

## STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

<b>Part I: Project Information</b>	<b>Response</b>	
<b>GEF ID</b>	10870	
<b>Project Title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation in the Imatong landscape of South Sudan	
<b>Date of Screening</b>	11 November 2021	
<b>STAP member screener</b>	John Donaldson	
<b>STAP secretariat screener</b>	Alessandro Moscuza	
<b>STAP Overall Assessment and Rating</b>	<p><b>Minor issues to be considered during project design:</b>  our review concluded that this proposal focuses on an area of importance for achieving GEBs and provides sufficient analysis of the problems and proposed mechanisms of change for this stage of the project development process. However, we also identified a number of areas where information was either missing or where further attention should be devoted to specific aspects. These included: (i) the baseline section where we concluded that some existing projects of relevance may have been missed, and where we could not find any reference to multiple baseline analyses; (ii) the proposed mechanisms of change relating to components 3 &amp; 4 where STAP recommends that the scope of the intended change is more precisely defined and the proposed mechanisms are aligned to the achievement of these changes; and (iii) the risk section where we recommend the inclusion of additional information on ‘risk likelihood’.</p>	
<b>Part I: Project Information</b> <b>B. Indicative Project Description Summary</b>	<b>What STAP looks for</b>	<b>Response</b>
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	The project objective is defined as ”To promote Sustainable Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation in the Imatong landscape of South Sudan” which is consistently related to the problem diagnosis. The objective is currently not measurable and should be

		strengthened by including intended outcomes. For example, the narrative states that the impact will be: resource management is improved and contributes to rural livelihoods, national, regional and global environmental benefits
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	The project has four components, which are mostly clear and coherent with the project's objective. However, our review found that the wording for component 1 was not very clear and did not illustrate sufficiently what the project will actually do to enable policy and regulatory frameworks for the planning, management and governance of PAs. The wording for component 3 was also too long and somewhat confusing.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.  Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	The outcomes were mostly fine and well designed, although the wording for outcome 3.1 was too long and bound to be confusing.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, the PIF provides a compelling explanation of how the project can deliver a number of GEBs and the sum of components, outcomes and outputs as a whole provide a solid pathway to do this.
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Output 1.1. not clear who will review and implement the national policy and institutional frameworks (supposedly the relevant national authorities) which then raises the same question regarding the contribution and/or role to be made by the project.
<b>Part II: Project justification</b>	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
<b>1. Project description.</b> <b>Briefly describe:</b> 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	The project description was not very long but was dense with relevant information and supported by a robust set of technical data and a very reasonable list of references from government agencies and other 'technical' sources.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	The PIF presented a total of four barriers, which were described to a sufficient extent for this phase of project

		development. The description was supported by a good amount of background data but was light on references. STAP recommendation is that the project developers review this version in the next phase of project development with two aims in mind: i) consider whether there are additional barriers to be added to the current list (e.g. lack of technical capacity or political instability), ii) review the current content with a view to strengthen this by adding more technical references.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	Yes, the problem statement focuses really well on the drivers of environmental degradation that will need to be addressed and provides a clear and comprehensive summary of the major threats to biodiversity (e.g. illegal wildlife poaching and trafficking, illegal logging of hardwoods etc.).
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, the PIF provides a clear description of the main government actors that operate in the environmental protection and conservation space in South Sudan, it also provides a list of four existing projects that have been funded by a mixture of international donors. Whilst we found the level of detail provided for the interventions listed to be satisfactory we would also <b>recommend that the project developers</b> conduct a further scanning of the interventions landscape to identify any additional projects that may have been missed.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Yes, the current scope of the baseline identified in the PIF provides a sufficient basis for quantifying the project's benefits.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, the information provided in the baseline section of the PIF includes the financial value and size of existing projects, which provides a sufficient justification in support of the additional investment to be delivered by this project.
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	We could not find any information related to this aspect in the current version of the PIF. <b>STAP recommends</b> that this information be provided as a matter of priority in the next phase of project design and development.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	We could not find any information related to this aspect in the current version of the PIF. <b>STAP recommends</b> that this information be provided as a matter of priority in the next phase of project design and development.

