

STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11365
Project title	Program to strengthen smallholder resilience to climate change (RESI-2P)
Date of screen	7 January 2024
STAP Panel Member	Edward Carr
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the project “Program to strengthen smallholder resilience to climate change (RESI-2P)” whose objective is to ‘enhance the adaptive capacity of the agriculture sector in Burkina Faso through innovative agro-ecological adaptation solutions, improved governance increased investments, and a whole-of-society approach, delivering food security and sustainable livelihoods.’

Overall, the project does a good job characterizing the existing system and interrelated drivers that create challenges for the rural agrarian system in Burkina Faso. However, the project is designed to address current challenges only, leaving it open to maladaptive interventions unless it can construct and address the uncertainties in how climate and non-climate drivers will play out through the development of more than one plausible future narrative.

STAP recommends that careful consideration be taken when treating resilience as a normative good in a context where transformation is needed, as resilience can become a barrier to change and may run counter to other intended project goals such as those related to gender. The risk table is incomplete and should be filled out to capture the overall risk to implementation, and project designers should clearly articulate assumptions underlying the theory of change and also clarify the additionality of this funding.

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.

Overall, STAP finds that current climate, environmental, demographic, economic/food value chain, social and political/fragility aspects of the rural agrarian system in Burkina Faso are well characterized, to some extent indicating how these are all interrelated challenges that produce poverty and other outcomes and have become self-reinforcing barriers to improvements in human well-being. When aligned with this understanding of the current context, the project components and interventions make a great deal of sense, particularly in the ways that the different components are designed to work together to overcome challenges that have both production and market demand sides.

The project theory of change (ToC) is clear and logical. However, to ensure that the components, and the specific interventions under those components, will address *future* challenges to this system, the baseline should also articulate plausible future conditions that the project and the people it aims to help might face.

Adaptation to present conditions without consideration of future uncertainties can lead to maladaptive interventions. [STAP guidance](#) suggests that effective projects present two or more plausible future narratives that take the integrated framing of challenges in the present and extend it into the future. For example, the project already outlines a range of climate futures. By creating an integrative narrative for each that also incorporates a future fragility state (i.e. greater or less than the current situation), a future environmental degradation state (worse than current or perhaps improved), and a future food systems governance state, the project will capture a range of plausible future conditions that the target population will have to address. As the future is uncertain, this range of futures can help project designers select interventions that are robust across those different futures.

Another important issue in the ToC is that resilience is treated as the goal of the project. The rationale and description clearly indicate that resilience is a means to the end of improving the quality of life for agrarian communities in Burkina Faso. This is a critical point, as it requires the project designers to consider if increased resilience is, in fact, the appropriate means to this end. As the contemporary literature lays out, resilience builds the capacity of many things to bounce back from shocks and stressors – not just food production, but (for example) gender roles associated with food production or other livelihoods practices that might have a negative effect on the environment. While STAP recognizes IFAD’s experience with its resilience approach as a valuable input to the project, resilience is not a normative good. Its value is contextual. Given the transformational goals of the project, the project would benefit from consideration of the ways in which increased resilience helps achieve project goals (i.e. more safe and secure agrarian livelihoods) and also might hinder project goals (i.e. reinforcing gender inequality) so that interventions might maximize benefits and minimize the risk of unintended negative outcomes.

Related to this, the PIF does not overtly discuss assumptions behind the design of the project. There is a great deal of information and justification for the selection of particular interventions in the PIF, but a clear, succinct discussion of assumptions (how a specific activity is assumed to address a specific issue, and under what circumstances it will/will not work) would benefit project designers as they propose specific interventions. Much of this information is implicit in the current PIF, under the description of activities and outputs in the description. However, these implicit assumptions are difficult to evaluate and test in their current format and should therefore be made explicit.

The risk section of the PIF is incomplete and mostly focused on project goals, not risks to implementation. This section of the PIF is intended to reflect what might happen to the project as a result of various risks, not the risks faced by the people the project aims to help. The climate and environment/social parts of the risk section do not discuss risk to the project at all, and the PIF does not discuss most of the risks in the table. Political and governance risk is substantial due to conflict, which is noted; however, the mitigation measures are not included in the table. Some are discussed earlier (joint fragility study with the UN, and working closely with NGOs) – ideally Fragility and Conflict Situation (FCS) considerations would be integrated throughout the project document. See STAP document on [Environmental Security: achieving durable outcomes in FCS](#).

The explanation for how this project builds on previous related projects (Neer-Tamba, PAPFA and PAFA 4R) is welcome; however, it will be important during PPG phase to also consider what other GEF and non-GEF agencies are doing in this space to build on synergies and avoid duplication. See, for example, the UNDP [Sustainable Land Management to Strengthen Social Cohesion in the Drylands of Burkina Faso](#) project.

Finally, the additionality of this project is somewhat unclear. The PIF makes it clear that LDCF funds are intended to support specific activities within a much larger project, but it is not evident how the larger project could go forward productively without including these activities. This begs the question of whether or not the larger project would have undertaken some, if not all, of these activities in the absence of LDCF funding. The current justification of the investment under #19, p.19 of the PIF, does not address the context of the larger project at all.

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 that the following actions be taken:

- 1) Develop at least two plausible future narratives. While these should reflect different climate futures, they should build on the integrated view of the current situation in the project to present different, integrated futures. Therefore, they must include other relevant trends, including plausible political, demographic, and economic situations. Climate change will be part of these narratives, and might exacerbate any challenges that emerge in other aspects of the system in the future, but in each narrative it should be clearly interwoven with the wider system. Such narratives can help define what interventions and goals make sense and what adaptation benefits are likely to be achieved.
- 2) Add a final step to the ToC that connects increased resilience to the management/mitigation/resolution of the challenges laid out in the rationale and description. This will help project designers avoid maladaptive interventions.
- 3) Clearly articulate the assumptions behind the choice of interventions – that is, concretely lay out how each intervention is expected to address some component of the challenges outlined in the project, and the conditions under which those interventions will or will not work. If these assumptions can be aligned with the plausible future narratives discussed above, project designers will have a strong foundation from which to select and design interventions.
- 4) Revisit the risk table. The project risk table does not, at this time, identify or address most risks to project implementation. These risks must be articulated and their mitigation/management discussed. Again, this section of the PIF is intended to identify risks to project implementation, not the risks the project seeks to address through its activities.
- 5) Clarify the additionality of this funding. How was the larger project going to address the issues focused on in this proposed project? If the larger project was not going to address these issues, why not and what was the rationale behind this decision?

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.)