REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11386
Project title	Acción Páramos: conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the páramos in Ecuador
Date of screen	16 January 2024
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STAP Secretariat	Alessandro Moscuzza

1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

STAP's review concluded that this was a solid proposal, which included several good elements and had several strengths, but also presented some weaknesses in specific areas.

The project summary and objective were very well-written and provided a clear picture of the project's intended aims. The logical framework was robust and underpinned by sound logical arguments, although STAP identified a couple of specific elements among the outputs and outcomes that should be clarified.

Other areas of the proposal that STAP identified as needing some revisions include the description of the barriers, stakeholder engagement and the ToC, which STAP believes could be more ambitious in setting the scale and scope of the desired results and outcomes for the project. STAP's assessment concluded that this proposal can proceed to the next stage of development and has identified some scientific and technical points to be addressed during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase.

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 proposal opens with a clear **project summary,** that provides a good description of the overall project **outputs and outcomes.** STAP assessed this framework to be adequate but identified a couple of elements that could be improved (i.e. description of outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 which did not provide any quantitative targets and the description of output 1.1.1 and 2.1.3, which did not provide enough details about the proposed activities and approaches).

The **project objective** is clear and provides an adequate description of what the project is aiming to achieve and how. The **project rationale** provides a thorough, detailed and comprehensive description of the main issues, threats and challenges that the project aims to address, as well as a clear and detailed explanation of the rationale behind this intervention.

STAP was impressed by the technical detail relating to the threats and was pleased to see that this included consideration for issues such as policy coherence and climate change, both of which were integrated well into the

overall logic and rationale for the project. Most of the **barriers** identified were also listed as threats although their description was very limited.

The **stakeholders** section was thorough and provided a good level of detail about the type of stakeholders that will be involved in the project implementation (including specific examples), the type of involvement and activities for each category of stakeholder and the processes involved in attracting and/or engaging these. The description also included a reasonable analysis of existing power dynamics and relationships between different groups of stakeholders, which demonstrated an additional level of depth and understanding of local and national socio-economic realities. STAP identified an aspect of the proposed approach relating to engagement with private landowners that could be improved and made some suggestions (see section 3 of this screen).

The description of the **existing baseline** was also thorough and comprised a number of GEF projects, Government of Ecuador initiatives and international donors projects, as well as explaining clearly how the project is aligned with, will complement and builds upon all of these initiatives.

The **project components** provided a good balance of activities between conservation and restoration activities, governance and policy coherence, finance and KML. STAP found that the type of activities chosen and the balance between them provided a strong basis for the project to deliver all of its objectives and longer term impact.

The **theory of change (ToC)** was sound and built on a solid theoretical framework, which included all the key elements (i.e. outputs, outcomes, intermediate results and project objective), and supporting elements (i.e. assumptions, barriers) and was underpinned by sound logical reasoning. The ToC diagram was well-constructed, clear and comprehensive in scope, as it managed to include all elements listed above in a very intelligible manner. One of the causal pathways was built on the assumption that existing solutions for restoration and management already exist and can be scaled up but this conflicts with the statement under Component 4 that "*the effects of interventions in páramo are not monitored and therefore, lessons are not identified in a systematic way and adaptive management is not informed by actual data*". It will be important to clarify this assumption and design the project accordingly, Moreover, STAP found the the ambition and scale of the desired results and outcomes rather conservative for a project of this scale and duration.

The description of the **risks** to project preparation and implementation covered an impressive number of risks across a wide range of categories covering environmental, socio-economic, political and institutional factors. The ratings assigned were assessed to be adequate for all risk categories, as was the description of potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures.

STAP recognized the validity of the project's approach to **knowledge management** because, although it is only briefly described, it makes a strategic connection to the other components and identifies some of the key elements that will need to be measured and monitored.

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

- The description of outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 should be revised to include quantitative targets.
- The phrasing for outputs 1.1.1 and 2.1.3 should be revised to clarify what it is aiming to deliver in concrete terms in a more simple and direct language.
- The description of the barriers should be reviewed to avoid duplication with other sections of the proposal and expanded to provide further details on how the barriers may affect the delivery of project activities and how they will be addressed.
- The proposed approach to engage with private landowners should be revised to ensure this is focused on educating and enticing landowners to invest in conservation and sustainable use activities, and that any financial incentives be concentrated on IPLCs or, if targeted at landowners, that they should be used to trigger further investments from their part.

- The assumptions underlying the causal pathway, that interventions for conservation and restoration will be based on tested and established methods, should be clarified to ensure that the project can be designed to deal with any uncertainty and to further test these solutions if that is needed.
- STAP recommends that the scope and ambition level in the ToC and desired results be reviewed with the aim of increasing the level of ambition for this project, which has the potential to deliver considerably more than currently proposed/anticipated. STAP also recommends adding quantitative targets/results against the project's outputs.

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.)