

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	12075
Project title	Strengthening Climate-Smart Agribusiness and Natural Resource Management for Adaptation and Resilient Livelihoods in Sudan's River Nile and Northern States (SCAN-2N)
Date of screen	May 14 2026
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is a well-explained proposal that meets most of STAP's assessment criteria.

The project objective is clearly stated and justified by a strong rationale that links climate vulnerability in the River Nile and Northern States to agro-pastoral livelihoods, dryland degradation, weak natural resource governance, poverty, gender inequality, underdeveloped value chains, and limited access to finance, extension services, technologies, and early warning information. The site selection is well justified, and the climate trends, projections, and projected impacts are supported by credible data. The proposal also provides a useful account of non-climate drivers and identifies relevant barriers, strategies, plans, and policies.

The Theory of Change is generally sound, but it should better explain incentives for institutional and behavioral change and test key assumptions around conflict, community ownership, institutional capacity, and private-sector engagement. The stakeholder section identifies relevant institutional actors, but consultation with Indigenous peoples and local communities and deeper analysis of their needs and incentives will be essential to the full proposal.

The operational context is challenging, and the proposal perhaps downplays the impediments posed by insecure property rights and conflict-affected displacement to its success; it could more explicitly engage with these factors in its design. To this end, we provide some suggestions to strengthen the proposal as it is further developed.

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's objective** (i.e., to *strengthen climate resilience and adaptive capacity of vulnerable agro-pastoral communities through ecosystem-based adaptation and climate-resilient agribusiness*) is clearly stated and justified by the analysis of the problem.

The **Project Rationale** provides a generally strong and well-structured explanation of the problem the project seeks to address. It clearly situates climate vulnerability in the River Nile and Northern States within a wider system of agro-pastoral livelihoods, dryland ecosystem degradation, weak natural resource governance, underdeveloped value chains, poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to adaptation technologies, finance, extension, and early warning information. The selection of the sites is well justified, particularly given the states' high climate sensitivity, dependence on natural resources, relative stability, institutional presence, and potential for scalable interventions. While the explanation of the problem is good, supporting some claims with data would help; the data on climate trends and projections is good and comes from a credible source. The information about projected impacts is also good.

The impacts of conflict and forced displacement on the problem, and of land tenure insecurity, seem understated. These are also significant **barriers** to the project's success and could be discussed as such, though they justify the project's focus on improving governance. Given these barriers, alternative responses might also be considered, including an explicit focus on environmental peacebuilding and social protection measures.

The explanation of **climate drivers** is one of the stronger parts of the section. The proposal provides useful data on observed and projected climate trends, including declining rainfall, increasing rainfall variability, rising average temperatures, more intense heat, and future risks to crop and livestock productivity. The figures on precipitation and temperature trends and projections are helpful, and the use of credible climate data sources strengthens the rationale. The discussion of projected impacts is also good, especially the links between drought, heat stress, rainfall variability, land degradation, crop losses, declining rangeland productivity, livestock losses, water scarcity, and disruption of agricultural value chains. The three **future narratives** are sensible and justified, given the discussion of root causes and climate drivers, though they are terse and discussed separately; whereas plausible storylines that combine these scenarios would be better. This should then inform the design of interventions that are robust across the different plausible futures.

The proposal also does a good job of identifying the **non-climate drivers of vulnerability**, as well as relevant strategies, plans and policies. It explains how unsustainable use of natural resources, limited access to adaptation technologies, weak markets, poor disaster risk management, poverty, population pressure, insecure land tenure, weak policy enforcement, and knowledge gaps combine to reduce adaptive capacity. This provides a credible systems-level account of how climate and non-climate pressures interact and reinforce one another.

A key weakness is that the impacts of conflict and forced displacement on the problem, as well as those of land tenure insecurity, seem understated. These are not only contextual issues but central drivers of vulnerability and significant barriers to the project's success. Resource competition, unclear tenure, contested grazing routes, displacement, and fragile governance could directly affect community participation, restoration activities, water access, rangeland management, agribusiness hubs, and the equitable distribution of project benefits. The proposal recognizes these issues, but they should be treated more explicitly as project design constraints and as risks to the durability of outcomes. Instead, they should be considered as key drivers to be included in the narratives of how the future could unfold and interventions should consider how they will be robust to their effects.

The description of the **causal pathways** is good and provides a fully adequate description of the project's interventions across four complementary areas: strengthening the enabling policy and institutional environment;

restoring and sustainably managing water, rangeland and forest resources; promoting climate-smart agribusiness and resilient value chains; and enhancing knowledge, innovation, early warning, and disaster risk management. However, the explanation of the **Theory of Change** is not as extensive as it could be, given that the diagram contains many elements and the project design is complex. For example, the proposal could explain more clearly the enablers of institutional and behavioral change, including the incentives that communities, farmers, pastoralists, women, youth, financial institutions, and private-sector actors will need to adopt and sustain the proposed practices. The **assumptions** listed are useful, but several are substantial and should be tested more carefully during project preparation, i.e.: assumptions that local conflict and extreme climate events will not undermine implementation; that communities will take ownership of project activities; that government institutions will have sufficient capacity; that private-sector actors will invest in green agribusiness opportunities; and that financial institutions will participate in microfinance and climate-risk insurance pilots. Given the high-risk context, these assumptions should be treated not only as background conditions but as design issues requiring explicit mitigation, adaptive management, and monitoring.

