REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11432
Project title	BioSouth: The Pacific-Andean-Amazonian Ecological and Cultural Connectivity Corridor
Date of screen	11 January 2024
STAP Panel Member	John Donaldson
STAP Secretariat	Alessandro Moscuzza

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is a strong proposal that covers all required areas well and provides detailed information about the approaches and activities proposed as part of the project. The proposal has a number of clear strengths and strong elements. The project rationale is solid, well written and provides a very good overview of the context and wider socio-economic and political systems within which the project will be operating, the environmental issues, as well as the challenges and vulnerabilities that the project will address. The description of the baseline and stakeholders are very clear and provide additional details that are seldom found at this stage of project development.

The project description is also detailed and well-written and is supported by a strong underlying logical thread, which connects all the proposed components to the project's aims and objectives. The scope of the components is clear and well reasoned, as is the range of activities that include a good mix of tried and tested and innovative approaches. The Theory of Change (ToC) is excellent and provides a strong logical underpinning and framework for the project. The risk section provided all the basic information but could be improved upon.

STAP acknowledges the scientific and technical merit of this proposal, which it concurs with, but has also identified a couple of areas which could be improved during PPG phase and has made some suggestions on how this could be done.

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 proposal includes a well written **project objective**, which describes the aims of the project clearly and concisely. This is a very ambitious project, which aims to tackle several interlinked complex issues, which can be very difficult to address, but the level of resources allocated to the project and its duration are commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

Ensuring policy coherence will be crucial for this project and an essential requirement for its success.

The **project components** are all well thought through and cover different areas of intervention. Component 1 focuses mostly on the harmonization of policy and planning instruments and includes involving local

communities and indigenous groups. This is a good start for the project and it is important to see that policy coherence measures are being considered.

Component 2 focuses on the improved management of areas of high-ecological value in the project target area and the development of financial and business plans. The proposed activities are well thought through and offer a good balance between different priorities, approaches and tools that include innovative financial tools involving mixed finance, OECMs, and use of more traditional tools and approaches such as restoration and land-management plans. It will be important, during the PPG phase, to assess the options that are available so that project activities can focus on the most viable ones.

Component 3 is focused more specifically on developing the economic and productive aspects of the proposed intervention, as well as the GHG mitigation aspect. The proposed activities involve a balanced approach between different types of interventions, including: training (e.g. field schools and rural extension activities), agro-ecological plans, and promotion of public-private investments involving joint startups and venture capital among other things.

Component 4 covers all the main aspects and requirements related to Knowledge Management and Learning (KML) for the project but appears to be mostly focused on sharing and dissemination of learning from this project, with no evidence of any actions/activities aimed at learning from ongoing or previous interventions in the same area.

Component 5 is entirely dedicated to M&E, and considers all the main elements that would be expected for a project of this size and duration. Notable features included in the current descriptions are a proposed M&E plan, which will have an allocated budget; a project results framework (PRF), which will be monitored on an annual basis and periodically evaluated throughout the lifetime of the project to ensure it remains relevant; as well as an independent MTR and TE.

The **ToC** is very strong and includes a number of interlinked features (i.e. impact pathways, causal pathways, barriers, assumptions and threats) as well as the key elements (i.e. outputs, outcomes impacts) that have been assembled skillfully to generate a clear vision/picture of how the project will deliver its intended objective(s).

An aspect that needs to be addressed in the project is 'policy coherence', which is implied and reflected in the description of component 1 and causal pathway 1, but is not fully identified as an area that needs attention.

The description of the existing **baseline** is thorough and well-written. It is split between existing policies and investments and covers different levels (i.e. national, sub-national, departmental and local).

The proposal includes a very comprehensive list of specific **stakeholders** across different categories (e.g. govt., academia, international donors, business, finance), as well as a clear and detailed description of the role to be played by each stakeholder.

The section on **risk** covers a good breadth of risk categories but does not include a description of proposed mitigation actions. Also, the ratings need to be explained/clarified so that it is clear what the difference is between substantial, moderate etc. and what each rating really means/implies.

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

This was a very strong proposal. To make it even stronger, STAP recommends the following improvements:

- The next version of the proposal should place more emphasis on policy coherence and its role in ensuring the success of this project, which involves activities that straddle across several different areas of government policy, as well as at least two separate productive sectors of the economy. A clear reference to policy coherence should be included in the narrative accompanying the ToC, where it could fit well under component 1 or form a separate sub-section under section B of the proposal (i.e. Project Description). Additional guidance on policy coherence can be found on the STAP website (https://www.stapgef.org/resources/policy-briefs/framing-policy-coherence-gef).

- The section on risk should be revised and expanded to include a description of proposed mitigation actions. Also the ratings system needs to be explained to clarify the difference between substantial, moderate etc. and what each rating really implies.

- The section on KML should be revised during PPG phase to ensure that it provides a balance between sharing and disseminating lessons and larning from this project and learning from ongoing or previous interventions in the same area. In this regard, STAP would also like to emphasize that meaningful learning of important lessons can be drawn from a wider pool of interevntions, including any that have been implemented in other geographical areas beyond the Pacific Andean region.

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.)