

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11576
Project title	Third Additional Financing to the Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP)
Date of screen	June 5, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges Sierra Leone's LDCF project "Third Additional Financing to the Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP)". STAP understands the project will contribute to an ongoing program supporting actions to improve resilience of food systems. In the case of this project, the activities target Sierra Leone, although some of the rationale and risk assessment is unhelpfully out of date or general to the regional program, including some of the theory of change.

Although the proposal provides some climate adaptation rationale, STAP questions to what degree LDCF funding will improve ongoing adaptation efforts that are already in place through wider program activities. Careful attention to the LDCF additionality is necessary when further developing the project.

The project aims to "scale...to achieve livelihood transformation": a stronger quantified rationale for what this means is needed to enable any assessment of success, and to set the level of ambition for the theory of change. It will also help to clarify what future uncertainties the project needs to be designed to be robust to, so that it does not contribute to maladaptation.

STAP also recommends paying closer attention to the definition and tracking of important assumptions in the theory of change that should be monitored to allow adaptive management during implementation.

Below, STAP provides its advice.

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
- X 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 rationale offers a description of the problem and the context influencing vulnerability to climate change, although not in the format required by the PIF template. Some of this appears to be based on an older proposal (e.g. p.4 "4.7m people are projected to experience food insecurity ...in Jun-Aug 2022" – this was 2 years ago so presumably does not need to be a projection anyway more?). Nonetheless the direct, and indirect, effects of climate change on people are clear if repetitive, the crucial importance of agriculture for food security in a country that already imports nearly half its staple of rice, and some of the sensible priorities of the Sierra Leone government come through.

Changes in temperature and precipitation are described as influencing agricultural production through changes in labor productivity (less working hours due to extreme heat), and decreased water availability for crops and livestock which induces competition over resources. Incidence of floods is also highlighted as a problem. Population growth, market changes and shocks (decrease in mineral prices, COVID, political instability) are also having an adverse effect on livelihoods. Interactions between these key drivers are described to some extent, but only at the national level. A description of the targeted socioecological systems appears missing in the project rationale, which is necessary to fully understand the problem and the rationale behind the selection of activities. As a consequence, the ToC does not seem to have worked back from the outcome goal to ensure what is proposed is both necessary and sufficient and in fact the most important actions to ensure that goal (in conjunction with other activities outside this project).

The rationale includes a brief description of two climate change scenarios and how they are foreseen to impact agricultural production in Sierra Leone. STAP recommends that there is enough on climate, but a more elaborate description is needed of the interactions between all key drivers (climate and non-climate – e.g. population, markets, etc), and how they are likely to influence the project in the future. Using simple future narratives (see next box) that encompass these will strengthen stakeholders’ capacity to implement resilient measures to withstand climate and non-climate stressors and risks, and to have outcomes that are robust whatever future eventuates. Plus, it will help stakeholders assess whether the interventions, as currently proposed, are necessary and sufficient to address undesired change that may affect food security, and that there is a very low risk of the project interventions causing maladaptation. Conversely, this analysis could also show opportunities as a result of changes caused by significant trends in climate, population growth, market changes, and regional political instability.

As with many parts of this proposal, the theory of change appears to be a generic program ToC (“participating countries”, “Program Areas”, etc). For this to be helpful to Sierra Leone, it is important to engage local stakeholders in tuning it for local circumstances. The key claim of the AF project is to “**scale up the integration** of sustainable landscape restoration, biodiversity conservation, and climate-sensitive interventions into **livelihood transformation** through enabling climate smart agriculture and climate resilient food security **practices**” (p.10, our **bolding** of some key words that need to appear in the subsequent text and theory of change), so it would be helpful to situate this as an outcome of the AF; the shorter term outcomes (p.10) proposed would contribute, but it would direct attention as to *how much* scaling of *what sort* is needed to achieve *some quantified level* of livelihood transformation. Being more explicit about defining these italicized terms is crucial for determining whether the project makes progress. Otherwise statements like “The AF will scale-up research etc...” (p.15) just sound like “will do more of”, not a really thoughtful scaling to a projected level of need that may enable a transformational change.

In addition, the proposal only explicitly states two assumptions (p.12) – (i) that NBS practices provide livelihood returns to farmers, and (ii) that there is national political stability. (i) is certainly vital to the behavioral change being sought towards improved practices, and so should appear in the theory of change logic and be an explicit subject of adaptive monitoring – that is, monitored and the project adjusted if shown not to be true. (ii) really seems to be a contextual risk, which is either so likely that the project should be designed to be robust to it or sufficiently unlikely that it warrants an entry in the Risk Table. However, there are many other assumptions in the chains of logic in the ToC that are important to consider and which should be made explicit – the proposers need to identify these in context, but these could include: do farmers actually find the early warning systems useful? does more use of CMA tech & services actually reduce food insecurity (or e.g. does it just go into exports from a few farms, etc)? does a decrease in average food insecurity actually reduce insecurity in extreme events? And so on. The proposal needs a deeper analysis of these sorts of assumptions (some of which are scattered in the text e.g. through p.15, but not made explicit), with some of them identified as critical to monitor (and reflected in component 5b p.14, perhaps under item (b) here).

