

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

| Part I: Project Information | Response |
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| GEF ID | 10704 |
| Project Title | Sustainable Management of Natural Resources towards Rehabilitation and Preservation of the Key Biodiversity Area along Bataan Province to Manila Bay |
| Date of Screening | December 2, 2020 |
| STAP member screener | Mark Stafford Smith |
| STAP secretariat screener | Guadalupe Duron |
| STAP Overall Assessment and Rating | <p>Minor issues to be considered during project design:</p> <p>STAP welcomes FAO’s proposal “Sustainable Management of Natural Resources towards Rehabilitation and Preservation of the Key Biodiversity Area along Bataan Province to Manila Bay”. The project aims to mainstream biodiversity and apply sustainable land management to achieve global environmental benefits. STAP acknowledges this is a small project, and the following comments are made recognizing this.</p> <p>Whilst it is good that a logic diagram of some sort is provided (‘conceptual framework’), the diagram does not demonstrate a clear logic on the problem. The description of the problems and barriers are acceptable. However, there is a lack of clarity on how the outputs add together to deliver the outcomes. As currently described, the likelihood that the sum of the outputs will be sufficient to achieve the outcomes, seems remote. This is especially so given that several of the nominated barriers (let alone other plausible ones derived from the root causes) are not addressed.</p> <p>STAP strongly recommends, even for a small project, that this logic be worked out better, by working back from the outcomes, and the project investment scoped to achieve something plausible, rather than spreading it thinly across many good-sounding outputs that are likely to be ineffectual. (Alternatively, there may be good reasons why</p> |

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| | <p>these targeted investments can complement other actions in ways that really deliver all of this, in which case that logic needs to be explained more clearly so the project can follow it.) The focus should be on making the case that the proposed outputs are both necessary and sufficient to achieve the outcomes, and whether there can be confidence in the durability of the outcomes once the GEF investment finishes.</p> <p>These comments are expanded upon below. In doing so, other weaknesses are revealed, including: a lack of clarity on developing incentives from the private sector; difficulty seeing that ‘participation’ really includes a co-designing role for those whose behavior ultimately needs engaging; a tendency to focus on more planning rather than action (for all that some of this is needed); a weak knowledge management strategy unlikely to assist greatly with scaling; an inadequate climate risk assessment in a country that is already suffering impacts; and, a failure to address other trends such as in-migration which might undermine durability of outcomes. In essence, the proposal uses words (e.g. participation, planning, women and indigenous peoples, and scaling), but presents little credible depth behind them.</p> <p>In STAP’s view, all of the aforementioned issues need addressing (at a level commensurate to the size of the investment) before the project can be expected to add credibly to the GEF portfolio. There are hints through the PIF that much additional material may have been thought through, but the lack of a stronger, and more focused, logical presentation means that it has not come through.</p> <p>STAP’s forthcoming brief on Biodiversity Mainstreaming, as well as STAP’s Theory of Change Primer, may be useful resources for the project team. More specific comments are provided below.</p> | |
| Part I: Project Information | What STAP looks for | Response |

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| B. Indicative Project Description Summary | | |
| Project Objective | Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis? | Yes (Learning from objectives in other projects, the wording here could emphasize the intention to support local livelihoods as the incentive for ongoing community support; this would help highlight the joint goal of achieving both global and local benefits. E.g. “To mainstream... <i>while improving secure and diversified local livelihoods</i> ”). |
| Project components | A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives? | These encompass provincial level capacity building and planning; local capacity building and implementation of NRM practices that are intended to improve biodiversity and local livelihoods, including with private sector partnerships and with attention to gender equity, as well as co-designed local plans that are implemented; and knowledge management and M&E for scaling. These plausibly support and appear <i>necessary</i> to the objectives; but it seems implausible that they are <i>sufficient</i> to achieving them, as discussed below. In addition, several outputs are not elaborated convincingly later (nor are perhaps possible on the budget). |
| 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? | Potentially. |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | Implausible; especially as regards ensuring that they are durable (see below). |
| 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? | As above, plausibly <i>necessary</i> but see following comments on whether they are <i>sufficient</i> . |
| Part II: Project justification | A simple narrative explaining the project’s logic, i.e. a theory of change. | A conceptual framework is presented, with some of the logic of a ToC, but this seems flawed with regard to ensuring that root causes are addressed to |

