STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11322
Project title	Climate Adaptation and Resilience Enhancement for South Sudan (CARES)
Date of screen	19 January 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

Overall, this project presents a good understanding of the complex dynamics in South Sudan (e.g., conflict, climate, livelihoods, etc.) However, even at $10 million of investment, the project is over ambitious in terms of the many things it hopes to address and accomplish and in its geographical scope, while at the same time failing to clearly articulate a specific adaptation rationale - a causal pathway that connects climate change impacts to interventions to benefits.

While marked by detailed, well-articulated activities with specific goals, the project is focused on overcoming identified barriers to human well-being in a changing climate without articulating what overcoming those barriers would produce. The issues laid out in the rationale suggest that climate change is negatively impacting agricultural outcomes but the project offers no clear mechanism of impact that might be addressed through intervention.

The project also mentions farmer-herder conflict and the risk of increased cattle raiding between herder groups, but again does not articulate a clear climate impact pathway producing these results, and therefore little sense of where an appropriate intervention might be staged. Further, some of the challenges laid out in the rationale are systemic issues that go well beyond climate change and variability (i.e farmer-herder conflict), but the project does not articulate how even the best-designed adaptation actions might result in adaptation benefits despite larger non-climate problems.

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 theory of change (ToC) is confusing, particularly around the adaptation benefits it is intended to deliver. It does not start from the challenges in the description/rationale, in part perhaps because those challenges are not articulated in a manner that connects them to a source of climate impacts.

For example, it is clear that there has been a significant increase in temperature in the country, but this is not linked to agricultural production through a specific mechanism that might inform intervention selection and design. Rainfall has increased or decreased, depending on the part of the country, but the project is not clear which of these issues it is addressing and if this informed site selection. Further, as with temperature, the data on precipitation are not linked to production, and therefore it is not clear if a precipitation decline of 25mm/yr

(for example) has a meaningful impact on production or not. While the PIF notes that climate challenges intersect with and perhaps exacerbate other important issues (and thus situate the project in the local system), such as farmer/herder conflict and overgrazing, it is not clear if climate is the principal driver of challenges or if other issues should be the primary focus of the project and a means to indirectly deliver adaptation benefits.

Without a clear connection between climate impacts and the challenges identified in the rationale, it is difficult to evaluate the assumptions behind the theory of change and therefore the likelihood the project will deliver adaptation benefits. The assumptions do not include information about how interventions will lead to outcomes, or how outcomes will address challenges. Instead, all assumptions relate to conditions in the project area, which are important but not sufficient to support the ToC.

The activities are well-described and appear to be thoughtfully designed, but their adaptation benefits are not clearly articulated – what they are intended to achieve, or how they will achieve it. Instead, the focus of the project appears to be on addressing the barriers identified in the PIF, but these are barriers to the achievement of larger goals. So the organization of activities under the project makes sense insofar as they are intended to address barriers, but it is not clear what these barriers are preventing from happening so there is no clear connection between activity, outcome, and adaptation benefit.

Further, while the PIF does include data from two RCP scenarios, giving it the potential to consider different plausible futures against which to measure the potential of the proposed activities, the climate data is not integrated into any wider system dynamics. Without considering climate in the context of other system drivers, the PIF cannot articulate how those two futures might play out on the system of farmers and pastoralists in a country with significant governance and economic challenges. It does not articulate even how these different scenarios might produce different agricultural or pastoral outcomes. This makes it difficult for the PIF to address the interconnections between the four project components, as ideally these would be linked in an effort to address not only present challenges, but their likely manifestation in one or more plausible futures. STAP guidance calls for projects to develop two or more plausible future narratives that integrate different drivers of the problems a project seeks to address, as such narratives help to manage future uncertainty by allowing designers to test their interventions across a range of possible futures to ensure the selection and design of interventions robust to the widest possible set of future conditions.

There are numerous relevant past and current GEF and non-GEF projects in South Sudan, many of which are described in this PIF. While there is mention of taking into account 'lessons learned' from these projects, it is not clear what these lessons are or how they have been integrated into the ToC, including informing specific interventions apart from the observation that women play a central role in foresty-related activities and will therefore also be involved in this project (which one would hope). Similarly, innovation is mentioned frequently, but it is not clear what specifically is innovative about this project. The method of proposed scaling (by sharing experiences and best practices to influence stakeholders outside the project) is standard, and therefore unconvincing.

In summary, the project presents a set of well-articulated activities that lack clear connection to one another or to an overall future envisioned for the (rather large) project area. Each project component seems well thought through in relation to a specific barrier, and therefore it is possible that the project will effectively address each barrier, but it is not clear how addressing those barriers will add up to adaptation benefits vis à vis current and expected challenges in the country.

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

Based on the observations above, STAP has the following recommendations:

- The PIF should develop at least two plausible future narratives. These cannot be limited to different climate futures. They must include other relevant trends, including plausible political, demographic, and economic factors. Climate change will be part of these narratives, and might exacerbate any challenges that emerge in other aspects of the system in the future, but in each narrative it should be clearly interwoven with the wider system. Such narratives can help define what interventions and goals make sense in the context of this project, and what adaptation benefits are likely to be achieved.

- The project needs to make clear, causal connections between climate change and the challenges laid out in the rationale. As noted above, it is not enough to say that changes in rainfall will impact agriculture. How will different plausible climate futures impact the specific crops, animals, and activities of the target populations? Which crops, animals, and activities will be impacted the most and least, and who is associated with those crops, animals, and activities? This will help determine if the projected climate changes are significant enough to result in changes requiring adaptation, or if other factors (e.g., intergroup conflict) are more pressing drivers of well-being.

- The project needs to clearly link challenges (in the rationale) to barriers (how are they barriers to addressing the challenges?) to interventions (how do these activities address the barriers in a manner that will ultimately address the challenges?) This last step is largely absent from this PIF.

- The project risk section should be revisited. Given conflict and weak institutions are identified by the project as significant challenges in the country, it seems implausible that politics and governance, institutional capacity, and social issues present low risks to the project.

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.)