

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10713	
Project Title	Adapting to climate change and enabling sustainable land management through productive rural communities in Timor-Leste	
Date of Screening	May 26, 2021	
STAP member screener	Edward Carr	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Durón	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design</p> <p>STAP welcomes UNEP’s multi-trust fund GEF and LDCF project “Adapting to climate change and enabling sustainable land management through productive rural communities in Timor-Leste”. The project seeks to strengthen communities’ resilience to climate change, and reduce land degradation in the Dasidareo and Lacro watersheds. To incentivize sustainable land management practices, the project will support agri-businesses on vanilla and cocoa production.</p> <p>STAP greatly appreciates the systems thinking evident in this PIF and recommends that during the PPG stage the project team reframe the place of climate impacts and adaptation to better match the evidence. The project team would benefit from carefully checking the linkages between projected climate change and the agricultural impacts described in the PIF. These are not likely to be significant in the next few decades and should not be addressed as such. However, it is clear that climate change impacts might interact with other stressors to create significant challenges. Therefore, to maximize the benefits of this project, adaptation interventions should be aimed at the intersection of climate impacts with other described drivers of change in the context, not at climate change alone.</p>	

	<p>STAP appreciates the project’s theory of change, and the various figures demonstrating the linkages between climate change impacts, land and forest degradation, and water insecurity. As the project is designed and implemented, STAP encourages the project team to apply iteratively the theory of change, amending it as the assumptions are tested, and learning and knowledge are generated. STAP appreciates that this project offered more than one possible climate trajectory when describing future conditions in the project sites. However, STAP recommends that the project more clearly link intervention selection to these different scenarios to examine the extent to which proposed activities are robust across a range of plausible climate futures. This will ensure the durability of project impacts.</p> <p>To address the multi-sectoral drivers of land and forest degradation, and the climate change impacts from rainfall and temperature variability, the project proposes to use landscape/watershed approaches, and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA). While these approaches are perceived to address the impacts of climate change on ecosystem services, livelihoods, and natural resources, STAP encourages the project developers to consider metrics (e.g. water, socio-economic, soil) that demonstrate how the chosen integrated approach(es) contribute to the project’s environmental and adaptation benefits. Being able to monitor the impact of integration processes will result in a more robust incremental and additional cost reasoning.</p> <p>Below, STAP provides further advice on these issues.</p>	
<p>Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary</p>	<p>What STAP looks for</p>	<p>Response</p>
<p>Project Objective</p>	<p>Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?</p>	<p>This is not clear. While the PIF is well-constructed, the claim that future conditions are likely to increase poverty by exacerbating vulnerability to climate change cannot be</p>

		<p>cross-checked because the references for this section were omitted. This is a problem because the rest of the description calls this claim into question. For example, models appear to project a net 9-day reduction in the growing season, presumably by 2100. It is possible that such a small reduction could be important, as Timor Leste is somewhat arid in places, but given the cycles of most major crops it seems unlikely that this much of a change will be a big driver of agricultural impacts.</p> <p>Similarly, the temperature increases projected are for 2100 – which means there is not likely to be a major evapotranspirative stress, thermal stress for crops and animals, or substantially increased evaporation in the next few decades.</p> <p>These issues call into question the link between climate change and declining livelihoods conditions.</p> <p>The part of the PIF that constructs the problems to be addressed as emerging from not just climate change, but various social and biological processes that, as a whole, produce big stresses, is very strong. The project will either need to carefully substantiate the assumed links between climate change and the problems it seeks to address, particularly its claims about climate and poverty. If this cannot be done, the project should instead focus on how climate change, even relatively small changes, will exacerbate some of these bigger and more temporally-urgent pressures.</p>
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Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes, but adaptation benefits likely arise insofar as the project addresses climate change's potentially minor contribution to the larger challenges it seeks to resolve. Minor point – the presentation of the project framework, section B is confusing. Some sections appear repetitive.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Possibly – with good monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Yes.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	The PIF constructs a logical argument, but see the point above about climate change, climate impacts, and the problems identified in the PIF: it is not clear that climate change plays a central role in the challenges the project seeks to address. It may do so several decades into the future, but this project is unlikely to influence the situation at that time. Increased deforestation and land degradation are also substantial challenges in Timor-Leste. Forest degradation is a result of logging for timber, harvesting for fuelwood, shifting agriculture, and forest fires. Changes in climate are considered to exacerbate these drivers, such as fire. Land degradation is driven by poor soils, unsustainable land

