

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11398
Project title	Tajikistan Ecosystem Restoration and Resilient Agriculture (TERRA) Project
Date of screen	January 20, 2024
STAP Panel Member	Graciela Metternicht
STAP Secretariat	Guadalupe Duron

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges Tajikistan's project on "Ecosystem restoration and resilient agriculture (TERRA)". The premise of the project relies on restoration being successful through the implementation of integrated land management. Multiple benefits in biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management are expected as a result, along with key contributions to Land Degradation Neutrality. The project's overall ambition is to contribute to resilience – ecological resilience and communities' resilience to foreseen (e.g., climate risks) and unforeseen (e.g., possible fluctuations in the economy) changes.

STAP supports the main thrust of the project, and its overall resilience goal. Nonetheless, STAP strongly recommends that the project be designed based on climate change trends, which indicate a high likelihood for increased temperatures and drought to affect agricultural productivity, biodiversity, socioeconomic co-benefits, and restoration options. As currently written, the project outcomes will not be robust to key climate drivers of change.

Below, STAP rates its assessment and provides details of its screening to help improve the project design.

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 project rationale could be more concise, and better elaborated. For example, it repeats the problem statement several times – at least three times. The systems drivers of change; which appear to be climate change, increased population pressure, internal displacements, and a fluctuating economy; are also minimally described. Without this description, it is difficult to understand what are the main drivers influencing the socioecological system, presently and in the future. Further detailing the drivers would also strengthen the problem context, which is important to understanding the biophysical, social, and economic aspects that characterize the targeted system.

Similarly, the project description could be written more concisely. For example, listing the various activities under each component could be shortened, or added to the component narrative. In this regard, the description could be better structured through a framework, such as the conceptual framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) that includes approaches essential for the success of this project: integrated land management (ILM), or integrated land use planning (ILUP). Adding this framework to the theory of change could also help organize the logic, particularly for component 2.

STAP is pleased that resilience forms part of the theory of change as a key ambition. Developing simple future narratives (currently absent) will be essential for achieving and maintaining resilience. STAP highly encourages this future planning during project design to deal with foreseen and different plausible futures.

Below, STAP provides further details to strengthen the rationale and description.

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

To strengthen the project, STAP proposes the following points to be addressed in the project design:

- As noted above, STAP encourages the project team to make the project rationale and description sections more concise. It also would be valuable to weave succinctly into the rationale the baseline (on-going and past projects) from which this project will leverage knowledge to inform its activities. (The baseline appears absent.)
- STAP is pleased that component 1 focuses on the enabling environment. As part of component 1, STAP suggests appraising the policy coherence between those sectors relevant to the project (e.g. analysis of policies supporting biodiversity conservation, agriculture (or land management), and climate change adaptation). An appraisal of policy coherence will help support governance across sectors and scales, which will help support integrated planning and LDN.
- The use of hydromet services as part of restoration efforts (component 2) is welcomed, particularly as Tajikistan is highly vulnerable to increased temperatures, and a greater likelihood of persistent droughts. In addition to providing hydromet services, STAP strongly encourages the project team to embed explicitly the climate risks in the project logic, and designing with resilience in mind. This includes targeting restoration activities, and outcomes to improve the resilience of land-based natural capital, as well as communities' resilience, to climate change. To assist with resilience planning, STAP encourages applying a climate risk screening before the project design to evaluate climate risks, and plan accordingly. One possible screening tool could be the World Bank's climate screening, which is found here along with other climate information on Tajikistan (e.g., description of climate projections which may be useful during the design):
<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan>
- Because of Tajikistan's increased vulnerability to climate change, certainty in climate change trends (e.g., increased temperatures) and its impacts on grasslands (e.g., reduced quality forage), biodiversity (e.g., change in species), agricultural production (e.g., less water availability for crops), STAP strongly recommends developing simple future narratives. This process can facilitate broad thinking about the impacts of climate change trends and other important drivers (e.g. increasing population, ecological migrants) on proposed landscape restoration interventions. STAP's advice on simple future narratives can be accessed here: <https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/simple-future-narratives-brief-and-primer>. The following paper also may be useful in describing how climate change is likely to influence agricultural productivity, biodiversity, and socioeconomic benefits in the target area: <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/73/5/347/7140039>
- Applying ILM is necessary to inform LDN interventions. STAP recommends developing component 2 by using frameworks such as ILM or ILUP (see Verburg, G. Metternicht, E. Aynekulu et al., 2022: [The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry Points and Support Tools](#)). Using either of these framings, will help

structure component 2 so it helps achieve territorial planning at the local level, which can be used to inform national level planning.

- Relying on ILM, or ILUP, as an organizing framework will also be helpful in assessing co-benefits that can be achieved, such as increased water supply. Trade-offs between land uses, or between Tajikistan's commitments to the Rio Conventions could also be assessed. Plans to assess co-benefits and trade-offs between biodiversity conservation, agricultural production, land and ecosystem restoration are not mentioned in the proposal, but are highly encouraged as the project seeks to achieve all these benefits. Having an understanding of the trade-offs between land uses is also necessary to select the appropriate LDN intervention of avoiding, reducing, or reversing land degradation.
- An ILM, or ILUP, approach also can be used to facilitate stakeholder engagement, and help characterize traits of the socioecological systems by embedding gender, cultural values and norms, governance structures, into the project logic. As the project is designed, the project team could consider the following paper to link ILM/ILUP with LDN, and, or to frame component 2 around either of these two frameworks: <https://www.unccd.int/resources/reports/contribution-integrated-land-use-planning-and-integrated-landscape-management> STAP's LDN guidelines is also another resource that can be helpful for designing LDN interventions: <https://stagef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality>
- The risk framework should acknowledge and explain how the project will address internal displacements that could arise from environmental degradation and climate change impacts in Tajikistan. The 2022 'policy analysis on migration, environment and climate change in Tajikistan (Gamp, 2022) alerts of the impacts of internal displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change, and it provides a set of calls for action that can assist the country in adapting to those impacts.
- Of relevance is that the project aims to restore **uplands pastures** (pg 21) yet the methodology in page 35 states that 'the TERRA project will provide practices to restore key **forested** ecosystems'. Please ensure the methodology is appropriate for targeting pastures. STAP also recommends for the project team to consult the WOCAT dataset of good practices on restoration of natural pastures. <https://www.wocat.net/en/>
- STAP congratulates the team on the effort to connect this project with other relevant projects in the area, including CASP, to existing knowledge and lessons learned. STAP recommends considering also a previous IFAD project "Khatlon Livelihood support project" as a source of inspiration for community based arrangements that could help co-management (that this PIF argues are scarce in the area – see pg 15). This previous IFAD project aimed at encouraging the formation of district-level associations of organizations and common interest groups, with the aspiration that these associations would become functional producers' associations. It is a form of stakeholder engagement that could assist greatly in the implementation of interventions in this 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.

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.)