

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11209
Project title	Strengthening ecological connectivity in natural and productive landscapes between the Amistad and Darien biomes
Date of screen	08 June 2023
STAP Panel Member	John Donaldson
STAP Secretariat	Alessandro Moscuza

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This project proposal was assessed by STAP to be adequate for this stage of project design and development. The project rationale section provided a satisfactory description of the background situation, the challenges that the project aims to address, as well as the barriers and baseline activities this project should build upon.

There are however a number of areas that need revising and/or improving, these include the description of threats, the ToC diagram and the description of some of the components, as well as the risk and stakeholder engagement sections.

The following sections of this document provide further details on the issues identified by STAP as requiring attention and a number of recommendations suggesting solutions and related actions.

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.

Project rationale the proposal provided a good overall description of the background situation, challenges and issues/factors that are acting as drivers and barriers of the identified problems and challenges, which comprised two separate sections dedicated respectively to the national context of Panama and the project area. There is a good balance between environmental and socio-economic issues, which was supported by data from a variety of sources including national statistics and the multidimensional poverty index. This section also included a reasonable gender analysis section that covered issues related to income, economic empowerment and participation in the workforce.

The reference to circular economy principles was scattered through several components of the proposal but the proposal does not specify or even provide a preliminary idea of any of the circular economy principles that it would like to introduce. Circular economy is a very broad area of practice and its principles will vary widely between sectors (i.e. the specific applications of circular economy principles in manufacturing will not be the same as those related to sustainable use and land management). Finally, we found that the simple introduction of CE principles did not go far enough in ensuring the delivery of the proposed outputs and results.

Project description: The description of the threats is very broad and covers such a wide array of issues that it is not always clear whether these are directly related to the purpose and scope of the project. (e.g. untreated wastewater and agrochemical pollution). The description of barriers is clear and the connection with the scope and purpose of the project is better articulated. The description of baseline investments and activities is clear and comprises a range of initiatives from line ministries and agencies (e.g. MoE, Panama Canal Authority) and international organizations (e.g. IADB, FAO, GCF and UNEP).

The description of the components is adequate and overall it provides an acceptable description of the proposed activities to be implemented. However, STAP identified a couple of areas that could be improved:

- **Component 1** does not provide any details about the circular economy principles the project is planning to implement, nor an explanation of how these would be integrated with other policies, strategies and plans, which are also not identified specifically.
- The title for **Component 3** is misleading in that the emphasis is on the circular economy (i.e. that the introduction of circular economy principles is the primary intervention) whereas the description has a more inclusive set of activities where the circular economy is only one of several approaches. The description of intermediate state 3 in the TOC diagram seems to provide a more complete description.
- **Component 4**, which covers knowledge management and sharing is very generic and does not provide sufficient details or an explanation of how project activities will be recorded and documented (i.e. using which methods, tools and approaches), the same applies to the proposed annual "continuous surveys". Component 4 also seems to contain some activities that need better alignment with Component 1, notably if the development of SLM strategies under Component 1 is sufficiently inclusive of the needs and aspirations of land users, how does it tie up to Outcome 4.1 on awareness and collaborative decision making?

The **theory of change (ToC) diagram** is quite confusing and does not include all expected/recommended elements, nor does it provide a clear logical pathway through all the conventional/recommended stages of project design and implementation. More specifically: the outputs are not included in the overall framework; an element called "*intermediate state*" was included but it is not clear how this fits in the overall logical pathway and ToC framework; the logical pathway connecting activities/inputs, outputs, outcomes/results and the project objective is not clear and almost upside down, with barriers leading to outcomes, leading to components, leading to an "intermediate state" step leading to the project objective; the assumptions are included in a box at the bottom of the ToC diagram but are not integrated in the overall ToC framework and it is not clear how they may influence the logical pathway.

The proposal states that a Gender Action Plan will be developed during the PPG phase of project development. The current proposal includes a gender analysis, which covered all the main issues and challenges affecting women in Panamanian society with a specific focus on the rural areas where the project will operate and was thus assessed to be fully adequate for this stage or project development.

The project proposal includes a **risk section**, which covers the very basics but should be improved upon in the next stage of project development. More specifically, STAP found that even though the description of the actual risks was in most cases adequate the description of proposed mitigating actions was weaker and in a number of cases (e.g. political and governance, strategies and policies, technical design and institutional capacity) provided very little detail about the proposed measures or reverted to describing project activities, as opposed to specifically designed measures.

The proposal includes a list of stakeholders that were consulted during the PIF development phase but no **stakeholder engagement plan** or assessment, which apparently will be developed during the PPG phase, as stated in the risk section.

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

- 1) A clear description of the proposed circular economy (CE) principles should be added to the proposal either in the project description section or the components description section. This should include concrete elements and/or aspects such as specific CE practices, methods and approaches. References to CE principles in different sections should also provide greater clarity and separation between the activities relating to CE versus others relating to biodiversity-friendly enterprises.
- 2) The section on threats should be improved to be more focused on the issues that the project is trying to address and the proposed scope of its activities.
- 3) The ToC diagram should be revised entirely to ensure that all the concerns noted above are addressed, with a specific focus on ensuring that the logical pathway and links between different elements and stages of the ToC framework are illustrated clearly as described in the [STAP ToC primer](#).
- 4) The risk section of the document should be revised and improved to address all the concerns highlighted in the previous section of this document. Specific attention should be devoted to ensuring that the description of mitigating actions is clear and includes measures that are specifically designed to address the risks identified.
- 5) A stakeholder engagement strategy and/or plan should be developed (preferably before the project proceeds to PPG stage), this should include a clear description of each stakeholder's anticipated role and responsibilities and should provide an adequate explanation of: **a)** how stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of the project, and **b)** how they will benefit from the project. Further guidance on developing a stakeholder engagement plan can be found in the STAP advisory document on [Multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change](#).

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.)