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| | | <p>promote durability of outcomes. In particular, there is really no critical analysis of whether the proposed outputs are <i>sufficient</i> to achieve (or at least play a well-scoped role in achieving) the outcomes.</p> <p>We applaud the effort to present the logic in the PIF, but neither the diagram nor the associated text gives confidence that a systematic (even if simple) ToC process has been undertaken that works back from the objectives to critically test whether the proposed outputs are <i>sufficient</i> (e.g. see STAP ToC Primer). https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p> |
| <p>1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)</p> | <p>Is the problem statement well-defined?</p> | <p>The project site is justifiably a place of concern. Threats noted include illegal and rampant logging, unsustainable farming practices, hunting and overexploitation of plants, storms and flooding worsening with climate change. However, deeper root causes are hinted at, including rising population, including in-migration of upland farmers; low education, poverty and dependence on uncertain government livelihood support; and possible corruption or at least unequal access to government support.</p> <p>The long history of what sounds like a suite of good policies and efforts to implement them is also noted (e.g. through the “decades of DENR’s existence”), but evidently with many failed outcomes, which implies that this latest modest investment must be really sharp in its logic as to why it will change this situation.</p> |
| | <p>Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?</p> | <p>A set of barriers is presented concisely in the ‘Conceptual Framework’ diagram and elaborated in the text.</p> <p>These barriers are no doubt real, but for the logical framework (or a theory of change, however simple)</p> |

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| | | <p>it is worth asking the thought experiment: if these barriers were somehow completely removed, would the threats be mitigated and the claimed biodiversity benefits achieved? If not, what are other barriers? And even if so, would the proposed actions be sufficient to achieve this? This seems unlikely to STAP, as noted below.</p> <p>In addition, a strong emphasis in the text is placed on “weak involvement and commitment of local organisations and key stakeholders in environmental programs” attributed to the lack of a common ecosystems-based cross-sectoral framework for action. STAP agrees but does not see a response to this adequately addressed in the proposal.</p> |
| | 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? | Yes, credible links between biodiversity and land degradation (and probably other areas). |
| 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects | Is the baseline identified clearly? | <p>Yes. Though the very large number of existing activities raises the question of whether this intervention has the resources to achieve what all of them has not.</p> <p>It is credible to argue that the key missing block is coordination, but if so STAP would expect to see much more emphasis on the barriers to integration across agencies. This probably requires a powerful mandate across government to overcome siloes, probably backed by a powerful stakeholder group holding those agencies to account, and these issues of power and ability to overcome the natural agency tendency towards silos are not really addressed. It seems unlikely that simply developing a more integrated plan will overcome these deep-rooted drivers of fragmentation.</p> |

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| | Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits? | There is little quantification in the baseline section (which mostly focuses on other activities and organisations), but there is relevant material earlier and later in the proposal. It may be good to collate this succinctly here. |
| | Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project? | Probably |
| | 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; | Probably OK, though not very explicit |
| | are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and | As noted, many other projects usefully identified |
| | how did these lessons inform the design of this project? | More reflection on the institutional politics and social processes that result in the documented fragmentation would improve the chances of this intervention having impact. |
| 3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project | What is the theory of change? | It is good that the proposal presents a conceptual framework, which outlines the underlying problems and barriers well. However, the diagram really presents no more than a logframe of intended outputs, rather than any logic for how these will be achieved, and, particularly, how the outputs may add up to lead to desirable outcomes. This problem is encapsulated in the 'Goal statement' which essentially asserts that <i>if</i> better plans are produced and technical assistance is provided to communities, the additional agency technical capacity and community knowledge and skills will mean that the GEBs will be developed. Whilst the outputs are plausibly <i>necessary</i> for the outcomes, at present it is hard to see any critical appraisal of whether they are <i>sufficient</i> . This depends on carrying out a genuine (even if quite simple) analysis working back from the intended goal – what ultimate outcomes are needed for this (these are plausible), then what shorter-term outcomes sit between the outputs and these. It is this part where the arrows in the diagram and the surrounding text |

