REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	12014
Project title	Enhancing Coastal Adaptation and Resilience in Bangladesh (CARB)
Date of screen	13 May 2026
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The proposal is well prepared and provides a clear, credible rationale for enhancing coastal adaptation and resilience in Bangladesh through community-led mangrove restoration, hybrid green-grey stabilization, climate-resilient livelihoods, and strengthened access to finance and markets. Its proposed joint government-civil society education is very good, and the project builds well on previous work conducted by the civil society partner (Friendship).

The project summary, rationale, and baseline sections explain well the vulnerability of the Sundarbans and adjacent coastal communities to sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, cyclones, erosion, ecosystem degradation, poverty, gender inequality, and livelihood dependence on natural resources.

The stakeholder section is concise but sound, with appropriate consultation of government, community, women, and Indigenous stakeholders. The project components are relevant and align with the Theory of Change. The risk section follows the expected GEF/STAP structure and the overall Moderate rating is reasonable; however, several risks and mitigation measures could be better specified in the full proposal, including those relating to suitability, livelihood uptake, and disruption from extreme weather events.

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** and **Indicative Project Overview** provide an overall acceptable description of the project. They clearly identify Bangladesh's coastal vulnerability to climate change, especially cyclones, erosion, salinity intrusion, and sea-level rise, and explain why mangrove restoration and climate-resilient livelihoods are relevant responses in the greater Sundarbans area. The sections also provide sufficient supporting data, including proposed targets for mangrove restoration, direct beneficiaries, livelihood diversification, financial inclusion, and emissions mitigation. The overview is generally coherent and shows a reasonable link between the problem, the proposed components, and expected adaptation outcomes.

The proposed pairing of the Departments of Environment and Forestry with the civil society organization Friendship is good and should help ensure the sustainability of outcomes.

The **project rationale** is strong. It provides a thorough, detailed, and well-referenced explanation of the problem and issues the project aims to address, and situates these convincingly within Bangladesh's national and coastal

context. The proposal clearly describes the exposure of the Sundarbans and adjacent coastal communities to sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, cyclones, erosion, and ecosystem degradation, and links these climate and environmental pressures to livelihood insecurity, poverty, gender inequality, and dependence on natural resources. The analysis, which is supported by additional data enclosed in ANNNEX H, applies a systems-thinking perspective effectively by identifying several relevant system drivers, including climate change, hydrological shifts, mangrove degradation, land-use pressures, aquaculture, weak local institutional capacity, and socio-economic vulnerability. It also explains how these drivers interact to reinforce risk: ecosystem degradation weakens natural coastal protection, climate hazards increase pressure on already fragile livelihoods, and poverty and limited livelihood options increase dependence on natural resources. Overall, this section provides a clear and credible explanation of the problem, its drivers, and the rationale for intervention.

The proposal includes an adequate description of the **baseline**. It identifies relevant national policies, strategies, and commitments, including Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan, NDC, NBSAP, and commitments under relevant MEAs, and explains how the proposed project aligns with these priorities. It also usefully identifies several relevant GEF and non-GEF baseline initiatives, including previous and ongoing work on community-based adaptation, coastal afforestation, climate-resilient livelihoods, and mangrove restoration. It would be helpful if the table showing existing site specifc initiatives on page 15 also showed the GEF project IDs, and the amount of funding for each project listed.

The proposal includes a description of the **barriers** to implementation, but this could be made more explicit and better integrated with the baseline narrative. The barrier posed by a lack of access to finance may be overstated, or at least is at odds with the proposal's intention to work with local financial institutions, which are relatively abundant in Bangladesh. The proposal could more clearly connect technical capacity gaps, dependence on unsustainable livelihood practices, weak institutional coordination, and limited access to finance to the outcomes the project seeks to achieve.

The **stakeholder** section is brief but clearly written and provides the necessary information, with more detailed tables provided later. The consultations with stakeholders for this project are good, and systematic, including with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Bangladesh Forest Department, Union Parishads, community members, women, Indigenous Peoples, and local leaders. The consultation process conducted during project design is sound, with focus group discussions held across target communities and adequate participation of women and Indigenous community members. The proposal describes the anticipated roles of each stakeholder group well. Government actors are expected to provide policy guidance, technical support, coordination, and local planning functions, while communities will participate directly in mangrove restoration, stewardship, livelihood activities, and local monitoring. The expected benefits to different groups, including improved livelihoods, strengthened adaptive capacity, greater participation of women, and enhanced community resilience, are also clearly described. The next version of the proposal could be strengthened by giving more attention to local political economy and governance risks. In particular, it should explain how the project will manage risks related to power dynamics, elite capture, clientelism, corruption, exclusion of marginalized groups, and unequal access to livelihood or financial benefits, which are important considerations for ensuring that community-led implementation and benefit-sharing are credible and durable. Keys to this may be the project's intention to establish partnerships with local financial institutions, including microfinance institutions and savings-based entities, which have a long history of navigating local power dynamics.

