

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	12291
Project title	Restoring the ecosystem integrity of the degraded Bobirwa-Tswapong ecosystem to sustain livelihoods and effectively respond to human-wildlife conflict and biodiversity management requirements
Date of screen	21 May 2026
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The project is well aligned with Botswana's strong policy and institutional framework, including CBNRM, SPEDU and the National Environment Fund, and responds to three core challenges in the Bobirwa–Tswapong landscape: land degradation and habitat loss, climate change, including drought and rainfall variability, and human–wildlife conflict. Its Theory of Change is comprehensive and presents a strong intervention logic, linking local institutional capacity, integrated land-use planning, nature-based solutions and sustainable land management to ecosystem restoration, improved productivity, livelihood resilience and reduced human-wildlife conflict. The project also identifies key barriers, enablers, risks and intervention strategies in considerable detail.

However, the baseline analysis could be strengthened by presenting these issues as interconnected and mutually reinforcing within a broader socio-ecological system. A more robust systems analysis should clarify root causes, feedback loops, governance constraints and interactions among ecological, social and economic factors. The PPG proposal should also elaborate simple future narratives to show how the interaction across different drivers and associated uncertainty may affect project outcomes and the durability of GEBs. Also, the eco-tourism activities under Outcome 3.1 require stronger justification, including assessment of tourism readiness, feasibility, community capacity and whether tourism is an immediate opportunity or a long-term opportunity dependent on restoration and reduced human–wildlife conflict.

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.

This project is designed against the backdrop of a strong policy and institutional framework that exists in Botswana, to support integrated landscape management, Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM Policy), Selibe-Phikwe Economic Diversification Unit (SPEDU) and the National Environment Fund (NEF) etc. Three core issues are identified: (i) land degradation and habitat loss, (ii) climate change, including drought and rainfall variability, and (iii) human–wildlife conflict. While the **baseline situation** is presented, the analysis

appears somewhat simplified given the complexity of the landscape and the interrelated drivers of ecosystem degradation and human–wildlife conflict. A more robust **system-level analysis of the problem** covering the underlying root causes, feedback loops, institutional constraints, and interactions among ecological, social, and economic factors would help sharpen the project’s intervention and ensure that proposed activities are more strategic, and responsive to the realities of the local conditions. This should include how drought, rainfall variability, grazing pressure, land-use change, wildlife corridorst, livelihood vulnerability and weak local governance may reinforce each other and affect the durability of restoration, SLM and human–wildlife conflict outcomes.

While the project presents a relatively linear **business-as-usual and alternative scenario**, it does not sufficiently explore how **uncertain future** conditions could unfold through simple narratives. Elaborating this is critical to demonstrate that the proposed interventions will indeed address the drivers of degradation, remain relevant under different plausible futures and generate durable Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs). During the PPG stage, the project should develop elaborate the different plausible futures considering the different drivers such as climate change (including drought, rainfall and temperature variability, etc), land-use, livelihood and wildlife-pressure, etc. The interventions should then be designed to be robust to the identified plausible futures. This would help refine assumptions, targets, risk mitigation measures and monitoring indicators.

The project identifies and describes the **key barriers and enablers** in detail. The **Theory of Change** is comprehensive and presents a strong intervention logic through involvement of local institutions and stakeholders to develop and implement integrated land use plans and NbS, SLM, resulting in restoration of degraded land, which in turn improves productivity, and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. Risks, barriers and intervention strategies are outlined well. The ToC would be stronger if the causal links between restored ecosystem integrity, nature-positive enterprises, community acceptance of wildlife, and reduced human–wildlife conflict were made more explicit and measurable.

While the overall **project interventions** are logical and well aligned with the project objective, the sustainable tourism activity under Outcome 3.1 could be better justified. The document identifies eco-tourism potential around the four dams namely, Letsibogo, Thune, Lotsane and Dikgatlhong as well as Tswapong Hills and the Tuli Block, and links this to livelihood diversification. However, given the project’s strong focus on restoring degraded land, and addressing human–wildlife conflict, veld-products micro-processing plant, etc, the tourism intervention appears somewhat premature unless it has already been piloted or supported by a feasibility assessment. The project document does not clearly indicate the current readiness of the landscape or communities, to implement and benefit from tourism activities at this stage. STAP recommends that this be elaborated during the PPG stage, particularly given that the project proposes up to US\$250,000 in low-value grants for community livelihood diversification, which may include support for eco-tourism facilities. This assessment should clarify whether tourism is an immediate viable intervention or a longer-term opportunity dependent on successful land restoration and reduced human–wildlife conflict.

For the selection, adaptation and documentation of SLM/NbS practices, the project should draw more explicitly on WOCAT and PANORAMA, as already referenced in the knowledge management component and STAP guidance on [Exploratory Future Narratives Primer and Brief](#). And Botswana-specific evidence on drought impacts in Bobirwa, such as [Mugari et al. \(2020\)](#), could also help refine the drought-resilience logic, assumptions and indicators.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

STAP recommends that the project proponents address the issues raised in Section 2 above, and specifically, the following:

- Strengthen the project rationale by describing land degradation, climate change, drought and human–wildlife conflict as interconnected and mutually reinforcing issues within a **systems context**. The analysis should more clearly explain the root causes, feedback loops, and interactions among ecological, social, economic, and institutional/governance factors.
- Further elaborate on the baseline during the PPG stage, including simple future narratives and a simple ex ante outcome projection that illustrate how drought, rainfall variability, land-use change, livelihood stress and wildlife pressure could affect project outcomes and the durability of global environmental benefits.
- Provide greater clarity on the eco-tourism activities under Outcome 3.1 by assessing tourism readiness, feasibility, market access, safeguards and community capacity. The PPG should clarify whether tourism is an immediately viable intervention or a longer-term opportunity dependent on ecosystem restoration and reduced human–wildlife conflict.
- Use WOCAT Global SLM Database (<https://wocat.net/en/database/>) and PANORAMA more explicitly during design and implementation to identify, adapt and document suitable dryland SLM/NbS practices, including sustainable grazing management, cropland restoration, soil and water conservation, drought-resilient NbS and silvopastoral options.

ANNEX: STAP'S SCREENING GUIDELINES

Project rationale

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 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?
- 10. 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?
11. 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.)