STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11102
Project title	Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program
Date of screen	May 31, 2023
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1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

The Indo-Malay Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program seeks to maximize the integrity of primary forests in the region to achieve global environmental and socio-economic benefits. The underlying drivers behind forest loss in this region are well documented, as are the barriers to successfully overcoming the many challenges. The five components are logical, comprehensive, and are intended to result in ambitious but plausible outcomes, supported by targeted outputs.

The role of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and women is well defined and embedded throughout the project; however, analysis of opportunities to influence private sector behavior, including scope for innovation in influencing private investment and land use trends could be strengthened significantly.

The largest shortcoming in design is one of geographic breadth. Despite the description of economic drivers of deforestation that span national boundaries, only Thailand, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Papua New Guinea are indicated as child projects, with the absence of Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia and – most significantly – Indonesia. The regional coordination project (RCP) is well conceived – notably, it will link to other GEF-funded IPs, initiatives, platforms, etc. and seek to include countries that are not participating directly in the IP through knowledge sharing activities.

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*

X   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 program rationale is succinct, convincing and well substantiated, describing dramatic trends of forest loss over recent decades, with few effective mechanisms for regional cooperation on sustainable forest management.

The theory of change (ToC) presented in this PFD is well thought out, including the causal pathways that connect the overall objective, the barriers, and components – described in relation to the four transformation levers identified in the GEF programming document. The grouping of barriers into 5 categories helps provide a clear presentation for an otherwise complex context.

Notably, the ToC identifies livelihood sustainability as integral to the achievement of conservation outcomes and maintenance of ecosystem services. Mapping the anticipated contributions to Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets is helpful and welcome, alongside SDGs.

Several potential future scenarios are presented for the region that range from a rapid transition to sustainability (Scenario A) to a slow transition, marred by excessive climate change and disrupted socio-ecological conditions that result in extensive forest loss. An 'in between' scenario is deemed most likely; this is plausible, however the explanation for this judgment is lacking.

The multi-pronged focus on 1) planning, policy and reforms; 2) protected area management; 3) sustainable use outside PAs including enhanced connectivity and restoration, 4) investment and scaling; and 5) coordination, KM and capacity building is logical, comprehensive, and includes ambitious outcomes, supported by targeted outputs.

Each of the components are described in detail, including underlying assumptions and the potential risks involved if they do not bear out. Importantly, the PFD notes that the combined outcomes will contribute to positive impacts for nature, people and the climate – *only if* the scale of the project interventions outweigh the drivers behind current degradation trends.

The important role of IPLCs and women is emphasized throughout the project, including how these groups will be integrated into the various components, noting the strong and persistent forces of marginalization, and the modest progress in securing meaningful community tenure rights (outside of PNG).

While challenges of policy coherence and activities to address these are well emphasized, the identification of associated innovations is notably lacking. Precisely because the trends of forest decline have been so rapid, and because the economic drivers are well understood, there are a host of ways in which the IP *could* promote innovations in policy, governance, enforcement and economic incentives to support sustainable management. Many of these entail new strategies for engaging and influencing trends of private sector investment – admittedly difficult but potentially high leverage, with potential to generate lessons significant well beyond the region.

The largest shortcoming in design is one of geographic breadth. Despite the description of economic drivers of deforestation that span national boundaries, only Thailand, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Papua New Guinea are indicated as child projects, with the absence of Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia and – most significantly – Indonesia. Recognizing these gaps, the regional coordination project aims to link to other GEF-funded IPs, initiatives, platforms, etc., and countries that are not participating directly in the IP may develop 'associated projects' with the ability to share in best practices, events, etc. to effectively capture the larger extent of critical forest biome in the region.

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**

Recognizing the solid features of program rationale and design outlined above, STAP suggests:

1. While the importance of secure tenure rights and the importance of forest tenure conflict are noted extensively, alongside importance of IPLC engagement, it would be helpful to explore how the proposed IP will relate to growing civil society movements focused on community tenure.

2. Deepen critical analysis on strategies for engaging and influencing the private sector, including indirect measures of influence through strengthening of policy coherence, governance and enforcement. Current description contains few concrete examples. This shortcoming could be strengthened during the next phase, along with more details regarding the proposed investment forum.

3. Prioritize opportunities to extend the geographic breadth of the program, engaging countries that have not yet committed, in order to increase the likelihood of significantly influencing trends in the region. Related to this, the selection of an appropriate regional organization (not yet identified) to house the regional platform and help execute the project will be critical to pursue multiple pathways for broader country engagement – among government, civil society and private sector actors.

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.)