

## STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11418
Project title	Strengthening Adaptation through Institutional Building and Resilient Livelihoods in South Sudanese Agro-pastoral Landscapes (SABRELA)
Date of screen	4 January 2024
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### 1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the project “Strengthening Adaptation through Institutional Building and Resilient Livelihoods in South Sudanese Agro-pastoral Landscapes (SABRELA),” whose objective is to strengthen the agro-pastoral systems of vulnerable communities and improve capacities for natural resources management while enhancing the resilience of the socioecological contexts of selected states in South Sudan. The project is aimed at a clear challenge in the present, but would benefit from a better articulation of the future it hopes to influence and greater clarity regarding the role of consultation in shaping the selection and design of interventions.

Overall, the theory of change is sound; however, given the fragile state of the country due in large part to prolonged conflict, STAP recommends that, in addition to acknowledging this fact, greater effort is made to explicitly address environmental security in the project's design. See [Environmental Security: Achieving Durable Outcomes in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations for details](#).

*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
- X** **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.

Overall, the project's theory of change (ToC) has a clear logic: strengthening agro-pastoral systems of vulnerable communities and their ability to manage natural resources by building and protecting asset portfolios that are both agricultural and non-agricultural within an appropriate enabling institutional and policy environment will strengthen the resilience of socioecological systems. The interventions proposed in the project align with this ToC and seem to have clear connections to the challenges outlined in the rationale and description. Also, this PIF nicely articulates the assumptions behind these components and interventions – in fact, it does so better in the narrative of the description than it does in its overt discussion of assumptions, which are focused on much broader issues beyond project control.

All of this said, the PIF exhibits a problem that should be resolved – it never generates one, let alone more than one, plausible future as a baseline for the country/project areas. There are snippets of a future shaped by different drivers – for example, the yield trends in Figure 2 – but these trends are not clearly linked to climate drivers, nor do they reflect a diversity of climate futures. Figure 2 represents model outputs run with RCP8.5, the most extreme high-emissions climate scenario, one that is unlikely to be realized. What would Figure 2 look

like under other RCPs, such as 4.5? If yield losses are much lower under more moderate scenarios, it would likely influence project intervention selection. Further, because the different drivers of future conditions are not linked together into plausible narratives, it is difficult to grasp the full uncertainties at play in this context: for example, there are different conflict futures that could play out, different governance futures, and given the country's oil-dependent economy at a time when demand is starting to drop, significantly different economic futures. Without an integrated picture of these different factors and how they could come together in two or more plausible futures, it is difficult to assess the potential efficacy of the proposed activities/interventions.

Another challenge with the project is that the interventions proposed under Component 2 are all illustrative/notional: it is unclear what, exactly, the project is proposing to undertake. The PIF offers broad categories of action (e.g., climate smart agriculture), but many things tend to fall under these categories. There are climate smart agricultural activities that might be appropriate in this context, and other activities that are not. It is not clear how the project will, in the end, decide what it is doing specifically under this component. A clearer link between stakeholder engagement and activities would help to address this concern.

A third challenge involves the proposed work on livelihoods in the project. While this focus seems both appropriate and necessary, the understanding of livelihoods here is very thin – just framed as activities people undertake. Livelihoods, however, shape people's identities and ways of living in the world. They can have significant influence over things like gender roles (a clear focus of the project) and are often deeply rooted such that changing an activity is akin to changing who someone is. Asking agropastoralists to shift, for example, more toward market-oriented agriculture is not a technical change in activities, it is asking them to be entirely different people than they are now. The PIF makes no mention of the uncertainty around this challenge. Again, while the clear evidence of stakeholder engagement at local level in this PIF is very welcome, the project will have to carefully consider what livelihoods alternatives it promotes and why if it hopes to see productive uptake of these alternatives that address, rather than exacerbate, the challenges facing the target populations.

This proposed project – and any project in South Sudan – must contend with working in a fragile and conflict situation (FCS). This is acknowledged throughout the PIF; however, it is not reflected in the project components. In the ToC, security concerns are noted as a barrier, but that is all – not even reference to conflict-sensitive planning which is a critical starting point for any activity that seeks to achieve enduring benefits. See [Environmental Security: Achieving Durable Outcomes in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations](#) for more information on project entry points and references to tools and practices that can be applied in FCS.

Finally, STAP notes that another LDCF project is currently being proposed for South Sudan that overlaps with several of the proposed project sites (e.g., Jonglei, Lakes, Eastern Equatoria) and encourages IFAD to coordinate closely with FAO on the CARES project (GEF ID 11322) to maximize efforts and avoid duplication.

*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**

To address the issues raised above, STAP recommends the following:

- 1) In the description, develop a baseline around two or more plausible futures that illustrate how different climate, political, conflict, and economic futures might play out. Following [STAP guidance](#), these need not be modeled, deeply data-driven scenarios, but should at least explain how the interplay of all these factors might result in different futures depending on how they play out and intersect. This will allow project designers and implementers to better understand the potential efficacy of candidate interventions across a range of plausible futures and select those most robust to those futures.

- a. Related to #1, the PIF ascribes food security issues almost exclusively to climate-related issues. While there is no question climate variability and change can greatly stress rain-fed agrarian livelihoods, at one point the PIF makes an offhand reference to the fact that food-insecure populations cannot access food surpluses from other parts of the country: this is not a precipitation problem, this is a food system/national economy problem. Developing understandings of current drivers of challenges to human well-being that integrate climate and other key factors is important for fully characterizing the current situation as well as developing the plausible future narratives.
  - b. Related to #1: any data on future climate impacts must represent more than one RCP scenario. Using RCP 8.5 exclusively creates a skewed understanding of the future predicated on an extreme scenario that is unlikely to be realized. Intervention selection and design based on that scenario might result in activities that are less effective or even inappropriate under more moderate scenarios. This is critical to developing plausible future narratives as recommended under #1.
- 2) During the PPG phase, the project designers should drill down to very specific livelihoods interventions and, building on the excellent local community engagement work undertaken for the PIF, carefully examine the social and local political ramifications of particular interventions and their outcomes. Who will have to change activities and why? How do those who will have to change view potential changes, and why? Who will benefit from these interventions and who stands to lose? This discussion should include IDPs and other vulnerable populations. For example, empowering women's production may be a powerful tool for improving well-being, but it might also cause men to feel like they are less authoritative and important than they once were, leading to domestic stress and even violence. To the extent possible, significant livelihoods analysis during the PPG phase should be able to identify such pitfalls and address them as part of intervention selection and design.
  - 3) The risk section of the PIF largely misses the goal of that section in that, in the climate; environment and social; and macro-economic discussions it focuses on the risks the project hopes to address in its outcomes, not in risks posed to the project itself. This section of the PIF should be revised to account for what are likely significant risks to implementation in these arenas. Further, the PIF could draw on lessons from implementation of the IFAD South Sudan Livelihoods Resilience Program to provide explanations for how such risks will be managed/addressed.
  - 4) The rationale and description make no mention of farmer-herder conflict, which is a very important challenge and dynamic in some of its proposed project sites. These conflicts should be addressed as part of the baseline, not just in the risk section. Further, managing this risk to implementation by avoiding areas where this challenge is most pronounced might lead the project away from the places of greatest need. The project should justify the decision to avoid areas where this is a challenge in the narrative, as it will impact the overall outcomes of the project in terms of benefits delivered.

*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.)