STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11238
Project title	**Land degradation neutrality initiative in Southern Haiti**
Date of screen	**June 13, 2023**
STAP Panel Member	**Graciela Metternicht**
STAP Secretariat	**Guadalupe Duron**

1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

The "Land degradation neutrality initiative in Southern Haiti" project proposal is well-formulated, identifying key drivers of land degradation and deforestation in the project sites. Given Haiti's vulnerability to climate hazards, STAP recommends developing a small number of plausible futures during the design stage. Simple narratives, possibly accompanied by a detailed resilience assessment, will inform integrated land use planning for LDN, enabling identification of entry points in the current planning system to effectively embed LDN targets.

STAP welcomes the inclusion of appropriate local indicators to monitor LDN. These indicators will be useful for describing and monitoring the targeted socio-ecological system, valuable input for a resilience assessment and socio-economic analysis of the project sites – both assessments will be important preparatory activities for successfully pursuing LDN.

STAP recommends embedding the neutrality mechanism of LDN into integrated land use planning; strengthening interventions towards avoided land degradation (e.g. educate and finance solar cookers; introduce more innovative financing mechanisms such as payment for ecosystem services, and better use of cooperatives). Scaling and innovation are necessary to achieve the project's LDN transformative ambition; to that end empower women and youth through the co-design of interventions. Outcomes may fail to be enduring if proper attention is not given to aspects such as lack of sufficient labour due to migration out of farmlands; insufficient empowerment of women (excessive focus on the lower levels of the participation ladder, where women are only consulted and/or informed). Specific recommendations follow hereafter.

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

☐ <mark>X Minor</mark> - 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.

Overall, the project rationale and project description are good, requiring adjustments that can be addressed during the project design. The baseline is described thoroughly, as well as the problem context. For example, the PIF describes how weak governance, lack of coherence between government offices, weak land tenure/land security, and limited livelihood options influence land degradatation and deforestation at the national level and in the project sites. Also, a good understanding of the interaction between drivers of land degradation is demonstrated; thus, providing a systems-based analysis for defining the problem, or identifying the project objective in a logical manner.

An initial description of plausible futures is described based on the long-term effects of climate change and climate hazards (e.g. hurricanes) on agricultural productivity of staple food crops and export crops, and how

these drivers could exacerbate further land degradation (due to soil erosion and deforestation). STAP commends the project team for providing an initial description of potential futures. Below, STAP recommends further steps on how the project can develop resilient options to deal with the effects of climate change/hazards, as well as other long-term changes, such as population growth.

STAP welcomes the initial theory of change outlining the causal pathways between outputs, and GEB outcomes. The proposed logic is satisfactory. However, STAP would recommend a few additional changes to further strengthen the causal chain. Strengthing the theory of change will also help in identifying metrics that can help monitor the GEF's incrementality. When refining the theory of change, STAP would also recommend building in the lessons learned from previous projects, which the project team has identified in the PIF. Below, STAP elaborates further on these recommendations.

Lastly, the project can be designed with more resilience and innovation in mind; include uncertainty as part of the design. Doing so, will enable for robust decision-making that relies on different options to ensure the resilience of, and through, the project. Relying on this resilience framing, the project can be designed by accepting the risks identified in the risk table. In regards to innovation, when working on interventions to address the outputs and outcomes highlighted (e.g. component 2.1.1) in the theory of change and the related components, do attend to interventions that could further help in avoiding land degradation and deforestation. Successful examples exist in projects of Brazil and Nicaragua where solar cookers have been installed to reduce the use of fuelwood. Empowering women and youth on the use of these technologies, and providing sustainable financing opportunities for them, would be precursors for successful innovation.

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 for the following points to be addressed as the project is designed:

1. STAP welcomes the initial descriptions of uncertain futures which the project is likely to face due to climate change, and climate hazards. STAP recommends for the project team to take these descriptions further by analyzing the interactions between climate change with three, or four other key drivers of degradation/deforestation, such as people's limited livelihood options, weak governance, policy incoherence, and conflict – all of which are raised in the project rationale and description. Once this analysis is done, the project team is encouraged to develop a small number of narratives that describe plausible futures and the options for dealing with unwanted changes – i.e. make outcomes resilient. Refer to STAP's future narrative advice and the World Bank's resilience methodology cited below.