	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	We could not find any information related to this aspect in the current version of the PIF. <b>STAP recommends</b> that this information be provided as a matter of priority in the next phase of project design and development.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	The intervention logic for the project is premised on the understanding that resources will be deployed to implement the interventions (activities) to deliver outputs, which in turn will lead to certain institutional and behavioral changes (outcomes) at the intermediate level provided that the assumptions and certain preconditions governing project implementation hold true.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	At the lowest level of the theory of change, the needed interventions will be deployed to deliver outputs. The next level of the theory of change, shows that outputs will lead directly to the delivery of the project outcomes, which include the enforcement and updated of a comprehensive policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, and coordination mechanisms for the effective management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation in the Imatong landscape.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	Above comment refers.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	The mechanisms are reasonably well-defined. The logical flow between the various ToC elements (i.e. outputs, outcomes, results and long-term impacts) is clearly illustrated in the ToC diagram, which also integrates the proposed intervention, baseline and impact pathways. These mechanisms seem plausible for the components dealing with enabling policy and management plans for the protected area. There is a large assumption that the activities and outputs under Components 3 and 4 will address the major drivers of degradation and biodiversity loss, which have been identified as the breakdown or lack of recognition of local institutions for governing resource use, in-migration from returning refugees and displaced persons, illegal logging and hunting, and increased pressure from commercial agriculture. The proposed interventions are appropriate to deal with some of the drivers, but the information provided does not show that they will be sufficient to address the main drivers. <b>STAP recommends</b> that the scope of the intended change is more precisely defined,

		and the proposed mechanisms are aligned to the achievement of these changes.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Yes, this is described in section 1.1. of the PIF: “ <i>Global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed</i> ”.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Yes, the PIF included a very detailed section on incremental and additional benefits, which listed and described clearly the incremental and global benefits that the project is expected to deliver. These include items such as: Enhanced forest cover due to PA adaptive management and reduced deforestation; substantial increase in forest carbon stocks; reduction in GHGs emissions and climate change mitigation and enhanced biodiversity conservation. Our assessment concluded that the proposed incremental activities will lead to the delivery of GEBs especially in view of the importance of South Sudan in terms of global biodiversity and natural habitat status.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	-
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, South Sudan contains a range of regionally important habitats and ecosystems, which comprise: Lowland Forests, Montane Forests, Savannah woodlands, Grassland Savannahs, Floodplains, Sudd Swamps, wetlands, and Semi-arid and arid lands (ASALs). South Sudan contains an impressive range of internationally protected areas, which include one of the largest remaining untouched savannah and woodland ecosystems in Africa, and one Ramsar site (i.e. the Sudd), which is the largest wetland in Africa (57,000 km) and one of the largest freshwater ecosystems in the world.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	The overall scale of the benefits proposed does justify the proposed investment. However, it is important to note that the outputs under component 3 are likely to have the biggest impact on the drivers of degradation and delivery of the outcomes in terms of ha of land restored or under improved practices. As noted elsewhere, it will be essential to define the scope of these interventions and then make sure they receive an appropriate portion of the budget allocation.

	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, above comments refer.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes, the PIF provides a range of indicators that are also aligned with Aichi targets.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project is planning to manage this risk through the promotion of afforestation programs among rural communities and the institutionalization of development planning systems that reduce land degradation. In addition, disaster risk and response plans may be put in place in collaboration with selected communities
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	Yes, the project contains several innovative elements, for example: Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanism is not yet a widespread practice in South Sudan, and the methodologies of establishing the Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) and to inform management decisions and IUCN Green Listing process will be applied for the first time in the country. The equipment, devices and intervention strategies that are proposed for adoption by the Forestry department at both national and state levels and at the site level are also innovative in the national context of South Sudan. A potential area of innovation could be how to strengthen traditional community resource use systems to cope with increasingly globalized pressures which manifest at community level in the form of in-migration, illegal trade, commercial agriculture and climate change.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes, the proposed project activities will address capacity building for staff within the Directorate of Forestry on Protected Area Management Effective (PAME), managing information systems, monitoring; training on implementing monitoring, enforcement; and training on PA management for staff at the targeted PA sites, which together will allow for best practices and lessons learned through national and on-site enforcement activities to be easily and be widely up-scaled to overall national forest management operations. Training of local communities within and adjacent to the targeted Imatong area will be crucial for developing models that can be replicated elsewhere in the country.

