

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10866
Project Title	Comprehensive land management in forestry and agri-food systems of three water basins in Argentina to contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and to mitigation and adaptation to climate change
Date of Screening	June 8, 2022
STAP member screener	Graciela Metternicht
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Durón
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design</p> <p>STAP welcomes Argentina’s project with the Development Bank of Latin America, “Comprehensive land management in forestry and agri-food systems of three water basins in Argentina to contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and to mitigation and adaptation to climate change”.</p> <p>The project aims to contribute to enhanced national and subnational institutional capacity for the incorporation of Land Degradation Neutrality in strategies, policies and governance in synergy with adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. In addition, the intervention will contribute to Argentina’s voluntary LDN targets and NDC voluntary commitments to promote resilient socio-ecosystems, food security and enhanced quality of life in a framework of climate change mitigation and adaptation.</p> <p>The project clearly recognizes the importance of articulating interventions to pursue land degradation neutrality and climate resilience with land use planning. In this regard, STAP suggests that the project team applies the approach and recommendations presented by the Science-Policy Interface of the UNCCD at COP 15 for embedding LDN interventions in ‘Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management’.</p>

The PIF demonstrates a robust methodology for selecting the river basins based on criteria and comprehensive input from stakeholders. Comprehensive multi-stakeholder engagement, along with an emphasis on local benefits (i.e. food security and ecosystem services) will underpin global environmental benefits.

As the project team develops the FSP, the STAP highly encourages to embrace the full potential of an LDN approach; to continue developing the proposed Theory of Change to clearly show how to embed LDN proposed intervention in the land use planning processes of the selected inter-jurisdictional river basins. Effective implementation of LDN is reliant on establishing coherence between policies, actors, and sectors, and on comprehensive, integrated land use planning that builds on a land potential assessment, socio-economic assessment focused on land-users well-being, and a resilience assessment.

Many of these LDN project design elements are reflected in the PIF, and sequencing them in a logical order could further harness the full potential of LDN – for example by aligning these design elements as inputs for estimating and monitoring anticipated losses and proposed gains of natural capital in the three river basins. Focusing on the counterbalancing element will reduce negative externalities (e.g. agriculture, or livestock, systems displacing smaller farmers into forest areas) that may compromise the durability of global environmental outcomes. Additionally, the STAP recommends for component 2 of the project (designed to overcome barriers 2 and 3) to consider behavioral insights (see [STAP advice on this matter](#)) as means of addressing unsustainable production, consumption and marketing practices (pg. 34 of PIF); thereby, invest in durable solutions.

Because of its great potential in applying LDN, and learning from this experience, STAP encourages the project team to disseminate results and lessons – success

	<p>and failures, to strengthen knowledge and learning across countries on LDN application. Because of its strong emphasis on the need for policy coherence to realise the set outcomes, STAP wishes to encourage the project team to consider the competitive pool on <u>policy coherence</u>. The project will likely prove to be a good opportunity for Argentina, and to the wider GEF, to learn about the role of policy coherence in maximizing global environmental benefits.</p> <p>Below, STAP details its guidance.</p>	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary		Response
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Though objectives are mentioned in pg 5, more clarity is suggested when writing up the FSP. STAP suggests working on improving the articulation of the objectives to be aligned with the barriers identified.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes, the project expects to achieve GEB outcomes resulting from sustainable land management and climate resilience.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, with good monitoring, evaluation, and learning. STAP welcomes the ToC mentioning triple loop learning and encourage the team to 'action' that concept as the FSP is written up, with clear actions, and diagrams connecting outputs and the learning achieved and how they are to 'feed' into the different 'loops'.
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?	Yes.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	

<p>1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)</p>	<p>Is the problem statement well-defined?</p>	<p>Yes, the problem statement is well-defined. To strengthen further the context of the project sites, STAP suggests using more recent climate information than the data for the period 1960-2010 provided by the National Climate Change Adaptation Mitigation Plan. One suggestion is Argentina’s Climate Risk Country Profile, 2021 and other resources for Argentina in the World Bank’s Climate Change Knowledge Portal. The project also could further harness Argentina’s Climate Change Risk Map System (SIMARCC) to describe the local climate risks and stressors.</p>
	<p>Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?</p>	<p>Yes, the threats are described for each target site. As for the barriers, addressing them (e.g. uncoordinated planning and unsustainable production/consumption practices) is essential to generating GEBs. During the project development, suggest reviewing the barriers to ensure they remain valid, and whether there are additional barriers that are context-specific to each site and which undermine achieving the project objective. STAP suggests the FSP preparation includes an in-depth desktop review of relevant literature (peer-reviewed and grey) as the facts provided in the PIF lack proper referencing and some data are out of date.</p>
	<p>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?</p>	<p>Non-applicable.</p>
<p>2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects</p>	<p>Is the baseline identified clearly?</p>	<p>Yes, a narrative baseline is included in the PIF. This narrative focuses on describing three different initiatives (programs supporting environmental laws; sectoral programs; and other on-going projects), which this project will build on. However, the project developers are encouraged to specify how the baseline projects will contribute to</p>

