REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	**11287**
Project title	**Sustainable Cities Integrated Program**
Date of screen	**23 May 2024**
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The Sustainable Cities IP Program (SCIP) comprises 46 cities from 20 countries worldwide. This program builds on efforts in GEF-6 and GEF-7 to achieve urban sustainability by focusing on policy, finance, innovation, partnership, and knowledge management issues. The outcomes are expected to be related to integrated and coherent policy, better-integrated planning, increased investments in nature-positive and resilient cities, the establishment of innovative projects that contribute towards GEBs (e.g., climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation), effective partnerships, improved knowledge management, and sharing.

It was good that project proponents engaged STAP and other stakeholders early in the IP development process. The detailed proposal included a systems thinking perspective in uncovering the key challenges and barriers to achieving urban sustainability. Appropriate actions and activities to address identified challenges are proposed. The identified transformational levers are appropriate for achieving the desired outcomes. It was that the proponents included discussions on how different child projects were linked to the overall goal throughout the documents.

The assumption made in the theory of change that priorities and local needs will remain unchanged is unrealistic, and the proponents should consider several possible futures when designing their projects. It is good that the IP draws lessons from previous GEF investments, and plans to explore linkages with other IPs (i.e., the Net-zero and Nature Positive IP) are encouraging. It is also good that the proponents plan for inter-project learning and knowledge sharing.

Overall, STAP thinks this is a well-designed IP with good potential to deliver objectives.

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*

X 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?

- The well-designed program articulates the challenges that will be addressed in existing and envisaged new cities. Upstream, midstream, and downstream barriers to achieving the desired outcomes are adequately addressed. In the text, the proponents appropriately provide clear linkages to the child projects, showing how the program will contribute to achieving GEBs.

- The described transformation levers will strategically position the IP to achieve its objectives. Furthermore, it is good that the IP plans to continue engaging strategic partners from GEF-6 and GEF-7 and explore new partnerships.

- More details on baseline GHG emission estimates for the selected sectors in the selected cities are needed. This will enable better monitoring, reporting, and verification of projected GHG emission reductions.

- The proponents propose innovative and context-appropriate financial instruments that can improve the flow of resources toward activities that support the scaling of the best available technologies and practices that support urban sustainability. The plan to share experiences and lessons learned with other cities in similar geographic and development contexts is commendable.

- A diverse list of areas prioritized for Investments in the different countries is given. The broad spectrum of areas the participating countries prioritize implies that diverse learnings from this IP can inform actions in several other cities beyond the program.

- A detailed theory of change is provided for the IP level, including the essential elements required in a good theory of change. The assumption that there will not be changes in government priorities and local needs is unrealistic. It may be reasonable to assume that there will be changes and use the envisaged different futures to inform project designs and actions.

- It is commendable that the proponents also consider urban-rural linkages in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, and Peru. This should enable the designing of inclusive solutions that take a whole-of-society approach. Additionally, such an approach should ensure coherence between actions in urban and rural areas and avoid leakages of GEBs at the national level.

- This IP embraces innovations at different scales and in various priority sectors. The envisaged financial, institutional, technological, management, and policy innovations will aim at advancing nature-positive and resilience, decarbonization, and circular economy objectives. Lessons learned should be appropriately curated to inform other initiatives. However, proponents should consider conventional/traditional systems where appropriate and resist the temptation to adopt innovation even when they do not work in the chosen context.

- A good knowledge management chain is presented. This chain shows the linkages between historical knowledge, knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination, and application to create global goods. Knowledge and learning management will be necessary for scaling best-bet options and achieving the desired transformations.

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

The proponents actively engaged STAP during the PFD designing stage. We recommend the following:

- While the global platform-level theory of change is presented, city-level theories of change should be considered to guide project implementation.
- The assumption that there will be no change in government and local needs is unrealistic. Consider changing it and ensure the designs of the child projects are robust enough for different potential futures. See the STAP brief on Simple Future Narratives.
- Consider estimating baseline GHG emission estimates in the target cities.
- The Global Platform could track the capacity for change (i.e., whether organizations and other actors have or are developing the capacity to think about and deliver change). Please see STAP's paper on transformation.
- Do not ignore the coherence between actions in urban and rural areas to avoid GEB leakages at the national level.

- While reporting IP achievements, exploring robust approaches for attributing GEB benefits to IP activities should be considered.
- Linkages with other integrated programs should be a priority to maximize impact.
- Consider highlighting and tracking co-benefits such as job creation opportunities for the youth. See STAP's paper on co-benefits.
- Reflect on tolerable risk appetites at the child project level. See STAP's paper on risk appetite for guidance.

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.)