	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Given the nature of this intervention, STAP assessment is that its success will require incremental adaptation over a period of time.
<b>1b. Project Map and Coordinates.</b> Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		-
<b>2. Stakeholders.</b> Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Yes, a wide range of stakeholders participated in the consultations during the project identification phase and will continue to participate during both full project development and implementation Phase. These have also been listed in the PIF that was reviewed by STAP and include stakeholders in Central Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies. At the sub-national level, county officials and local communities' committees neighboring the target area of Imatong were consulted, whereas at the local level, civil society organizations, private sector organizations, research and academic institutions, faith-based organizations and traditional institutions were also consulted.
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	Different roles have been allocated to various stakeholders depending on their size, remit, scope and level of authority. These range from design and implementation of the project to providing technical guidance, advocacy, lobbying and awareness creation.
<b>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.</b> Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g.	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Yes, the PIF includes a section on gender analysis, which provides a broad but sufficiently comprehensive overview of gender issues in South Sudan. The project the project will also carry out project-specific gender analyses and develop a gender action plan in the next phase of project development, which will identify and support opportunities to include women in the design and implementation of project activities. This will be an

<p>gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p>		<p>important component of the project because many of the root causes of degradation and biodiversity loss are significantly gendered, e.g. illegal and unsustainable logging and hunting typically involve men whereas harvesting of NTFPs mostly involves women. It will need to be clear how gender-sensitive responses will address this. Our review of this section of the PIF concluded that this was perfectly adequate for this stage of project development.</p>
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>Our review did not identify any issues of this kind.</p>
<p><b>5. Risks.</b> Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?</li> <li>• Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?</li> <li>• Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?</li> </ul>	<p>The PIF included a well-presented risk section, which identified a number of risks that may prevent or hinder the project from achieving its objectives, including COVID19 and climate-related risks. Our assessment concluded that the list of risks identified was both valid and sufficiently comprehensive for this stage of project development. We noted that there were no risks identified for possible conflicting commercial interests (e.g. for high value hardwoods or commercial agriculture) nor for the impact of illicit trade. These may not be significant but given the description of drivers in the proposal, they do seem like possible risks. The proposed risk mitigation measures were appropriate for the potential impact and likelihood of each category of risk. However, we noted the absence of a column in the risk table that rated the likelihood of a risk happening. Whilst we recognize that</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?</li> </ul>	this is not an essential requirement, <b>STAP recommends</b> that this information be added to the next iteration of the project proposal.
<b>6. Coordination.</b> Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	The PIF includes a section on co-ordination, which provides a good overview of how the project will be managed and coordinated, including any governance arrangements. This also provides a list of three GEF projects which will be coordinating their activities with those of this project. Our assessment concluded that this section of the PIF was totally adequate -both in scope and level of detail provided- for this stage of project development.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes, for further details please refer to the comments provided on the KM component of the project below.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, the co-ordination section of the PIF (i.e. section 6) provides a few examples where experience and lessons from previous GEF-funded projects were listed. The same section also describes how this project will use these lessons with a view to change mindsets on benefits of ecosystem restoration and ecosystem services.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	-
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	Yes, there are adequate provision made to satisfy this requirement in the KM section of the PIF. In addition, planned training activities on PA management for staff at the targeted PA sites will allow for best practices and lessons learned through national and on-site enforcement activities to be easily and be widely up-scaled to overall national forest management operations.
<b>8. Knowledge management.</b> Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	The project is aiming to facilitate and enhance knowledge acquisition and experience sharing at local, landscape, national, regional and global levels through better access to information, knowledge, learning and networking.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The PIF states that this will be achieved by: i) developing and operationalizing an interactive M&E system to track implementation of project activities for purposes of scaling out in Similar areas in South Sudan; and ii)

		documenting, packaging and sharing best practices and lessons learned at landscape, national and regional levels to inform uptake of good practices and lessons learned, and policy influencing.
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Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
<p><b>1. Concur</b></p>	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.</p>
	<p>* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that <b><i>“STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.”</i></b></p>
<p><b>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p>
	<p>(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.</p>
	<p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>

<p><b>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>