

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10794
Project Title	Enhancing environmental security and transboundary cooperation in the Golok/Kolok river basin
Date of Screening	3 November 2021
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor.</p> <p>Proposes a traditional TDA/SAP approach but well-structured in terms of focus and sequence of activities.</p> <p>Strong focus on nature-based solutions and source-to-sea acknowledges the importance of land-based and upstream activities that are impacting water quality and quantity and can help target solutions accordingly.</p> <p>Greater attention is needed to identify and address the drivers and effects of land use change, as well as the socio-political context influencing the potential for regional cooperation. Explicit lessons from prior investments have yet to be identified.</p> <p>There is reference to conflict risk and potential comparison with previous investments, and passing reference to sustainable finance. These aspects could be innovative if further developed.</p> <p>Underlying assumptions should be made more explicit to strengthen the initial theory of change. Identification of risks is also very preliminary, apart from COVID-19.</p> <p>The approach remains weak on climate risk and engagement with non-governmental and private sector stakeholders which may undermine the success of the pilot projects in particular. These merit careful attention during the next phase of development.</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?	<p>Yes. The project objective is to “...improve transboundary management of flood risks and erosion processes, and develop jointly agreed and evidence-based investment plans that will be needed to reverse degradation trends and enhance environmental security in the Golok/Kolok.”</p> <p>The objective is focused and responds to the problem of increased flooding and erosion identified in the PIF and the assumption is that the improved management will tackle the underlying causes of these problems such as deforestation/LCLUC.</p>
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives?	Yes, well structured.
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?</p>	Climate change is mentioned repeatedly as one of the factors behind increased flooding and drought; however, little or no scientific data are provided to substantiate this. While some of the potential solutions (e.g., NbS) may have adaptation benefits, this is not clearly articulated in the PIF and should be elaborated prior to CEO endorsement.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, plausible.
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>	Clearly presented.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project’s logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe:	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Yes – it is clear that human activities on both sides of the river/border are impacting the quality and

<p>1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)</p>		<p>flow of the river. More information would be helpful regarding how this is affecting people living in the catchment area in terms of their livelihoods, as well as any consequences for biodiversity, etc,</p>
	<p>Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?</p>	<p>The main barrier mentioned in the PIF is "...the gap in developing a comprehensive integrated strategy for the protection and management of the Basin's water resources, harmonized across the two-country segments." The underlying assumption then is that transboundary water management is the key to reversing erosion and flooding.</p> <p>This may be true as a starting point and as the basis for the TDA/SAP; however, much more detailed information on specific barriers to reducing deforestation, improving wastewater treatment, etc. and how to overcome them will be necessary to reverse degradation of the water basin. Presumably this information will be highlighted as part of the TDA; however, it would be helpful if additional information were provided during PPG following discussions with local communities, private sector, provincial governments, etc. to at least validate the key issues of concern.</p> <p>Greater attention is needed to identify and address the drivers and effects of land use change. For example, is it lack of regulation, enforcement, incentives, etc.? Presumably this will all be detailed in the process of developing the TDA. Further review of existing studies is suggested. See, for example, analysis of policies promoting biodiesel and the subsequent expansion of oil palm plantations spurring land use change in southern Thailand; as well as the contributions of forest and peatland conversion to hydrological changes including flooding and droughts (Srisunton &</p>

		<p>Chawchai, 2020).¹ Also comparative analysis of the impacts of hydrological change on productive wetlands, including the Kolok basin (Gopal, 2012).²</p> <p>Also important is the socio-political context influencing the potential for regional cooperation. This is one of the poorer regions in both Thailand and Malaysia with significant investment in defense and security along the border, rather than rural development (Anuar & Harun, 2018).³ Existing studies could help to establish baseline regarding environmental indicators and their relation to demographic trends, e.g., Dawrueng et al. (2017).</p>
	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?	N/A
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, the description of key trends and policy context is adequate at this stage. Output 1.1 to develop the TDA will define baseline conditions of the Basin in much greater detail.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Not yet.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	In general terms, but not yet with respect to key environmental indicators.
	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;	N/A
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	

¹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feart.2020.559868/full>

² <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00027-011-0247-y>

³ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bird-conservation-international/article/abs/effect-of-landscape-variables-on-the-longterm-decline-of-great-argus-in-the-rainforest-of-southern-thailand/16EDD3251B0DF6D99FB3ED552EE259DE#access-block>

