STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	11000	
Project Title	Great Green Wall Climate Change Adaptation Regional Support Project	
Date of Screening	June 10, 2022	
STAP member screener	Ed Carr	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor.** STAP acknowledges the "Great Green Wall Climate Change Adaptation Regional Support Project." The project seeks to overcome an all-too common problem in adaptation and development work: missing structures to facilitate communication across projects that might allow for the sharing of lessons and the scale-up of good practices. Overall, the project appears likely to deliver adaptation benefits by providing just such a structure to the GGW area. STAP has difficulty assessing the potential value of this effort, however, as the PIF lacks a meaningful baseline related to current practices of information sharing across projects and the benefits gained/lost under current practice. Further, the PIF does not lay out how things will look different with the project in place – what will be gained over that baseline. STAP strongly suggests the project establish a more meaningful baseline and set of metrics during the PPG phase. STAP also notes that the problem statement of the PIF is contradictory and unhelpful for making the case for the project. It contains overgeneralized claims about likely future scenarios that it then contradicted with more specific data that discussed variation across the GGW area. While it is clear that the GGW area will experience the impacts of climate change in coming decades, and many of these impacts will be significant and harmful, the current	

	problem statement made that less clear than it could have been. STAP also notes that while the focus of this project is on creating a structure for organizing and transmitting lessons across projects, its framing of stakeholder engagement reads as one-way, from project to stakeholders. Actively engaging stakeholders can provide important feedback that shapes and reshapes what lessons and information are shared through the structure, creating a more effective, impactful project. See Multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change.	
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 project objective is "To improve access to best practices, foster innovation and digital transformation and facilitate cross-learning across Great Green Wall countries for enhanced resilience to climate change impacts." However, this is a somewhat vague statement in that it is unclear how this effort will relate to the Great Green Wall project(s) – or if GGW is just a geographic locator.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes, in a very general way. These are activities likely to enable enhanced resilience to climate change impacts if the knowledge gaps the project assumes currently exist and can be bridged through these efforts.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes, but they are very vague. For example, "Enhanced knowledge management and experience exchange on climate change adaptation in GGW countries" says little about how this knowledge exchange will concretely result in adaptation benefits.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, as these activities will broadly support resilience-building, but how likely these benefits are is difficult to assess.

Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Yes – the outputs articulate what the outcomes and components are really going to do. At the same time, how these outputs will bring about these outcomes is not very clear. They seem focused on enabling adaptation benefits, but it is not clear they would drive the creation of such benefits.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	There is a theory of change diagram, but no narrative to go along with it. See STAP's Theory of Change Primer.
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?	The problem statement is contradictory in several places. First, it makes somewhat conflicting claims about current and future climate across the GGW countries (+Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire). On one hand, it makes statements like "precipitation levels will continue to decrease, while temperatures are expected to increase between 1 and 1.72°C for the 2031-2050 period compared to the 1986-2005 reference period." However, these claims are not uniformly true across these countries, or indeed within these countries. The PIF seems to note this further on, for example in the fact the monsoon is likely to increase in the central Sahel and decline over the far western Sahel. But this contradicts the "big narrative" at the start of the problem statement. Then figure 1 indicates that future precipitation trends are likely to show increases across both RCPs shown, except in the far western Sahel – which directly contradicts the earlier problem statement. Finally, Table 1 gives more detail on precipitation outcomes across the RCPs, which also contradicts a coherent single narrative. Also, in figure 1, the historical data needs to be better contextualized. Most of the decline in Sahelian precipitation occurred between 1951 and 1980 – there was a more than 20% decline in annual precipitation before 1980 that has since rebounded a bit (now to about 80% the pre-1950 levels). In short, the Sahel has not been getting

steadily drier. It got a lot drier and has been pretty stable for around four decades.

Finally, there is uncertainty around these trends, but the PIF mostly focuses on a single scenario (with the exception of the future precipitation side of figure 1). In short, the current and future climate situation across the countries in this proposal is both much more complex and much more uncertain than this PIF mentions.