Lastly, although STAP understands that LDCF funding is aimed at strengthening adaptive capacity and community resilience, it questions why Sierra Leone’s efforts on climate adaptation and resilience are not covered by the program’s component 2 (see page 12). A clear distinction between the program component 2

and component 6 (this project) is necessary, or a stronger reasoning as to why climate adaptation and resilience is not the main thrust of component 2 or of the entire program. It is STAP's understanding that World Bank projects, and programs, [systematically build in climate adaptation and resilience](#) into their activities to manage risks and embrace opportunities. Hence, it is important for this project to be structured in a manner that LDCF funding explicitly improves on current adaptation efforts. In this regard, this AF proposal and its theory of change need to be more consistently analyzed for Sierra Leone specifically, rather than generic regional issues, preferably with local stakeholders.

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

When developing the project, STAP recommends for the following points to be addressed:

1. STAP notes by looking at the project map that target sites have been identified. Missing is a description of each of the targeted socioecological systems, including social aspects such as societal norms, values, power dynamics and gender. These issues are not only important to characterize the system, but are strong levers of change necessary to achieve the expected impact of component 6, and the scaling ambition of the program. Furthermore, the theory of change logic is based on several assumptions that farmers will adapt improved climate-smart technologies, invest in watershed restoration, or in other improved land management practices. STAP recommends defining and testing explicitly these assumptions in each pathway of the theory of change. [STAP's theory of change primer](#) is a useful resource project managers may wish to rely on when revisiting the theory of change – which STAP highly recommends is done.
2. Monitoring whether change is occurring, and whether it is in the right direction, or bound for failure is important to enhance communities' resilience to climate and non-climate risks to achieve food security, and a host of socioeconomic benefits the project aims to achieve. In this regard, STAP highly encourages the project to adopt process-based measurements to understand what type of change is happening. These process measurements can be identified when the socioecological systems have been further determined, when specific quantified targets for what will qualify as successful 'transformation' (or at least levels of scaling en route to this) should be articulated – ie. through pp.14-17, make the outcomes more quantified, and provide a rationale as to why the quantified outputs are at a level that could trigger the outcome (e.g. what must "achieving climate resilience communities achieved in 60% districts" or "coordination capacity established" have to mean to have an impact??) Some metric categories to consider for assessing transformational change are described in STAP's advice on "[Achieving transformation through GEF investments](#)" (see also the decision tree in this). STAP also encourages the project managers for this project to connect with the monitoring and evaluation team in the [Climate Investment Funds working on monitoring and assessing transformational change](#).
3. The theory of change needs to be made more Sierra Leone-specific, probably in conjunction with some stakeholders from the targeted districts; but it also needs to articulate key logical assumptions much more explicitly (see previous comments), and then commit to monitoring those that are regarded as particularly important for adaptive feedback to project management.
4. The project usefully articulates two future climate scenarios for Sierra Leone. However, STAP recommends simplifying these but then articulating them within 3 or 4 simple narratives of alternative future that describe how they interact with other key drivers (e.g., population, market changes, climate risks, economic changes, possibly conflict), and how their interrelationships could affect the future trajectory of this project – particularly achieving long-lasting, positive outcomes. For example, the

project proposes strengthening value chain commodities requiring irrigation although water resources will likely be negatively affected by climate change and will also be needed for a growing population (water availability is recognized as a problem; hence, there is a disconnect in the project proposing irrigated agricultural production without a strong rationale for how the water use will be much more efficient). Carrying out this future planning will also help ensure the activities, and logic, of the theory of change is necessary and sufficient to strengthen the resilience of food systems, and communities' adaptive capacities to climate change; and above all that the proposed interventions are resilient in the face of future uncertainties. In this regard, many of the contextual risks identified in the risk table should actually be part of the design and identified explicitly in the theory of change, so that they are addressed through the various proposed activities. Doing so will enable the project to be designed in a manner that its outcomes build resilience to these risks. [STAP's advice on future narratives](#) is recommended as a resource, which is partly based on the [World Bank's resilience methodology](#). Resources on climate-fragility risks are also highly applicable to the project (and program), such as STAP's [Environmental Security: Achieving Durable Outcomes in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations](#), which draws from the World Bank's [Defueling Conflict: Environment and Natural Resource Management as a Pathway to Peace](#).

5. Whilst the more contextual risks (that the project cannot really change but must live with, including their uncertainty) in the risk table should be explicitly addressed (perhaps through simple future narratives) in the project framing and ToC, the operational risks need to cover all issues that might impede the project being implemented. Thus climate change is what the project is designed for long-term; but the risk of a 3 year drought or major flood (or loss of key staff) in the middle of implementation is an implementation risk to mitigate in the Risk table. Political uncertainty might be in either category depending on whether it is a short-term risk (e.g. elections in the middle of implementation) or more a long-term characteristic of instability (in which case the project ToC should be designed to be resilient to this, for example by ensuring widespread and long-term political support).
6. It is not particularly helpful to repeat all the climate change risk in the Risk Table – this is a primary design driver so should just be there justifying the whole project in the Rationale (as it is); instead, climate risk in the Risk table should consider the residual risk given that the project does what it says (is there a risk of maladaptation? Will resilience be achieved?); as well as what are risks to implementation, such as having a drought in the middle of the project so none of the NBS work for 2 years, or things like this – how will the project adapt to such potentialities?
7. As a small point, “interregional” on p.6 should presumably be “intraregional”, based on other parts of the proposal.

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

Project rationale

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.)