

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

| Part I: Project Information | Response |
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| GEF ID | 10389 |
| Project Title | Evaluation of Natural Capital to Support Land Use Planning, Improved management effectiveness of Terrestrial Protected Areas, deployment of SLM practices and Creation of Eco-Villages in Central Madagascar |
| Date of Screening | 11/27/2020 |
| STAP member screener | Mark Stafford Smith |
| STAP secretariat screener | Guadalupe Duron |
| STAP Overall Assessment and Rating | <p>Minor issues to be considered during project design:</p> <p>STAP welcomes the proposal to establish policy and practice around a significant set of ecovillages in the biodiversity-rich Central Highlands of Madagascar, and to do so learning from previous ecovillage projects.</p> <p>STAP applauds the provision of a theory of change (ToC) at this stage, the description of which helps outline the proposed project logic quickly, with a clear identification of drivers and barriers. It would help to make the relationship between different component actions and intended long-term outcomes clearer by adding shorter term, intermediate outcomes (the arrows are difficult to interpret in this regard). In particular it is important to consider whether the components are necessary AND sufficient to achieve the outcomes, and whether there can be confidence in the durability of the outcomes once the GEF investment finishes.</p> <p>Hence, during project design, STAP particularly urges proponents to (i) consider whether the project title and objective really reflect the intentions of the project as described; (ii) enhance the ToC by laying out the component activity-to-outcome logic more clearly, working back from the outcomes to ensure the components are not only necessary but also sufficient to achieve the</p> |

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| | <p>outcomes, and looking closely at the assumptions that are built into the project design; (iii) consider developing a separate ToC aimed specifically at scaling and durability; (iv) ensure ToC assumptions are being formally monitored and evaluated over time to allow learning about these; and (v) pay more attention to issues that might undermine project durability, including climate change and the potential for population increase to overwhelm improved management in this region or cause damage to leak from here to surrounding areas.</p> <p>Below, STAP describes further its recommendations on how to strengthen the project design.</p> | |
| <p>Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary</p> | <p>What STAP looks for</p> | <p>Response</p> |
| <p>Project Objective</p> | <p>Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?</p> | <p>The project objective (and title) as stated seems different to the actual project as described (and the outcomes listed in the ToC logic) – the project description emphasizes establishing a set of ecovillages with improved biodiversity and land degradation GEB outcomes; NCA and land planning are simply tools to support policy towards this. The objective suggests promoting the use of NCA is the project end objective. I presume this is not intended and all our following comments are based on this assumption. If the objective truly were <i>only</i> to promote the use of NCA, then the project lacks a ToC and M&E to determine whether this is successful.</p> |
| <p>Project components</p> | <p>A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives?</p> | <p>Subject to the comment above, these appear <i>necessary</i> to the objectives; it is less clear whether they are strictly <i>sufficient</i> to achieving them, as discussed below (ToC).</p> |
| <p>Outcomes</p> | <p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?</p> | <p>Yes</p> |

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| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | Plausible; attention needs to be paid to ensuring they are durable. |
| Outputs | A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes? | Plausibly <i>necessary</i> but see following comments on whether they are fully <i>sufficient</i> . |
| Part II: Project justification | A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change. | We applaud the presentation of a ToC description and diagram, with a good analysis of drivers and barriers, but note that the diagram is presented in an obscure form that suggests a true ToC process of working back from objectives to long-term outcomes to short-term outcomes to activities/components has not necessarily been followed (e.g. see STAP ToC Primer https://www.stagef.org/theory-change-primer). It would help to do this to provide more insights into whether the components are truly sufficient to achieve the outcomes. |
| 1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description) | Is the problem statement well-defined? | Yes, including noting climate change, dependence on biomass for energy (80%), population growth (2.5%), poverty, especially in this rural region dependent on rain-fed agriculture. |
| | Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references? | The ToC useful classifies 3 groups of (7) drivers, with 'Causes' (pressures/threats) identified as illegal mining, and unsustainable ag and pastoral practices, noting also deforestation and erosion. The description then identifies barriers as lack of national capacity to mainstream NCA, limited local capacity and resources to develop local plans and do management, and inadequate financing to support biodiversity-friendly livelihoods. This is plausible, though it would be good to have a more reflective analysis of whether there are other barriers, such as population pressures, infrastructure, access to 'modern energy', failures |

