STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**11700**
Project title	**Strengthening Climate Adaptation, Biodiversity Conservation, and Combating Land Degradation through Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Samoa**
Date of screen	**November 25, 2024**
STAP Panel Member	**Ermias Betamariam**
STAP Secretariat	**Guadalupe Duron**

1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP welcomes Samoa's multi-trust fund project, "Strengthening Climate Adaptation, Biodiversity Conservation, and Combating Land Degradation through Ecosystem-based Adaptation". The project is technically sound and characterized by different forms of innovation, including establishing an Ecosystem Conservation Adaptation Trust Fund that relies on scaling Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) practices linked to the Blue and Green Island Integrated Program.

To ensure the project successfully embraces innovation, STAP recommends that the theory of change explicitly defines the assumptions surrounding the scaling of EbA and the adoption of sustainable finance. While the project has a dedicated component on monitoring and learning linked to the theory of change, STAP encourages Samoa and UNDP to prioritize robust measurements for the proposed EbA practices to assess their impacts on biodiversity conservation, land management, and adaptive capacity. This project could valuably contribute to learning about EbAs' impact on the global environment, climate adaptation, and their role in scaling finance.

STAP encourages more significant emphasis on integrating indigenous knowledge and community-driven approaches into EbA. This would enhance the relevance and effectiveness of EbA practices by ensuring that local communities, particularly indigenous groups, are actively involved in designing, implementing, and monitoring climate adaptation interventions. Such an approach would strengthen the project's resilience-building strategies and foster greater local ownership and long-term sustainability.

Lastly, STAP welcomes the simple narrative of how the future may unfold due to climate change. It encourages the project developers to continue exploring robust interventions for the future.

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 project rationale is structured clearly, which is welcomed. The threats and drivers are distinctly defined, facilitating an understanding of the context and the problem. The compounding effects of drivers are also well described, such as floods causing soil erosion, which can affect agricultural production, coral reefs, and fisheries. A historical analysis of climate change trends (from 1980 to 2020) on Samoa's terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and on the socioeconomic well-being of the targeted population, helps explain the importance of climate change as a key driver of environmental degradation and the communities' low capacity to adapt.

This reasoning is further supported by a simple narrative of the possible future impacts of climate change on terrestrial and marine ecosystems and people's adaptive capacity. Climate projections for 2080 and 2100

appear mainly to have been used for this analysis, although projections for the next 25 years (2050) are also needed. To complement the trends and projections, a comprehensive analysis is provided of the exposure and sensitivity to climate change impacts, along with a description of the limited coping capacity due to lack of knowledge and information and poor infrastructure. Overall, this analysis helps support the project's main premise, which focuses on EbA and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to enhance Samoa's climate resilience and ability to deliver global environmental benefits on land and biodiversity.

The project description is equally well articulated. It provides a good narrative of the logic presented in the theory of change. Several opportunities for innovation, including establishing the Ecosystem Conservation and Adaptation Trust Fund, using sustainable financing, and applying Natural Capital Accounting to achieve GEBs and adaptation benefits, are commendable. Innovation is also behind the assumption, or hypothesis, that "…EbA/NbS has a comparative advantage over hard infrastructure…" for GEBs and climate adaptation.

Components 1 and 2 are characterized by substantial innovation and will require monitoring to learn. It will also require the theory of change to be more specific about the assumptions, and risks associated with the project design. For example, risks to scaling EbA, or NbS, best practices should be captured in the project design. Other risks that remain to the project outcomes, for example, market fluctuations to the global economy influencing investors' willingness to contribute to the Ecosystem Conservation Adaptation Trust Fund, will be reflected in the risk table.

Lastly, the connection to the Blue and Green Island Integrated Program is welcomed, as is the incremental/additionality reasoning for GEF and SCCF. Monitoring the assumptions supporting the incrementality and additionality is essential to learning how GEF and SCCF help Samoa strengthen its climate resilience while generating GEBs.