2. STAP recommends mapping the relevant policies and analyzing their synergies, and how they conflict with each other. This will identify causes of potential leakage of deforestation, or other negative spillover effects that help understand the root causes of land degradation and deforestation. Thus, STAP recommends conducting these analyses (plausible futures-resilience,socio-economic, policies) to design appropriately component 1,2, and 3. Refer to UNCCD's scientific framework (see causal chain page 66),STAP's policy coherence advice, and the Standards of practice on ecosystem restoration cited below.

3. Once the system of land use planning of Haiti is understood, STAP recommends the project team to identify entry points in the current LUP system to embed LDN targets. The how to do this is the focus of a recent UNCCD-SPI document 'The contribution of integrated land use planning and integrated landscape management to implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry points and support tools" (UNCCD-SPI 2022).

4. As the theory of change is refined during project design, STAP recommends the following:

      a.   add the project activities/components to the diagram;

      b.   identify the assumptions associated with achieving each of the project outcomes;

      c.   reflect the systems analysis that was used to describe the project rationale in the PIF – i.e. the interaction between the key drivers. Additionally, describe the social aspects underpinning the targeted socio-ecological systems, such as cultural norms and values, power dynamics between stakeholders (men and women), and other challenging levers of change that are important for achieving scaling, innovation and transformative pathways on climate-resilient SLM (component 3). Thinking through these levers of change in a systems analysis can help ensure the activities are necessary and sufficient to achieve the GEB outcomes in a manner they remain resilient, or durable, to unwanted changes; and,

      d.   add a short description of the logic represented by the theory of change. The narrative ought to include a brief description of the context, the logic of each, and between, causal pathway, explaining the barriers and assumptions, and how the pathways are necessary and sufficient to achieve GEB outcomes.

    Refer to STAP's theory of change primer for further guidance.

5.   The neutrality mechanism is central to LDN. Therefore, STAP recommends embedding the neutrality mechanism in the integrated land use planning approach the project will apply (relevant to component 2, 3, and 4 on monitoring.) As part of this process, the project team is encouraged to estimate the anticipated losses and proposed gains of natural capital. Tracking the counterbalance (neutrality) mechanism will then be possible, and it will be needed to inform the selection of LDN interventions based on the response hierarchy of avoid, reduce, and reverse. Refer to UNCCD Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, particularly the section on monitoring LDN.

6.   The innovation section of the PIF suggests the project intends to achieve transformation. To be transformative, particular attention needs to be paid to scaling (out, up, and deep), and to the levers of change (as mentioned above) that can drive systems change. The project's theory of change needs to reflect this scaling intention to design transformative pathways on LDN. To think through the different elements linked to scaling, innovation, and transformation, STAP recommends applying the logic tree in its transformational change paper to help set up a logic chain. A narrative of this analysis ought to be elaborated in the innovation section of the PIF. Consider that with a changing climate, and scarce labour force, other innovative solutions could be trailed (e.g. vertical farming solutions to ensure food security are being trialed in Africa, see references at the end of this document). Refer to STAP's transformation paper cited below.

7.   Revise component 4 to include a knowledge management and learning loop. As currently written, monitoring and learning do not appear to be central to component 4. This learning can originate by testing or validating knowledge gaps, or assumptions, and adapting the project (and theory of change) to reflect this learning.

STAP's sing simple narratives to ensure durability of GEF investments: https://stapgef.org/resources/policy-briefs/using-simple-narratives-ensure-durability-gef-investments
World Bank's resilience methodology: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/9920d826-21e5-5def-898d-8ccb1daaf4a0
Framing policy coherence for the GEF: https://stapgef.org/resources/policy-briefs/framing-policy-coherence-gef
UNCCD's scientific conceptual framework for LDN: https://www.unccd.int/resources/reports/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science-policy
Theory of change primer: https://stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/theory-change-primer
Achieving transformation through GEF investments: https://stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/achieving-transformation-through-gef-investments

Standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration: a contribution from the U.N. Decade on ecosystem restoration https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc5223en

The contribution of integrated land use planning and integrated landscape management to implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry points and support tools. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/SPI%20Objective%201%20Technical%20Report_Advance%20Copy_Final_6May2022.pdf

Mujeres Solares de Totogalpa (Solar Women of Totogalpa) – Nicaragua. https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/activity-database/momentum-for-change-mujeres-solares-de-totogalpa-solar-women-of-totogalpa

Brazil sets up a novel model to reverse desertification. The Recovery Units of Degraded Areas and Reduction of Climate Vulnerability (URAD) initiative to finance actions to address the main drivers of land degradation in the Caatinga biome. https://www.unccd.int/news-events/brazil-sets-novel-model-reverse-desertification

