REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11400
Project title	Building climate resilience of communities in Cambodia's protected landscapes: biodiversity-friendly crop-livestock systems for adaptation.
Date of screen	12 January 2024
STAP Panel Member	John Donaldson
STAP Secretariat	Alessandro Moscuzza

1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

STAP assessment concluded that this is an interesting project, which has merit and is based on a sound concept. However, the current version of the proposal presents several weaknesses, which should be addressed and rectified before the project proceeds to the PPG stage..

The areas that STAP has identified as needing revising include the description of the baseline, which was limited in scope and could be expanded to include government policies and interventions; the description of the barriers, which was unclear and too generic in places; the Theory of Change (Toc), which presented several structural and content issues, the descriptions of outputs under Component 1 (1.1.4 and 1.1.5), Component 3, and Output 4.1.2; as well as the risk section, which STAP found to be inadequate, even for this early stage of project design and development.

Further details on STAP's assessment and recommendations have been provided in the relevant sections below.

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 comprehensive explanation of the **problems** and issues faced by Cambodia as a country on the whole and the project target region more specifically. The analysis was supported by a considerable amount of scientific evidence and data from verified sources. It also provided a thorough description of the context within which the project will operate; this involved an analysis of various aspects covering population growth, economic development, climate change, government policies, and social issues.

The **baseline** section of the proposal comprised only a description of three existing projects - two GEF projects, which the proposal intends to complement, and a UNEP Adaptation Fund project "Enhancing climate change resilience of rural communities living in protected areas in Cambodia" (2013-2021), which the current project is expected to build upon. There was, however, no mention of government policies or interventions which would add to the baseline situation. Even though a number of policies and laws were mentioned in the project description section, it would have been good to see these discussed in this context, to better understand how the project would aim to tackle some of the issues associated to their introduction. The description of some of the

barriers was unclear. For example, under barrier 1, lack of clarity on ecosystem rehabilitation was listed as one of the issues leading/contributing to an inadequate enabling environment, but it was not clear how. Barrier 4 "Limited knowledge management, coordination, and sharing across key stakeholder groups" was quite generic and did not provide a clear explanation of the type of knowledge that was not being shared or why.

The **ToC** presents a number of structural/content issues that should be rectified, namely:
  i) The ToC narrative is very brief and the accompanying diagram is therefore needed to fully understand the project logic, but diagram does not provide any clearly marked outputs, outcomes and impacts;
  ii) The sequencing is confusing and does not appear to follow a clear logical pathway, or map out the causal pathways between different elements of the project (i.e. what action/activities leads to what result);
  iii) The diagram provides a clear list of adaptation benefits, but only two GEBs, which are also poorly defined. Even though it is understood that adaptation is the main focus of this project, the GEBs should still be better defined and made clearer;
  iv) The assumptions are quite weak, as they appear to refer to given certainties rather than 'beliefs' that underly the project's logic and that could undermine the outputs if they prove to be untrue.

The current **project description** gives the impression that the project is primarily about food security – the link biodiversisty issues and GEBs is made elsewhere in the document but is completely missing from the IF-THEN statement where the final outcome is only about food security and nutrition. The description of several outputs under **Component 1** were unclear, and it was not evident what exactly these outputs would deliver and how. Particularly, outputs 1.1.4 and 1.1.5 provided limited information. Although 1.1.5 refers to lessons from an ongoing project, it could provide a stronger rationale based on early lessons from that project.

The section on "**co-ordination with existing initiatives**" provided a clear and comprehensive description of the institutional arrangements and operational set-up for the project, how this will be managed on a day to day basis and how activities will be implemented, although STAP found that the title of this section was misleading.

STAP found the **risk section** to be inadequate, even for this stage of project design and development. The risk categories are too broad and generic (e.g. climate, environmental and social). The mitigation measures proposed are not adequate and do not provide sufficient assurances or evidence that project-related risks have been properly considered or that appropriate and meaningful mitigation measures are being planned.

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

- The section on the **project description** should emphasize the link between "food security and nutrition" and the achievement of GEBs and adaptation benefits to avoid the impression that the project is primarily about food security.
- The **ToC** should be thoroughly revised. The main recommendations from STAP are as follows: i) The ToC diagram should mark different elements (e.g. outputs, outcomes, and impacts) clearly; ii) the sequencing between the different elements should be revised to ensure that there is a clear, logical sequence between activities, through to outputs, outcomes, impacts etc.; iii) the list of proposed GEBs should be integrated more clearly into the logical sequence of the overall ToC. Additional guidance on developing a ToC for GEF projects may be found on the STAP website: (https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/theory-change-primer).
- **Output1:** STAP recommends that this description be revised substantially and that this section be mostly dedicated to explaining what the project will actually deliver in concrete terms and how, by providing more granular details about the activities it intends to fund etc. The description of the problem should be moved to the relevant section in the proposal, and any duplication should be removed.

- The section on ***co-ordination and co-operation with existing initiatives*** should be renamed to ensure the title reflects accurately the content. STAP suggests something along the lines of "*institutional and operational management arrangements for the project*".
- The content of the **risk section** should be revised to ensure that the risk categories are less generic/more descriptive and provide more specific details about the type of risks that the project is likely to face. The description of proposed mitigation measures should focus on identifying specific solutions that can be deployed to tackle any emerging risks. For example, under macro-economic risks, instead of saying that "*this will be monitored and taken into account during PPG and monitored in implementation*", the proposal should try to identify possible actions that could be deployed to counter potential inflationary pressures on project finances.

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.)