

REVISED STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE, OCTOBER 2022

GEF ID	11701
Project title	Building a Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Shea Landscape of Northern Uganda
Date of screen	May 22, 2025
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges Uganda's LDCF project "Building a climate-resilient and sustainable shea landscape of northern Uganda". The project aims to build a climate-resilient and sustainable shea landscape in northern Uganda. As the project is developed, STAP strongly recommends that the project team think further about several critical issues. As currently designed, the project is not technically valid. For instance, there are several challenges that have not been captured in the project design, which will undermine achieving the project objective, and potentially result in negative impacts to women (key actors of change), communities, the shea landscape, or possibly result in maladaptation. A more careful mapping of resource users and stakeholders and their incentives for or against the project activities, is also necessary. This will help better understand and manage the risk of conflict that this project might increase.

Furthermore, a more robust adaptation rationale is strongly recommended. Currently, the rationale is not well articulated, nor is its logic well presented. For example, the rationale appears to be, in part, tied to worsening climate hazards (e.g., drought) that will have significant negative impacts on livelihoods and well-being. However, the project does not focus on how non-climatic issues (e.g., gender norms, policies, market conditions) intersect with climate change. That is, how these connections exacerbate or ameliorate vulnerability. The project also appears to maximize synergies between adaptation benefits and global environmental benefits. However, adaptation benefits are not explicitly defined, tradeoffs with global environmental benefits are not discussed, nor is this rationale for dual benefits articulated, or its logic formulated.

STAP shared these recommendations in a productive conversation with Conservation International and the GEF secretariat, stressing the need to address these issues during project design. Following the discussions, STAP agreed to review the draft CEO endorsement project to make sure it is technically improved.

Below, STAP details its screening of the project.

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

X 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 seeks to enhance the sustainability of the Shea landscape in Northern Uganda, through integrated land management, a strengthened governance system, and increased access to financing for inclusive climate-resilient livelihoods of the resident communities. Its rationale could be much clearer and more focussed. Many drivers of change, and many barriers, are identified with little clarity about how these interact, which matter most and, therefore, which warrant prioritisation. It would appear from later statements (pages 26-27) that charcoal production is the major driver of loss of shea trees, although agricultural encroachment also seems to be a factor, as does demand for timber. The scientific literature suggests that charcoal production and agricultural expansion are the major drivers (e.g. Nardi Runnström, M 2024).

Of these drivers, the project seems most focussed on reducing charcoal production by encouraging awareness, policies, plans, livelihoods, and SMEs to value conservation and sustainable use over charcoal. With respect to this, the project offers no suggestions about what these alternative livelihoods might be (there are examples from other shea projects that could be mentioned), nor what these SMEs might do and the sustainability of these new livelihoods and firms. More information about the options here would be very helpful. The project also talks of 'blended finance' options to support this, yet again there is no indication of what these models might be and how viable they might be.

The project seeks to enhance climate change adaptation, though how the proposed activities reduce vulnerability to climate change is not explained. Indeed, there is a significant risk that these new livelihoods and business models are themselves maladaptive as they may increase dependence on shea trees, which, as the project notes (e.g., p 15), are vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, a climate risk screening of the project, along with the development of future narratives, is highly recommended, and more information about how these risks will be managed is needed.

With respect to other drivers – and in particular agricultural encroachment – the project arguably works against government policies and programs to expand agriculture to support recovery from conflict and improve rural livelihoods. Indeed, the project notes that national government awareness of the need to conserve the shea landscape is 'just developing', and its list of government policies on page 47 needs more detail, explaining if these policies refer to shea areas specifically, and what other policies seem to work against the project goals - especially agriculture policies. There is therefore a risk that support for people and livelihoods based on conservation of shea trees puts those people and this project at odds with government policies, and with farmers and people who profit from charcoal production ('charcoal dealers' page 27).

Given a recent history of violent conflict in the area, and several studies that highlight the risk associated with ambiguity about property rights, these factors mean this project's assessment of the risk of conflict seems inadequate, and its measures to mitigate it need further consideration. STAP notes, for example, a 2015 report from the The World Agroforestry Centre on *Opportunities and challenges in the improvement of the shea (Vitellaria paradoxa) resource and its management* which notes "Demographic and resource commoditization trends lead to increased competition between users, stricter individualization of access rights to shea trees and an increased frequency of conflicts", and that "caution is needed in selecting participating communities, households and planting locations not to increase social differentiation and resource conflicts between individuals or groups.". Yet the proposal makes no differentiation between resource users and uses in the target areas.

Moreover, the burden of any such conflicts will fall on women as they are the principal harvesters of shea, and the principal victims of violent conflict in the past. The risk of conflict is therefore a particular risk to women, and women's safety around shea production is an issue that has been noted by previous studies (e.g. the 2005 Saferworld Report on *Conflict and peace analysis report for the Northern Uganda Shea Nut Project in Otuke county of Lira* district. We therefore recommend more careful mapping of resource users and stakeholders and their incentives against the project activities with a view to better understanding and managing the potential that this project increases the risk of conflict.

