REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11565
Project title	Integrated Landscape Management for Biodiversity Conservation in the Caatinga - Conecta Caatinga
Date of screen	25 November, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is a reasonably well-grounded proposal that focuses on improved governance and landscape and conservation management in the Caatinga, a Brazilian biome of globally significant biodiversity that has already lost 46% of its native vegetation. However, despite being based on solid principles, the proposal is not well-written, which makes it difficult to understand.

STAP's assessment identified several points that need more detail and strengthening during the next phase of project development. The description of the Caatinga needs to be more extensive, so that it is possible to understand it as a system, rather than as a collection of independent parts. The rational for the project needs to be strengthened and the project objective will need to be framed in the context of the GEBs that will be accrued from implementing the proposed project activities. A clear and comprehensive description of the baseline situation is also needed, so that the contributions of the project can be evaluated. Finally, the drivers and barriers need to be more clearly articulated, because they are foundational to the theory of change. Specific recommendations are provided below in sections 2 and 3.

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** is adequate and provides enough information about the environmental problems and issues that the project aims to address. The **project objective** is reasonably clear, but it is not framed in the context of the GEBs that will be accrued from implementing the proposed project activities.

The **rationale** for the project needs to be strengthened. Parts of the project rationale are clear, but the specific rationale for the targets of 500,000 ha under improved management and 14,000 people impacted is not clear. The Caatinga covers 844,453 km2 and 500,000 ha is only 0.6% of the region. Despite the small percentage, this may still be a meaningful target, but an explanation is needed. Similarly there are 27 million people in the Caatinga, and the target number of people impacted is very small. These targets may be very meaningful, but more detail is needed to determine whether this is the case. For instance, how was the target of 14,000 people arrived at and how will they be impacted by the project interventions? The area target also indicates that the 500,000 ha under improved environmental management will lead to the "establishment and maintenance of ecological corridors between PAs and other forest fragments." Historically, riparian forest provided the key

ecological corridors between fragments of the native ecosystem, and also provided the connections between the Caatinga with the Amazon forest and the Atlantic forest. Is the intent of the project to restore riparian forests in strategic areas? Ecological connectivity in the context of the project needs to be defined.

The **project description** states that 80% of the biome has been lost or degraded and that the main drivers are: i) conversion of native ecosystems for animal husbandry (goats and sheep are mentioned, but cattle and cotton production, which are also important are not); ii) deforestation to produce firewood (charcoal production, for both domestic and commercial uses is also important, but is not mentioned); iii) forest fires (the relative importance of climate change versus burning to clear land is not clear); and iv) "quick expansion" of wind and solar farms.

The proposal includes a table of "**drivers of degradation**," which does not mention loss, even though the text implies that both loss and degradation are critical processes. The same table lists 26 **barriers**, although in the narrative, these are condensed to a total of 6 barriers. The rationale for reducing these so drastically is not clear and the relationship of the 6 remaining barriers to each specific driver is not clear. This in turn, makes it difficult to develop a theory of change with clear logical pathways from barriers to activities to outputs, outcomes and impact.

The current description of the **baseline** is very high-level and too limited to inform the design of interventions. A clear and comprehensive description of the baseline situation is needed, so that the contributions of the project can be evaluated. In several places there is reference to "business as usual" but this is never defined. As a result, it is difficult to understand the logic for defining the outcomes (e.g. how is "faster adoption of sustainable and low carbon management" an outcome? Faster than what?). Also faster implies a rate, which is not provided.

The tables on pg. 14 of the proposal show average temperature and precipitation changes across the entire region, which is not directly relevant to the discussion in the narrative about extreme climatic events or increases in fire frequency or intensity, etc. Instead it would be good to have an explanation of what has already changed and what is projected to change at different scales. Also, this is a large area and different species of plants and animals will be differentially impacted by climate change or particular dimensions of climate change.

For the **future scenarios**, how will projected changes in climate affect the functionality of corridors? Will the project interventions through corridors increase, decrease or have no effect on the resilience or adaptive capacity of the ecosystem? What are the tradeoffs between the objective of income generation and biodiversity conservation? What are the baseline carbon stocks and how will target mitigation levels be achieved? How were the target levels calculated and what is the evidence these estimates are credible?

