

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11142
Project title	Guinean Forests (GEF-8 Amazon, Congo and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program)
Date of screen	02/06/2023
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This proposal presented noticeable weaknesses in a number of areas, which in some cases were quite significant. Whilst it is STAP's assessment that the cumulative impact of these weaknesses would not be enough to affect the delivery of program activities and actual results, which would otherwise warrant assigning a "major" scoring, there are still a number of areas that need attention and will need clarifying and strengthening in the next phase of program development. The issues identified include: the descriptions of the project objective and some of the components, a lack of coherence between the description of some of the outcomes and the activities related to them, and some weaknesses affecting different elements of the theory of change ToC. Further details about the issues that were identified and suggested recommendations to address these are noted below.

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 **project description** was quite broad and in some places used rather generic language and phrases taken from the GEF programming document, but without providing a clear explanation of how the proposed targets, objectives and goals will be achieved in practice (e.g. *country projects will apply multiple levers of transformation, including an enhanced enabling environment for sustainable forest management through supportive government policy and sustainable financing solutions*).

The **program objective** was clear but it did not appear to match the proposed activities and environmental benefits described in the same section. The description and analysis of barriers were clear and convincing with a good understanding of the interlinkages between the barriers and how a systems approach is required to address them. One of the two stated program priorities was quite vague and did not provide sufficient details on how it will be achieved (e.g. *facilitate work by the countries of the region towards a permanent body for ongoing alignment and harmonization of forest management policies*). The proposal provided a reasonable baseline of activities and projects that the current program plans to build upon in order to deliver its outcomes and goal. This included a good mix of international donor funded interventions, regional initiatives and GEF-funded projects.

The proposal also included a short section on key lessons learned from current and past investments. This provided an acceptable description of some of the key issues, needs and things that have worked well, but could have arguably included a more detailed analysis of why issues arise and why different types of measures and

interventions worked or did not work. This would provide a better understanding of the context and how the program is designed to overcome obstacles experienced in previous initiatives.

The **Theory of Change (ToC)** section presented a number of weaknesses in areas such as the assumptions, which in a number of cases are given facts and do not cover underlying assumptions that affect the intended outcomes. The ToC diagram is very dense and difficult to read and presents some inconsistencies and gaps in the logical flow between stages (i.e. lack of outputs and a stage named “desired situation”, which was unclear and did not fit the overall logical flow). The narrative description of the ToC is somewhat disjointed and appears to describe different types of interventions without drawing the logical connections or boundaries between them, or attempting to explain how these will be implemented as part of a coherent framework.

The description of the **program components** varies in strength and clarity. Components 4, 5 and 6 are quite clear and describe in enough detail the activities that will be implemented, as well as how these will be implemented and what outputs, results and outcomes they will generate. On the other hand, the descriptions for components 1, 2 and 3 are weak, as they lack clarity and specificity on most of the aforementioned aspects. For example, component 1 does not provide enough detail about the activities that will be implemented; component 2 -and especially outcome 2.1- is overall quite weak and should be revised and clarified. More specifically we found that the labelling for outcome 2.1 (i.e. *Expanded coverage of protected areas and OECMs*) was somewhat misleading and did not match the description provided, it also did not provide any details on how the proposed targets will be achieved, i.e. how PAs and OECMs will be established. It is also not clear whether OECMs are envisaged only for areas outside PAs but where there are no production activities, or whether some of the SLM initiatives could also serve as OECMs, particularly where there is intact forest. The description for component 3 is quite broad and somewhat vague and does not provide enough details on what the program or projects will actually do and how. The description provided focuses entirely on describing what is needed and why, rather than what should happen and which partners would be relevant/important to achieve specific results. Along similar lines, the description for outcome 3.3 (i.e. Strengthened inclusive community forest governance) is quite broad and the activities proposed seem to be somewhat removed from front-line delivery (i.e. *inform the development of mechanisms that will empower communities to deliver NMR processes and governance...*), which is not ideal, as it does not match the proposed scope of the outcome.

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. The ToC should be revised and improved. The areas that need attention include: the assumptions, which need to be revised and rewritten to exclude given facts; the outputs which are currently missing; the “desired situation”, which should be better explained and contextualized, as it is not currently clear how this fitted into the wider context of the ToC; and the ToC diagram, which should be revised to include outputs and address the aforementioned issues.
2. The description of the components should be revised and improved to address the issues highlighted above in section 2 of this document.
3. The description provided for cross-cutting programmatic areas such as multi-stakeholder engagement, knowledge management and learning and innovation should be revised to provide further clarity about the activities that will be implemented to deliver the intended outputs (i.e. provide additional details about the ‘what’ and the ‘how’).
4. The overall style and language of further program/project documents should be considered carefully and should be focused on providing more detailed and convincing descriptions of the activities and results

that the these will deliver and how. The language and style used in this proposal for the description of the country child projects was much clearer and should be used as a template for future documents.

5. In the development of the regional and country-level child projects, it would be helpful to provide greater clarity on the proposed scope for OECMs versus integrated land management. As noted in the proposal, OECMs are an evolving concept and the program could play an important role in exploring additional conceptualizations and operational models for OECMs in different land management contexts.

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.)