	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	N/A
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>A theory of change is provided in a graphic, which usefully indicates relationships among the components. Interestingly, the long-term goal is “enhanced environmental security” which is not the stated objective of this project. Rather the mid-term goals are more in line with the objective, focusing on the development and funding of the TDA/SAP. Further elaboration of the long-term goal in the text would be helpful to orient and provide a basis later for evaluating the outcomes of the more immediate project objective (mid-term goals).</p> <p>The TOC indicates that the development of the TDA will occur along side the design and execution of pilot projects which makes sense as combined, these two activities could be very useful for informing the development of the SAP. However, the TOC doesn’t indicate any underlying assumptions and how the project might adapt under changing circumstances.</p> <p>See STAP’s Theory of Change Primer for additional information on developing a robust TOC, including attention to assumptions and framing conditions or contextual factors / challenges being addressed.</p>
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	TDA+pilot projects, then SAP + KM and coordination.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project’s objectives?	Well described.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Component structure implies change mechanisms. Underlying assumptions should be made more explicit.

	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Not explicitly. Further attention needed.
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, the links are plausible.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	N/A
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?	There are numerous potential benefits from this project from an environmental and socio-economic perspective. However, without robust baseline information it will be difficult to measure.
	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, though general.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Nature based solutions are highlighted as one of the main types of interventions that could achieve benefits for people and nature and in theory increase the project's resilience to climate change. These linkages could be made more explicit during PPG phase.
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?	Not yet adequately developed. This project follows a traditional TDA/SAP methodology. There is reference to conflict risk and potential comparison with previous investment in the Costa Rica / Nicaragua border region. These aspects could be innovative if further developed. There is passing mention of "identification of sustainable financing" in Output 3.2 which in

		theory could be innovative but without defining this further it is impossible to know for sure.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	If the pilot projects are successful, activities under Component 3 will develop cost-effective upscaling strategies. Some examples could be provided during PPG phase to further articulate possible future options.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A map is provided.
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?	Many stakeholders are identified; however, for this project to be successful it will be necessary to fully engage with communities living along the river basin as well as the private sector entities who stand to lose or gain from changes in relevant management and policies. The PIF notes that “so far, non-governmental organizations or private sector actors have not been included” in transboundary consultations.
	What are the stakeholders’ roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	Well elaborated and specific regarding government agencies. Very preliminary regarding other groups. These aspects should be developed prior to CEO endorsement.

<p>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</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Yes, this is suitable and specific to the context of flood management.</p>
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>To be identified.</p>
<p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible,</p>	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project’s objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 	<p>Risks to the project include 1) climate variability and climate change (low); 2) lack of stakeholder involvement at the community level (medium); 3) lack of support from ministries/local authorities (low) and 4) risks related to COVID-19 (medium).</p>

propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	<p>2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>These risks appear a reasonable start; however, apart from COVID-19, the descriptions are too preliminary to assess. Given the attention to conflict potential and environmental security in the description of goals, it is striking to see these aspects unaddressed among risks.</p> <p>In addition, more detailed information is needed with regards to climate risk as well as what actions and capacity will be needed to ensure that the project interventions are not neutralized as a result of not having adequately outlined climate risks and sensitivity to climate change and its impacts along the river basin.</p>
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?	Somewhat. There is ample information about relevant activities underway in both Thailand and Malaysia and some recognition of related GEF and non-GEF activities. However, a comprehensive description of prior and ongoing projects and (importantly) lessons learned from these activities that could inform this project is missing. As an example, even projects dating as far back as the Golok River Mouth Improvement Project between 1983-85 and its subsequent reviews, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment published in 2000 ⁴ can be useful to identify pitfalls and lessons.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	No
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	No
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	N/A
	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?	A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for coordination of the project that is well placed to undertake this effort and help

⁴ <https://agris.fao.org/agris-search/search.do?recordID=TH2002002411>; the work was performed by SEATEC consulting engineering (<https://www.seatecgroup.com/projects-detail.php?id=201>)

		integrated it into the TDA and other relevant project components.
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?	<p>The importance of knowledge management throughout the project is emphasized, and several specific activities are listed (e.g. participate in IW:Learn, workshops, knowledge products).</p> <p>However, this could be strengthened by a more coherent KM strategy that outlines the overall objective and how each of these pieces will support it. A starting point could be an assessment of prior and ongoing related projects and lessons learned to identify priorities and gaps in knowledge and set specific targets and indicators accordingly. Equally important is the identification of the groups, sectors, people who will generate, maintain and benefit from the knowledge. How will it be used to enhance achievement of the project goals?</p>
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	

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.

<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p>	<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>