The **ToC diagram** itself is conceptually useful but hard to read due to poor image quality and visual density. For the full proposal, it should be redesigned with clearer causal pathways, fewer crowded text boxes, and a more legible sequence from barriers and activities through outputs, outcomes, assumptions, and impact. A simplified diagram supported by a sharper narrative explanation would make the project logic more convincing.

The **stakeholder engagement** section identifies a relevant set of institutional and technical stakeholders, including federal and state government bodies, environmental councils, agricultural research institutions, water agencies, the Meteorological Authority, forestry institutions, pastoralist and farmers' unions, financial institutions, and ministries responsible for agriculture, livestock, finance, industry and trade. This provides a reasonable institutional foundation for a project focused on ecosystem-based adaptation, climate-smart agribusiness, natural resource management, and disaster risk management. The summary of consultation findings is also useful, as it captures stakeholder concerns around ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), value-chain strengthening, women's empowerment, sustainable natural resource management, resource conflict, data gaps, and institutional capacity needs. However, the section is weaker in its treatment of communities and vulnerable groups. Indigenous peoples and local communities were not formally consulted during the development of the PIF, which perhaps explains the lack of detail about these groups. Consultation with these groups and a deeper analysis of their circumstances, needs and incentives will be important for the full proposal, as this will be key to its success and sustainability. The stakeholder section would also benefit from a clearer explanation of stakeholder incentives and benefits. For example, pastoralists may benefit from restored grazing areas and access to water but may also face perceived restrictions imposed by rotational grazing or resource-use rules. Farmers may benefit from CSA, water harvesting, and value chain support, but may face costs or risks when adopting new practices. Women and youth are expected to benefit from training, finance, and agribusiness opportunities, but the proposal needs to explain how barriers related to land tenure, mobility, time burdens, social norms, and access to credit will be addressed.

The design and description of the **components** are generally sound, but a more detailed costing of the capital and labor costs associated with component 2 would also help assure the project's ambitions are feasible. Output 3 could also consider piloting or implementing social protection measures, which are a key aim of the next GEF LDCF strategy. The project also has some modest co-financing but is honest about this.

The assessment of **risks** is sound, and the overall "high" risk rating reflects Sudan's fragile context. Proposed mitigation measures are sensible, including conflict-sensitive design.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

-Strengthen the evidence base for key **non-climate drivers** and livelihood constraints. The full proposal should support key claims with more specific data where possible, especially on poverty, displacement, land tenure insecurity, gender exclusion, market access, extension coverage, access to finance, and the condition of relevant value chains in the River Nile and Northern States.

-Recognize conflict, forced displacement, and land tenure insecurity as **barriers** to adaptation. The full proposal should explicitly acknowledge how conflict, displacement, and insecure land tenure affect vulnerability and may constrain implementation, uptake, and sustainability. This would bring these issues to the fore as design challenges that the project must work through, rather than treating them mainly as contextual risks. (See STAP guidance on: [Enabling Elements of Good Project Design](#))

-Develop more integrated **plausible future scenarios**. The proposal's current three future narratives are sensible, but the full proposal should develop them into more integrated, plausible storylines showing how climate shocks, governance fragility, poverty, market weakness, displacement, tenure insecurity, and resource conflict could interact over time. (See STAP guidance on: [Using simple narratives to ensure durability of GEF investments](#))

-Strengthen the **governance components** through an environmental peacebuilding lens. The governance components should be strengthened by identifying opportunities for peacebuilding through restoration, rangeland management, water governance, and participatory natural resource management activities. This could draw on STAP's 2024 brief on environmental security to clarify how project activities can reduce resource-based tensions while supporting adaptation outcomes.

-Test and manage the major **assumptions** underpinning the project design. The full proposal should convert these assumptions into explicit design and monitoring issues, with mitigation measures, decision points, and adaptive management arrangements. (See STAP guidance on: [Theory of Change Primer](#)).

-Redesign the **Theory of Change diagram** for clarity. The ToC diagram should be more legible, less visually crowded, and should show a clearer sequence from barriers and assumptions to activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term adaptation benefits. A simplified figure, supported by a sharper narrative explanation, would make the project logic much more convincing. (See STAP guidance on: [Theory of Change and Risk in GEF projects and programs](#)).

-Ensure the full proposal is informed by **meaningful consultation** with **Indigenous Peoples and local communities**. The full proposal should be informed by direct consultation with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as a deeper analysis of their circumstances, needs, priorities, and incentives. This will be essential for strengthening ownership, ensuring equitable benefit-sharing, and improving the likelihood that project outcomes are sustained. (See STAP guidance on: [Multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change](#)).

-Provide more detailed **costing** and **feasibility** analysis for **Component 2**. Given the ambition of the ecosystem restoration, water harvesting, agroforestry, and rangeland management activities, the full proposal should provide a clearer breakdown of capital, labor, maintenance, and technical support costs. This would help demonstrate that the proposed hectares, infrastructure, and restoration targets are feasible within the available budget and implementation context.

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

ANNEX: STAP'S SCREENING GUIDELINES

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.)