Second, projections of lost production need to be calibrated by whether or not they account for farmer behavior. Simply put, farmers do not continue to cultivate failing crops – they start to adjust farm composition. This includes changing varieties, crop mixes, and even the size of farms. Lost production could mean greater import dependence. It could also mean a shift in what is available from local production, or it could even make a country a more effective importer of food if what they are able to grow increases in value. Here again there is significant uncertainty in the future scenario that is not acknowledged in the PIF. Further, there seems to be little focus in the PIF on capturing what people are already doing to adapt and learning from that – the focus seems exclusively on project learning, which may or may not capture autonomous adaptation. STAP's [decision tree for adaptation rationale](#) could be useful though this project may be somewhat broad for its specific application.

As with the climate scenario, these broad claims about livelihoods and food security seem contradicted by later parts of the problem statement which acknowledge that the Sahel "harbors a range of ecosystems and agricultural zones, such as savannas and steppes, semi-arid and sub-humid areas, as well as extensive coastal areas. Farmers in

		the Sahel produce various tradable commodities such as maize, soybean, dairy and livestock across the Guinea Savanna; rice and cassava in humid and sub-humid zones; and tree crops (cocoa, coffee, cashew, mango and oil palm), horticulture and fish in other regions."
		Finally, the connections between climate change impacts and conflict are very complex and highly debated in the literature. While there is little doubt that climate change impacts *could* create pressures on land and other resources that might heighten conflict drivers, there are many examples of such stress leading to cooperation as well. Further, even if climate impacts exacerbate conflict drivers, are they the right lever to pull to reduce conflict? See Environmental security: dimensions and priorities.
		Herder/farmer conflict has deep social roots, but also plays out very differently in different Sahelian countries (in Mali, cooperation between such groups is part of formal law and informal practice in many parts of the country). Adaptation efforts may have little to do with the key drivers of conflict in the region, and it is not clear how better knowledge management will address conflict (though it might better contextualize the connections between climate change and conflict).
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	The barriers section is helpful because in its focus on addressing "the major barriers to exchange of experiences, knowledge and lessons learned between existing programs, projects and GGW partners that hinder the uptake and scaling up of climate adaptation and resilience measures related to natural resources management." The overall focus of the project is narrowed to one of communicating and exchanging knowledge. This is not clear in the earlier parts of the PIF and sharpens the need for a clear linkage between how such exchanges will promote scaling up.

	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?	The baseline provided is not a baseline. It is a description of the GGW project and the ambition to move it beyond a tree-planting program to a wider effort to address land degradation, adaptation, mitigation, and the protection of biodiversity. It does not describe what would happen without the investment. As this project speaks to coordinating learning and communications across projects, some description of current knowledge-sharing and innovation/scaling up would be helpful to assess the value of the proposed project.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	No.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	No. It is not clear how much of the knowledge sharing is already taking place, or if it would take place by other means.
	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	n/a
	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?	By providing a framework that captures the knowledge and innovation products of GCF and GEF projects in the GGW area, the project will overcome existing barriers to knowledge dissemination and the scaling-up of effective practices for adaptation, land restoration, and food security.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See below

	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	Component 1: Knowledge management and experience exchange Output: Climate adaptation knowledge products on lessons learned, good practices and policy recommendations from adaptation projects and other specific knowledge products published Output: Peer-based knowledge exchanges on climate adaptation among the 11 GGW countries through communities of practice Output: Coordination enhanced on NDC/NAP and programming of adaptation actions at country level Outcome: Enhanced knowledge management and experience exchange on climate change adaptation in GGW countries. Component 2: Identification of innovations and digital transformations Output: Stock taking of and promotion of adaptation innovations and digital transformation technologies in relevant adaptation projects Output: Identify new gender-responsive opportunities for investing in climate adaptation innovations in the GGW involving the private sector, MSMEs, cooperatives, etc. Outcome: Identified climate adaptation innovations and digital transformation technologies in GGW countries Component 3: Innovation grants, capacity building and Programme M&E Output: Small grants for climate adaptation and resilience measures for natural