		<p>the different expected outcomes. At the moment, the baseline projects are listed without necessarily linking them to the components, or outcomes.</p> <p>STAP recommends the FSP preparation phase includes a thorough search of projects with similar scope and objectives implemented in Argentina, which the GEF did not fund. An example is the <u>REGATTA project</u> that promoted knowledge sharing of climate change technologies and experiences for low carbon and climate-resilient development in Latin America and the Caribbean.</p>
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Yes, by providing estimates for core indicators for the goals the project is expected to achieve – i.e. expected hectares to be restored; expected hectares of landscapes under improved practices; greenhouse gas emissions mitigated, and others.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, although good monitoring of the project outcomes will be necessary to assess whether the project is on track to contributing to GEB outcomes.
	For multiple focal area projects:	Non-applicable.
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>The project's theory of change can be described as follows:</p> <p>To achieve sustainable land and forest management, while addressing climate change, the project identified sites where integrated land use planning could be piloted. The sites were selected based on data extracted from the 'National Action Plan to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation</p>

		and Drought Mitigation’, and by considering local capacity, including governance and institutional arrangements, needed to carry out LDN. Once the sites were identified, the main barriers to achieving the global environmental outcomes, were defined. Subsequently, three components were articulated to support integrated land use planning for LDN to assist in achieving GEBs on enhanced land productivity, forest management, and climate resilience.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project’s objectives?	See above.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	The assumptions do not appear to be articulated in the PIF. Suggest defining the assumptions, including the barriers and enablers of change, that need to be tested/validated to achieve each of the GEB outcomes. This process will contribute to the triple loop learning the project seeks to achieve, especially with regards to the scaling needed to achieve the change levers on institutions, governance, innovation, and resilience. Suggest referring to <u>STAP’s theory of change primer</u> for further guidance.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Partly. Component 1 is rooted on managing knowledge to strengthen capacities to implement ‘Provincial Action Plans to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought Mitigation (PAPs), as well as for managing the project’s governance. To monitor drought, particularly in the Salado-Dulce Basin and the Middle Parana River Basin, the project developers are encouraged to assess and track climatic and hydrological conditions as part of early warning systems. <u>UNCCD’s drought toolbox</u> is one example of an early warning drought system the project developers can use.

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?	Possibly, with coherent monitoring and assessment of the expected GEB outcomes, including by testing the unconfirmed assumptions with the appropriate indicators as necessary.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Non-applicable.
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, the benefits are global environmental, and they are measurable. The project intends to strengthen the LDN baseline by estimating land productivity, soil organic carbon, and land cover – metrics for global benefits related to land. The project team is encouraged to use the <u>land use planning for LDN tool</u> . If the tool is not fully ready, perhaps the project team could reach out to the tool developers to explore the possibility of trialling the tool in the project sites. Another valuable resource is <u>UNCCD’s/SPI’s technical report on integrated land use planning and LDN</u> .
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Various outcomes and change levers identified in the theory of change are dependent on scaling. The project team is encouraged to define the barriers, and enablers, of scaling that are associated with each outcome. For example, component 3 will depend on stakeholders being receptive to incentives (e.g. PES, eco-tourism), on stable and reliant governance and institutional arrangements, among other factors, for these incentives to successfully deliver durable GEBs – which are often dependent on first achieving sustained socio-economic co-benefits. Identifying the assumptions behind each of the components, especially with relation to the required transformative scaling needed to achieve GEBs, will strengthen the project’s impact.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, GEBs related to sustainable land and forest management, and climate resilience are defined in the proposal.