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| | | <p>lack credibility, yet a simple theory of change analysis could help.</p> <p>There are also differences in wording between the Framework diagram and the text with regard to risks, barriers as well as outputs and outcomes; some of these are material in terms of what is being prioritised, and suggest further unclarity in the logic of what is intended. Getting these clear will help proponents sharpen the project logic and communicate it better, both internally and externally.</p> |
| | <p>What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?</p> | <p>It seems implausible to STAP that the outputs proposed (even if achieved) will by themselves achieve the stated outcomes.</p> <p>For example, the full text of Outcome 1.1 includes “implementation of harmonised plans” yet none of the outputs go beyond “capacity to implement” or “capacity to catalyse” – clearly many other things must happen for this capacity to turn into on-ground outcomes. Whilst Outcome 2 might help some implementation (this is the sort of logical alignment that it would be good to make clear in the conceptual framework), either there must be close alignment with other baseline activities for this, or the project scope is unrealistic.</p> <p>In addition, Outcome 1 depends on real coordination among agencies and other organization. As noted above, much more attention to the organizational dynamics would help here – simply producing some coordinated plans is unlikely to result in implementation. To STAP the multi-stakeholder platform is probably the key element of this Outcome, if set up and resourced well, and owned by non-government stakeholders to drive the power dynamics of coordination. But if so, much more discussion of how to give it a real mandate that can over-rule</p> |

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| | | <p>tendencies to fragment, how to resource it, and how to ensure it will see benefits from the on-going work needed to achieve and maintain integration, are important missing elements. At present this is envisaged as an MSP among agencies to harmonise planning and training, without the social dynamics and demand of having community stakeholders partially driving it. This requires a sharper analysis than that currently presented.</p> <p>Outcome 2 aims to ‘increase the capacity’ of local communities including vulnerable groups to implement some of the integrated planning from Outcome 1, yet it is not apparent that those locals want this and they are unlikely to do so unless they have a sense of ownership of the planning process. The project is delivering ‘training’, ‘knowledge materials and hands-on manuals’ and planning modules’ and ‘skill development activities’ – many of these may well be needed, but are totally unlikely to be sufficient without addressing the <i>motivation</i> of the community members, not to mention their underlying time and resources to take up the ideas, especially among most vulnerable groups.</p> <p>These are issues even in the short term. In the longer term, if in-migration continues, can the population pressure be accommodated? Will those adopting better practices feel they have tenure security to justify their efforts? Will climate change disrupt developments?</p> <p>In short, the logic does not seem to address the <i>motivation</i> for either agencies or local communities to do what the project seeks to achieve, let alone do so enduringly. As a result the project proposes activities that are at best plausibly <i>necessary</i>, but unlikely to be <i>sufficient</i> to achieve the outcomes.</p> |
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| | What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | As above. The linkages and comprehensiveness need addressing, if necessary by reducing the scope. |
| | Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions? | <p>No, as above. STAP recommends that the guidelines for ToCs in STAP's Primer are followed more directly to document assumptions, and to re-assess '<i>necessary and sufficient</i>'. Refer to: https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p> <p>Local engagement, including of vulnerable groups such as women, is cited. However, noting COVID, it would be good to know this is more than aspirational – do we know that locals want to make these changes? Will the local communities work together to participate? Might there be cultural or power dynamics barriers? (The quotes inserted early on point to this.)</p> <p>There are many other implicit assumptions which it would help to make clear and then target with some monitoring to test whether they hold up as the project unfolds – e.g. do the sustainable practices ultimately deliver better livelihoods, etc.</p> |
| | Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes? | <p>This would be greatly enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing the assumptions underlying a ToC, in order that implementation flexibility can learn as the project proceeds. STAP's ToC Primer discusses this process of adaptive MEL</p> <p>In addition, Outcome 3, which deals with monitoring, should monitor the local benefits and then market them in ways that resonate with local participants, to develop and maintain their support (or change the project if these are not being generated). Demonstrating value to participants should be a key element of the ToC (which is also needed for scaling and durability) that might be elaborated – at present it is planned to monitor % increase in income from diversified livelihoods,</p> |

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| | | which is good, but is this the only benefit and how will others be convinced of it? |
| 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? | This seems unlikely as written. In addition, the proposal should address durability more clearly: might drivers like climate change and population increases undermine the durability of GEBs achieved? This should be addressed in further design – might climate change undermine the proposed diversifications? Might population increase overwhelm improved management in this region or cause damage to leak from here to surround areas? Can national policy help avoid these issues? |
| | LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change? | |
| 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? | If actually achieved, yes, though more compelling if eventually scales out beyond the targeted examples |
| | Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment? | If actually achieved, though more compelling if eventually scales out beyond the targeted examples. |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined? | Yes |
| | Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation? | MEL needs more development – what might be measured is indicated, but how it will be tracked is not made clear. |
| | What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change? | <i>[We have not seen the Climate Risk screen; what is reflected in the PIF is limited, as noted above and below under Risks. FAO's project risk certification (available to STAP via the GEF portal) also does not include climate risks.]</i> |
| 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? | Not in a global sense. The PIF claims innovation in applying the design at the project site – this is not innovation, just replication. There could be some innovation in the goal of seeking genuine better integration across agencies, sectors and |

