

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

| Part I: Project Information | Response | |
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| GEF ID | 10699 | |
| Project Title | Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and Improving Forest Landscape Planning in Bago Region, Myanmar | |
| Date of Screening | 11/27/2020 | |
| STAP member screener | Mark Stafford Smith | |
| STAP secretariat screener | Guadalupe Duron | |
| STAP Overall Assessment and Rating | <p>Concur</p> <p>STAP welcomes the proposal to mainstream biodiversity conservation in forest landscapes in Myanmar. STAP applauds the provision of a theory of change (ToC) at this stage, with a clear narrative which helps outline the proposed project logic quickly, with a clear identification of drivers and barriers. Notably and positively the ToC addresses the issue of eventual scaling from this project.</p> <p>The proposal treats local control and the empowerment of women well, in a way that is embedded throughout, and seems to draw real lessons from previous projects. It is also encouraging to see the (challenging) issue of leakage addressed explicitly.</p> <p>Given the importance of achieving (and being perceived to achieve) genuine co-design, STAP recommends some monitoring of whether both government and community participants feel this is happening during roll-out, to forestall any failings, and also test whether the logic presented is necessary and sufficient to achieve change.</p> <p>Formally monitoring and evaluating other ToC assumptions over time will allow learning about these also.</p> <p>Below, STAP describes further its recommendations on how to strengthen the project design.</p> | |

| Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary | What STAP looks for | Response |
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| Project Objective | Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis? | Yes. (Learning from objectives in other projects, it might be good to include in the wording up front the intention – that is well articulated through the proposal – to support local livelihoods or ‘wellbeing’ (as in the ToC). This would help emphasise the joint goal of achieving both global and local benefits.) |
| Project components | A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives? | Yes |
| Outcomes | A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits? | Yes |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | Plausible. |
| 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? | Plausibly <i>necessary</i> and probably <i>sufficient</i> . |
| Part II: Project justification | A simple narrative explaining the project’s logic, i.e. a theory of change. | We applaud the presentation of a good ToC description and diagrams, with a good analysis of drivers and barriers, and assumption logic. This makes the logic much easier to follow and justify, and could replace significant other text. |
| 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? | Yes, including noting especially challenges of poverty, low education rates, malnourishment, high deforestation and over exploitation rates, especially illegally, as well as climate change, challenges to economic growth, and population growth |
| | Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references? | Yes: key barriers are argued to be failure to engage communities in land use planning coupled with limited information and government capacity for planning or management at regional levels, limited |

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| | | livelihood incentives for better local management, and low capacity and resources in local protected areas. |
| | 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? | Yes, clear links between biodiversity and land degradation (and probably other areas). |
| 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects | Is the baseline identified clearly? | <p>Yes. The baseline section identifies other activities, as well as key gaps in information and processes.</p> <p>Supportive trends include a shift in policy intentions from top-down control to local empowerment which indicates government readiness to move to the next step. This relatively recent change does raise questions about how culturally ready regional government staff (and target communities) are for more decision making power at a local level; and, even if ready culturally, how well-aware staff are of how to run real co-design processes rather than superficial consultations.</p> <p>It also highlights the high level of illegal harvest/hunting, which suggests a high risk of leakage of any achieved benefits such that improvements in targeted areas may simply put greater illegal harvest pressure on surrounding lands. This issue of leakage is addressed but not resolved later in the proposal.</p> <p>The proponents are clearly aware of these issues, but they lead to a couple of suggestions below</p> |
| | Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits? | Yes, though this is summarized better in the Section 6 Table. |
| | Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project? | Probably |
| | For multiple focal area projects: | |

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| | are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators; | Probably though not in this section |
| | are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and | Useful projects identified, and useful lessons drawn. |
| | how did these lessons inform the design of this project? | |
| 3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project | What is the theory of change? | <p>It is great that the proposal provides a ToC diagram (the presentation of a fuller and then more overview diagram is also helpful) and there is an excellent short, explicit description of the assumptions underlying the chains of logic (p.24-25); this really helps to lay out how the components will work together to achieve the overall outcomes.</p> <p>This logic also provides an implicit case that the set of interventions are both necessary and sufficient.</p> <p>It is noteworthy that the ToC (at the bottom of the diagram) key elements that set it up for scaling.</p> |
| | What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes? | <p>The logic is strongly focused around local empowerment and ownership of plans then management practices, coupled with sufficient capacity and resources to act in government and incentives to act in communities. There are multiple plausible assumptions in this that could be challenged, and which should be monitored and tested as the project progresses; these should now form a constructive part of the design discussions in the community and regional government.</p> <p>In particular the logic hangs heavily (and plausibly) on community empowerment creating community support, and on changes in management delivering livelihood and wellbeing benefits to the community that cause them to champion the whole process; it would be worth monitoring and testing these links throughout the process, to enable early warning of</p> |

