REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11514
Project title	Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Bond (WCB) Operation
Date of screen	November 24, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This proposal provides a reasonable case to support the funding of the proposed intervention. STAP's review concluded that some of the elements (e.g. the project description, project rationale and existing baseline) are sufficiently clear and/or provide an adequate amount of evidence and information.

However, it also identified a number of areas that will need to be clarified in the final proposal (i.e. during PPG stage). These include the theory of Change (ToC), which covered all the basic elements but was overly simplistic and appears to have missed all the more nuanced aspects and elements associated with this type of intervention; the structure of the intervention with a focus on the project duration; and the risk section, which should include a category related to wildlife disease and should provide a better description of the mitigating measures related to some of the risk categories.

STAP's overall assessment concluded that this project is sufficiently justified by the current proposal but there are several scientific and technical points to be addressed during the next stage of project design.

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 summary** does not provide an actual summary of the activities that the project is planning to implement. Rather it provides a very broad and generalized overview of what the government of Rwanda is planning to do to scale up investments in Nature and adopt nature-based solutions to tackle climate vulnerability. In addition, few of the outputs listed here are subsequently allocated indicators that might be tracked to confirm their success. It also seems implausible that support will really reach all 600,000 community members at any individually significant way, and not project details are provided as to how this level of specificity will be achieved.

The **project description** and **rationale** are generally clear but include some incomplete statements. For example, in the section under ongoing co-operation it states that "*current mechanisms for supporting conservation efforts are sub-optimal, as most are focused on inputs and outputs"*, but does not explain why that is an issue in the context of this project. The project description has a strong focus on mobilizing finance and the conservation problem needs to be more clearly defined in the context of the ecological/human system and the consequences for delivering GEBs.

The high levels of endemism in Rwanda's Congo Nile Divide and the high levels of threat suggest the potential contribution to global environmental benefits (GEBs) could be high, but the logical pathways for achieving these outcomes is not completely clear. For example, Rwanda is highly dependent on wood-fuel. An estimated 57% of energy comes from direct burning of wood-fuel and 23% from charcoal, making wood-fuel one of the main drivers of forest loss. This is not discussed in the project description of theory of change. How will leakage from the project's results (i.e. gaining forest in one area whilst losing more in another area as fuelwood harvesting simply shifts) be addressed?

The proposal provides an adequate overview and description of on-going activities (i.e. the **existing baseline**) that this project will leverage and build upon.

The **theory of change (TOC**) covered all the basic elements but was overly simplistic and appears to have missed all the more nuanced aspects and elements associated with this type of intervention. It would have been good to see more developed and better-defined medium-term outcomes and critical assumptions. For example, one of the critical assumptions is that "*investors and stakeholders value and mobilize resources to support the role of biodiversity conservation*"; however, there were no mentions anywhere else in the proposal of measures or mechanisms that the project will deploy to guarantee that this happens. Even more importantly, another assumption is that "*local communities recognize economic, social, and ecological opportunities/ benefits derived from operation*", which again, is good in principle, but is also far from guaranteed. This is because if communities are already locked in environmentally extractive and/or destructive livelihood activities or patterns, which is quite likely, this will not happen spontaneously but will need specific interventions to ensure behavioral changes. This is especially relevant in areas like Rwanda where it is not uncommon to find sizable displaced and/or transient communities who are more likely to display such behaviors. One of the "if…then" statements (p.17) approaches the assumption that if communities are effectively engaged then there will be broader adoption – which is plausible but no mechanisms to achieve this is made explicit, nor is any intent to monitoring and learn about whether this assumption holds up in the face of conflicting priorities as above. Indeed, all of the listed assumptions warrant some level of monitoring but how this will be done is not addressed.

The proposal mentions the concept of "***enabling environment***" in several places but does not explain what this would consist of exactly in the specific context of this project. Creating an enabling environment is very important and STAP recognizes a number of enabling elements of project design that can reduce risk and *"increase the likelihood of delivering enduring outcomes that contribute to transformational change"* (Stafford Smith et a. 2021)

STAP's biggest concern is that the **project duration** seems insufficient for measuring meaningful conservation outcomes as a basis for success payments. The proposal indicates that project success will be determined based on a combination of biodiversity scores measured by (a) chimpanzee growth, hectares of habitat restored and improved management of chimpanzee habitat.

