STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**11447**
Project title	**Strengthening agricultural resilience through transformational livelihood adaptation in Liberia (SARTLA)**
Date of screen	**January 22, 2024**
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STAP Secretariat	**Guadalupe Duron**

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges Liberia's project, "Strengthening agricultural resilience through transformational livelihood adaptation". The project intends to apply a systems-thinking approach to build resilience of communities and food production systems through alternative livelihoods and interventions that are robust to climate risks. STAP welcomes the holistic, inter-sectoral and ecosystem-based focus of these approaches and makes several recommendations below on how to apply them. Greater attention to climate risks in the project logic is a necessary condition that STAP urges the project team to address, given Liberia's high vulnerability to climate change impacts.

STAP welcomes the use of innovative finance and value chains to diversify livelihoods. To manage the various risks affiliated with financial innovation and value chains, STAP highly encourages UNDP to develop good monitoring of component 3 to generate rapid learning that can be realized through adaptive management, and the consideration of social and behavioral change for the design of interventions relevant to component 1, and 2.

Below, STAP rates its assessment, and provides details of its screening to help improve the project design.

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 is based on thorough information on climate trends and projections, and how they are likely to impact agricultural productivity and sea level rise in Liberia. This section also lists drivers of degradation (agricultural and forest) that may impact populations' vulnerability to climate change. Figure 6 is particularly helpful in demonstrating the importance of climate change as a key driver. Baseline information about the project is also provided, and relevant – in particular the baseline narrative on the Growth Accelerator Program, which this initiative will build on. STAP appreciates the co-financing of 103 millon dollars and how the project will build on, and cooperate, with highly complementary projects (described in Table 2).

With regard to the project description, this section is unnecessarily long. A more succinct description is necessary to strengthen the project logic. Understanding the project reasoning is difficult due to the superfluous text. Further thought also needs to be given to resilience. STAP saw little evidence of how climate risks are

explicitly built into the project logic. Because Liberia is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, addressing current, and future risks, is necessary. In addition, and aligned with systems thinking which the project supports, consideration of other drivers of change, such as population pressure and fluctuations in the economy, will be necessary to make the targeted systems resilient to unwanted changes. Thus, STAP is pleased with the project's intentions to build with resilience and systems thinking in mind. Addressing STAP's recommendations below can help the project achieve this intention.

STAP also welcomes the project's focus to connect farmers and fisherfolk to value chains to strengthen their livelihoods; thereby, opportunities to improve their capacity to climate change. The project will build on UNDP's Growth Accelerator Program's baseline and experience on value chains and innovative finance. STAP appreciates figure 10, which is essentially a preliminary logic chain for component 3. Because of the nature of fluctuating markets and innovations that are accompanied by risks (social, environmental, financial), good monitoring for component 3 will be necessary so that learning can be captured through adaptive management. Below, STAP details further its advice.

STAP welcomes that the PPG phase will engage with Indigenous People and that this project will integrate indigenous knowledge with innovative and adaptive practices. Recent guidelines from the World Economic Forum "Embedding Indigenous Knowledge in the Conservation and Restoration of Landscapes" could provide guidance on business models that are inclusive of Indigenous People (e.g. for the innovative finance architecture to incentivise the private sector).

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

STAP recommends addressing these points during the project design:

- Add a description of the biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of each site. This information seems absent in the project document, and it is relevant to understanding the problem and the proposed solutions. Additionally, it would be valuable to provide a reasoning as to why the target sites were selected. It is unclear if this information was provided as the project rationale and description were unnecessarily long, and details might have been lost.

- The climate rationale extensively describes climate change projects and trends in Liberia. To strengthen the technical robustness of the project and help reduce climate change vulnerability, STAP recommends embedding resilience throughout the project logic. The following resource on assessing the climate resilience of the project can be used during the project design: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/701011613082635276/pdf/Summary.pdf .The resource focuses on making interventions resilient to climate – for example, will the value chain crops associated with component 2 and 3 be resilient to climate risks? In addition, the resource focuses on resilient outcomes, which is also relevant to the project. That is, designing the project with the intent to improve communities' resilience to climate through improved policies, incentives, improved capacities, or technologies.

