

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11389
Project title	Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security
Date of screen	January 18, 2024
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The Tunisia's project focused on adaptive management and restoration of the Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate to strengthen resilience to a changing climate, conserve biodiversity, halt and reverse a degradation process and maintain productivity. STAP welcomes the project's recognition of the importance of integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation across policy sectors associated with forest restoration and landscape management, and that it acknowledges the region's socio-economic context, highlighting the relatively large proportion of unemployed youth in the project area.

As formulated, the project is at risk of delivering short-term outcomes, mainly because it lacks a conceptual framework that coherently integrates the activities with outputs and outcomes to deliver the vision introduced in pg 17. The vision and overall aim align well with the Land Degradation Neutrality concept. The project claims efforts to 'neutralize land degradation', and describes how it will contribute to advancing Tunisia's LDN targets and the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (pg 13). For these reasons, STAP strongly advises that the project components, associated outputs, and actions be better framed using the LDN scientific conceptual framework and its guiding principles. The LDN conceptual framework enables participatory approaches, inclusive governance, adaptive management and learning; it is gender-responsive and supports innovation in designed interventions.

Tunisia's high vulnerability to climate change is acknowledged. STAP strongly recommends climate-smart planning in the project's design and implementation. STAP provides several recommendations below on how to plan for such futures, including by developing simple future narratives. Additionally, STAP provides suggestions on how to strengthen the project logic to facilitate adaptive management and learning to achieve global environmental benefits.

STAP has rated the project as minor revisions required with the understanding that the project team will properly address its recommendations 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 PIF does a good job of describing the problem affecting Aleppo forest ecosystems and livelihoods in the Kasserine governorate. The narrative describes how pests, fire, and disease have increased in frequency due to climate change and poor forest management, affecting the health of the forest and communities' well-being. The project begins to discuss the importance of protecting and investing in the Aleppo pine forest's restoration to protect agricultural areas from advancing desertification. It also raises the importance of the project area as being part of the last remaining natural, forest corridor in central Tunisia. Elaborating further on the importance of the Aleppo pine forest in halting degradation (i.e., desertification) at the regional and national level is encouraged to support the GEB rationale. Also, highly recommended is the application of the LDN conceptual framework (Orr et al., 2017) and STAP's LDN guidelines.

Given that climate change is a key driver of forest degradation, STAP highly encourages the project proponents to define the climate risks more prominently in project logic. Equally important, it will be necessary to design and implement the project based on future planning (simple scenario planning exercises), using simple future narratives that ensure the durability of the project outcomes to climate change, as well as to other key drivers, such as negative changes resulting from a fluctuating economy.

As a set, the logic between the components could be improved so that adaptive management, a central feature of the project, is achieved. Continuous learning will be essential across component 1 and 2 so that knowledge can be generated (component 3) and monitored (component 4). Further considerations of the logic underpinning the restoration activities (component 2) will also be needed to ensure they are effective and resilient to long-term drives of change.

Below, STAP suggests recommendations to strengthen the project rationale and the various components.

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

STAP recommends addressing the following points during the project development to strengthen the project:

- STAP welcomes the project's focus on adaptive management and the Aleppo pine forest restoration. Well-described drivers and pressures, including climate change, described in the project rationale, threaten this ecosystem of global significance. To ensure the component outcomes, particularly component 2 on restoration which will surely be impacted by climate change, STAP recommends designing the project based on the climate change trends for Tunisia, or for the project area if the data is available. STAP recommends looking at the World Bank's climate change knowledge portal for climate information, or at other similar sources:
<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/tunisia>
- The project aims to significantly reduce and avoid land degradation (pg 26). Use the LDN conceptual framework to frame the aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes and the components designed to achieve those. In doing so the project team can identify indicators that will enable monitoring the progress towards the set targets of 'halting land degradation'.
- Consider the project team working with local stakeholders to develop a 'state and transition model' for the Aleppo pine ecosystem. These models widely used in the USA and Australia were proposed in the 1980s as a means to organize and communicate information about ecosystem change as a basis for management. They facilitate co-design amongst scientists, land managers and other actors with a stake