		resources management and climate smart agriculture
		Output: Capacity building provided to groups of farmers, land users, cooperatives, MSMEs and the private sector (to a total of 3,000 people) in adoption and implementation of adaptation innovations and resilience measures.
		Output: Project monitoring and evaluation - a monitoring & evaluation plan for the project is formulated and implemented, and an exit strategy is formulated
		Outcome: Climate adaptation innovations grants will be approved on a competitive basis and capacity building provided in GGW countries.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	The mechanisms of change seem plausible. There are numerous points where there is an implicit assumption that actors in the GGW area want the products and exchanges that the project proposes, but this seems to be implicitly asserted, not substantiated. Under output 2.1.1, there appears to be an assumption that the challenges with digital transformation technologies and innovative adaptation approaches lies in understanding and promoting them. However, several of the named examples (e.g. precision farming, index insurance, and climate technologies) all have significant literatures and project experience demonstrating that the challenges with these technologies are much more complex, and have to do with the ways in which they fit into or disrupt existing livelihoods and social orders. Perhaps a more productive framing of this output would be to focus on learning about where such innovations worked, exactly why they worked in that context, and what from that experience might allow that innovation to take root someplace else. This work is quite

		different than promotion and stocktaking – it is about actively learning.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	No. The discussion of climate risk in the risks section of the PIF is about the climate risks faced by the population of the project area, not risks to the project itself. That said, this is largely a KM project with some innovation grants, and therefore the vulnerabilities of the project to climate change might be quite small.
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?	n/a
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	It seems likely that this effort will identify innovations and lessons that improve future adaptation efforts in the GGW countries, thus delivering adaptation benefits.
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?	The expected benefits are adaptation benefits. The project does not lay out how to measure them.
	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?	No. The benefits would come from the scale-up and dissemination of existing actions and experiences, but these are not enumerated in the PIF.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	There are indicators to measure results in the theory of change. These largely capture outputs, not outcomes or impacts.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project does not discuss activities to increase its resilience to climate change. It may not need to, as it is principally a KM project.
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?	The project is more likely to foster innovation and its scale up than it is innovative in and of itself. Creating a structure to bridge learning across adaptation funds is innovative in and of itself.

	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	The project will facilitate scale-up – but the project itself is already operating at a very large scale.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	The project will not, at the outset, require any adaptation of existing activities in the GCF or LDCF. Instead, it will work with existing structures to share knowledge and lessons. The feedback from this sharing, however, could lead to incremental or even transformational changes in the work of those funds.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		There is a map that identifies the GGW countries plus Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.
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
	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?	Table 4 covers all the topics and forms of engagement for the different groups of stakeholders.

		One thing to note: the project seems to present engagement as one-way, from the project to the stakeholders. Stakeholders such as farmer organizations, cooperatives, and women and youth organizations could help the project identify what knowledge and lessons to prioritize as it starts to work on identifying and communicating lessons and experiences across the region.
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?	Yes. Given the scale of the project, and its goals around communicating innovative ideas and lessons learned, while fostering new innovations, the focus of this section of the PIF on women's unequal and uneven access to funding for innovative activities is appropriate.

	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	This is not clear. The project intends to undertake a gender analysis in the PPG stage and should assess this through that process.
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	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: • 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?	The risks are valid, but do not seem to include political barriers to sharing lessons and data across the GGW countries – particularly across Francophone and Anglophone countries. There have been a number of instances where the sharing of climate data across this divide has been contentious. The PIF does not mention how climate risks will impact the project – it is not clear, though, that climate risks *will* impact what is largely a KM project.
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?	Yes.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	The project fills gaps in terms of knowledge transfer and communication that exist between previous projects.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	Yes.
	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?	Yes.
8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	The project is essentially a KM project with some innovation grants attached.

the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.		
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project seeks to do this for other projects, though it is set up to learn from its own experiences.

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 ***"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."***
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**	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:
	(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.