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| | | of local governance, etc: some of these appear later in the eco-village descriptions. |
| | For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs? | Yes, clear links between biodiversity and land degradation (and probably other areas). The objective as interpreted here – establishing eco-villages to improve environmental and socio-economic outcomes – certainly requires such integration. |
| 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects | Is the baseline identified clearly? | Yes. The baseline section moves into describing the eco-village concept, drawing on experiences elsewhere, especially Senegal; given the latter is now complete as a project, learning about the durability of the outcomes needs to be accessed – for example, have the eco-villages continued to operate as such, and what enabled this? |
| | Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits? | There is little quantification in the baseline section (which mostly focuses on the ecovillage concept and other projects), but there is relevant material earlier in the proposal. It would be good to collate this succinctly here. |
| | Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project? | Probably |
| | For multiple focal area projects: | |
| | are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators; | Probably though not in this section |
| | are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and | Useful projects identified, but more should be made explicit about lessons on scaling and durability, as well as whether the proposed Components are <i>sufficient</i> to achieve the changes intended |
| | how did these lessons inform the design of this project? | Good potential, but more needed. |
| 3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project | What is the theory of change? | It is great that the proposal provides a ToC explicitly; the diagram is hard to interpret and does not really spell out the disaggregated logic for why each component will deliver short term outcomes that will add up to the long-term outcomes (which |

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| | | are well-defined). This makes it hard to see whether the intervention (plus external activities) really add up to a <i>sufficient</i> set of actions to deliver the outcomes. In essence, the proposal is that better policy and national and regional planning (based on NCA) coupled with options for local ecovillage governance with co-designed local planning and credible/profitable management options will support the establishment of a set of exemplar eco-villages, which will reduce land degradation and conserve biodiversity. This is plausible, though readers might want to know whether there are any cultural or power distribution barriers to achieving this, and whether local people have been asked whether they are willing to collaborate in the eco-village vision, and if so, what level of resources or livelihood assurance would they need to sign on? In this sense it is excellent to have a ToC so as to be able to ask these questions of the logic. |
| | What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes? | |
| | What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | As above |
| | Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions? | <p>Broadly, though the ToC lacks a critical appraisal of underlying or implicit assumptions in the logic. STAP recommends that the guidelines for ToCs in STAP's Primer are followed more directly to document these assumptions, and to re-assess '<i>necessary and sufficient</i>'.</p> <p>Components 2 and 3 have a good emphasis on co-design of plans and actions with potential eco-villagers themselves, to generate local ownership through local governance; it is not clear how the project will ensure that personnel will really appreciate the need for genuine co-design, not superficial 'consultation'; nor whether genuine handing over of power to locals fits with local bureaucratic approaches.</p> |

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| | Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes? | <p>This would be greatly enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing the assumptions in the ToC (as amended, see above), in order that implementation flexibility can learn as the project proceeds. STAP's ToC Primer discusses this process of adaptive MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning)</p> <p>In addition, Component 4, which deals with knowledge management, should be monitoring and marketing the local benefits in ways that resonate with local participants, to develop and maintain their support (or change the project if these are not being generated). Demonstrating value to participants is a key element of the ToC (also needed for scaling) that might be elaborated.</p> |
| 5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing | GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits? | <p>Plausible. However, after providing a useful outline of drivers like climate change and population increases earlier, whether these may undermine the durability of GEBs achieved is not addressed. This should be rectified in further design – might climate change destroy improvements that the ecovillages introduce? Might population increase overwhelm improved management in this region or cause damage to leak from here to surround areas? Can policy help avoid these?</p> |
| | LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change? | |
| 6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF) | Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable? | Yes, and nicely balanced with intended local benefits that are necessary to maintain local support |
| | Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment? | Yes, subject to scaling up beyond the targeted number of ecovillages eventually, see below. |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined? | Yes |