The project is modeled after the South African Rhino Bond, however, there are key differences in the conservation contexts, the target species and conservation interventions between South Africa and Rwanda that need to be considered. In the South African parks that were the focus of the Rhino Bond the main driver of rhino population decline was poaching and the main conservation interventions related to fencing of the parks and improved management and anti-poaching. Black rhinos, the conservation target, have a population growth rate that can be as high as 9-10% per year. In contrast, the conservation target for the current project is the eastern chimpanzee, which has a generation time of 24-28 years and a maximum population growth rate of ~1% per year, making it essentially impossible to evaluate population trends in a statistically robust manner. The scientific literature (e.g., White, 2019; Keith et al., 2015) indicates that for species with generation times and population growth rates even lower than chimps the minimum monitoring period for detecting population trends is 10-20 years. In the case of GMNP this is further complicated by the small population size of only ~25 individuals, so if the population increased at the maximum possible rate of increase the best-case scenario after 5 years (excluding immigration) would be an increase of 1 individual to a total of 26 chimps.

Similarly, 5 years is not a meaningful time period for measuring the success of native forest restoration, especially if a key metric is carbon stocks. First, the only sources for native tree seeds and seedlings in Rwanda are within national parks and a few forest reserves. In the 1-2 years of the project seeds and/or seedlings would need to be collected and nurseries established for propagation, while non-native vegetation is removed. Tropical trees require 10-20 years for regeneration or restoration of carbon stocks. Part of the restoration process described includes removal of existing invasive species. In Nyungwe NP, removal of invasive ferns is needed before trees can be planted. Pilot studies showed that to successfully remove the ferns and prevent reinvasion repeated treatments are needed every year for 4 years. This means that in Nyungwe, trees could only be planted in year 5. In GMNP, the Park restoration plan currently envisions 10 years of interventions to remove so it is not clear how success could be meaningfully measured after 5 years.

In the risk table, whilst some potential **risks** to the project have been well articulated and plans for mitigation are sufficient, others are very misaligned or inadequate. In particular:

- the discussion under Climate is not of **climate risks** but just recapitulates design features; real climate risks might include issues such as major drought during the 5y term undermining any conservation intervention; please reconsider real climate risks to the project.
- The discussion under **technological risks** is not evidently much to do with technological innovation risks. In fact, some of this text should appear in the Climate risk, perhaps. Given the statistics mentioned, as well as other climate-related catastrophic events in the project area in the last decade, should the climate risk be increased to moderate, rather than low? Also, inasmuch as project design has already dealt with these issues, they do not constitute risks to project implementation under there remains some risk that the design has not catered for them adequately.
- The text under Financial and Business model **innovation risk** is not about this [and is repeated verbatim under Other risks-macroeconomic (where it belongs)]. This is supposed to be a financially innovative project (one of the selection criteria for NGI program proposals) so please here explain why the innovations in the project may have at least moderate residual risks (which they likely will).
- The **stakeholder risks** pertain to the engagement assumptions mentioned above – the mitigation measures here are what should be articulated earlier as part of project design. Remaining risks to implementation may be issues such as this not being sufficient to overcome the social norms related to extractive activities mentioned above – how will these remaining risks be mitigated (or at least monitored and adapted to).
- Risks from **wildlife disease** should also be considered. Chimps are vulnerable to diseases such as Marburg virus (there is a recent outbreak in Rwanda), Mpox, Ebola and others. The risk of such diseases in the project area are not negligible, and the potential impact on project success could be moderate to catastrophic.
- Lastly, **institutional risks** are identified, however, additional risks related to potential for insufficient inter-ministerial coordination should be considered.

The proposal provided a good description of the **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system (p.14)**, which will be used to enable the issuance of the payments linked to the achievement of conservation targets. However, the proposed means of verification, which included estimates of increases in the chimpanzee population, raised doubts, because of the maximum rate of population increase of ~1% /year which would lead to very modest results over the lifetime of the project, as noted above. The methods of monitoring and verification, which involved a range of techniques (e.g. line transect sampling, direct sighting and camera trap data) were deemed to be adequate. However, the success payments are said to be based not only on Chimp population and forest cover but also "better management of chimp habitat" (p.5, 7, 17, 34) – but there is no mention of how this 3rd element will be measured and verified anywhere.

The proposal asserts (p.22) that **gender equality** and women's empowerment are 'clearly articulated' however, these words only appear in the ToC fine print and among indicators, with no treatment of the issues anywhere else. This should be rectified.