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| | | society, but as noted the process for achieving this in an enduring way is not currently credible. |
| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | <p>Long-term this project will only have a small impact on GEBs unless it is both durable and scaled. There are currently few credible insights in the proposal as to the behaviour change and incentives needed to achieving scaling or durability. The base line information catalogues many other activities that seem to have failed in this regard, and there is little sign of advancement here. At present any scaling largely depends on information push through Outcome 3.</p> <p>In general, STAP strongly recommends that more attention be paid now to potential means of scaling later (various other mechanisms could be posited, some of which may benefit from preparatory actions during the initial project); ideally STAP suggests a separate ToC be developed for this possible eventual phase, so that the ToC for this project can be informed by what might be needed to make scaling more feasible later. (STAP's guide on Durability and its ToC Primer provide more advice on these issues.) Refer to: https://www.stapgef.org/achieving-enduring-outcomes-gef-investment https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p> |
| | Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability? | As above. |
| 1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. | | OK |
| 2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in | Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers? | Acknowledging constraints from COVID, a range of stakeholders have been engaged and it is acknowledged that more will occur as project |

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| <p>consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.</p> <p>If none of the above, please explain why.</p> <p>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.</p> | | <p>development continues. However, STAP does not see insights about real co-design and co-production processes that might ensure the project is delivering results that communities will be able or willing to own and take up durably; yet these are acknowledged (first row of Key Stakeholders table) as “primary stakeholders and key partners”. See comments on motivation above. It is hard to see how the tendencies for policy fragmentation will be overcome unless there is a strong and empowered demand for better integrated plans from these stakeholders and representative CSOs.</p> <p>In addition, the intention to engage the private sector (obviously at early stages) is very vague to date and should be further elaborated, since it may also be critical to durable funding.</p> |
| | <p>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?</p> | <p>Poorly developed, as above.</p> |
| <p>3. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.</p> <p>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</p> | <p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p> | <p>Gender is mentioned throughout the proposal, though again rather superficially. It would be good to be more concrete about targets, such 30%+ membership of any committees.</p> |

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| equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd | | |
| | Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed? | An analysis of this is proposed, and should be progressed very early. |
| 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>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?</p> <p>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 risk analysis recognizes 'complacency' and low interest from stakeholders – but this (at least, low interest') should be a driving design feature not a post hoc risk. The risk that government agency coordination will fall apart despite the best efforts might also be addressed, since it seems to have been a persistent past problem.</p> <p>The treatment of climate risks in the PIF is simplistic (but we did not have access to any separate Climate Risk assessment). It would help to have an open appraisal of what processes will be put in place to ensure that communities are not encouraged to adopt practices or livelihoods that subsequently become maladaptive due to climate change (or indeed any other trends in drivers, e.g. population). The area is inevitably affected by floods, cyclones and sea level rise – will changes be more resilient to these? More sophisticatedly, how will the project seek to ensure that the interventions will be robust to uncertainty in the rapidity and scale of change?</p> |
| 6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives | Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects? | There is more about 'complementing' than 'coordinating' – the latter will be necessary to enable real change here, and to leverage the relatively modest investment in this project. |

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| | Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them? | |
| | Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited? | |
| | How have these lessons informed the project's formulation? | |
| | 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? | |
| 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? | |
| | What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience? | <p>This seems to be mainly congruent with Outcome 3, and is neither imaginative nor obviously tailored to the context, and is dominated by a diffusion push model.</p> <p>STAP would suggest that a scaling ToC would include, for example, more active engagement of local stakeholders in the knowledge preparation and co-dissemination process, as well as involving other communities in visits to/observing the successes here, to develop champions for scaling during the course of this project. Tracking the livelihood benefits (which is suggested) and then demonstrating them, as well as the success of other incentives would be other examples of explicit actions more likely to create fertile ground for scaling out.</p> <p>The success of these KM efforts should themselves be monitored and learned from.</p> |

Notes

| STAP advisory response | Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed |
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| 1. Concur | 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. |
| | * 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> |
| 2. Minor issues to be considered during project design | 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: |
| | (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, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review. |
| | 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. |

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| 3. Major issues to be considered during project design | <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> |