

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| GEF ID | 11395 |
| Project title | Enhancing biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development utilizing a landscape approach. |
| Date of screen | 15 January 2024 |
| STAP Panel Member | John Donaldson |
| STAP Secretariat | Alessandro Moscuza |

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is a strong proposal that covered all aspects and requirements of project design adequately. STAP found that the arguments proposed were balanced and based on sound logical reasoning. The proposal was supported by sound technical data and quantitative evidence from official sources. The project objective was clearly defined and the theory of change (ToC) provided a good description of how and why the proposed interventions would achieve their intended outcomes and goal. The reasoning underpinning the ToC was based on a robust set of 'impact pathways' and was supported by sound assumptions and a thorough description of the proposed component and related activities. All other elements of project design (i.e. baselines, risk, knowledge management and learning) were adequate. Stakeholder engagement was incomplete but the proposal acknowledged this and stated a sound course of action to remedy it in the next stage of project development.

STAP acknowledges the scientific and technical merit of this proposal, which it concurs with. STAP has identified a few aspects of the proposal that could be improved and has made a number of suggestions to be considered during the next stage of project development.

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 proposal provided a good description of the **problems and issues** to be addressed and a thorough analysis of the wider system within which this project will be operating, which covers economic, social and ecological factors. The **project objective** was clearly defined and adequately linked to the project description and summary. The description of the **barriers** that the project will need to address was very good and covered several fields and aspects of government policy, the country's institutional set-up and legal framework, technical capacity and financial investment and incentives.

The narrative description of the project's **theory of change** was thorough and comprehensive. STAP found that this covered all the required elements of good project design adequately and provided a solid reasoning to justify the need for the project and the rationale behind its concept. In this context, STAP appreciated the use of pre-conditions as an additional element, which is separate but complementary to the key assumptions. The ToC diagram included all the main elements and STAP noted the use of different shape boxes and colors, which increased clarity, but this could still be simplified and streamlined in various places. STAP also noted that several interventions mentioned in the diagram are not dealt with in the text and these need to be aligned, for example,

alternative livelihood is prominent in the diagram but is not discussed in the narrative for Component 2. There are also aspects of the components where the scientific merit and technical feasibility will need to be evaluated during the PPG phase (see recommendations below).

The section on **stakeholder engagement** was limited in scope and will need to be improved significantly in the next phase of project development. However, the proposal acknowledged this issue outright and has included a clear description of the measures and actions that will be implemented to resolve this issue before the proposal reaches CEO approval.

The section on **risk** was solid and covered all the main aspects and angles well. The proposed mitigation actions were assessed as good or adequate. STAP identified a couple of risk ratings and proposed mitigating measures that could be improved and has made specific recommendations to rectify this.

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

STAP recommends that the proponent address the following:

- Under the description of the project components, STAP suggests that the description of sub-components 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 be revised to be more specific and provide further details of planned activities.
- The ToC diagram could be simplified and streamlined, perhaps removing some of the elements. Logical pathways (i.e. arrow connectors) could also be simplified by reducing their number. It is good to see the use of different shape boxes and colors for different elements of the ToC, but labeling could be improved to ensure consistency with narrative description.
- Component 2 includes a list of possible interventions, including payments for ecosystem services, OECMs, solutions for human wildlife conflict and alternative livelihoods, but does not provide any detail to assess their scientific merit or technical feasibility. In all of these cases, there are scientific and technical issues that would influence the effectiveness of proposed interventions. The PPG phase should assess the viability of these options along the lines of the planned studies of different nature-based solutions and their relevance to biodiversity enhancements in Central Vietnam. STAP's advisory documents can provide useful guidance on a number of these issues, for example STAP's background note on [Alternative Livelihoods](#) and Advisory document of [Payment for Ecosystem Services](#).
- The proposed mitigating measures for the macro-economic risk category should be revised to account for any potential macro-economic risks/shocks that are exogenous to the project and could be triggered during implementation. The project should at least have a broad contingency plan on how to mitigate address these.
- The rating for fiduciary risk should be revised to moderate because the project will work extensively with/through govt. partners and Vietnam is a high-risk environment for fiduciary issues.
- The rating for stakeholder engagement risk should also be revised to moderate because it is quite possible that some ethnic minority groups may be adversely affected, or may perceive that they will be and obstruct/protest against implementation of specific segments of project activities.

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.)