

STAP SCREEN

GEF ID	11453
Project title	Promoting social and ecological resilience in land-water-food systems in blue economy sectors in Benin
Date of screen	21 January 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the project entitled "Promoting social and ecological resilience in land-water-food systems in blue economy sectors in Benin," noting that this project is mainly about the fisheries sector, which is just one aspect of the blue economy. See The [GEF and the Blue Economy](#), which provides a comprehensive framing of the issue and suggests several priority areas for GEF investment.

STAP finds that the rationale for focusing on the fisheries sector in Benin is sound. However, while substantial information is provided on climate change impacts, including on the fisheries sector, more and better (i.e. up to date) climate data are needed to clearly articulate the linkages between future climate scenarios and impacts on the fisheries sector and vulnerable populations. See STAP's [decision tree for climate adaptation rationale](#) for specific guidance.

While well-designed, the project is overly lengthy and repetitive and displays some confusion regarding impacts, barriers and root causes that should be clarified as a first step towards better articulating the logic underpinning the project's theory of change (ToC). Additional comments regarding the proposed Components are detailed below.

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 objective of this project is "to build the climate resilience of fisheries resources by implementing adaptive strategies and bolstering institutional capacities, with a strong focus on the local community and women empowerment, climate smart technologies and infrastructure, knowledge transfer, and policy reform." From the title, it can be assumed that the project is mainly focused on building adaptive capacity in the fisheries sector of Benin. STAP appreciates the strong focus on gender and local communities throughout the project in line with the stated objective.

This project is intended to run parallel to another AfDB project that focuses on other problems facing the fisheries sector. This should be made more explicit from the beginning of the PIF, carefully delineating between

the two efforts to indicate the value added of the climate change adaptation component, which is the purview of the LDCF.

While many pages of the PIF are devoted to climate change impacts, much of the information is generalized, outdated (2008 NAPA!), and repetitive. Without a clear connection between climate impacts and the challenges identified in the project rationale, it is difficult to evaluate the assumptions behind the theory of change (ToC) and therefore the likelihood that the project will deliver adaptation benefits.

With regards to the climate data (arguably the most important since this project is requesting funding from the LDCF), STAP strongly recommends project designers first consult the [World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal \(CCKP\)](#) to clearly articulate potential future climate scenarios for Benin. STAP further recommends that the project designers consult and follow STAP's [Decision tree for adaptation rationale](#) to 1) decide whether adaptation is required because the climate is changing in a way that results in a worsening climate hazard that will have a significant adverse impact on human well-being; 2) identify projects that meet an adaptation need that is recognized as a problem by those experiencing the hazard; 3) ensure that projects complement current efforts to manage climate variability and hazards; and 4) maximize the synergies and minimize the trade-offs between adaptation benefits and the achievement of global environmental benefits (including sustainable fisheries, in the case of Benin).

The PIF makes it clear that climate change is not the only driver of environmental degradation. Several other key drivers are described, including general factors such as population growth, urban sprawl and poverty as well as others that are more specific to the issue of declining fisheries such as IUU fishing. First, STAP recommends that greater effort is taken to clearly articulate drivers vs. root causes vs. barriers vs. impacts which are often inter-mixed, making it difficult to follow the project's logic. For example, at one point the PIF states that "Several barriers stand in the way of addressing these challenges, including habitat destruction, overfishing, climate change, and socio-economic factors such as insufficient funding, competition for resources, weak enforcement and limited community involvement."

Second, STAP recommends that after establishing at least two future climate scenarios, project designers make a concerted effort to integrate the climate data into any wider system dynamics by developing two or more plausible future narratives. See STAP's [simple future narratives brief and primer](#) for more information. Doing so can help to manage future uncertainty by allowing designers to test their interventions across a range of possible futures to ensure that the selection and design of interventions is robust to the widest possible set of future conditions.

The project description provides very clear information on expected impacts, including quantifiable information on area of improved management, beneficiaries, involvement of actors, etc. However, while a considerable part of the document focuses on the problem to be addressed, surprisingly less emphasis is put on barriers which may result in a situation in which measures/outputs are selected that address only some of the key issues, while at the same time neglecting other key issues such as lack of governance, capacity, etc. that are a necessary condition for improving the resilience of Benin's fisheries sector. Where this *is* mentioned (e.g. in the figure on page 26), little detail is provided.

The outcomes and outputs are quite clear. However, STAP recommends providing more information on *why* certain outcomes and outputs have been selected in light of the problems and barriers identified (especially under outcome 2 – e.g. output 2.2 ('water supply and sanitation services provided at fish landing sites') may be useful, but it is not clear how it connects with the project's main focus. Similarly, output 2.7 refers to capacity strengthening of youth, which is certainly important, but no information is provided on *why* youth are a key stakeholder in the area. Finally, more clarity is needed regarding which institutional and regulatory capacities are to be strengthened and how. The PIF refers to key governmental fisheries agencies which, from the description of the outcomes and outputs, seem to be at the more local level. However, multi-level governance structures of both fisheries and adaptation more generally are not accounted for. This might lead to a situation

in which institutional change or behavioral change of key sectors and actors is insufficiently incorporated or addressed.

The project claims to be transformative by applying a multi-dimensional strategy. While the combination of adaptation strategies with institutional strengthening, including taking a community-focused and gender-sensitive approach, is appreciated, it is not clear how it is transformative. Some of the innovations listed (e.g. remote sensing to monitor illegal fishing, mobile applications and e-commerce platforms to facilitate direct market access for fishers and aquaculture farmers, etc.) have the potential to be innovative but without further explanation it is difficult to see where and how they will fit in with the rest of the project or how they are particularly innovative compared to other regions/countries/projects.

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

Based on these observations, STAP recommends the following:

1. Use data from the [World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal \(CCKP\)](#) to more clearly articulate at least two future climate scenarios to better account for the role of climate change on Benin’s fisheries sector.
2. To ensure that the overall project and selected interventions are as effective as possible and to avoid maladaptation, STAP recommends that project designers consult the [decision tree for climate adaptation rationale](#).
3. Develop at least two plausible future narratives that are not limited to different climate futures, but which also include other relevant trends, including plausible political, demographic, and economic situations identified in the rationale section that are relevant to the fisheries sector. See STAP’s [simple future narratives brief and primer](#). This can also add clarity to show how the proposed GEF project is compatible with the larger AfDB fisheries project.
4. Revisit the various sections describing drivers, root causes, barriers, impacts, etc. to make clear delineations between them, and use this information to more clearly articulate the logic contained with the ToC. Doing so will also greatly reduce the redundancies in the PIF and shorten the document.

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.)