

STAP Screen for GEF ID 11572

GEF ID	11572
Project title	Strengthening Zambezi River Basin Management towards Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Health
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The objective of this project is to “improve collaborative water, energy, food and environmental (WEFE) planning and management in the Zambezi River Basin” through enhanced institutional capacity to support cross-sectoral, basin-wide planning in a transboundary water basin.

The strength of this project lies in its focus on integration of sectors beyond water such as energy and food. The project displays a solid understanding of the issues plaguing the Zambezi River Basin and it is to be commended for its overall ambition and the fact that it builds upon prior and existing efforts to support transboundary water cooperation in this highly biodiverse and economically vital region.

A major weakness of the project, however, is that the overall ambition is not clearly aligned with the many and varied activities comprising each of the Components. More work is needed to explicitly connect the outputs and outcomes with the overarching objective through a more clearly articulated and logical Theory of Change (ToC).

Overall, the project is well founded but should be revised during the PPG phase to ensure that the stated objectives can be successfully achieved given the many challenging barriers presented and the complexities involved in multi-scale, cross-sectoral interactions required for long-term improvement.

STAP provides several observations and recommendations below and is available for consultation during the PPG phase.

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.

The **problems** facing the Zambezi River Basin are well understood by project proponents; however, the background and rationale for this project are not well written or substantiated with outdated references (including the data and information contained therein including evaporation rates, etc.), redundancies and general lack of clarity. Additional information on environmental challenges is needed to improve baseline information and provide a clearer understanding of the root causes/drivers behind degradation as well as the

barriers that stand in the way of improvement (or a justification of why the baseline information is not available and how the project will address this). Related, additional clarity is needed to explain which of the many problems identified will be targeted by this project and the underlying rationale for doing so, particularly within the larger context of other related GEF and non-GEF projects and indicate how this proposed project will build on and learn from them to achieve results.

The project **objective** to “enhance the capacity of ZAMCOM and its subsidiary riparian state entities to institutionalize multi-sector systems for implementing actions that catalyze inclusive and resilient transboundary management” and “enhance multi-sectoral collaborative water, energy, food and environment planning...” is somewhat convoluted but is still sensible and addresses the key problem plaguing the basin. More information is necessary to explain what, specifically is meant by “inclusive” and “resilient” in the context of this project.

Based on the **barriers** identified as part of the **Theory of Change (ToC)**, the project acknowledges the need for different institutions – at the basin and the national level – to interact effectively to implement a ‘water, energy, food, environment’ (WEFE) approach. The project builds on existing institutions with the goal of enhancing their long-term effectiveness and functionality for sustainable outcomes. A multi-level and multi-sector collaborative approach is therefore warranted to ensure **policy coherence**. However, it is unclear from this project what has prevented this type of integrated approach from being implemented in the past and if the barriers listed are focused on the project level or if they are broader in scope (i.e. economic, political, etc.).

The **project** itself is well-designed, albeit ambitious and quite complex, casting doubt on whether it is realistic to expect that all the intended activities can be implemented, particularly within the project timeline (e.g., the implementation of sub-basin management plans under 1.1.4 or the achievement of financial self-sustainability).

Component 1 addresses the institutional capacity for collaborative basin management critical for effective governance in a multi-level transboundary system. While most activities support this effort, the long-term sustainability of institutions is not fully addressed. For example, how can dialogue be institutionalized over the long run, how will the different sectors cooperate in the future given varying interests, and how can this cooperation be institutionalized to survive future challenges?

Component 2 addresses basin-wide planning and aims to tackle barriers standing in the way of a ‘nexus approach.’ However, it is not clear which of these barriers is targeted by the project and why (vs. others, of which there are many) and how the project intends to overcome the barriers beyond just creating more data, information and related capacity related to the nexus-based integrated basin management approach (e.g. a higher number of interconnected data repository systems [indicator for outcome 2.1.1] won’t be sufficient to overcome the identified barriers). In addition, the project assumes that the basin management mechanisms will be adopted; however, it is not clear what this entails. For example, does it imply formal legal adoption as part of the ZAMCOM legal regime or at the policy level, and to what extent can the project ensure that this happens, or is it beyond the project’s sphere of influence?

Improved data management and exchange (**Component 3**) is important, particularly the need for more active data sharing (especially between ZAMCOM and ZRA and the dam operators) as opposed to data collection for its own sake to develop a repository. In addition, clarification is needed regarding the status of the TDA and how it relates to other data collection and sharing efforts (e.g. whether parameters identified in the TDA will provide the basis for continuous monitoring through the established platform), as well as how the TDA will build on earlier work (including the TDA analysis for the Eastern Kalahari/Karoo Aquifer, where there is some overlap with the Zambezi Basin), to ensure consistency lack of duplication/overlap.

The project also recognizes the need for long-term sustainability of institutional cooperation mechanisms and intends to develop alternative arrangements (**Component 4**), a core yet often overlooked element of cooperation. This merits GEF support though consideration should be given for how core funding for the basin

organization by Member States (not just from alternative financing mechanisms) can be secured, ensuring that States feel ownership according to internationally accepted principles for basin organization funding.

Stakeholders have been identified to participate in the planned project; however, it is not entirely clear which challenges pertaining to stakeholder engagement will be addressed by the project and which ones are simply identified but will not feature in project activities.

Some of the **gender**-related aspects are presented in an overly simplistic manner (e.g. referring to men as culpable and women as victims in the context of water pollution). Properly addressing the gender dimension in the project may require a more nuanced approach and go beyond the local level to address decision-making structures at all governance levels.

To address the question of **additionality**, the project can be strengthened to emphasize the long-term uptake of newly developed or improved tools, cooperation mechanisms and processes by all relevant stakeholders, which will likely pose additional challenges – particularly outside of the water sector – where other interests are likely to prevail, particularly given emerging challenges.

Some of the indicators could be sharpened after revising the ToC, as recommended above. For example, indicator for 1.1.3 refers to gender-balanced and ‘self-financed all-sector meetings’ but does not measure to what extent dialogues and meetings will improve inter-sectoral cooperation. The indicator for 1.1.4 refers to the number of sub-basin management plans that are implemented; however, this may not occur during the project’s timeframe.

Finally, the **knowledge management** approach is interesting, particularly the proposed peer-to-peer learning and internships; however, existing exchange activities, including knowledge platforms (e.g. between the SADC RBOs) could be further expanded, potentially in collaboration with IW:Learn.

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 this review, STAP has the following recommendations, in addition to the points raised in Section 2:

1. Revise the section on **problems, challenges, and barriers** to ensure consistency, eliminate redundancies, and update with more recent data and research. This includes defining key terms used throughout (e.g. resilience, ‘multi-sector systems’, inclusive, etc. within the context of this project).
2. Revise the **theory of change (ToC)** by working backwards from the goal to develop causal pathways that indicate what is both necessary and sufficient to achieve project objectives. This may require clearly outlining what is within the scope of this project and what is outside its ‘sphere of influence.’ See STAP’s [Primer on Theory of Change](#) for additional guidance.
3. Clearly explain how the **multi-level and multi-institutional approach** can realistically be achieved considering barriers, including those which are not being addressed by the project, as well as a fuller rationale for addressing the barriers that *have* been targeted by the project. This includes further explanation of how the different institutions (at the local, national and transboundary level as well as regional with SADC) interact with each other and how these interactions can be made more efficient considering potentially different interests (e.g. between ZAMCOM and ZRA), which risk intensification due to climate change-related challenges and the current persistent drought affecting the basin.

4. Sharpen the **indicators** to ensure that they are realistic and correspond to stated outcomes as determined by the ToC.

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.)