

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10995	
Project Title	Integrated water resources management in the transboundary Bermejo River Basin	
Date of Screening	4 June 2022	
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor.</p> <p>This PIF proposes a traditional TDA/SAP approach whose design takes into account lessons learned from previous efforts to support transboundary cooperation in the Bermejo River Basin.</p> <p>The problem analysis could better differentiate between environmental problems of land use change and root causes. The barriers identified are mainly focused on lack of understanding, monitoring and poor cross-border cooperation; yet, addressing these factors alone seems unlikely to address the root causes.</p> <p>The PIF includes a remarkably direct accounting of prior project shortcomings in the basin, including problems of coherence among sub-projects and failure to achieve “basin-wide impacts, as per the expected objectives.” This is welcome, but it also flags the need to better articulate how this investment will avoid those pitfalls.</p> <p>The theory of change seems to miss the linkage that explains how the TDA/SAP will 1) address the main drivers of degradation related to poor land use practices; and 2) attract ‘bankable projects.’ Incentives for investment in sediment control, improved land use, etc. are not clear; presumably the TDA will help to elucidate.</p> <p>The PIF fails to explain how a revised cooperative framework will lead to ‘bankable projects’ and what will</p>	

	<p>be the financial or other incentives for companies / organizations to invest in infrastructure, land restoration, or other identified measures.</p> <p>The KM approach lacks any articulation of how the information and lessons may have a chance of influencing the behavior of key actors at scale.</p>	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary	What STAP looks for	Response
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	<p>The stated project objective is “To reverse present land and water degradation trends in the binational Bermejo Basin by introducing integrated water resources management approaches including to groundwater resources, revamping and consolidating existing transboundary cooperation mechanisms, and accelerating priority reforms and investments.”</p> <p>The major problem described is poor land use practices upstream, including deforestation, which leads to erosion and high sediment loadings (exacerbated by flash flooding made more common by climate change).</p> <p>The main barriers to positive change are identified as lack of understanding, cooperation, and monitoring. This makes sense; however, poor living conditions are later listed as a ‘major environmental problem’ whereas this might be better placed in the category of ‘root cause’ where there is no discussion of why there are poor living conditions that may be contributing to environmental damage (or is environmental damage partly responsible for poor living conditions?) Acknowledging these issues is important to frame the relevance of proposed monitoring, capacity building and national level cooperation.</p>

Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	<p>Planned activities can be summarized as 1) updating the prior transboundary framework with new data plus training and tools; 2) assessment of groundwater resources, including training and tools; 3) defining bankable projects following update of TDA/SAP; 4) multi-stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>These combined activities have the potential to support the overall objective through a revised framework, data, tools, etc. but none of the proposed components appear to tackle the main problem of destructive land use patterns upstream which are the primary culprits behind erosion and poor water quality. If the assumption is that this will be encapsulated within the updated TDA/SAP, then it would be helpful to make this explicit.</p>
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?</p>	<p>The project has the potential to support adaptation to climate change; however, insufficient evidence is provided. STAP recommends using the decision tree for adaptation rationale to ensure that the project will encompass adaptation benefits.</p>
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	<p>Information provided makes this difficult to assess – particularly with regards to climate change adaptation. The PIF states that ‘the strengthened transboundary cooperation mechanism ... will promote appropriate allocations among competing uses, equitable distribution of benefits and burdens and community participation...gender equity...’ which is welcome though it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms and/or incentives are that will accomplish this beyond the future framework.</p> <p>Finally, the PIF indicates that 1,330,000 people (split evenly between female and male) will benefit from the project. This assumes that everyone in the basin will benefit from ‘increased water security</p>

		and climate resilience,’ which seems optimistic without more detailed explanation.
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Yes, these connections are plausible.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project’s logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	The global environmental problem is said to be ‘accelerated erosion’ but that seems more like a consequence of poor land use practices, which are listed as root causes. But what are the reasons behind poor land use and deforestation? The logic could be strengthened for improved clarity.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	The barriers are mainly focused on lack of understanding, monitoring and poor cross-border cooperation, which do not encompass whatever barriers may exist to mitigating the poor land use activities responsible for increased sedimentation.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	N/A
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Detailed summary of related project investments, including early transboundary cooperation efforts. Remarkably direct accounting of prior project shortcomings in the basin, including problems of coherence among sub-projects and failure to achieve “basin-wide impacts, as per the expected objectives.”
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project’s benefits?	Only in terms of past projects.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Not at this stage.
	For multiple focal area projects:	

