

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11212
Project title	Resilient communities, land restoration and sustainable ecosystem management
Date of screen	9 June 2023
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP welcomes the project "Resilient communities, land restoration and sustainable ecosystem management" intended to enhance climate change adaptation in local communities, reduce land degradation and enhance biodiversity conservation through an integrated climate-resilient management approach in the Central and Southern Provinces of Zambia. The PIF is very well-organized and coherently integrates efforts to address biodiversity loss, land degradation, and climate change adaptation challenges. The project will benefit from planned stakeholder consultations that will map out local livelihoods, as this will allow designers to understand the sources of degrading and unsustainable behavior in the project area and select appropriate interventions to address those root causes. The project will also benefit from the development of two or more narratives of future conditions in the project area that integrate different climate scenarios with different poverty, food security, and employment futures to better represent the uncertain futures the project hopes to address. Such narratives will help project designers select and design robust interventions that provide durable Global Environmental Benefits and Adaptation Benefits.

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*

X 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.

STAP notes that the PIF is exceptionally well-organized and contains nearly all data needed to support the theory of change (ToC). The following observations are intended to strengthen what is already a well-constructed project.

STAP appreciates that the PIF contains a great deal of useful information on the current drivers of degradation, biodiversity loss, and compromised adaptive capacity. These are well-integrated and provide a useful framing of the challenges the project seeks to address (with the caveat of missing data on local motivations and decision-making above).

STAP also appreciates that the PIF contains more than one future climate scenario, which helps to illustrate the (sometimes sizable) uncertainty regarding future conditions, particularly in the Southern Province. The PIF does an excellent job of framing the local conditions, environmental and social, that produce vulnerability to the

possible range of climate impacts (#10 in the PIF). However, the PIF would be strengthened if it better integrated all the drivers of vulnerability, biodiversity loss, and land degradation into integrated simple narratives of the future.

For example, the PIF lays out key contributors to vulnerability in the targeted provinces (including HDI, MPI, prevalence of food insecurity, and unemployment). It does not, however, offer possible future trends in these contributors – for example, what would the environmental situation look like if Zambia was able to increase its HDI/lower its MPI in these areas and food insecurity decreased vs a future where the HDI falls, while the MPI and food insecurity increase? In the former future, projected climate impacts might be heavily mitigated by reduced levels of vulnerability, allowing people to manage climate impacts at the larger end of the possible range, while in the latter, vulnerability to climate impacts will be heightened, likely driving greater rates of biodiversity loss and land degradation in even a mildly changed climate. Developing two or three such integrated scenarios will allow the project designers to check the robustness of their intervention selection and design.

Related to the construction of an integrated picture of the drivers of biodiversity loss and land degradation, a significant issue for the PIF to address the drivers of *local behavior* around the environment. While STAP welcomes the PIF's focus on behavioral change aimed at youth, at various points the PIF mentions such behaviors but takes them for granted instead of understanding why these behaviors emerged and persist. At the same time, the inclusion of a social cash transfer scheme (Output 1.1.4) as a means of addressing degrading behaviors suggests an implicit understanding that these behaviors are associated with structural drivers of vulnerability. Generally speaking, people with natural resource-dependent livelihoods are aware of degradation and wish to avoid it (as it compromises their livelihoods) but, for various structural reasons, they cannot. Reasons may include issues of local and national economy (no alternative livelihood opportunities) or local social structures and expectations (creating expectations for what livelihood activities to undertake, and who should undertake them).

Understanding the local sources of degradation and unsustainable behavior is critical to identifying appropriate interventions. For example, if local populations are aware of the degrading effects of their livelihoods but cannot change what they do because they lack opportunity, environmental education and sensitization (Output 1.2.1) makes little sense as interventions. If local populations are engaged in degrading behaviors because they have no other choices, enhancing natural resources law enforcement (Output 1.1.2) is likely to drive local conflict while lowering the legitimacy of the project.

The PIF identifies climate-smart agricultural interventions as one activity/output that can shift existing degrading trends while also noting historically low levels of uptake by farmers (Barriers, #4). The literature moves beyond the PIF's identification of "tree seedling availability, increased labour demands, low knowledge, skills, and government's farmer fertilizer support systems" as reasons for this low uptake, identifying a mismatch between proposed interventions and the social dimensions of existing farming systems. To avoid identifying and designing ineffective or maladaptive interventions, the project will require substantial engagement with the local communities targeted by the project to understand the sources of their contributions to the problems this project seeks to address. STAP appreciates that the PIF, under Project Description #19, points to a detailed study of livelihoods in the PPG phase and hopes that this study will be conducted rapidly enough to fundamentally shape intervention selection and design.

Associated with this, the effort to shift communities away from charcoal production (Output 1.1.3 and Output 2.2.1) seems focused on interventions at the community and district level, when the PIF identifies urban markets (particularly Lusaka) as the big driver of charcoal use and therefore charcoal markets. This framing risks shifting responsibility for changed behavior away from more secure consumers in urban areas onto more vulnerable rural populations.

The focus on policy coherence in this project is welcome as the PIF provides several examples of how *lack of* policy coherence is contributing to environmental degradation including 1) increased charcoal production due in part to ever-rising electricity tariffs; 2) forest policy legislation that supports sustainable management while agricultural policy promotes forest clearing to confirm ownership; 3) limited success and uptake of climate-

smart and sustainable agricultural practices due in part to government's farmer fertilizer support systems. Working towards policy coherence is particularly important given several of the assumptions in the ToC such as demand for charcoal production being addressed by ongoing initiatives which may not hold if there is inaction related to energy and agricultural policies that are working against project objectives. For example, installing biogas and solar in rural households may help reduce dependence on fuel wood in these areas, but if urban dwellers are the main customers for charcoal, then it may be necessary to examine energy tariff policies to reduce demand for charcoal.

STAP notes that land tenure and forest rights is listed as a cause for land degradation, resting on the underlying notion that customary tenure system essentially mean 'open access.' In fact, customary tenure is defined as 'a set of rules and norms that govern community allocation, use, access and transfer of land and other natural resources' – this is not the same as 'open access.'

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

- 1) To ensure that specific interventions selected and designed by the project do not produce maladaptive results, in the PPG stage the project should develop 2-3 integrated simple narratives that take the existing climate projections in the PIF and combine them with plausible future trends in poverty, employment, and food security.
- 2) To lend meaning to these simple narratives, in the PPG stage the project should ensure that it delivers on #19 under the project description and conducts a detailed study of livelihoods to understand the decision space of targeted communities. While the PIF treats degradation and the behaviors as simply existing, the PPG stage should establish why these behaviors exist. As the drivers of such behavior are likely related to issues such as poverty, food security, and employment, articulating the decision space of these communities will allow project designers to interpret how different climate/poverty/food security futures might lead to different behaviors and require different interventions. The project designers might consider formalizing this as a research activity under Output 4.1 to ensure this effort goes beyond a simplistic cataloguing of activities and makes an effort to understand the underlying decision space that is leading to observed degradation.
- 3) Under Output 1.1.3, consider including dialogues with national-level policymakers on charcoal use and policies. Without national policies and incentives to shift away from charcoal production, market demand will remain strong and local populations will have significant incentives to continue producing charcoal.

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.)