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| | | any links not working. A particular risk could be that government personnel, even if signed on in principle to ceding planning power, do not internalize this sufficiently that it is seen as genuine by locals. Of course it is also possible that the communities also are not ready or organised to take on this role. Establishing some lead-indicator monitoring of the genuineness of these processes in Components 1 & 2 (including how both sides perceive its effectiveness) could provide key timely learning. |
| | What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | As above |
| | Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions? | Yes, excellent. Components 3 and 4 already address issues that will matter for scaling out the project, which is excellent foresight. |
| | Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes? | Yes. As noted above, this could be enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing some assumptions in the ToC, in order that the project can learn about these for implementation flexibility as it proceeds. STAP's ToC Primer discusses this process of adaptive MEL. |
| 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? | Good reasoning in Table, p.40. It would be good to maintain a focus on whether the key drivers of climate change and population may undermine the durability of GEBs achieved. It is also excellent that the issue of leakage is acknowledged (p.33) since this is one key potential source of undermining the durability of GEBs in this project. This recognition is really important, even if it is perceived as hard to predict; it may be useful to think about how tracking of leakage might be accomplished as part of monitoring for LDN, once Myanmar sets its targets and monitoring approach for this – ideally this would |

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| | | commit to determining the national-level of outcomes for land degradation by land type, rather than just local achievements, and thus start to monitor and manage leakage from projects like this – ie. not a responsibility of this project but worth this project encouraging, to better assure the durability of benefits achieved here. |
| | LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change? | |
| 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? | Yes, and nicely balanced with intended local benefits that are necessary to maintain local support |
| | Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment? | Yes, especially with scaling, which is addressed. |
| | 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? | MEL will need more development on details, but basis for this is clear. |
| | What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change? | Climate risk screening is discussed below. |
| 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? | Individual elements are not particularly novel globally in principle, but they are clearly a major innovation for Myanmar, with planned potential for scaling. There is also innovation in the overall integrated approach which will hopefully deliver a success story of value elsewhere in the world subsequently. |
| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | There is serious and credible attention provided to scaling, such that its precursors are built into the project planning (e.g. p.23 etc), through training (output 3.3) and component 4, and appear in the ToC. This is further elaborated here. |
| | Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability? | The project is seeking to support transformational change in how Myanmar's policy system interacts with communities on the ground. Scaling towards this is seriously considered. |

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| | | (Acknowledgment of the possibility that leakage undermines durability is discussed above.) |
| 1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. | | OK |
| 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 peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement. | Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers? | Acknowledging COVID constraints, yes; and strong assertion of lessons about good local 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? | OK. |
| 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 | Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences? | Good outline and acknowledgement of cultural challenges, and well embedded throughout the proposal. An early gender analysis is intended (STAP would urge a specific youth element in this also). |

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| <p>project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p> | | |
| | <p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p> | <p>An analysis of this is proposed, and should be progressed very early.</p> |
| <p>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> | <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? | <p>Overall the risks seem comprehensive, noting the recognised (and addressed) high risk of loss of durability of outcomes, and potential disenfranchisement of both women and Indigenous people. The potential for social disharmony in participatory land use planning is noted, which is good – STAP would recommend adding a monitoring element to the treatment to this.</p> <p>There is a good analysis of COVID implications; and of climate change risks. The impacts of COVID on tourism (p.19) highlight how important it is not to put 'all the eggs in one basket'. A key related risk from climate change is promoting livelihoods that become incompatible with</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? | <p>conditions in the future (e.g. through changes in temperature, fire risks, etc): although there is attention to practices addressing projected impacts in the sense of not being maladaptive (p.57), implications of uncertainty in the rates and degree of change are not discussed. It would be good to explicitly ask whether proposed actions are robust to this uncertainty – that is, they will perform reasonably well in all futures, rather than being good in some futures and failing in others. Diversification (cf. COVID and tourism) is likely to be one such characteristic.</p> <p>But this is a good risk analysis!</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? | Seems so. |
| | Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them? | Yes. |
| | Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited? | |
| | How have these lessons informed the project’s formulation? | |
| | 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? | |
| 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? | <p>KM is largely congruent with Component 4 and is handled well (see above). As noted there, some more focus on testing ToC assumptions would be valuable.</p> <p>Like the definition on p.61 – “KM is about getting the best knowledge to the right people at the right time”!</p> |
| | What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience? | |

Notes

| STAP advisory response | Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed |
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| 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. |

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| <p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p> | <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> |