	It is likely that both, incremental, and transformational, change will be required to maintain resilience of the targeted social-ecological systems. Suggest using the theory of change to generate knowledge and learning by monitoring the outcomes while looking for opportunities to adapt (incremental change) or transform more fundamentally its pathway.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Yes, maps of the targeted watersheds are provided. When developing the project, suggest referring to STAP's guidance on Earth Observation (page A1-2) The guidance specifies elements that ought to be covered in a map.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Yes. STAP welcomes the stakeholder engagement plan that will be developed during the project design. During this process, it would be valuable to revisit the theory of change with stakeholders, adjust as necessary, including by involving additional stakeholders that are essential to the design and implementation of the project. Furthermore, the project proponents should aim to build trust and legitimacy during the stakeholder engagement process. Such efforts establish relationships that facilitate the uptake of behavioral change interventions, which are linked to scaling and transformational change. STAP's advice on behavioral change would be useful to consider during forthcoming stakeholder consultations.
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to	Please specify stakeholders' roles during the PPG phase.

	achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Gender differentiated risks and opportunities will be identified during the PPG. STAP welcomes FAO's plan to involve a gender expert during the design process, and to deepen further a gender analysis with field studies.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Please consider whether the participation of an important group (or groups) are hindered during the gender analysis.
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project	Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project? For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:	Yes, the risks to the project have been initially identified in the PIF. STAP welcomes the climate risk assessment, and encourages the project team to implement the recommendations for each component.

objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project’s objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? 	STAP suggests revisiting the risks during the project design phase, and ensuring they form part of the theory of change. Additionally, STAP recommends developing two, or three, potential alternative pathways during the subsequent phase. This scenario planning will help the project manage and respond to long-term drivers, such as drought, economic slow-down, and population changes (in and out migration). Refer to STAP’s advice on resilience , theory of change durability for assistance on scenario planning. (STAP is developing further advice on scenario planning in 2022).
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	Yes.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Partly. Coordination are described at length for some projects, while others are less so. Suggest adding a table listing the projects, specifying the lessons, and how these lessons will inform the design of this project. This information also can be listed under the baseline narrative.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	See above.
	How have these lessons informed the project’s formulation?	See above.
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	See above.
8. Knowledge management. Outline the “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project, and how it will contribute to the project’s overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	In addition to developing products, the project will rely on component 3 to manage knowledge through monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The project plans to adapt as necessary based on the outcomes of component 3. STAP also encourages the project team to use the theory of change for knowledge management and results monitoring. This process would involve revisiting the theory of change during implementation and testing, or validating,

		assumptions, as well as assessing whether the outcomes need to be enhanced, maintained, increased, decreased, or other.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project plans to connect the project to several platforms, as well as produce different types of knowledge products.

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
	* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that <i>“STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.”</i>
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;
	(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.
	The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	<p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>