The narrative description of the **Theory of Change (ToC)** is succinct and clear. It provides an acceptable level of information for this stage of project development by identifying the main intervention areas (e.g. community-based mangrove restoration, strengthened subnational capacity, and improved access to finance and markets) and linking these to coastal ecosystem restoration, more inclusive adaptation action, and climate-resilient livelihoods. However, the next iteration of the proposal should include a more developed explanation of the underlying project logic and preferred pathways to impact. At present, the ToC narrative relies mainly on a basic "if–then" formulation and does not yet explain in sufficient detail how the proposed activities and outputs will interact to generate the intended outcomes. In particular, it should better explain the causal pathways through which mangrove restoration, hybrid green-grey embankment stabilization, livelihood diversification, institutional

capacity strengthening, financial inclusion, and market linkages will combine to reduce vulnerability and generate durable adaptation benefits.

The **ToC diagram** is well-designed and follows a clear linear structure that is easy to understand. The progression from environmental problems, root causes, and barriers through to project components, outcomes, and Global Environmental Benefits is illustrated effectively. The diagram includes most of the key elements expected at the PIF stage. However, it would be strengthened by mapping the key assumptions underpinning the causal pathways, either directly in the diagram or through numbered references linked to a legend. This would make the logic more transparent and help identify where implementation risks or enabling conditions are most important.

The **project components** are clear and justified and provide sufficient detail to explain how the proposed interventions aim to address the identified problems. The proposal describes a coherent package of activities focused on community-led mangrove restoration, hybrid green-grey embankment stabilization, climate-adaptive livelihoods, subnational capacity strengthening, financial inclusion, market access, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation. The proposed outputs are clear, linked to activities, and align well with the theory of change.

Component 1 is sound, particularly in its emphasis on ecosystem- and hydrological-based mangrove restoration, field-based community learning, and site-specific implementation. However, it is also very broad in scope, combining interventions as diverse as mangrove restoration, embankment stabilization, community capacity building, and alternative livelihoods. The next version of the proposal could more clearly distinguish among ecosystem restoration, infrastructure-related resilience, and livelihood diversification activities. Not all mangrove projects succeed, given the niche zones in which they can be established, and there is evidence that climate change and sea-level rise are risks to mangroves and mangrove restoration. These risks are acknowledged in the proposal and will be managed through the assessment of hydrological conditions and salinity regimes. Yet it will also be important to monitor recruitment at mangrove restoration sites against specific ecological targets.

The proposal identifies several possible livelihood options, including vegetable cultivation, poultry, aquaculture, small forest product processing, beekeeping, mud crab farming, climate-smart shrimp farming, Nypa palm products, and other ecosystem-based enterprises. However, it gives limited attention to the social, economic, and behavioral conditions that determine whether alternative livelihood strategies are likely to be adopted and sustained. Evidence from alternative livelihood programming shows that long-term uptake depends not only on training and inputs, but also on community ownership, perceived livelihood value, local demand, market access, risk exposure, tenure and access rights, social norms, household labor constraints, and whether the livelihood option is genuinely preferable to existing practices (IMM, 2008; Roe et al., 2015; Carr, 2020; Epstein et al., 2022; Peng et al., 2022).

Component 2 is a useful complement to Component 1, as it addresses several enabling conditions, particularly financial literacy, access to formal finance, enterprise planning, and market linkages. This is a strength of the project design. However, the proposal should more clearly explain how the livelihood support under Component 1 and the finance and market-access activities under Component 2 will be sequenced and integrated in practice. This would help demonstrate that alternative livelihood activities are not treated as one-off inputs, but as part of a credible pathway toward durable, climate-resilient income generation and reduced pressure on mangrove ecosystems. For further guidance, the proposal should draw on STAP guidance on Alternative Livelihoods.

The **risk** section follows the general GEF and STAP guidance on structuring and presenting risk analysis. It includes the main elements normally expected at the PIF stage, including: a short narrative introduction, a risk table, ratings across relevant risk categories, and proposed mitigation measures. The overall risk rating of Moderate appears broadly reasonable given the project context, the country setting, and the nature of the proposed interventions. Some risks are stated in very general terms, such as the possibility that project activities may cause negative environmental or social impacts, without specifying the types of impacts most relevant to this project. For example, the risk table could more clearly identify risks related to mangrove species selection and site

suitability, land and resource-use conflicts, exclusion of vulnerable groups from benefits, elite capture, weak uptake of alternative livelihoods, financial access barriers, or disruption from extreme weather events.