		<p>management practices, unsustainable grazing, and climate change – i.e. soil erosion, landslides.</p> <p>STAP values Figure 1 and 2, illustrating the links between climate change impacts, land degradation, and water insecurity. The figures demonstrate succinctly the scale of the problem, the connections and feedbacks between climate change, land degradation and water insecurity.</p> <p>STAP appreciates the systems thinking that emerges when the PIF describes the connections between the drivers of forest and land degradation, water insecurity, and climate change impacts in the target sites, and suggests this thinking be applied to the project going forward.</p>
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, barriers and threats are described
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	This project is a multi-trust fund project combining GEF land degradation resources with LDCF resources. The project could usefully combine resources to address the multiple drivers of degradation, and climate change impact which include rainfall variability and extreme events.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, the baseline is described clearly as a narrative of past and on-going projects (GEF and non-GEF) in the country, and in the targeted watersheds. STAP appreciates the fact the PIF included more than one future climate projection, demonstrating a recognition that the future state of the climate is probabilistic and therefore contains a degree of

		irreducible uncertainty. STAP suggests that the project actively consider how its proposed interventions might function across these different futures to identify interventions that will be robust across a range of plausible futures.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Not yet. However, the project developers are encouraged to identify indicators beyond the GEF's and LDCF's core indicators. For example, it would be valuable to identify metrics for landscape management/watershed management, including measuring groundwater supply and other ecosystem services that are important to the communities. For the land and forest degradation baseline, indicators should be used that are aligned with metrics used by Timor-Leste to monitor its LDN targets on forest conservation (and land management). Consideration should also be given to remote sensing for establishing land cover baselines.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Partially. Suggest identifying indicators that complement the GEF's and LDCF's core indicators to truly be able to measure and assess the incremental and additional cost reasoning of this project. Suggests on indicators and metrics are provided above.
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	See comments above.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	This information appears absent in the PIF. Suggest adding a table that lists the baseline projects, and how lessons from each will contribute to this project.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	See above.

<p>3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project</p>	<p>What is the theory of change?</p>	<p>The theory of change for the project is described as: “The project will focus on building the adaptive capacity of communities, given the increasing risks posed by drought, more intense rainfall events, flooding and more erratic and unpredictable rainfall. Communities’ capacities will be strengthened to implement climate-resilient SLM, and water resource management. By transforming unsustainable agricultural and water practices that drive land degradation, the transition to climate-resilient SLM will improve the health of agro-ecosystems and support the long-term resilience of small-scale farming livelihoods to the impacts of climate change. Specifically, the project will: i) facilitate the integration of EbA and agri-business into national policies and targets to create an enabling environment for their implementation; ii) facilitate land restoration and climate-resilient agricultural livelihoods, based on participatory adaptation and land-use planning; iii) improve resilience to climate change-induced water scarcity through the development of small-scale infrastructure and water resource management; iv) transforming farming and access to markets facilitated by private sector investments and agri-business development to support sustainable commodity production; and v) develop monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to ensure that the measures implemented under the project are sustainable, lead to improved adaptation outcomes, and can be upscaled to other priority watersheds across Timor-Leste.”</p>
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	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	See above.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Yes, the theory of change identifies assumptions underlying the success of each outcome. The assumptions should be tested and refined as the theory of change is applied, and modified. STAP notes that these assumptions generally look outside the project itself, and suggests that the project team consider the assumptions about problem identification, intervention design, and implementation that might shape the outcomes of this project as well.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Yes – component 3 describes the possible need for managing adaptively the newly formed value chains on vanilla and cacao. Suggest using the theory of change to look for opportunities across the components on adaptive management.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	It is likely that the proposed incremental activities will lead to global environmental benefits with good monitoring, evaluation and learning. STAP recommends identifying indicators to monitor short-term outcomes, and revisiting the theory of change as the project is implemented and the assumptions are being tested, or validated. Table 3 usefully describes and organizes additional cost reasoning per component. Suggest adding a column to describe the incremental reasoning in the same manner – i.e. per component. Alternatively, offer a combined description of the incremental and

		additional cost reasoning per component. This appears to be the case for component 3.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed additional cost reasoning lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Possibly. There are clearly real challenges in Timor Leste and several of the activities proposed by this project are likely to reduce vulnerability and build some adaptive capacity. What is not clear is whether or not that reduced vulnerability and increased adaptive capacity will have much to do with the climate, given the tenuous link between climate and the challenges to be addressed by this project. STAP suggest that the project team carefully consider how the project will lead to adaptations that reduce the likelihood that climate change will exacerbate other drivers of change. While this will not do a lot to reduce vulnerability to climate change itself, mostly because it is not clear how significant a challenge climate change is here, at least in the near term, it will make the character of proposed adaptations and the expected impacts much clearer.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, the benefits are global environmental benefits, and adaptation benefits. Suggest identifying metrics to track and assess progress at the watershed/landscape level for land, forest and groundwater availability.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Possibly. Recommend identifying clearly the boundaries for the social-ecological system, and applying systems thinking to further enhance the problem statement, and to develop the impact pathways. Additionally, suggest developing a separate theory of change on scaling. This involves specifying causal pathways that identify innovation required for scaling, the barriers to

