STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11267
Project title	Beyond 30x30: Securing resilience in the Eastern Tropical Pacific through enhanced transboundary cooperation
Date of screen	June 6, 2023
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1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

This proposed project is intended to ensure the long-term resilience and conservation of at least 31.2 million ha of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor area – by strengthening regional governance, coordinating blue economy investments and conservation efforts and securing regional connectivity and improved management. The area covered by the proposed project is significant in terms of its large size and high levels of biodiversity. The transformative ambition, to model the "first regional ocean governance and sustainability effort in the western hemisphere" is compelling. Identification of linkages to prior and ongoing investments is particularly strong.

Proposed project design, with each component addressing multiple barriers, is well-structured, though several of the theory of change details should be more clearly delineated and specified. Project design could benefit from a clearer articulation of how the proposed solutions address the threats and drivers as well as the primary objectives. This includes tracing how enhanced cooperation will specifically lead to GEBs.

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 project rationale contains the right elements but is unnecessarily confusing in its presentation. Drivers are listed as climate change, unsustainable and illegal fishing, and population growth along coastal areas which causes pollution. "These drivers have created" the following problems: regional climate change, biodiversity loss, and poor ocean health. Unclear connections. How is climate change causing regional climate change? And why population growth specifically as distinct from the economic trends driving pollution and consumption (for which population size is one among several factors)? Overall, a clearer articulation of the underlying drivers, threats, and resulting impact is needed – and this needs to correspond to the proposed solutions. By contrast, the theory of change in the Project Description provides greater clarity of relevant linkages.

The section on future narratives is welcome, and it's helpful to see how these relate to the identification of barriers. However, the connections between these three narratives are difficult to ascertain. It's also unclear how uncertainty along each of these dimensions (regional coordination, blue economy programming, and

country alliances) is influencing project design, as opposed to anticipating a particular, worrisome potential and selecting design options that are robust given that uncertainty.

The theory of change (ToC) rests on 3 underlying environmental problems in the region which are shared by all the countries and must be jointly addressed to be effective. These are: climate change, biodiversity loss, and declining ocean health. These are exacerbated by several root causes: uncoordinated regional governance, deficient regional natural resource management, overexploitation of natural resources and unsustainable economic models. The ToC posits that all of these can be solved through increased collaboration, strengthened governance, coordinated investment, as well as M&E and learning systems.

Yet, several elements of project design call for greater clarity:

- What is the relative place of fisheries amidst problems and solutions? To what extent is the decline in biodiversity due to destructive fishing practices (e.g. bycatch, discards, trawling, etc.) versus declining ocean health, including pollution and climate impacts?

- Similarly, pollution figures centrally among the drivers but it's unclear that the project aims to address this dimension of the problem, either within the MPAs or on the mainland.

- Unclear how climate change is defined as a problem and how, specifically, this project will address it through increased cooperation. Does this mean adaptation or mitigation? Outcome 2.1 is to increase climate resilience of the Central ETP MPAs and the indicator (2.1) is # of MPAs implementing climate resilient actions. Examples provided are focused on mitigation (decarbonize marine transport, ocean-based renewable energy, etc.). How do these relate to the 11 MPAs? This is very confusing.

- Component 3 on the blue economy seems to focus on tourism and fisheries. Is this how the blue economy is defined for this project and by each of the participating countries? In terms of fisheries, Distant Water Fishing Nations were named as having a significant negative impact on fisheries in this region. Will Component 3 focus on this problem or is it mainly geared towards artisanal fishing in coastal areas? Or are there partnerships identified to explain how it is being addressed by other actors? More specificity would be helpful. Is moving fisheries to sustainable levels one of the main objectives of this project? How does this feature within the more general category of blue economy investments?

Outcome indicators in several components do not seem to match the scale of ambition, focusing instead on documents signed (indicator 1.1), plans and strategies (indicators 3.1, 4.1) rather than the shifts these bring to the actions and behaviors of key actors.

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

As part of the next phase of design:

1. Review and revise the Project Rationale, using a systems thinking approach, to more carefully distinguish and demonstrate the connections among drivers, environmental effects, and barriers to change. Critically, resolve the confusing language around climate change as driver and problem.

2. Clarify the connections among future narratives, the range of uncertainty in potential future scenarios associated with each, and how design options are robust given that uncertainty. Beyond considering aspects directly related to regional cooperation, it may also be helpful to consider narratives regarding

other, external trends such as climate, pollution, and economy. See "Using simple narratives to ensure durability of GEF investments."

3. Clarify identified ambiguities in how proposed solutions address the threats and drivers as well as the primary objectives, including aspects related to destructive fishing, pollution, climate mitigation or adaptation, and the focus of blue economy investment. As part of this, clearly identify what is meant by "blue economy" in relation to this project – and in particular in relation to the threats affecting "marine connectivity" and ocean health. See STAP's GEF and the Blue Economy for a useful framework.

4. Review and revise identified outcome indicators to match the scale of ambition (notably the shifts in actions and behaviors of key actors) rather than output-level milestones.

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.)