The description of the components was not always clear. **Component 1** "*Territorial Socio-environmental Governance",* the term territorial governance can refer to multiple geographic scales and levels of (usually public) administration. There are different potential ways that territorial governance can catalyze more integrated and inclusive approaches to conservation and development. Also these raises two further questions: i) what is the baseline situation with respect to Territorial Governance (e.g., how many different forms a are there in the project area and on what do they focus?) and ii) how will ecological conditions and the well-being of IP & LCs (or other target populations) improve by investing in activities related to territorial governance?

Component 2 "*Collaborative Ecosystem Conservation and Management*" aims to to establish and maintain corridors to connect six protected areas (PAs) but does not explain how the proposed activities can lead to increased ecological connectivity among these or what is an appropriate outcome? It is also confusing that, in one part of the proposal, the objective is stated as connecting public to private land, not necessarily connecting the six PAs, and that no restoration will take place on private land except potentially to create OECMs. What is the rationale behind this thinking? Some of the PAs are on private land. Isn't improved management of both private and public lands needed? What if control of invasive species or restoration on private land is needed as has been suggested, e.g., by the Caatinga Association? Furthermore, different organisms (e.g., a small mammal

versus a migratory bird) experience connectivity differently. So which organisms will benefit from increased connectivity? Is there a risk that increasing connectivity will promote the spread of invasive species, and how will this risk be mitigated? Isn't there a need for long-term finance to manage and monitor the corridors? STAP suggests thinking this through in more detail.

Component 3 "*Innovation in Public Management and Sustainability Policies*" does not provide any details about the kind of activities it will fund, or the baseline situation with respect to policies and enforcement. In this context, is the main need to fill gaps; to harmonize national and local policies; to revise policies to increase recognition and protection of biodiversity; all of these, some of these, or something else?

Component 4 "*Knowledge, communication and project management*" does not mention anything about scientific data or traditional knowledge, which raises some questions. For instance: what data, and over what spatial and temporal scales are needed to monitor whether the corridors are increasing connectivity and biodiversity condition among the six PAs? What data are needed to monitor financial wellbeing of families, IP & LCs and the private sector? Are measures of biodiversity, of fire frequency, location, intensity and impact needed to determine evidence-driven best practices?

There seem to be many relevant projects programs that this project will link to. It is difficult to understand what each of these projects is (e.g., names, locations, interventions, scale); the responsible institutions or entities; how each will impact this project and vice versa. A table with 3 or 4 columns would be a useful way to summarize this information and make it easier to absorb. A similar table with relevant data on laws and policies.

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. In addition to improving the writing, tables, and figures, the maps should be numbered and should have legends to describe what information they contain and should be referenced in the text to strengthen the narrative.

2. The description and rationale for the drivers and barriers needs to be clarified. For example, there is a table of "drivers of degradation," but from the text it sounds like both loss and degradation are critical processes, however loss is not mentioned in the table.

3. The description of outputs needs to be double-checked and revised since many are activities (e.g. "training of community members…." Or "support the recognition of OECMs") rather than outputs (e.g. "legal recognition of OECMs" and/or "designation of XX OECMS").

4. The baseline situation needs to include more detail with respect to current climate change and also contrast that with future climate change scenarios.

5. The names of the components are not clear and need to be written in plain language.

6. The logical pathways from barriers to interventions to outputs and outcomes needs to be made clearer through the TOC diagram and narrative.

7. Component 1 needs to be better defined. Generally, territorial governance can refer to multiple geographic scales and levels of (usually public) administration. There are also different potential ways that territorial governance can catalyze more integrated and inclusive approaches to conservation and development.

8. Component 2 also needs to be better defined to explain how it will lead to increased ecological connectivity among PAs and what is an appropriate outcome.

9. The rationale for selecting the particular interventions the project will use needs to be clarified in some detail.

10. It would useful to include a table that illustrates the main details (i.e. names, locations, interventions, scale) of at least the most (directly) relevant interventions that this project wil link to. A similar table could also be used to illustrate the relevant data on laws and policies (e.g. the law or policy; legal authority; method of implementation/enforcement; scale).

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.)