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

Below, STAP provides recommendations for strengthening the project:

1. STAP welcomes the description of future narratives based on climate change projections for 2080 to 2100. To further strengthen the narrative, STAP suggests using climate data for 2050. See UNDP Human Climate Horizons. It also encourages the project developers to consider the interactions between climate change and other drivers, such as population increase (mentioned in the PIF), to help identify robust interventions that produce enduring outcomes. Suggest consulting STAP's advice on future narratives to strengthen the application of future narratives in the project design.
2. Component 1 is characterized by substantial innovation, with the establishment of the Ecosystem Conservation Adaptation Trust Fund. Monitoring processes that enable rapid learning about how public-private finance impacts GEBs and climate adaptation outcomes will be important to ensure proper and timely adaptive management is pursued.
3. Furthermore, STAP recommends explicitly defining as an assumption, or hypothesis, that EbA approaches will generate GEBs, benefit adaptive capacity, scale, and attract further private capital. This will help identify risks that need to be captured in the project design, such as the scaling of EbA best practices, which are assumed to occur due to this project. In fact, STAP would urge the project developers to consider a separate theory of change for the Fund that defines the impact pathways to achieving the desired outcomes, detailing the assumptions, and the different roles of the partners (private and public) in contributing to the Fund's results.
4. Component 2 is characterized by extensive innovation, such as scaling of EbA practices that are being pursued in the Blue and Green Island Integrated Program (e.g. restoring and protecting mangrove, and riparian forests; improving agroforestry practices; establishing blue carbon projects on mangroves and seagrass meadows). A separate theory of change on scaling the proposed EbA measures is possibly

necessary to test assumptions, the risks associated with them, and to capture monitoring and learning better.

5. Furthermore, component 2 proposes to apply Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) to assess the economic benefits of the restored ecosystems. STAP recommends that this component uses Samoa's experience in NCA. As currently written, it is difficult to understand to what extent this component will leverage knowledge from Samoa's potential previous experience in NCA. The following resource may be helpful to the project developers as they consider the challenges and opportunities in building synergies between national and business natural capital accounts for ecosystem valuation in Samoa: Leveraging natural capital accounting to support businesses with nature-related risk assessments and disclosures
6. STAP is pleased the project has a dedicated component on knowledge management and gender mainstreaming. As written, the component seems to emphasize linking the knowledge resulting from this project to the Blue and Green Island Integrated Program, and focus less on gender mainstreaming. If this is accurate, STAP strongly encourages the project team to assess the necessary conditions and actions to support gender norms, and equality, throughout the project logic. STAP also encourages for indigenous and local knowledge on climate adaptation to be embraced throughout the project design. For example, refer to " Working with nature, working with Indigenous knowledge: Community priorities for climate adaptation in Samoa"
7. STAP recommends expanding multi-stakeholder partnerships beyond government and the private sector to achieve sustainable, systemic change at scale and ensure transformative, long-term impact. This should include deeper collaboration with local NGOs, academic institutions, and regional networks focused on climate change adaptation. Such partnerships would help align efforts, pool resources, and broaden the knowledge base for adaptive management across sectors.
8. While gender mainstreaming is acknowledged, it would be valuable to incorporate more specific and measurable gender-responsive actions within the project. This could include targeted interventions to address gender-specific vulnerabilities to climate change, and the development of gender-specific indicators to track progress on women's participation and leadership in climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and community-based decision-making processes.
9. The project has identified key barriers related to policy, technical, and financial capacities and knowledge management. However, the proposal should incorporate innovative solutions to address these challenges. One approach is integrating governance and policy reforms, sustainable finance mechanisms, and strengthening institutional capacities. Additionally, a focus on robust innovation, continuous learning, and enhancing technical capacities through knowledge management would further support the project's effectiveness and sustainability.
10. The document requires careful editing. For instance, the content of the ToC Fig is not easily readable and would benefit from clearer structure and formatting. Additionally, the area targeted for riparian forest restoration (990 ha?) is not clearly visible in the document. It would be helpful to include visual aids such as maps or diagrams to make this information more accessible and to support the project's goals better.

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
    - 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.)