	<p>Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?</p>	<p>Partly, the project describes a number of tools available in Argentina (e.g. climate change risk maps system, SIMARCC, forest monitoring system, soils information system, early warning systems). In the project document, please indicate whether and how these tools will be used to monitor and assess the delivery of GEBs. If additional methods will be used, please specify them.</p> <p>STAP also recommends that the project team consult the UNCCD SPI methods, tools, and approaches to embed <u>LDN in Integrated land use planning</u> (Verbug, Metternicht et al., 2022). Additional resources include: Paruelo et al 2014 <u>Ordenamiento territorial rural</u> and <u>Land Use and Spatial Planning</u>; and <u>Enabling Sustainable Management of Land Resources</u> by Metternicht (2018)</p>
	<p>What activities will be implemented to increase the project’s resilience to climate change?</p>	<p>The project will aim to embed early warning systems that increase the resilience to climate change. In addition to this effort, the project team could also use monitoring and learning to adapt land management practices to increase resilience.</p>
<p>7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up</p>	<p>Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?</p>	<p>Yes, the project is innovative as it will apply an LDN approach to generate global environmental outcomes, and local benefits. As part of an LDN approach, the project will also seek to enhance coherence between regulations and policies to address land degradation and drought. The project also aims to apply integrated land use planning to identify the proper interventions (avoid, reduce, or reverse) on land degradation to achieve impact. STAP recommends drawing on its paper on “<u>Framing policy coherence for the GEF</u>”, which proposes five levels in which the GEF can influence on policy coherence. The paper also provides a number of tools that can be used to apply policy coherence in practice.</p>

		As the project is designed, it would be valuable to adapt as suitable the LDN logic chain (page 66) in the <u>Scientific Conceptual Framework on LDN</u> . Careful attention is necessary on land potential assessments and stratification per land type, and other relevant outputs that support integrated territorial planning. In this regard, the project team is encouraged to use the LDN baseline to calculate how the project interventions will contribute to gains, or losses, of natural-capital.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	No, it is suggested describing a scaling pathway focused on the barriers, enablers, and critical assumptions that underpin reaching GEB outcomes. It might be necessary to identify metrics to monitor transformative scaling for governance, innovation, resilience, improved ecosystem services – i.e. the change levers. It is suggested to refer to STAP’s recent guidance on transformational change metrics, which will be submitted to the GEF council meeting in June 2022.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Probably both incremental and transformational change will be required. We suggest applying STAP’s recent guidance on plausible future narratives when designing the project. STAP’s guidance will be submitted to the GEF council meeting in June 2022, and is also on <u>STAP’s website</u> .
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		The PIF includes a well geo-referenced map of the project sites.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	The PIF describes thorough and multiple consultations with a variety of stakeholders, which is commendable. As the project is developed and implemented, the project team ought to remain aware of additional stakeholders that might be essential for addressing barriers, testing

<p>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.</p>		<p>assumptions, and for achieving scaling. An additional recommendation is to map the stakeholders according to outcomes in the final project document.</p>
	<p>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?</p>	<p>See comment above.</p>
<p>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. 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. 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-</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Not yet. A gender analysis will be conducted at the PPG stage. The project team is strongly encouraged to embed gender throughout the project logic chain, and components, based on the gender analysis.</p>

making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /td		
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Please consider whether gender will hinder the participation of an important stakeholder group.
5. Risks. 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>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"> • 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? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? 	Yes, the risks are comprehensive and valid. STAP appreciates the climate risk screening that is part of the project documentation. When designing the project, please consider applying STAP's plausible future narratives guidance which will soon be released. The guidance will assist the project team plan for risks (climate and non-climate), and how to identify opportunities for change (incremental and transformational) to achieve durable GEBs.
6. Coordination. 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?	Yes. The PIF describes ways how on-going and past GEF projects will contribute to this project. STAP appreciates these descriptions linking knowledge generated from previous, or on-going GEF investments, to this current project.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, lessons have been identified.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	Lessons were identified through consultations. These lessons were used to identify the needs for policy coherence to address land degradation.

		Lessons on understanding the complexity and interdisciplinarity of land degradation also were used to design the PIF. Thirdly, the importance of project governance and institutional arrangements to support the delivery of GEBs and local benefits.
	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?	Partly, there is a mechanism to learn from current project implementation through river basin committees that will facilitate knowledge exchange.
8. Knowledge management. 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?	<p>Institutions collaborating on LDN will manage knowledge about the project. These institutions include: the National Observatory of Land Degradation and Desertification, the National Advisory Commission (CAN), the river basin committees, and others.</p> <p>The project also plans to generate knowledge and learning via a triple learning loop. As mentioned above, testing of assumptions will be essential to generate learning that can lead to scaling, innovation, and the necessary transformational change.</p>
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	<p>Knowledge exchanges between institutions and committees will take place to disseminate learning and best practices. During project implementation, suggest being open to adaptive management based on the knowledge generated through these exchanges.</p> <p>While designing the PPG, STAP also suggests considering its guidance on <u>south-south knowledge exchange</u> and <u>knowledge management and learning</u>.</p>

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
1. Concur	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.
	* 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 <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>
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	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:
	(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, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.
	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.

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	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:
	(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.