	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	N/A
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	N/A
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	N/A
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>The TOC states that if the two riparian countries (Bolivia and Argentina) can agree upon a new TDA that is based on improved data and management tools and use this to harmonize policies which will lead to partnerships with IFIs and the private sector, then all people living in the basin will benefit in terms of improved water security, health, livelihoods, enhanced resilience.</p> <p>A TOC diagram is included that indicates how outputs will lead to outcomes and expected impacts (which is slightly different in that it focuses on reversing soil and water degradation), as well as several key assumptions.</p>
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	<p>As above – essentially that improved cooperation through TDA SAP will lead to ‘bankable projects’ that will result in improved security, livelihoods, etc.</p> <p>The theory of change seems to miss the linkage that explains how the TDA/SAP will 1) address the main drivers of degradation related to poor land use practices; and 2) attract ‘bankable projects.’ Instead, much of the focus is on the data management, capacity building, tools, etc. – all of which are helpful but the connection to these core issues is not explicit. Incentives for investment in sediment control, improved land use, etc. are not clear; presumably the TDA will help to elucidate.</p>
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project’s objectives?	Activities mainly revolve around development of tools and monitoring, capacity building and training with the objective of developing a revised

		cooperative agreement and agreed-upon priorities (TDA/SAP).
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	It seems likely that the combined activities/outputs will contribute to a revised TDA/SAP and the underlying assumptions are plausible, though not insignificant.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Not clear.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Remains difficult to assess.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	N/A
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	GEBs are tied to Indicator 7 of the IW RBM regarding shared transboundary water resources, making it relatively easy to measure. More difficult are claims of improved resilience and climate security, as well as the scope of impact on land use practices.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	This project seeks to improve upon the previous TDA/SAP by explicitly including activities related to measuring and monitoring. That said, one of the stated risks is lack of data and resistance to share information that is needed for integrated water management.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The entire project has as a goal to increase resilience to climate change – assuming this means resilience of the people living in the basin. Not enough climate data is provided to helpfully explain how climate change is expected to impact the area and how the project objectives may be

		affected. However, one of the aims of the revised TDA is to incorporate climate change data, which will presumably help to address this question.
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	No, the innovation statement is unconvincing. The proposed project follows a typical TDA/SAP process. The PIF fails to explain how a revised cooperative framework will lead to 'bankable projects' and what will be the financial or other incentives for companies/organizations to invest in infrastructure, land restoration, or other identified measures.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	No. There is reference to scaling but the evidence and pathway is not convincing, especially given past project shortcomings.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	The TDA/SAP can outline specific activities that will lead to incremental change.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A map is included with lat/long coordinates of the Bermejo river.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	<p>The main stakeholders in developing the TDA/SAP are national institutions. However, the project also includes academia (to form the Science Panel) and several NGOs that include farmers and others who may be impacted and presumably are also essential to the solution.</p> <p>A useful STAP reference for multi-stakeholder dialogue can be found here. This could be helpful to reference with attention to engaging private sector actors in particular.</p>

peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.		
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	Stakeholders will be consulted during the development of the TDA.
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Information on gender is focused primarily on national policies and not directly related to this project. It is assumed that half of the beneficiaries will be female; however, this rationale is not well supported.

	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Unclear.
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? 	<p>Yes, a reasonably broad range of risks are identified.</p> <p>Vulnerability of ecosystems and population to climate change impacts is rated 'high' risk, and the mitigation measure is the project itself which will contribute to adaptive capacity, though this aspect is not well explained.</p>
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	Yes. This PIF displays a good understanding of previous and ongoing related projects in this area, with admirably frank language on past project shortcomings.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes. There is explicit recognition of the previous TDA/SAP for this area and why it was not as successful as hoped for.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	Yes – main lessons learned from previous projects are elucidated including recommendations to formulate this project based on what transpired. A main lesson is that previous approaches towards cooperation were fragmented – this project will concentrate on fewer and larger investments.
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	OAS is proposed as the main executing agency (TBD) to prevent duplication and support transfer of lessons learned (OAS implemented 3 GEF IW projects that were precursors to the one proposed).

		It would be helpful to have further detail on how past mistakes can be avoided.
8. Knowledge management. Outline the “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project, and how it will contribute to the project’s overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	An unremarkable list of meetings and online services and consultations is described. Lacking is any articulation of how the information and lessons may have a chance of influencing the behavior of key actors at scale.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	In addition to standard dissemination of results through annual meetings, IW:Learn, etc. the KM approach proposed will revolve around the creation of the Bermejo Basin Information Management System that will be used to share data, management plans and other information with stakeholders.

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
	* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that <i>“STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.”</i>
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;
	(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.
	The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	<p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>