		scaling, including barriers associated with institutional arrangements, cultural norms and values. Paying close attention to scaling – developing distinct impact pathways on scaling – will more likely put the project on the transformative paths it is trying to achieve. Refer to STAP’s theory of change primer , and STAP’s transformation brief .
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, they are explicitly defined.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Partly. See comments above.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project’s resilience to climate change?	All the components in one way or other seek to increase the resilience to climate change. However, the project developers are encouraged to systematically use the theory of change to look for opportunities to adapt, or transform, the interventions to maintain or enhance climate resilience. A resilience assessment would be a valuable tool to use in the design and implementation of the project: https://research.csiro.au/eap/rapta/ https://wayfinder.earth/contact-us/
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	The project aims to partner with the private sector to support agri-businesses on vanilla and cocoa production. Benefits from engaging in commodity supply chains on vanilla and cocoa are expected to create incentives for sustainable land management.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Partly. The project aims to train farmers on cocoa and vanilla production, as well as establish nurseries and post harvesting facilities for the commodities. As mentioned above, it would be good to develop distinct

		impact pathways to articulate the barriers and risks associated with scaling the innovation in each of the suco watershed management committees, and to identify more readily adaptive management opportunities.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Possibly both adaptation and transformational change will be required.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A land use map is provided for Timor-Leste, as well as a map identifying the two targeted watersheds.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Possibly. Suggest revisiting stakeholders as the project is designed and implemented to ensure the appropriate actors are being engaged based on the project needs.
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	Suggest specifying how the stakeholders' combined roles will achieve the environmental and adaptation outcomes. STAP notes that none of the stakeholders listed appears to play the role of implementer. The project team

		should be clear about who is responsible for what aspects of implementation.
<p>3. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services.</p> <p>Will the project’s results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Partly. STAP is pleased the project will embed gender-differentiated needs and capacities in the project. STAP recommends building gender across the components, and develop the interventions based on the social and cultural norms in the target watersheds described in the PIF. Attention also should be paid to how gender shapes access to, and control of resources (land, income, and other).</p> <p>Assumptions about gender also should be built into the theory of change. Refer to the following paper for further insights on gender and climate change: Lau, Jacqueline D., et al. "Gender equality in climate policy and practice hindered by assumptions." <i>Nature Climate Change</i> 11.3 (2021): 186-192.</p>
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>Unclear. Recommend considering whether gender considerations hinder the participation of an important stakeholder group. For example, focusing a specific activity on women may prevent others from joining, or benefitting.</p>

<p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project’s control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project? For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project’s objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? 	<p>The risks are valid, and comprehensive, and are within the project’s control.</p> <p>As the project is developed, greater attention should be given to the links between climate change risks and land management. For example, the project will target areas that are more prone to increased drought, flooding and landslides. How will reduced access to water affect agricultural production, including the proposed value chains on cocoa and vanilla? How will groundwater recharge be managed amid increased propensity to flooding, and increased rainfall intensity? Is sea level rise and salinization of groundwater a risk in the Dasidaru watershed?</p> <p>STAP proposes considering one, or two, alternative pathways to plan for uncertain risks and stressors, such as climate change impacts, demographic changes, market fluctuations, and possibly conflict. This scenario planning will assist in making the interventions more robust as opportunities for adaptation and transformational change will be more visible.</p>
<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Yes – to LDCF, Green Climate Fund, and GEF projects.</p>
	<p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p>	<p>Possibly. Suggest listing in a table format the projects, their lessons, and how they were used to inform the design of this project. This will make the information more visible.</p>
	<p>Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
	<p>How have these lessons informed the project’s formulation?</p>	<p>See above.</p>

	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	Yes, the theory of change and component 4 on monitoring and knowledge systems.
8. Knowledge management. Outline the “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project, and how it will contribute to the project’s overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	Knowledge management will be managed through monitoring and evaluation – component 4. Suggest using the theory of change as an adaptive management tool; thus, recommend linking component 4 to the theory of change.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project will collect and disseminate relevant knowledge, best practices and lessons learned based on outcomes from component 4. On scaling, suggest developing separate impact pathways as suggested above.

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
<p>1. Concur</p>	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.</p>
	<p>* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that <i>“STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.”</i></p>
<p>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</p>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p>
	<p>(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.</p>
	<p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>

<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p>	<p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>