The proposed **risk mitigation measures** are also often generic. Phrases such as "*tailored climate adaptation strategies will be implemented in a coordinated and proactive manner*" do not provide sufficient detail to assess the credibility of the mitigation response. The proposal should specify what actions will be taken, by whom, at what stage of the project cycle, and how implementation will be monitored. This is particularly important for environmental and social safeguards, fiduciary risks, stakeholder risks, and risks linked to the long-term sustainability of livelihood and financial inclusion activities. The presentation of the risk table should also be corrected. The use of color coding in the rating boxes is potentially helpful, but the colors appear to be applied inconsistently. For example, a substantial risk is marked green while a low risk is marked orange, and no legend is provided to explain the meaning of the colors. The next version should either remove the colors or apply them consistently with a clear legend.

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

-In the **project summary,** explain how climate hazards, mangrove degradation, livelihood dependence, poverty, gender inequality, institutional capacity gaps, and limited access to finance interact to reinforce coastal vulnerability in the target areas.

-Make the **barriers** to achieving the project outcomes more explicit and better integrated into the baseline section, particularly technical capacity gaps, livelihood dependence on unsustainable resource use, weak coordination across institutions, and limited access to finance and markets.

-Clarify the mechanisms for **inclusive participation** and **benefit-sharing**, including how community representatives will be selected, how marginalized groups will be able to influence decisions, and how access to livelihood, finance, and market-support activities will be monitored.

-Describe how **stakeholder engagement** will be sustained during implementation, particularly through feedback mechanisms, grievance redress, community monitoring, and adaptive management arrangements that can respond to emerging social or governance risk capacity (**See STAP guidance on:** Enabling Elements of Good Project Design and Multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change).

-Clarify the causal link between the project components and expected adaptation outcomes, showing how mangrove restoration, livelihood diversification, subnational capacity strengthening, and financial inclusion will work together to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in coastal communities (**See STAP guidance on:** Theory of Change Primer).

-Integrate the main **ToC assumptions** more clearly into the diagram or accompanying text, showing where assumptions are most relevant to specific causal pathways and how they will be monitored or managed during implementation (**See STAP guidance on:** Theory of Change Primer).

-Review the structure of **Component 1** to determine whether its activities could be reorganized into more coherent intervention groupings, or whether an additional component is needed to distinguish more clearly between mangrove restoration, embankment stabilization, community capacity building, and livelihood diversification.

-Strengthen the design and rationale of the alternative livelihood interventions by explaining how livelihood options will be selected, validated, and sustained with community ownership and buy-in, taking account of local

demand, market viability, household labor constraints, risk exposure, access rights, gender norms, and incentives for adoption (**See STAP guidance on:** Alternative Livelihoods).

-Clarify the operational link between livelihood support, finance, and market access, including how activities under Components 1 and 2 will be sequenced so that livelihood support is connected to enterprise development, financial inclusion, and durable income generation beyond the life of the

- Sharpen the **risk analysis** in the next version of the proposal by defining risks more specifically and linking them to the project context, including site suitability, land and resource-use conflicts, exclusion of vulnerable groups, elite capture, alternative livelihood uptake, financial access barriers, and disruption from extreme weather events (**See STAP guidance on:** Clarifying risks in GEF projects, with a focus on innovation risks).

-Strengthen the **risk mitigation measures** by specifying the concrete actions to be taken, the responsible actors, the timing within the project cycle, and how mitigation effectiveness will be monitored and adjusted during implementation (**See STAP guidance on:** Clarifying risks in GEF projects, with a focus on innovation risks).

-Correct the presentation of the **risk table** by applying the color coding consistently across risk ratings and adding a clear legend, or removing the colors if they do not serve an analytical purpose.

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.

References

Carr, E. R. (2020). Resilient livelihoods in an era of global transformation. *Global Environmental Change, 64*, 102155.

Epstein, G., Alexander, S. M., Marschke, M., Campbell, D., & Armitage, D. (2022). The ambiguous impacts of alternative livelihoods on fisher well-being in a closed-access fish sanctuary in Port Antonio, Jamaica. *Coastal Studies and Society, 1*(1), 78–96.

IMM Ltd. (2008). *Sustainable livelihoods enhancement and diversification (SLED): A manual for practitioners*. IUCN; CORDIO; ICRAN.

Peng, W., Robinson, B. E., Zheng, H., Li, C., Wang, F., & Li, R. (2022). The limits of livelihood diversification and sustainable household well-being: Evidence from China. *Environmental Development, 43*, 100736.

Roe, D., et al. (2015). Are alternative livelihood projects effective at reducing local threats to specified elements of biodiversity and/or improving or maintaining the conservation status of those elements? *Environmental Evidence, 4*, 22.

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.)