With respect to outcome 1, it is not clear why 'At least two joint National-Local level coordination mechanisms' are needed when it is one landscape, and one such mechanism would presumably be more effective and coherent. It would also be good to specify which of the 'At least three policies, plans, and frameworks that mainstream climate resilience' would be included. Agriculture and energy policies would ideally be two of these two policies, given their importance as drivers of shea degradation.

The theory of change could be improved: "*Commitment to regional and international obligations and cooperation frameworks*" and "willingness" are not enablers *per se*, indeed most of these enablers are about changing values and attitudes yet the activities do not relate to that. Resilient livelihoods should be a benefit given that this features in the discussion (and it could be something that is monitored and measured). Competing uses of shea trees, and the shea landscape would seem to be a barrier. 'Unsustainable shea resource use' isn't a cause it is more like a consequence. 'High levels of poverty' could use more explanation – what is it about poverty that leads to unsustainable use of shea trees? Are property rights issues also a cause given the 'tragedy of the commons' statement on page 14?

For the reasons outlined above, the key risks seem to be higher than assessed, and measures for their mitigation need more careful consideration. Of note: the climate risk is arguably high and the explanation of how this is to be managed needs more detail and built-in to the theory of change; the information on environmental and social risks seems low, given the risk of conflicts arising from alienated farmers and people who profit from charcoal trade, as well as uncertainties around property rights in some areas, and the burden of any resulting conflict will fall most on women. The text in this section is repeated; political and governance risks should note that since agricultural expansion seems to be a driver of change and this is promoted by government the project may fall foul of government; financial and business model risks seem high, but could be addressed with greater information about possible blended finance models and their sustainability; stakeholder risks seem moderate (at least) since the project does not differentiate between local resource users not all of whom may be supportive - a better understanding of the major users and uses of shea areas and their incentives for (and against) conservation would help. In totality, many of these risks, or challenges, should form part of the theory of change as they undermine achieving the outcomes.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

STAP recommends that the following suggestions be addressed during the project design:

1. A screening of this project's risk to climate change is highly recommended, and more information about how these risks will be managed is needed. The [STAP guidance on climate risk screening](#) may be helpful in this regard, as well as the World Bank's Climate Disaster Risk Screening Tool.
2. In addition to a thorough climate risk analysis, STAP recommends developing a [few simple future narratives](#) (i.e., two or three) to imagine the interactions between drivers (which is necessary as described above) and uncertainties. Developing these narratives will assist the project team in thinking about interventions that are robust to possible futures and help avoid maladaptation.
3. The risk table needs to be revisited. Many of the risks described in the risk table should form part of the theory of change, as they undermine delivering the outcomes and the project objective. Often, these challenges are also assumptions associated with delivering key outcomes. Hence, STAP recommends thinking about the potential challenges (e.g. climate risks, lack of political will, policy incoherence) that can undermine the outcomes, and defining these challenges in the project's theory of change logic. The risks that remain once this logic has been developed can be described in the risk table. This also applies to risks associated with innovation (financial, technological, institutional/policy). [STAP's note on clarifying risks](#) provides examples of how risks can be completed in the risk table. These examples differentiate between challenges (assumptions) that should be part of the project logic, and residual risks (e.g. recognition that gender norms will be difficult to change), which will likely be important for the project to monitor and pursue the necessary adaptation.

4. A greater explanation of how the project may enhance climate change adaptation is needed, and here the STAP information document on [A Typology of Climate Change Adaptation Benefits: Exposure, Sensitivity, and Adaptive Capacity](#) should prove very helpful. This also speaks to the need to strengthen the adaptation rationale and additionality in the project. A robust adaptation rationale is more likely to deliver strong outcomes and avoid maladaptation. STAP strongly recommends that the project team think further about the adaptation rationale, including by thinking about how non-climate factors raised in the previous section (e.g. land tenure insecurity, policy decisions affecting land use, gender norms) affect vulnerability. Effective adaptation will require understanding how these non-climatic issues intersect with climate change – that is, how they exacerbate or ameliorate vulnerability and designing the project accordingly. The project team is encouraged to use the [STAP’s advisory document “A decision tree for adaptation rationale”](#) to improve significantly the adaptation rationale.
5. More careful mapping of resource users and stakeholders and their incentives for or against the project activities with a view to better understanding and managing the potential that this project increases the risk of conflict. The STAP report on [Environmental Security: Achieving Durable Outcomes in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations](#) may be helpful here, as might documents such as the Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations and Small Island Developing States Approach from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Strategy for Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa (2022-2026) from the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), and the World Bank Group (WBG)’s Policy on Development Cooperation and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence.
6. To strengthen the project further, more information is needed on the suite of potential alternative livelihoods that might be encouraged, the nature of existing small to medium enterprises in the project areas, what they do and what they might alternatively do to promote the sustainability of shea trees, and proposed blended finance models that might be used.

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.)