

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11448
Project title	Conservation, development and livelihoods for thriving people and nature
Date of screen	28 May 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is moderately well developed project that is designed to contribute significant global environmental benefits through the expansion of protected areas in South Africa as part of an ambition to reach the 30x30 target of the Global Biodiversity Framework. The proponents make a compelling case for achieving the 30x30 target through stewardship agreements and the involvement of previously disadvantaged groups in the biodiversity sector, which represent important innovations for achieving conservation targets. The proposal also provides good background information with a sound understanding of the barriers and enablers.

STAP's assessment noted that the unifying logic for the various components of the project is not always clear. There seems to be some confusion about the project outcomes, specifically whether the overall objective is to create an enabling environment for further action or also to include downstream activities, such as an actual increase in protected areas. STAP also noted that several aspects of project design are still in an early stage of development (e.g. stakeholder engagement and risks) and these will need substantial inputs when the project is further developed. More detailed recommendations are itemized under Section 3 of this review.

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

- 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 **background** and **project rationale** make a compelling case for how stewardship approaches and greater involvement of previously disadvantaged groups in the biodiversity sector can increase the protected area estate towards the global 30x30 goal.

The **baseline situation** is well described and there is a good understanding of the barriers and enablers to achieving project outcomes. South Africa has a rich history of biodiversity assessment and the development of stewardship programmes, as well as a nascent biodiversity economy strategy, and the project is designed to build on these initiatives.

There is no specific assessment of uncertainties as part of **future narratives** although this would have contributed to a greater understanding of the systems and how the project can be designed to ensure durable outcomes. Some of the uncertainties affecting long term outcomes include: climate change impacts, where both the Northern Cape and Limpopo provinces are projected to be impacted by increased temperatures, changes in rainfall, bush encroachment and shifts in vegetation and these will affect both people and the environment (Scheiter *et al.* 2018; Strydom *et al.* 2019); the political and economic uncertainties associated with development

of the biodiversity economy strategy, such as social resistance to commercialization of the game meat sector or economic competition from people outside of the project, often with access to more capital, affecting commercial viability and economic benefits to local communities (e.g. as has happened with *Hoodia*, Wynberg & van Niekerk 2014).

Although the underlying rationale is well motivated, the unifying logic for the project is not always clear and the **theory of change (ToC)** does not consistently provide a clear pathway in terms of actions and outputs leading to specific outcomes. The stated objective is to create the enabling environment for increased protection and transformation of the biodiversity sector but some of the actions and outcomes are not aligned with this objective. For example, the anticipated outcome for Component 2.1. is “strengthened institutions..” but the two outputs are (2.1.1) to establish four new protected areas, and (2.1.2) to establish marine and terrestrial OECMs, but there is no output relating to institutions or capacity development. The ToC requires careful consideration of what the actual objectives are for the project and should then identify a consistent set of outputs and outcomes. It should be clear whether the end point is an established enabling environment, in which case some of the outputs seem inappropriate, or whether creating the enabling environment is one pathway towards an objective for increased protected areas.

The **project components** are generally well-described. However, STAP noted the following areas where the component outcomes and outputs could be strengthened during the PPG phase:

- Outcome 2.2, comprising actions for alternative and sustainable livelihood strategies (Output 2.2.2), acknowledges the need to build a deep understanding of stakeholder livelihoods. STAP advises the proponents to ensure that the steps required to do this are carefully considered to ensure adherence to good practice and avoid common pitfalls encountered in livelihood interventions (see STAP 2024 for a summary of guidance documents). Here, it would also be important to identify suitable indicators, which represent both the socioeconomic benefits (e.g. number of people benefiting) as well as the GEBs associated with these interventions.
- Component 2 seems to assume that win-win outcomes for the environment and economic growth are always possible. The literature suggests this is often not the case and that biodiversity losses or economic losses are common in diversified land use systems (Jones *et al.* 2023; Rosa-Schleich *et al.* 2019). As a result, interventions in diversified landscapes typically include some form of tradeoff analysis and an optimization process to identify the activities that best support project objectives. The proponents should consider how this would be done within the context of this project. It is also worth noting that theoretical analyses of South Africa’s biodiversity economy strategy have highlighted the need for adequate capacity to support the anticipated changes (Forster *et al.* 2021).
- Component 3 identifies knowledge management as a critical lever for increasing investment in stewardship programmes and making the case for biodiversity conservation and is, potentially, one of the most innovative aspects of the project. The outputs are aligned with the assumption that providing robust, verifiable and accessible information will strengthen making the case for biodiversity conservation and stewardship approaches with political decision. What seems to be missing from Component 3, is evidence to support the biodiversity economy part of the project, specifically outputs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 which will be hard to achieve without a knowledge management system that systematizes and documents information on the localized benefits to people on the ground.

The section on **stakeholder engagement** provides a table of roles and other sections discuss how the design of the project has been informed by discussions at various biodiversity stewardship working groups and conferences as well as the biodiversity economy’s Phakisa process. The range of stakeholders identified for future engagement (Table 1) comprises many government agencies and NGOs, which is consistent with the need to strengthen stewardship programmes, but seems to include few on the ground stakeholders from affected communities. Given that impacts on IP&LC are identified as a major risk, it would be expected that they would be critical stakeholders in the development and implementation of the project.

The project recognises the need for a cross sectoral approach and identifies the lack of coherence across sectors and the proposed enabling environment is designed to address this.

There is a strong focus on **gender**, at least in the language and framing of outputs and outcomes, with many of them prefaced as gender-responsive or gender-inclusive. It will be necessary to unpack what some of the terms mean, otherwise it won't be possible to identify suitable indicators and to measure whether the targets have been achieved or not. For example, while it is clear that programmes, policies and activities can be gender-responsive, it is not clear what comprises a 'gender-responsive landscape' or a 'gender-responsive conservation objective'.

The **risk section** outlines some of the major risks, particularly those relating to potential impacts on Indigenous people and local communities. At this stage, there is no attempt to discuss possible mitigating measures so it is not possible to comment on how well the project can address them. Some of the risks require further analysis, such as the climate risk which only assesses how the project may contribute to CO₂ emissions (should be under environmental safeguards) but not how climate might affect the outcomes of the project.

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

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

1. Provide a clearer description of the objectives and the pathways for achieving the objective, with a consistent set of outcomes and outputs, particularly for Component 2.
2. Ensure that the list of stakeholders adequately caters for all aspects of the project, particularly groups who may be affected by land use decisions or those whose livelihoods may be impacted by project interventions.
3. Ensure that the activities on alternative livelihood interventions follow best practice and the project is designed to overcome common pitfalls
4. Consider how tradeoffs between socio-economic and environmental benefits will be managed in situations where win-win outcomes are not guaranteed.
5. Review the section on knowledge management to ensure that more granular information on benefits to IP&LC is included.
6. Further develop the risk section to provide mitigation measures and revise the section on climate risks.

References

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