

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11116
Project title	Promoting sustainable economic benefits through the conservation of critical biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Eastern Coastal Region of Sri Lanka
Date of screen	15 January 2023
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The PIF presents a generally sound proposal to achieve global environmental benefits in two coastal areas of Sri Lanka. Strong points include taking a systems approach, consideration of possible futures and scenarios, and a theory of change that has been developed from a good understanding of the barriers and identifies relevant components and outputs to overcome the barriers. STAP has identified a few sections in the PIF that would benefit from further consideration or greater clarity (see below).

STAP concludes that this project has scientific and technical merit and, for the most part, provides adequate information on project objectives and activities for the PIF stage of project development. Attention to the following areas will strengthen the project design: providing a rationale, baseline status and link to the TOC for Component 3, as it relates to improved management effectiveness for protected areas; a more coherent assessment of the baseline that is aligned to the specific objectives of the project; and greater clarity on the scope and timeline for scaling of successful solutions and how this relates to the achievement of project objectives.

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 basic **rationale** for this project is sound, with a focus on two coastal areas with high levels of biodiversity that are impacted by compound threats linked to various forms of economic development. **The theory of change (TOC)** is based on a good understanding of the ecological and hydrological systems that are affected by development and that need to be managed to achieve global environmental benefits as well as climate and economic **co-benefits**. It is very encouraging to see the consideration of **possible futures and scenarios** to explore how project outcomes may play out in different contexts and that would inform project activities. The possible futures relating to the economic crisis and climate change seem particularly appropriate to the context in Sri Lanka. The three scenarios presented also provide a good way to position expectations for the project, in terms of what is likely to be achieved together with what could be achieved if project outcomes align with the most positive scenario. The **project components** are generally well designed to address the **barriers** identified in the TOC. There is a strong emphasis on coherent policies across sectors and ministries, and the development of economic opportunities that are aligned with environmental objectives. There are a few instances where the link between components and the TOC is less clear. Particularly Component 3, which speaks to improved management

effectiveness of protected areas, but any lack of effectiveness is not identified as a **threat** or barrier to the achievement of GEBs. Also there is no mention of management effectiveness in the baseline assessment so it is not clear what needs to change or by how much it needs to change to add value to the achievement of GEBs in the project area.

The section on **baseline** status provides mostly a narrative description of funded projects and investments but does not provide a clear and comprehensive description of the current status in a way that is relevant to the project. It is difficult to interpret how these different investments may combine with other institutional and government initiatives to form a baseline. Some of the information is provided in different parts of the proposal, but the baseline section could be strengthened to provide a comprehensive picture of what is happening now in the project areas so that it is possible to determine how that will change if the GEF project is implemented.

The design of interventions to pilot and scale solutions will need to be clearly identified during further project development. The PIF includes several areas where **novel approaches** will be piloted, while scaling is included as a specific output under Component 4 with an apparent focus on learning, capacity building and knowledge exchange as the mechanism for scaling. The available information leads to several questions regarding **scaling**: 1) *To what extent are the project outcomes and the achievement of GEBs dependent on scaling of the pilot solutions as part of this project?* If they are critical to the outcomes of the project, then there needs to be more detail on how this scaling will be designed to achieve the desired change and how rapid learning from pilots will be incorporated into project design to facilitate scaling. 2) *Is awareness raising, capacity building and knowledge exchange (Component 4) sufficient to achieve scaling at the required level?* The approach to scaling will depend on whether the main barrier to scaling is lack of awareness or capacity, rather than some other barrier such as access to finance or socio-cultural barriers. The PIF refers to the development of a “replication, scaling and sustainability strategy” (Output 4.2) and presumably this strategy should identify barriers to scaling and then consider different options for scaling. Learning, capacity building and knowledge exchange is likely to be one approach but it may need to be complemented by other approaches.

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

- Consider presenting the baseline as a more coherent assessment of the status quo so that the additionality of the GEF project can be more easily determined.
- Clarify the importance of improved management effectiveness of protected areas by i) showing how this links to the TOC as a solution to overcome barriers or address threats, ii) providing a baseline measure of management effectiveness, and iii) providing an estimate of what level of change is required to achieve project GEBs.
- Provide greater detail on interventions linked to piloting and scaling of solutions so that it is clear what level of scaling is required to achieve the outcomes for this project rather than opportunities for future initiatives or rollout to other areas, and what information is available or needed to inform the approach to scaling. Further guidance on scaling can be found in the STAP Advisory document on [Achieving Transformation](#) and the joint STAP report on [Taking Nature-Based Solutions Programs to Scale](#)

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.)