STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**11717**
Project title	**Building Climate Resilience for Vulnerable Groups in Rural and Urban Areas of Yemen**
Date of screen	**29 November 2024**
STAP Panel Member	**Blake Ratner**
STAP Secretariat	**Guadalupe Duron**

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The proposal's logic is technically sound but with room for refinement. The PIF provided a detailed account of how observed and projected climate change, and its interaction with conflict, will increase communities' vulnerabilities to climate change impacts. STAP welcomes the use of an "area-based approach" to analyze the compounding and complex interactions between climate change, conflict, and environmental degradation for local communities.

The proposed project claims innovation by supporting communities with upfront capital for solar photovoltaic systems, and associated financing. Challenges to enabling the adoption and scaling of the solar technology, as well as crowding-in more private sector investment, will need to form part of the project logic, and any remaining risk captured in the risk table. Interactions between risks should also be spelled out. STAP recommends that project developers pay close attention to how non-climate factors (e.g. policies affecting land use) contribute to vulnerability, as effective adaptation depends upon addressing these interactions.

However, in STAP's view, the most innovative element may be the intent to show that "addressing climate change risks within a peacebuilding approach can help counteract societal tensions and potential violence connected to the physical impacts of climate change." This element merits close attention as a focus of monitoring, evaluation and learning during implementation. The humanitarian and security context combined with the challenging social and ecological conditions no doubt will necessitate significant adaptive management. Moreover, lessons learned can be highly valuable for other climate-stressed regions.

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
- □ X 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 rationale is well described. It provides an in-depth description of the socioeconomic, population, and geographical context. The project developers also describe the climate change context influencing Yemen, including the current and future climate trends and how they influence the country's population, land, and water resources. All of this is highly relevant to understanding the complex situation contributing to communities' vulnerabilities and the impact of climate change (e.g., drought and floods). The incidence and projection of higher temperatures should not be underestimated as a driver of drought, including disruptions to the water cycle. When developing the project, it is worth exploring what climate forecasting data is available at a downscaled level. This could help with landscape planning and local climate adaptation strategies.

The rationale also effectively analyzes the interactions between climate change, conflict, and environmental degradation. The description of these drivers should help in formulating future narratives, which are not explicitly described in the rationale. STAP also suggests adding a more robust description of the non-climate contributors to vulnerability, apart from conflict—such as social and economic issues and policies influencing land use. The baseline description usefully identifies points of complementarity with related projects. The baseline description could be strengthened by identification of gaps or lessons learned, and elaborating how this project will build on the baseline conditions, including other projects (GEF and non-GEF). Giving greater attention to the baseline will also help strengthen the justification of this project's LDCF additionality.

The project logic appears sound, aiming to "*foster long-term, systemic change by shifting from unsustainable dryland farming practices to climate-resilient systems across the region"*. For next steps in project design, including theory of change and component articulation, STAP suggests a focus on assumptions and challenges of adopting and scaling the selected technology and organizational solutions, including distributed solar energy generation, ecosystem-based adaptation, and smart agricultural technologies, and their interactions with peacebuilding. The risk table should also be explicit about the risks that can occur despite good project design, as a basis for mitigating measures.

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 offers the following suggestions to strengthen next steps in project design:

1. The start of a description of plausible futures is offered when the area-based approach is first raised in the rationale. However, STAP recommends developing a more robust description of plausible future scenarios by analyzing the interactions between key drivers (including climate change, conflict, population pressure, internal displacement). This can aid in identifying and refining interventions most likely to address communities' current means of coping with and adapting to climate change impacts.

2. In the theory of change, STAP recommends identifying the assumptions and risks associated with each outcome. Currently, only a general list of assumptions is provided. This can aid in testing the viability of the proposed project, especially important in such a frought political, security and humanitarian context.

3. The articulation of innovation should be revisited. While the project description identifies the PV solar technology as innovative, the risk table notes "the technical design of the project hues closely to the approaches adopted successfully for other projects/settings in Yemen, including previous solar PV installation projects." Extending an approach already proven in the context is not innovative. By contrast, the participatory and integrated area-based approach, linking analysis of climate vulnerability to other social and institutional dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding, appears worth highlighting for potential innovation and generation of lessons.

4. In component 1, it will be valuable to draw from the experiences and lessons learned from other projects that focused on similar issues, such as improving communities' capacity for integrated water management, water storage, and the use of climate data/information to develop water management plans. Furthermore, attention to social aspects that underpin the logic of this component, such as gender, cultural values, ethics, should be identified and articulated.

5. In component 2, assumptions, and associated risks, will need careful attention:

- There is an inherent assumption that targeted land has the capacity to be restored, or to demonstrate agricultural productivity to support climate-resilient crops. This assumption should be identified in the theory of change. The PIF mentions spatial planning, but whether this includes an assessment of land potential is unclear.
- An analysis of the non-climate variables, such as policies supporting drought-adapted agriculture, and socioeconomic variables (in addition to conflict) should be integrated. Effective adaptation requires assessing how social, economic, political factors associated with vulnerability intersect with climate change to identify how they ameliorate or exacerbate community vulnerabilities. STAP's advisory document "A decision tree for adaptation rationale" offers steps to consider when designing such interventions.
- The component should specify the assumptions and challenges associated with the adoption of solar photovoltaic technology, scaling of the technology, crowding-in more private investment, and the assumptions associated with achieving climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits, such as reduced GHG emissions.

6. In component 4 (knowledge management and monitoring) STAP recommends setting up a rapid learning cycle for the proposed innovations. Learning quickly will influence the timing of adaptive management necessary to achieve the outcomes and the project objective.

7. The risk table should be refined to more credibly address the risks to project outcomes, subsequently ensuring that mitigation measures are also appropriate. See STAP's recent guidance note on clarifying project risks for further guidance on completing the risk table. Key points for attention:
   - Context risks appropriately focus on potential impediments to achieving outcomes given the basic project design logic. Yet, the explanation of Political and Governance risk appears to give unwarranted weight to the attributes of the UNDP and UN system. Given the fragility of the governance system amidst ongoing conflict, it's difficult to see how this risk could be anything but High. Note that the GEF Risk Appetite explicitly acknowledges that Context risks will often be high in fragile and conflict affected situations. See also STAP guidance on pursuing GEB's in fragile and conflict-affected situations.
   - Innovation risks should address the risk that selected innovations will fail to deliver intended outcomes. The identification of Institutional and Policy risk should therefore focus on what could impede the success of any policy and institutional changes. Noting that "The proposed outputs and activities are closely aligned with national development priorities" does not speak to the issue of "policy and regulatory barriers" raised earlier, nor to vested interests and more. This suggests the need for a more realistic assessment of the risks involved in policy and regulatory reform, and making sure these are well addressed in the design.
   - Under Execution risks, similarly, it seems implausible that Stakeholder risk would be low under the social context described, including the intention to contribute to environmental peacebuilding.
   - Careful attention should also be paid to the interactions between risks – for example, the effects of climate risks on the adoption of smart-agricultural technologies (Ecosystem-based Adaptation, agroforestry, and others).

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.

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.)