Likewise **knowledge management and learning** is asserted to be clearly described – whilst M&E is outlined for the purposes of performance payments only, the words "knowledge management" or 'learning' also appear nowhere in the PIF except in headings; what data will be collected on assumptions and barriers to achievement in this project that will help inform subsequent bonds projects, and how will this knowledge be transmitted?

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. The project summary should be re-written and should at the very least provide the following information: i) details of the problem and issues to be addressed; ii) a brief description of the project objectives; and iii) How these will be achieved.

2. The definition and indicators of project success need to be revised to address the STAP concerns identified in Section 2, especially, given the project duration. The TOC also needs to provide sufficient details on the interventions and articulate clear pathways to success and impact, including those engaging local community support.

3. Provide an explanation of the characteristics and features that would constitute the right enabling environment related to the specific context of this project.

4. Component 1 should be revised to include, not just implementation of management plans, but development of management plans, including restoration plans and consideration of climate change for PA and landscape management. Neither national park has a current management plan. GMNP has a restoration plan, but its timeline does not align well with this project, so it may need to be revised. GMNP has a Tourism Development Master Plan and Nyungwe has a business plan.

5. The ToC is too high-level and should be refined (in line with the suggestions made in box 2 above) to better reflect the specific contexts, necessary interventions and pathways to outcomes and impact. Please refer to the STAP's guidance on developing a ToC in a GEF context.

6. Provide more details on how the number of beneficiaries, which is estimated at 600,000, was determined and what level of benefits they will receive, through what pathways, and how long will this take? What is the current baseline with respect to livelihoods and other measures of wellbeing? The proposal states that the local community already benefits from receiving 10% of tourism revenue from GMNP, however, data are needed on current levels of tourism in the park and revenue generated. What impact will the project have, e.g., how many jobs will be created? What training do women and youth need to run nurseries?

7. Target 1 needs to be clarified. Fragmentation per se is not the major driver of biodiversity loss in the project area. Rather, native forest loss for fuelwood and charcoal production, as well as agricultural expansion and intensification are the major drivers. Also, these should be incorporated in the TOC and provide an impact pathway for how the project will address these. If they are not addressed, the gains from forest restoration will be short-term.

8. The final proposal should provide a more detailed description of the mitigating measure the project intends to apply against the climate and technological risks that have been identified in the PIF.

9. The risk table needs revision as noted above, including risks from insufficient inter-ministerial coordination, as well as coordination with other projects operating in the same area need to be more clearly described, evaluated and mitigated. For example, there is no discussion of coordination with MINAGRI which has its own priorities and projects which may not align with the current project, e.g., priority areas for expanding tea

production seem to overlap with priority areas for native forest restoration. Further, a description of how synergies will be maximized and duplication of effort with the related projects be achieved. If this doesn't happen, there is a risk of double counting. Please refer to the STAP's guidance on clarifying risks in GEF projects.

10. Clarify how the project will contribute to each of the GBF Targets. As it is currently written in the PIF, it is too vague.

11. Gender issues need to be addressed better in the main text. As does Knowledge management and learning other than the narrow M&E element.

12. The proposal states that no people will be relocated by the project, however, the project map shows in red the "expropriation area." The meaning of expropriation needs to be clarified in this context and potentially removed from the map, since it is not discussed.

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

References

Keith, David H. Resit Akçakaya, Stuart H.M. Butchart, Ben Collen, Nicholas K. Dulvy, Elizabeth E. Holmes, Jeffrey A. Hutchings, Doug Keinath, Michael K. Schwartz, Andrew O. Shelton, Robin S. Waples. Temporal correlations in population trends: Conservation implications from time-series analysis of diverse animal taxa. *Biological Conservation*, Volume 192, 2015, Pages 247-257. ISSN 0006-3207 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2015.09.021)

Stafford Smith, M., Ali, S., Carr, E.R., Donaldson, J., Metternicht, G., Ratner, B.D., and Bierbaum, R. 2021. Enabling Elements of Good Project Design: A synthesis of STAP guidance for GEF project investment. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility. Washington, DC. (https://stapgef.org)

White, Easton R. Minimum Time Required to Detect Population Trends: The Need for Long-Term Monitoring Programs, *BioScience*, Volume 69, Issue 1, January 2019, Pages 40–46 (https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biy144)

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.)