REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11693
Project title	Conserving Biodiversity and Natural Resources through Spatial Planning and Integrated Landscape Management
Date of screen	24 November, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

This is an ambitious and complex project that aims to achieve transformative change to produce significant national and global environment benefits through a "cross-sector, jurisdiction and scale" approach and harnessing the synergy of national spatial planning and integrated landscape management.

The proposal has several strong aspects. It is generally well-written and well-thought-out, with a compelling narrative. For the most part, it is based on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the problems and their drivers. The description of the local contexts and the proposed mechanisms to address the problems are clear and appropriate.

The cross-sector integration, together with the emphasis on integration of national- and local-level planning are strong. There has been a significant amount of stakeholder consultation, particularly with national and provincial government natural resource agencies, international agencies, IP and LCs and civil society organizations.

STAP identified some aspects of the proposal that should be strengthened to increase the likelihood of the project delivering transformative change. These relate to levers for catalyzing system change and providing a more detailed description of specific scaling pathways to achieve enduring change at scale. Further details of these are provided in the recommendations in section 3 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

☐ **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 project **summary**, **objectives**, **description** and **rationale** are all clearly described and generally provide clear and detailed descriptions and analyses of the problems and the underlying drivers the project will address.

There are, however, a number of areas where more detail would be valuable. For example, the project intends to treat landscapes as integrated systems with both ecological and human components, but from the description provided, the underlying model or framework for coupled natural-human systems the project will employ is not clear. It also is not clear whether any of the interventions are intended to simultaneously address both components, either directly, or through feedbacks.

The **private sector** is mentioned several times throughout the proposal in the context of green product traceability certification and ecological branding, but there is only mention of one company and the rationale for selecting partners is unclear. The private sector is also mentioned in the context of sustainable finance for nature conservation and restoration. However, there is little detail on these in the TOC diagram or narrative, so it is unclear how important these are to achieving the project outcomes and impacts.

The **project baseline** is described in sufficient detail and the consideration of alternative scenarios is strong.

The **TOC diagram** and narrative are generally strong, but several areas need to be improved:
(a) The diagram is difficult to read because the font is small and the image is not sharp. Moreover, its organization could be improved so the logical pathways from barriers to activities to outputs to outcomes are strengthened. Also, the direction of the arrows from barriers to components is confusing, since the components are intended to address the barriers, not vice versa;
(b) Formulating integrated landscape management plans is a critical step, but implementation of those plans, and the human and financial capacity to do so are also essential for achieving the outcomes and the complete pathways for ensuring these outcomes are not sufficiently detailed;
(c) The types of alternative livelihoods, incentives for adoption, the local- to national-scale socioeconomic benefits they will provide, the criteria for evaluating their compatibility with conserving biodiversity need to be more clearly articulated;
(d) To make a compelling case that the project will achieve transformative change, the levers for catalyzing system change need to be incorporated into the TOC, with descriptions of the interventions to address each of them, articulating the specific scaling pathways from the pilot "scapes" and provinces to similar contexts at the national-scale and beyond. The interventions related to national spatial planning will achieve some, but not all of this;
(e) As the proposal recognizes, increasing finance, particularly access to non-traditional finance through the private sector will be essential to achieving outcomes. The spatial plans and biodiversity finance plans are indicated as intermediate outcomes. Given the importance of finance to achieving the project outcomes and impact, should private sector engagement, or at least finance, be an additional project component? Also, what are the barriers to increased private sector engagement? Market incentives and insufficient finance are included as barriers, but these are too generic and the barriers are likely to be different for large companies. The key **causal pathways** for catalyzing private sector engagement to generate novel sources of finance at scale need to be described in detail, ideally through an additional component;
(f) Outcome 2.3 should be more explicit in linking the identification of OECMs to rare species, e.g., describing the adequacy of the site for protecting the target species. The IUCN tool that is mentioned in relation to this outcome only indicates whether the site supports any one of 6 biodiveristy values, but it doesn't provide a mechanism for prioritization or for evaluating whether the site is large enough or the ecosystem has sufficient integrity to sustain the target biodiversity values.

The treatment of **uncertain futures** is strong at an overall project level, but each case study/pilot will need to have a more specific discussion of uncertain futures.

The proposal indicates a **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan** will be developed in the next phase. It will be important to identify metrics and indicators that will provide evidence of increasing availability and volume of private sector financial resources and to trigger course correction if financial resources appear to be insufficient. Metrics for biodiversity outcomes are also essential.

The proposal recognizes that **climate change** presents a **risk**, but more explicit consideration of potential climate change impacts on each pilot and the associated outcomes (e.g. changes in climatic suitability for target species and ecosystems within and outside of protected areas) should be described.

Finally, spatial planning and diversified funding are given as examples of how the project will be innovative. There is insufficient detail to evaluate whether or not these aspects of the project are innovative or not. Spatial planning

is now mainstream, so it is not clear what is it about the specific spatial planning methods, or software, or the way it will be used to inform decision making and biodiversity management that makes it innovative.

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. Revise and clarify the meaning of some of the terminology used (e.g. acceptable transformative change in the strengthening of biodiversity and resource governance). Acceptable to whom? What is meant by "improvement of food pyramids"? Does this refer to human diets, or to trophic levels in ecosystems?

2. Revise the TOC diagram in line with the indications provided in box 2 above.

3. Provide a more specific discussion of uncertain futures for each case study/pilot listed in the proposal.

4. Identify metrics and indicators for tracking inflows of private sector financial resources and to trigger course correction if financial resources appear to be insufficient are needed.

5. Describe the risk of potential climate change impacts on each pilot project and its outcomes focusing on key factors such as changes in climatic suitability for target species and ecosystems within and outside of protected areas.

6. Provide a better explanation of how and why any specific activities or approaches proposed (e.g. spatial planning) would be innovative in the context of this project.

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.)