

## STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11411
Project title	A Holistic Approach to Food Systems Resilience and Adaptation in Maldives
Date of screen	18 January 2024
STAP Panel Member	Edward Carr
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### 1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The objective of this project is to support resilient food systems in the Maldives that are adaptive to the impacts of global climate change. The connections between climate impacts and agriculture production are clearly articulated, as is the justification for the project in the face of climate change and other non-climate impacts.

Overall, STAP finds that the project rationale and description are sound; however, could be improved by clearly identifying the impact pathways from projected changes in climate to agricultural outcomes to identify the most important and effective points of intervention for this project and by developing two or more plausible future narratives that integrate different climate, tourism/economic and demographic futures to help characterize and address the uncertainty of future conditions for project design as per STAP's [guidance on Future Narratives](#).

*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.

The rationale for this project rests on the goal of rendering the food system of the Maldives more resilient to current and expected future climate stresses. This is a significant challenge for this country, as agriculture currently covers a relatively small area and employs relatively few people, with limited opportunities to expand either area under cultivation or people employed in agriculture. The number of people engaged increases substantially if home garden plots are included in this project, and doing so would also open up a clear opportunity to support women's production, but it is not clear that home garden production faces the same challenges as commercial agricultural production. The PIF should be clearer as to what and whose production is being addressed in this project.

STAP appreciates the clear connection made between the impacts of climate change and the food sector (land and marine based) and the need for a 'whole of society' 'whole of island' 'whole of 'food system' approach. In particular, the project's recognition that agricultural self-sufficiency is not necessarily the path to food security and its effort to create an approach that improves local production while addressing vulnerabilities in the import markets and transportation connections is sensible.

STAP also appreciates the effort made by the project proponents to clearly connect specific climate impacts to agricultural outcomes through clear pathways. That said, the PIF does not cite any references for the claim that heat stress is a significant agricultural challenge in the Maldives, which is home to tropical crop production and thus crops adapted to some degree of heat stress. The project also does not clearly articulate whether droughts will be of duration and depth to produce significant agricultural impacts – there are no citations for this, either. Overall, going a bit further and clearly identifying the impact pathways from projected changes in climate to agricultural outcomes will clarify the most important and effective points of intervention for this project.

STAP appreciates the detailed climate information in the project rationale and the information about sectors beyond agriculture that shape the overall resilience of the food system, including tourism. However, this project presents the climate information unevenly, generally relying on a single future scenario without articulating which scenario was chosen, though Figures 3 and 5 are exceptions that bracket possible climate futures with RCP 2.6 and RCP 8.5. STAP recommends the project consider at least two climate futures, if not more, consistently throughout the PIF. Further, following STAP's [guidance on Future Narratives](#), the project should develop two or more plausible future narratives that integrate different climate, tourism/economic and demographic futures to help characterize and address the uncertainty of future conditions for project design. This will allow the project designers to better assess the viability and efficacy of proposed interventions across a range of plausible futures and facilitate the selection of those that work across the widest possible range of futures.

While a relatively minor point, the PIF claims the project is applying an “innovative holistic vision of resilience,” when the vision of resilience seems to be quite standard in terms of the contemporary literature and practice (and in that sense it is an appropriate use of resilience). If the project wishes to claim that an effort to render an entire food system resilient is innovative, that might be defensible.

The Theory of Change is easy to understand by simply looking at the diagram (Figure 1) and clearly explains threats to food security, barriers to food system resilience, and corresponding proposed interventions – which combined lead to the project vision and goal. The accompanying narrative further explains each of these pathways and what will be done to ensure durability (with several assumptions).

Figure 2 is particularly helpful in showing how current donor-funded, food and climate related projects can contribute to a more integrated system leading to a common goal and how this proposed project ‘fits in.’

STAP appreciates the emphasis on policy coherence; however, while the list of national policies described in this section shows commitment by the GOM to address food and climate-related issues, it does not articulate what (if any) government policies may be working at cross purposes (i.e., subsidies). See [Policy Coherence in the GEF for more information](#).

The Risk section of the PIF requires some attention. The climate risks portion rates the risk of climate impacts to project implementation as low, but the descriptive comments suggest that the project will be fine unless something happens outside the coping range of the project. This is precisely what the risks section is meant to take up: what happens if something occurs outside the coping range of the project? This section offers no detail on how the project might manage the identified social risks.

The project should be commended for a good set of consultations that included local beneficiaries. This ground-truthing of project goals is critical to good project design. STAP suggests the project consult the [Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale](#) to structure future consultations and thus ensure that the project is addressing a wide set of needs without displacing existing indigenous adaptation efforts.

*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

Per the recommendations above, STAP recommends the following:

1. Develop 2-3 simple future narratives as a baseline for the project.
2. Consult the [Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale](#) to structure future consultations, particularly with local communities, to ensure that adaptation needs are identified, and that existing adaptation actions are identified and assessed before they are inadvertently displaced.
3. Clarify the agricultural focus of the project – will it target household gardening as well as larger-scale agriculture? If not, the project should recalibrate its claims about the importance of such production to the economy and women’s participation in agriculture.
4. Provide details regarding the lessons learned from prior and ongoing related projects and how these lessons have informed the design of this proposed project.
5. Provide detail on scaling, which is mentioned but without detail about how it might occur in practice. A separate causal pathway in the ToC for scaling would be helpful, particularly given the ‘whole of island’ approach.

*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.)