REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11347
Project title	Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature, Mega conservation landscape project
Date of screen	17 January 2024
STAP Panel Member	John Donaldson
STAP Secretariat	Alessandro Moscuzza

1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

This is a relatively strong and well written proposal that outlines an innovative mega-living-landscapes (MLL) approach to developing national parks and expanding the area under protection to meet the 30% target of the Kunming-Montreal Agreement. For the most part, the project description maps out a credible pathway for achieving the objectives and provides a description of the proposed outcomes and outputs that is adequate for this stage of the project.

Given the bold intention of the project to transform the way national parks are conceptualized and managed, there were some elements of the proposal that would benefit from further elaboration, particularly of the underlying assumptions associated with the theory of change. In the same vein, the sum of all the outputs does not seem to fully support the objective of demonstrating the ecological, social, and economic benefits of MLL.

STAP concurs that this project has scientific and technical merit. Although the project provides adequate detail for this concept stage, STAP's assessment includes suggestions for strengthening the project during the next phase of development in support of its intentions to be innovative, specifically: to relook at the assumptions underlying the TOC; a review of the outputs to better support the high level objective to demonstrate the impact of MLL; and a consideration of how to design monitoring, learning and knowledge management outputs to support the innovative intent of the project.

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*

<mark>Concur</mark> - 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 rationale for the project sets out a compelling case for changing the thinking around how national parks are developed and managed to achieve global environmental benefits. This is particularly relevant in the context of a country like South Africa with critical development imperatives and a history of national parks associated with displacement and dispossession. The concept of mega-living landscapes (MLL) as an alternative is well motivated and backed by reference to past and ongoing initiatives to justify its scientific and technical credibility.

The theory of change provides a sound logic for the project and the narrative adequately sets out the causal pathways. The accompanying diagram (Figure 1), however, is quite difficult to follow and does not illustrate the project logic or causal pathways in a way that adds value to the narrative. The assumptions underlying the TOC,

at least as they are identified on pg 21, don't seem to represent assumptions that are closely linked to the causal pathways in the TOC. Yet the descriptions of some of the components suggest there are significant assumptions underlying the project logic (as per STAP's definition[1] of assumptions) and that would influence the outcomes of the project if they proved to be untrue. For example, Component 2 includes a raft of interlinked steps with underlying assumptions (*If the private sector increases investment in the MLLs, then jobs and business opportunities for local communities will be created; If conscious intention is given to ensuring that pro-nature initiatives by the private sector are linked to improving benefits for local communities and only these are supported, then the chances of communities benefiting are increased; If consumers demand sustainable products, and investors require companies in their portfolio to meet certain environmental requirements, then producers will respond to these external pressures and commit to sustainable production practices; If producers receive incentives for pro-nature production and buyers will not purchase unsustainable products, then producers will shift their practices to respond to this*). The assumptions inherent in these proposed steps will affect project outcomes but are not identified as such, nor are they covered by the assumptions set out on pg 21.

The PIF is designed around a high level intention to demonstrate various outcomes linked to mega-living landscapes, including: MML as an effective alternative approach to national parks; the critical importance of the biodiversity economy to development; and the role of corridors in mitigating climate change. The audience for such demonstrations is not always clear but is presumably diverse (national parks management, private sector, investors, communities, general public) and will require various types of evidence to demonstrate environmental, social and economic benefits. Despite the strategic importance of these demonstrations, and the need for appropriate evidence, this does not seem to translate into outputs that adequately align with the intention – the outputs under Component 2 speak to technical support and branding and those under Component 3 refer to workshops and knowledge products but these seem insufficient to properly demonstrate the environmental, social and economic impacts of the MLL approach.

The project sets out to be innovative and includes innovations in several domains (institutional, financial, policy, and business models). It is, therefore, surprising that the project design does not seem to include elements that would ensure rapid learning from innovation and to accelerate transformation.,

The nature of the project means that it requires early commitment and involvement from a wide range of stakeholders and the PIF provides good evidence of stakeholder engagement during project development together with the identification of relevant groups for ongoing engagement. The section on risks adequately covers most of the major risks, particularly those that are relevant to South Africa such as crime and political violence. The risks associated with criminality seem to refer primarily to poaching and it is not clear whether risks linked to attacks on tourists have been factored in, given the importance of tourism as part of the biodiversity economy.

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. Review the assumptions underlying the project logic, particularly for Component 2. It is important to properly identify these assumptions and then include activities in project design to test them so the project can adapt if they turn out to be untrue.

2. Review the outputs, particularly under Components 2 & 3 to clarify how they will support the strategic intention to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of the MLL approach. The review should

---

[1] Stafford Smith, M. 2020. *Theory of Change Primer, A STAP Advisory Document*. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility. Washington, D.C.

consider how outputs would support data collection (ecological, social, economic), verification of benefits, and the use of data and information to achieve transformation and shift the mindset from conventional parks to the MLL approach.

3. Consider how monitoring, learning and knowledge management under Component 3 could be designed to support the innovative intent of the project by ensuring early testing of solutions, rapid learning from successes and failures and documentation of enabling and constraining factors.

4. Review the risk analysis and assessment around "criminality" to ensure that this adequately covers risks associated with violent and/or street crime involving tourists and that this is supported by clear and effective measures to mitigate any potentially significant impacts on project activities and results.

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.)