- The core indicators partly focus on monitoring resilience with output indicators (e.g., number of policies that strengthen climate adaptation). Nonetheless, STAP highly recommends complementing the core indicators with outcome measurements that monitor change. For example, these measurements could help track social change (e.g., change in values and norms), among other categories (e.g., complexity, adaptability) related to transformation, and which are relevant to

component 2 and 3. These components rely on the successful adoption of nature-based solutions and commercialization of crops and forest products, or adoption of alternative livelihoods to work in tourism. More importantly, being able to monitor change will assist the project team assessing barriers and opportunities for scaling for transformation – which is committed to achieving. STAP's advice on transformation metrics can be found here: https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/achieving-transformation-through-gef-investments

- When the project is designed, STAP recommends, therefore, strengthening the project logic so it expliclity reflects an assessment of climate resilience. Key recommendations to keep in mind include:

    - Undertaking a climate risk screening. Here is the World Bank's screening tool, which STAP suggests, but other tools also could be used. What will matter is designing the project logic based on the actions recommended by the risk screening. https://climatescreeningtools.worldbank.org/
    - Given Barrier #1 (pg 20), STAP recommends the PPG includes an appraisal of policy coherence (horizontal amongst the sectors relevant to this project) and vertical (national to county). STAP's recent paper "Framing policy coherence for the GEF and Policy Coherence in the GEF can assist to that end.

    - Thinking broadly about how key drivers of change affect the biophysical characteristics of the land in the project sites, as well as the socioeconomic well-being of communities to adapt to climate change. In addition to climate change drivers, which are covered in the PIF, the project team is encouraged to embed other key drivers in the logic, such as population changes and fluctuations in the economy (e.g., COVID and ebola impacts). Both were mentioned as being key factors influencing degradation or unwanted changes – e.g. increased population has led to urban expansion and deforestation, as well as to increased sand mining for building homes.

    - When carrying out this analysis, consider how these drivers are presently interacting, and will do so in the future, and how their relationships will affect the outcomes. Develop a simple, narrative of the future based on this analysis to inform the project logic. This future planning will complement the climate risk screening and help ensure the interventions and outcomes are resilient to unwanted changes. STAP's advice on simple future narrative can be accessed here: https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/simple-future-narratives-brief-and-primer and a decision tree for adaptation rationale

    - STAP welcomes the opportunities to connect farmers and fisherfolk to agricultural and fisheries value chains. Components 2 and 3 could be strengthened, nonetheless, by defining thoroughly the impact pathway for each component. This includes identifying the risks (climate, environmental [land degradation], social, financial risks); defining assumptions clearly so they can be validated and generate knowledge and learning about the relationships between value chains and improved adaptive capacity, or climate resilience; and linking explicitly the pathways to climate adaptation outcomes. Indicators to monitor climate resilience outcomes, and other desired social, economic and environmental outcomes, from each type of value chain (agricultural, fisheries, briquette) or ecotourism, should be used.

    - STAP welcomes the integration of indigenous knowledge and the acknowledgment that 'many farmers and fisherfolk are reluctant to shift to new practices'. It is, therefore, strongly suggested that the assumptions of the ToC include behavioral change (or the lack thereof and consequent implications for mainstreaming of NbS and other innovative practices). Thinking about what kind of the planned interventions could tackle behavioral change, and other recommendations have been included in STAP's work on Why behavioral change matters to the GEF and what to do about it. Furthermore, recent research on Evaluating behavioural

changes for climate adaptation planning could help as well (Tanvi et al., 2023: Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 66:7, 1453-1471, DOI: 10.1080/09640568.2022.2028610)

- The project has an important component on extension. Findings from the recent review "Agricultural extension in post-conflict Liberia: progress made and lessons learned" by Moore, A. (2017) in the publication "Building agricultural extension capacity in post-conflict settings" (pp. 1-22). Wallingford UK: CABI should be considered in the PPG. As well, for output 1.5 it is important that in addition to co-operate with projects mentioned in the section of the existing baseline, the project proponents do include local universities that are pioneering context-relevant work to help in building knowledge. More to the point, works by one of the University of Liberia College of Science and Technology are promising and could bring more innovation to this project (i.e. Internet backpack for teaching agriculture as described in M. S. Torto, D. T. Smith, L. W. McKnight and P. K. Ghosh, "The Internet Backpack: Transforming STEM Education, Agriculture and Economic Development in Liberia, West Africa," 2022 IEEE International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS), Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2022, pp. 1-5, doi: 10.1109/ISTAS55053.2022.10226642.

- Figure 10, which STAP finds highly helpful and which could be considered as a logic for component 3, captures monitoring and evaluation. However, it would be valuable to add to the figure, as well as in the project document, a learning element that symbolizes that monitoring of the Growth Accelerator Program will be nimble and responsive to the needs of adaptive management that can arise as a result of changing market conditions, climate risks, or other factors.

- Lastly, and reinforcing the first point, STAP highly recommends to revisit the project rationale and description sections, and write them more succinctly.

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.

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.)