STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11335
Project title	Introducing Nature Based Solutions to Ensure Resilient Ecosystems, Green Recovery and Sustainable Livelihoods
Date of screen	June 6, 2024
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1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

STAP welcomes Bosnia-Herzegovinia's project, "Introducing Nature-Based Solutions to Ensure Resilient Ecosystems, Green Recovery and Sustainable Livelihoods". STAP is pleased with the scenario analysis and encourages the project designers to develop this description further so that key driver trends are embedded in the logic chain. Close attention to optimizing trade-offs to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality is recommended, particularly for counterbalancing anticipated losses with gains to achieve neutrality.

Because the project aims to integrate the management of multiple-use landscapes to promote biodiversity conservation, improve land productivity and economic benefits to local communities, it is highly recommended that the Land Degradation Neutrality conceptual framework and Integrated Land Use Planning be applied to organize the project components and associated activities. This might also assist with developing a more succinct document, as it is too lengthy in places.

Below, STAP 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
- ☐ 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 Information Form (PIF) provides a lengthy description of the project rationale and project, making it sometimes difficult to understand. For instance, the rationale discusses two landscape target sites and their significance in biodiversity conservation and ecosystems. However, it does not clearly explain how the threats are related to these landscape clusters, stating that only threats specific to the target sites will be addressed. Additionally, the description of climate change as a threat is too general to understand its impact on the ecosystems and communities in the target landscapes. The baseline and other sections could be better integrated into the overall rationale/context description.

STAP acknowledges the project developers have considered future conditions that may influence the targeted systems, such as increased economic pressure on land and forest ecosystems, and planning broadly for the effects of climate change. It is important to ensure these plausible futures are reflected in the theory of change to plan for long-lasting, positive outcomes. On a different note, STAP is not convinced that increased future demand for harmonized national and international policies/regulations between biodiversity and land management (external driver 3) should be seen as an underlying driver of global environmental change. The

description of external driver 3 seems to be more about barriers, or inadequate support (e.g., financial, capacity, monitoring processes) to align biodiversity policies/frameworks with LDN targets and their monitoring. The text should be amended to reflect this suggestion, if accurate, or amended to reflect a driver that will influence (positively, or negatively) global change in the future.

The project description appears overall acceptable, although STAP would recommend several adjustments to be made during the project development which are described below.

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 the project is developed, STAP recommends addressing the following suggestions to strengthen the rationale and logic of the project:

1. Strengthen the rationale by describing the problem, and its context, in relation to the two landscape sites. Additionally, describe how the project will build on the past, or on-going projects described in the baseline. That is, use the baseline description to help establish the purpose, or rationale, of the project.

2. Because climate change is expected to be a significant driver of global environmental change, please add a description of the key climate trends associated with the project areas, or use national data if local data is not available. Refer to the World Bank's climate risk profile for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the climate knowledge portal. This data/information will then assist to design with the intent to making outcomes/outputs resilient to climate risks as well as building resilience through the project. The project is well-placed to build communities' resilience to climate through integrated landscape management. Suggest using the World Bank's climate resilience methodology to inform the project design, as well as to monitor resilience.

3. Component 1, enabling a regulatory framework for biodiversity conservation and addressing land degradation, combines mainstreaming of policies supporting biodiversity and land with integrated land use planning. STAP would recommend splitting these two interventions so that an enabling environment is seen in the logic chain as contributing to, or as an input of, integrated land use planning. This would improve the logic of the project, and it would allow project developers to consider steps that are necessary to support integration of biodiversity and land management. For example, conducting a policy analysis is an integral step of understanding the enabling environment and its needs. This assessment ought to be done.

4. As its own component, integrated land use planning could be applied as an organizing framework and outcome. For example, the stakeholders listed in Table 1, and possibly others, could be identified and engaged based on the governance needs for designing/implementing integrated land use planning. Additional steps to consider under integrated land use planning is an analysis of the trade offs between land uses, and stakeholders' needs. This analysis will contribute to the LDN counterbalancing (neutrality) mechanism by anticipating losses with planned gains of natural capital elsewhere. Furthermore, the project raises the ambition of improving LDN monitoring at the national level (component 3). To realize this, the results of the integrated land use planning ought to be mainstreamed into national plans. Sequencing these, and other necessary steps associated with integrated land use planning, merit further attention. Suggest relying on these resources: UNCCD's Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management for LDN, UNCCD's Scientific Conceptual Framework on LDN, and STAP's LDN guidelines.

5. The LDN conceptual framework and STAP's LDN guidelines focus on a land potential assessment, which is an important step for integrated land use planning. STAP recommends pursuing the assessment as the project assumes that restoration, or diversifying land uses, is possible.

6. Component 4 is focused on knowledge management (outputs) and replication (outreach). STAP would like to encourage the project developers to rethink this component by building learning into the theory of change and describing how this learning will take place and be monitored to generate knowledge and manage for adaptive management. As a first step, identifying and testing the critical assumptions underpinning each outcome is necessary (the assumptions described in the theory of change are useful, but are not associated directly with the outcomes) to generate meaningful learning and replication. Replication is also conditioned on building stakeholders' capacity based on placed-based values and contexts. STAP highly encourages for the project proponents to develop, and implement the project, based on those social aspects which underpin the project logic and ensure lasting positive changes, such as cultural values and norms, gender, and power unbalances, or power dynamics.

7. As mentioned above, revise the description of external driver 3. Currently, it reads as if investments in policy coherence from the national level to the international level is a driver of global change, which is not. Based on the text, STAP thinks the intention was to state that lack of support (financial, technical) exists to align the biodiversity agenda with the LDN/land management agenda at the national level to achieve integration across sectors and governance levels. If STAP's thinking is accurate, please reflect this change in the revised project.

8. On decision support tools, STAP suggests building on other countries' experiences in setting up and maintaining LDN monitoring processes. STAP also encourages to work with local Universities in the co-design and implementation of component 3 (Strengthening the national capacity for monitoring LDN indicators) and component 4 (Knowledge management and replication). Higher Education and tertiary institutions were not included in the initial stakeholder engagement, though they are valuable resources for knowledge management, training and development of institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability (highilighted as a moderate risk in pg 32).

9. STAP recommends the project designers to consult the extensive literature on gender-responsive LDN and land restoration/rehabilitation, the LDN scientific conceptual framework (Orr et al 2017); the LDN guidelines for GEF projects and the recent guidance from the UNCCD Science policy interface on 'The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality.

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.)