

STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11053
Project title	Implementation of the La Plata Basin SAP priorities through regional and national actions
Date of screen	9 January 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the project entitled "Implementation of La Plata Basin SAP priorities through regional and national actions" whose objective is to 'promote the management of shared water resources, cooperation and regional integration, while seeking to achieve sustainable development in LaPlata Basin countries and the welfare of their inhabitants.'

Overall, STAP finds that the project has the potential to be transformative if it succeeds in implementing the TDA/SAP by embedding it into an effective basin management approach that is supported and owned by the countries. This requires strong ownership by all countries, expressed in national contributions (in-kind, through knowledge and expertise, long-term funding structures, a functional basin organization, etc.).

The project would, however, benefit not only from more clarity in the PIF concerning the actual objectives and how they relate to the identified problem, barriers, etc. – but also how they will be achieved through specific outputs (beyond listing SAP-identified areas of action). This would also help provide a better understanding of how the different components contribute to the overall objectives and interact with (and potentially reinforce) each other.

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
- 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.

STAP finds that overall, the problem is well defined, including the relevance of the basin and its contributions to people's livelihoods, food security, exports, etc.

The barriers are clearly spelled out; however, it is not clear from the table what, specifically they are barriers to as they are not clearly linked to the threats. For instance, how does the loss of water quality relate to weak institutional capacity? Is it due to a lack of regulation or enforcement that leads to water pollution? An explicit description of such linkages would further finetune the project and ensure that it addresses the key challenges identified, and also refrain from attempting to address issues that lie outside of its scope. In addition, there are links (in some cases inter-dependencies) between the barriers (e.g., between weak institutional capacity and water use conflicts, between a lack of stakeholder participation and water use conflicts, etc.), which should be clearly articulated and then addressed explicitly in the project design.

In addition, the project objective should be sharpened and the project design should clarify how specific activities relate to the SAP. For example, much is written about the process for how the activities for this project were identified, but information on why and how they relate to the problem, objectives and the barriers is lacking, as are the details on biodiversity conservation.

Along these lines, the theory of change (ToC) should also be revised to indicate how the project will address the assumptions that are listed, and what happens if one or more of them don't hold true.

The GEBs are indicated, with a focus on freshwater/transboundary water management and biodiversity. More detail on whether and how they support each other should be provided based on the description of water management and biodiversity-related challenges in earlier sections of the PIF. Also, while biodiversity benefits are being claimed, biodiversity does not feature in the project objectives, or the outcomes and outputs.

Reference is made to a terminal evaluation (TE) that was done for the MSP project that preceded this one. However, little to no information is provided on specific findings of the TE and how lessons learned are being applied to this project. Doing so would be informative and give assurance that proposed interventions are not duplicating prior mistakes and are building on past successes.

Finally, given the background and context described in this project, proponents may wish to consider using a source-to-sea approach (detailing how exactly this is being done beyond an individual activity) and/or to make a stronger case for how this project can contribute to increased food security in the region.

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

Based on these observations, STAP recommends the following:

1. Address identified issues of relevance to the basin in a more integrated manner. Currently, the project addresses numerous issues independently and may not be taking advantage of benefits that could accrue from addressing synergies *between* issues. If this is intended already, it needs to be clarified in the PIF.
2. Clearly articulate how this proposed project builds on earlier work done by the GEF (and others), in particular in relation to the TDA/SAP, and how it intends to be sustainable such that countries in the La Plata Basin will be able to manage future activities once GEF funding terminates.

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.)