

## STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11399
Project title	Climate Change Adaptation in Lowlands of Lao PDR
Date of screen	19 January 2024
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### 1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the project entitled "Climate Change Adaptation in Lowlands of Lao PDR" which aims to strengthen the resilience of lowland communities, resources and agrifood systems to climate change through climate-smart and nature-based adaptation approaches. Overall, STAP finds that the project addresses a clear need for adaptation in Lao PDR, offers useful evidence for the various sources of vulnerability to climate change impacts, and presents a set of reasonable components and interventions to address that vulnerability.

However, STAP suggests that developing multiple [simple future narratives](#) could help characterize uncertainty and facilitate the design and selection of effective interventions. STAP also suggests the project consult the [Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale](#) to ensure that Component 2 activities complement existing adaptation efforts without inadvertently displacing effective existing actions and efforts.

*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.

Overall, STAP finds that the project rationale clearly lays out the challenges facing agrarian livelihoods in Lao PDR. However, it could be strengthened in a few important ways. First, with the exception of Figure 7, the PIF confines itself to a discussion of the future under the RCP8.5 scenario. This RCP represents the most extreme scenario and is not likely to be realized. Under other scenarios, impacts might be different. STAP strongly advises the project to consider 2-3 more plausible climate futures as represented by other RCPs.

Second, the rationale should develop two or more plausible future narratives that integrate climate change with other important processes and drivers of change in this rural area. See STAP's [Simple Future Narratives Brief and Primer](#) for more information. For example, the PIF references growing flood hazards which are not just about a changing climate, but also about a growing population and where it chooses to locate. The PIF also discusses relatively low agricultural productivity and low rates of education as important factors shaping vulnerability. Given these factors, the project would benefit from articulating several integrated narratives that consider how different combinations of climate, demographic, geographic, and educational futures might produce varying situations that could affect the effectiveness or durability of any adaptation benefits delivered (e.g., a high climate change scenario also marked by low agricultural productivity but rapidly increasing rates of

education versus a moderate climate change scenario with growing agricultural productivity, increased urban migration, and increasing rates of education). By developing such narratives, the project designers can evaluate the relative effectiveness of proposed interventions across a range of futures, helping to identify the most effective interventions for an uncertain future and possibly validate the ones that have already been outlined in this project.

The project description nicely connects proposed interventions to reducing vulnerability through specific pathways – increasing adaptive capacity, lowering sensitivity, and lowering exposure. This clarity helps make the adaptation rationale much clearer. The Theory of Change helpfully links outputs to outcomes but seems to have the components out of order. The logical flow of a ToC starts with the problem, barriers to addressing that problem, the components of the project, their outputs, their outcomes, and how these contribute to the project objective. This is a minor point, but a revision of the ToC to capture this flow will help clarify what activity produces what outcome and thus facilitate project monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the risks included in the ToC diagram are general categories and not specific to this project.

For Component 2, STAP strongly suggests the project consult STAP's [Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale](#). This document lays out key questions for developing an effective adaptation rationale. Relevant to this project is the discussion in sections 2 and 3 of the decision tree, which focus on identifying existing local/ indigenous adaptation measures and ensuring that proposed interventions address actual adaptation needs without removing or reducing the effectiveness of existing adaptation measures. For example, the project proposes various climate-smart agricultural interventions, but does not discuss how CSA introduces risks (i.e. dependence on inputs, dependence on markets, etc.) and weighs those against any reductions in climate risk. CSA has a low rate of uptake because it often introduces more risk than it solves, while displacing existing local risk management tools/activities. Addressing the questions in the decision tree will facilitate the local consultations the project hopes to facilitate and use to choose appropriate interventions, for example by more clearly identifying who should be consulted, and about what.

This project will build on lessons learned from other related projects in Lao PDR such as those detailed in Table 2. The links between projects are clear but it would be helpful to articulate what, specifically, *were* the lessons learned from those projects that have been taken into consideration in the design of this one, particularly since many of them are working with similar stakeholders such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAFF). This could be added as a column in Table 2 to be explored further during PPG phase.

*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 recommends the following:

- 1) Develop 2-3 simple future narratives to capture and characterize the uncertainty of future climate, economic, and demographic situations. This will help the project identify interventions that are robust across a range of possible futures.
- 2) Revise the theory of change to more clearly reflect the flow from components/activities to outputs to outcomes, as this will facilitate implementation (monitoring) and evaluation, and include risks specific to this project in the diagram.
- 3) Consult STAP's [Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale](#) to ensure that Component 2 activities meet a range of local needs without displacing already-effective adaptation efforts at the community or household level.

*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.)