on the area where interventions are planning and have proven to foster a shared understanding of [the](#) dynamics of ecosystems, helping to understand if observed changes are due to natural disturbances (e.g. drought, fire) or management (pests, over-exploitation). Such understanding will be crucial in the design of adaptive management, and in the monitoring and evaluation of the success of interventions (have they contributed to the planned outputs and outcomes?). Key literature on this topic: Bestelmeyer, B.T. et al. (2017). State and Transition Models: Theory, Applications, and Challenges. In: Briske, D. (eds) Rangeland Systems. Springer Series on Environmental Management. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46709-2_9. Westoby, M., B. Walker, and I. Noy-Meir. 1989. Opportunistic management for rangelands not at equilibrium. *Journal of Range Management* 42: 266–274. <https://rangelandgateway.org/topics/rangeland-ecology/overview-state-transition-models>. Richards, Anna; Prober, Suzanne; Williams, Kristen; Schmidt, Becky; Dickson, Fiona; Roxburgh, Stephen; Murphy, Helen; Cook, Garry; Warnick, Amy; Daniel, Colin; Lucas, Richard; Newnham, Glenn. Can State-and-Transition Models inform ecosystem trajectories under climate change?. In: Ecological Society of Australia - Society for Conservation Biology, Oceania joint conference; 28 Nov 2022 to end of 02 Dec 2022; Wollongong. Ecological Society of Australia; 2022. 1. csiro:EP2022-3195. <http://hdl.handle.net/102.100.100/485660?index=1>

- Additionally, STAP recommends considering drought-resistant measures to support component 2's silvicultural activities, which will be impacted by climate change. Similarly, it would be an appropriate measure if the seed banks under component 2 were to grow drought-resistant species suitable to the socio-ecological and cultural context of the project area. (The PIF only mentions that native seeds will be used.) Designing with resilience in mind will be necessary to reduce the climate risk impacts to the project and communities. This entails targeting the resilience *of the* project (e.g. adopting drought-resistant tree seedlings), as well as aiming for resilience *through the* project (e.g. outcome aims to strengthen communities' resilience to drought through a drought-smart land management approach). STAP encourages the proponents to rely on the World Bank's climate resilience methodology or its screening tool when designing the project: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/701011613082635276/pdf/Summary.pdf> <https://climatescreeningtools.worldbank.org/>
- To make the project resilient to future drivers of change, STAP recommends developing simple future narratives. It is necessary to plan for future climate change. STAP guidance on simple future narratives can be accessed here: <https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/simple-future-narratives-brief-and-primer>
- STAP recommends adding a component on integrated land use planning (ILUP). ILUP can be applied as an organizing framework for the enabling environment (component 1), restoration activities (component 2), and generating learning and knowledge (component 3 and 4). An ILUP can be used to organize a policy analysis (touched on in component 1) between land, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, to identify synergies, or policy misalignments that need attention. This cross-sectoral policy and governance is necessary to support forest and land restoration. Additionally, ILUP can be used to engage meaningfully with stakeholders, assess and manage trade-offs between different land uses and between multiple stakeholder needs. Refer to: <https://www.unccd.int/resources/brief/science-policy-brief-integrated-land-use-planning-and-integrated-landscape>; this publication assists project developers in integrating ILUP and ILM with LDN.
- While STAP supports the restoration activities the project proposes, STAP recommends carrying out a land potential assessment to gauge the land's capacity to recover from land degradation, and pursue successful restoration. This assessment can usefully inform restoration land use planning. STAP's guidelines on Land Degradation Neutrality offer advice on how to carry out a land potential assessment: <https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality>

- To improve the theory of change and overall project logic, STAP recommends explicitly defining the key assumptions underpinning the outcomes. These assumptions are essentially knowledge gaps which the project can turn into questions, or hypotheses, to be tested, or validated, to contribute to learning and knowledge. The process of validating the assumptions and generating evidence can form the basis for component 3 on knowledge management. As currently written, component 3 is about communication, sharing and disseminating knowledge products, but not learning which is important to scaling, innovation, and adaptive management.
https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Embedding_Indigenous_Knowledge_2023.pdf
- The objectives of restoration, conservation and sustainable management can be of interest to the private sector (pg 11). The PIF also recognizes the importance of local community involvement. STAP recommends the project designers include some of the best practices highlighted in the 2023 WEF publication (Embedding Indigenous Knowledge in the Conservation and Restoration of Landscapes; chapter 2 on New models for embedding Indigenous Knowledge and leadership)
- A minor point, the theory of change narrative and project description focus on four components, while the theory of change figure only includes three.

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.

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 **NEEDS TO DO THIS**.
- 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.)