A manual for gender responsive LDN transformative projects and programs. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Manual-for-gender-responsive-land-degradation-neutrality-transformative-projects-en.pdf

Inclusive investments in sustainable land management to help achieve LDN. https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/uploaded/2022/04/2020-LDN-Report-10.5-Medium.pdf

Debonne, van Vliet, Metternicht, Verburg, Agency shifts in agricultural land governance and their implications for land degradation neutrality, Global Environmental Change, Volume 66, 2021

Africa needs its own version of the vertical farm to feed growing cities. https://theconversation.com/4frica-needs-its-own-version-of-the-vertical-farm-to-feed-growing-cities-74929#:~:text=Vertical%20farms%20use%20high%20tech,less%20water%20than%20traditional%20farms.

A methodological tool for sustainability and feasibility assessment of indoor vertical farming with artificial lighting in Africa. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-29027-8

The dome: a potential game-changer for vanilla supply. https://www.verticalfarmdaily.com/article/9347817/the-dome-a-potential-game-changer-for-vanilla-supply/

Note: number key points clearly and provide useful information or suggestions, including key literature where relevant. Completed screens should be no more than two or three pages in length.

*categories under review, subject to future revision

ANNEX: STAP'S SCREENING GUIDELINES

1. How well does the proposal explain the problem and issues to be addressed in the context of the **system** within which the problem sits and its drivers (e.g. population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, and technological changes), including how the various components of the system interact?

2. Does the project indicate how **uncertain futures** could unfold (e.g. using simple **narratives)**, based on an understanding of the trends and interactions between the key elements of the system and its drivers?

3. Does the project describe the **baseline** problem and how it may evolve in the future in the absence of the project; and then identify the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve, how these outcomes will change the baseline, and what the key **barriers** and **enablers** are to achieving those outcomes?

4. Are the project's **objectives** well formulated and justified in relation to this system context? Is there a convincing explanation as to **why this particular project** has been selected in preference to other options, in the light of how the future may unfold?

5. How well does the **theory of change** provide an "explicit account of how and why the proposed interventions would achieve their intended outcomes and goal, based on outlining a set of key causal pathways arising from the activities and outputs of the interventions and the assumptions underlying these causal connections".

   - Does the project logic show how the project would ensure that expected outcomes are **enduring** and resilient to possible future changes identified in question 2 above, and to the effects of any conflicting policies (see question 9 below).
   - Is the theory of change grounded on a solid scientific foundation, and is it aligned with current scientific knowledge?
   - Does it explicitly consider how any necessary **institutional and behavioral** changes are to be achieved?
   - Does the theory of change diagram convincingly show the overall project logic, including causal pathways and outcomes?

6. Are the project **components** (interventions and activities) identified in the theory of change each described in sufficient detail to discern the main thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they address the problem, their justification as a robust solution, and the critical assumptions and risks to achieving them?

7. How likely is the project to generate global environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF project (**additionality**)?

8. Does the project convincingly identify the relevant **stakeholders**, and their anticipated roles and responsibilities? is there an adequate explanation of how stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of the project, and how they will benefit from the project to ensure enduring global environmental benefits, e.g. through co-benefits?

9. Does the description adequately explain:

   - how the project will build on prior investments and complement current investments, both GEF and non-GEF,
   - how the project incorporates **lessons learned** from previous projects in the country and region, and more widely from projects addressing similar issues elsewhere; and
   - how country policies that are contradictory to the intended outcomes of the project (identified in section C) will be addressed (**policy coherence**)?

10. How adequate is the project's approach to generating, managing and exchanging **knowledge**, and how will lessons learned be captured for adaptive management and for the benefit of future projects?

11. **Innovation and transformation:**
    - If the project is intended to be **innovative:** to what degree is it innovative, how will this ambition be achieved, how will barriers and enablers be addressed, and how might scaling be achieved?
    - If the project is intended to be **transformative:** how well do the project's objectives contribute to transformative change, and are they sufficient to contribute to enduring, transformational change at a sufficient scale to deliver a step improvement in one or more GEBs? Is the proposed logic to achieve the goal credible, addressing necessary changes in institutions, social or cultural norms? Are barriers and enablers to scaling be addressed? And how will enduring scaling be achieved?

12. Have **risks** to the project design and implementation been identified appropriately in the risk table in section B, and have suitable mitigation measures been incorporated? (NB: risks to the durability of project outcomes from future changes in drivers should have been reflected in the theory of change and in project design, not in this table.)