STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11548
Project title	Strengthening the resilience of natural and agro-ecosystems and communities to climate change in Central Togo
Date of screen	November 25, 2024
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1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

STAP welcomes Togo's multi-trust fund project "Strengthening the resilience of natural and agro-ecosystems and communities to climate change in Central Togo". STAP is pleased the project team developed plausible futures using climate projection data, and assessed how climate change would impact agro-ecosystems in the target area. As the project is further developed, STAP recommends factoring population pressure and conflict, the other two key drivers mentioned in the PIF, and assessing their trends in this future narrative.

To strengthen the project, and ensure outcomes are durable to foreseen risks, like climate change, STAP recommends below accounting for these risks during the project design. In this regard, greater attention to differentiating risk that should form part of the project design, versus risk that remains despite good design is necessary, particularly for context risks, such as risks from climate change. STAP also encourages thinking about the assumptions associated with each outcome. Currently, assumptions are missing, which undermines the project logic.

Below, STAP provides its assessment of the project.

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 thoroughly articulates the target area, Central Togo. As part of this description, the agroecological systems and the socioeconomic traits of the population are highlighted. The description of threats and drivers is also thorough and helpful, particularly the characterization of land degradation which relied on satellite imagery.

In addition, STAP is pleased with the thorough analysis of how the future might unfold based on climate projections. This analysis seems to focus on future climate impacts on land (e.g. increased soil erosion due to extreme rainfall that affects agricultural productivity), and less on communities' potential vulnerabilities.

While some effort was made to define the incrementality/additionality, several assumptions will need to be addressed to validate the GEF/LDCF reasoning. For example, the additionality assumes that the proposed interventions will improve existing efforts in agroecosystem resilience and climate change adaptation. To strengthen this reasoning, the baseline will need to be better supported with evidence (e.g., demonstrating how

past or ongoing initiatives have generated evidence), and monitoring will need to be established to assess how the GEF incrementality/LDCF additionality is being met. The proposal should provide stronger evidence of ongoing initiatives supporting agroecosystem resilience to validate the project's GEF incrementality and LDCF additionality.

In terms of the project description, it appears to be less thorough than the rationale. For example, a narrative describing the project logic is absent, which prevents obtaining a cogent assessment of whether the interventions, as structured, are necessary and sufficient to achieve the targeted outcomes. Furthermore, despite a thorough assessment of how the future might unfold under specific climate projections, there is minimal evidence that this assessment has been applied in the component descriptions. Applying an assessment of plausible futures will help construct a series of robust interventions to climate change and, ideally, to the compounding effects of climate, population pressure, and conflict.

Additional efforts are necessary to strengthen the theory of change, including identifying assumptions for each outcome and risks associated with these assumptions that can be addressed in the project design. Tied to this exercise is identifying risks to the project outcomes that remain despite a good project design, which should be listed in the risk table. At present, there is a mix between project design risks (e.g. factoring climate projections and risks throughout the logic), and residual risk (e.g. a drop in market prices that limits the potential of value chains to achieve restoration outcomes). Additionally, the project description should clarify the intervention logic and theory of change, linking each intervention to the overall goals and ensuring they are both necessary and sufficient to address the identified threats and risks. Clear monitoring indicators should also be included to track progress toward these objectives.

The proposal could distinguish between risks it can mitigate through design and those driven by external factors, such as climate change. By categorizing risks and defining mitigation strategies, especially for climate impacts like irregular rainfall, droughts, and floods, the project will prioritize actions that strengthen resilience in both natural and agro-ecosystems, while ensuring adaptability to climate uncertainties.

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

Below, STAP offers recommendations to strengthen the project:

- STAP is pleased with the land degradation assessment using satellite images. STAP recommends assessing the land potential to complement this analysis, or ground-truth the remote sensing data. This land assessment will also be necessary to strengthen the technical soundness of the restoration activities in component 2. Such assessments will help identify the most suitable restoration techniques based on local conditions, ensuring that interventions are feasible and optimized for the landscape's potential. STAP's Land Degradation Neutrality Guidelines offer guidance on conducting a land assessment.
- STAP welcomes the analysis of plausible futures based on climate change projections. To strengthen this analysis further, STAP recommends analyzing the trends between climate change, population pressure, and conflict (the three drivers identified in the project), and developing a narrative of the plausible futures to help identify robust interventions to these drivers. At the moment, the simple future narratives only include climate change and its implications for land resources. Population pressure and conflict are missing, as so are the effects of these drivers on adaptation capacity. Equally important is to ensure the application of future narratives when designing interventions.
- STAP also recommends expanding the climate impact assessment to include community-level vulnerabilities, such as access to resources, food security, and socio-economic resilience, alongside the

- focus on land and agricultural impacts. This will ensure that the project addresses both ecological and human resilience in the face of climate change.
- Component 2 and 3 focus on value chains, yet, a distinction between the value chains for each component is not clear. Both value chain interventions appear to have the same outcomes – that is, to be climate resilient and generate benefits from restoration, agroforestry, and agriculture. It seems more logical to combine the value chains under one component and design the interventions to be climate resilient. See the point above.
- To improve the technical soundness of the theory of change, identify the assumptions for each outcome. The risks associated with each assumption should also be specified (e.g., climate risks affecting agroforestry or agricultural production; soil health is good and capable of restoring ecosystems). The risk table should include risks that remain despite good project design.
- For the risk table, consider revisiting it and embedding the climate risks, or the outcomes from the climate analysis that will be carried out during the PPG phase, into the project design. The same applies to the political and governance risks. For innovation risks, suggest paying close attention to residual risks associated with restoring land (once a land potential assessment has been done) – that is, what risks remain for soil health to be restored, ecosystems to be generated, and adaptive capacity to be strengthened, as a result of the land potential assessment.
- Besides integrated land use management, the project would benefit from incorporating integrated land use planning (See reference:https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ba284804-d5d0-4e5c-94da-e0eee64f1f0d/content)
- While the project adopts an integrated approach by addressing key land uses—arable, forest, and grazing—it is crucial to clarify and enhance interventions for grazing lands, particularly in managing water resource conflicts among agro-pastoralist communities. A targeted strategy should be developed to improve water access, promote sustainable water management practices, and establish conflict-resolution frameworks and shared governance models to ensure equitable access and reduce tensions over increasingly scarce water points.
- It is commendable that the proposal considers both distal and proximal causes of environmental degradation. However, the analysis would benefit from a more thorough literature review to strengthen its foundations. For instance, existing research on the impact of agriculture on environmental degradation has not been cited, despite its relevance to the proposed interventions. Incorporating relevant studies will provide a more robust understanding of the issues, help identify proven solutions, and ensure that the proposed actions are informed by the latest evidence and best practices in the field.
- To achieve transformative impact (sustainable, systemic change at scale), the project should prioritize capacity development to address key barriers and integrate land governance into the policy component to resolve resource conflicts among agro-pastoralist communities.

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.)