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| | Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation? | MEL needs much more development – what might be measured is indicated, but how it will be tracked is not made clear. |
| | What activities will be implemented to increase the project’s resilience to climate change? | These are only outlined in the vaguest of terms but constitute a real risk to outcome durability; will NCA take account of climate change? Will recommended changes in management in ecovillages be screened for robustness to climate change (and other major driver trends) in collaboration with villagers? Will e.g. climate ready ag approaches be considered; etc? |
| 7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up | Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning? | Given it is building on other projects the concept of NCA and ecovillages themselves are not especially innovative; but the project does bring a set of elements together innovatively – seeking to establish a critical mass of ecovillages, backing their activities with policy change, and seeking private sector partnerships. However, greater attention should be paid to durability and scaling in the ToC process (see below), and to whether there are other barriers such as cultural norms, that might impede scaling. |
| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | Long-term this project will only have a small impact on GEBs unless it is both durable and scaled; the current section on scaling is very thin and wishful, based on a dissemination push model. STAP strongly recommends that more attention be paid to potential means of scaling now (various other mechanisms could be posited, some of which may benefit from preparatory actions during the initial project); ideally STAP suggests a separate ToC be developed for this possible eventual phase, so that the ToC for this project can be informed by what might be needed to make scaling more feasible later. (STAP’s guide on Durability and its ToC Primer provide more advice on these issues.) |
| | Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability? | With scaling, transformation impact is possible, but attention is needed to how this might occur. |

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| | | In particular, at present p.27 indicates that the project depends on political and financial commitment of the Govt of Madagascar – this does not sound like an assurance of durability. The intention to seek sustainable finance mentioned here is only an aspiration not a plan as expressed so far. These issues must be addressed now even if they are pursued later, else the initial investment may be for nought. In particular lessons should be sought from the other examples of ecovillages round the world. |
| 1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. | | OK |
| 2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement. | Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers? | Acknowledging constraints from COVID, a range of stakeholders have been engaged; however, STAP would seek assurance that significant discussion have been held on the ground with potential villagers to ensure they are supportive of the idea of ecovillages. In addition, the intention to engage the private sector seems poorly detailed to date and should be further elaborated. |
| | What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge? | OK |

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| <p>3. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services.</p> <p>Will the project’s results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p> | <p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p> | <p>Intentions seem good. An early gender analysis to ensure that any barriers related to cultural norms can be managed would be important.</p> |
| | <p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p> | <p>An analysis of this is proposed, and should be progressed very early.</p> |
| <p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible,</p> | <p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project’s control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project’s objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to | <p>Overall the risks seem reasonably comprehensive, except that, given project durability ‘depends’ on continued government financing currently, the risk of an economic downturn is not handled and it would not seem to be ‘low’.</p> |

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| propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design | <p>2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? | In addition, the treatment of climate risks in the PIF is simplistic (we did not have access to any separate Climate Risk assessment); it would help to have an open appraisal of whether the ecovillage approach is even the right solution in the face of climate change; and if it is, what processes will be put in place to ensure that villagers are not encouraged to adopt practices or livelihoods that subsequently become maladaptive due to climate change (or indeed any other trends in drivers, e.g. population). |
| 6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives | Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects? | Seems so. |
| | Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them? | Yes, but learning about whether ecovillages endured after project funding ceased are not mentioned and should be sought out. |
| | Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited? | |
| | How have these lessons informed the project's formulation? | |
| | Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects? | |
| 8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations. | What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used? | |
| | What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience? | These plans are not clear, and dominated by pushing out information – "ensure knowledge is shared... promoting its scaling out". STAP would suggest that a scaling ToC would include more active engagement of other regions in visits to/observing the successes here, to develop |

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| | | champions for scaling during the course of this project, etc. Tracking and demonstrating the livelihood benefits and the success of other incentives would be other examples of explicit actions more likely to create fertile ground for scaling out. |
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Notes

| STAP advisory response | Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed |
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| <p>1. Concur</p> | <p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.</p> |
| | <p>* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that <i>“STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.”</i></p> |
| <p>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</p> | <p>STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:</p> |
| | <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p> |
| | <p>(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.</p> |
| | <p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p> |

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| <p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p> | <p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p> |
| | <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p> |