

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10865	
Project Title	Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in AIO SIDS	
Date of Screening	9 November 2021	
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor.</p> <p>The proposed project covers a wide diversity of SIDS, aiming to span both Blue Economy and Land Degradation priorities. There is logic in linking these two elements, owing to the environmental flows from land to sea as well as the need for integrated national planning and policy implementation. The project structure is simple and straight-forward, emphasizing these connections, yet the details of design do not yet show adequate integration.</p> <p>The PIF provides some recognition that Blue Economy activities may result in environmental degradation; clear criteria are needed to ensure these risks are averted. Greater attention should be paid to risks relating to policy development and implementation, including recognition of potential conflicts and negative impacts.</p> <p>Discussion of policy development and implementation is strikingly simplistic (ref Figure 2), with no reference to the political economy of policy reform and potential for conflict and trade-offs.</p> <p>There is reference to “new and innovative models to advance protection and restoration of coastal, marine, and agricultural ecosystems while diversifying and sustaining economies” but inadequate information to suggest what this might entail.</p>	

	The land degradation aspects are poorly developed, with mention of LDN but no reference to supporting guidance including the Guidelines for Land Degradation Neutrality .	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary	What STAP looks for	Response
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	<p>The project objective is “To support the development and realization of sustainable blue economies in Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS through improved governance, national Blue Economy demonstrations, and knowledge management.”</p> <p>Subsequently in the PIF, the stated objective is “to support AIO SIDS in addressing the root causes and barriers, listed previously to preserve and restore the health of marine and ocean ecosystems in order to sustain inclusive and sustainable development models.”</p> <p>These related but distinct articulation of objectives are characteristic of the PIF which has large, overarching objectives but lacks detail on defining elements of the approach to inspire confidence that the project will result in tangible benefits.</p>
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives?	Yes. The components address 1) improving of the enabling conditions for a Blue Economy transformation, 2) investing in the development and implementation of national sustainable Blue Economy demonstrations specifically tailored for each country, and 3) disseminating of learning experiences from the planning work and national demonstrations for replication and up-scale at both the national and regional scales.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	It is possible that the demonstration projects will encompass adaptation benefits – if, for example,

	Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	they are focused on Nature based Solutions such as restoration.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Difficult to assess at this stage.
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Strategies, plans, pilots, etc. There are many possible products and services that could be generated through this project and each would in theory contribute to some aspect of a sustainable blue economy or LDN.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	A TOC is presented but is essentially a list of components, outputs, etc. without causal pathways, underlying assumptions. Immediate causes are shown as leading to Root causes, so there is some confusion evident. See STAP Primer on Theory of Change for guidance.
1. Project description. Briefly describe: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Yes.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, with useful differentiation by country.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	Yes; however, the problem statement and analysis is much better developed for the Blue Economy portion. The land degradation/LDN component, albeit smaller in terms of the overall project, is lacking in detail. Overall, the acknowledgement that Blue Economy stretches beyond the IW focal area and oceans and should incorporate land-based activities is positive. However, this is not reflected in systematic way throughout the project design.

		Reviewing lessons learned from prior analyses of LDN investments (e.g., Gnacadja & Wiese, 2016 , Gonzalez-Roglich et al., 2019 , Chasek et al., 2019 , Keesstra et al., 2018 , etc.) can be helpful for development of this aspect.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Ample information is provided on related projects in target SIDS.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Quantification depends upon comparative data on environmental and institutional trends which is not provided.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Not yet.
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	No
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	<p>Identification of lessons needs much additional effort.</p> <p>There is scope for harvesting lessons from prior GEF investment in SIDS, particularly with regard to integrated development policy. There is also a need to identify connections with parallel GEF programming, e.g., on biodiversity governance in Cabo Verde (10871) which includes a substantial section on blue economy initiatives.</p> <p>There are quite a few peer-reviewed evaluations and analyses of Blue Economy projects in SIDS. Some of these include: Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2020, Bakshi, 2019, Phelan et al., 2020,</p>
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	Unclear.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected	What is the theory of change?	In general, the TOC is that having national BE and or LDN strategies in place combined with demonstration projects that can be scaled will

outcomes and components of the project		result in sustainable blue economies in the target countries.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Strategies/plans/financing mechanisms + demonstration/pilots + information sharing and scaling = widespread adoption of sustainable blue economies in Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS. Discussion of policy development and implementation is strikingly simplistic (ref Figure 2), with no reference to the political economy of policy reform and potential for conflict and trade-offs.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	No, not yet adequate.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	N/A
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, though with heavy emphasis on marine protected areas. The target indicated for land restored & under improved management (200 ha) is trivial – not clear whether this is a mistake.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	The scale of this project is vast and varied and implausible for even a \$9 million GEF grant. However, co-financing is substantial and the project builds on past and ongoing activities in each of the target countries so it is likely that some progress will be made in advancing SBE.

	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	<p>There is reference to “new and innovative models to advance protection and restoration of coastal, marine, and agricultural ecosystems while diversifying and sustaining economies” bit inadequate information to suggest what this might entail, despite some examples such as promotion of organic production, aquaculture, or entrepreneurship.</p> <p>There is potential for innovative financing, for example, however at this point no details are provided. Dharmapuri Tirumala and Tiwari (2020), Christiansen (2021) and Whisnant and Vandeweerd (2019) amongst others propose and evaluate various financing mechanisms, including blended finance for Blue Economy projects; these and related studies merit review to identify lessons appropriate for the context of this project.</p>
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	There is significant potential for scaling and knowledge exchange given the vast reach of this project and the fact that despite their differences, SIDs have many commonalities.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A map is provided.

<p>2. Stakeholders.</p> <p>Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.</p> <p>If none of the above, please explain why.</p> <p>In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.</p>	<p>Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?</p>	<p>The engagement of stakeholders is mentioned throughout the PIF as essential and touches upon all of the relevant categories (government, NGO, local communities, private sector, etc.). However, the section on Stakeholders is very preliminary, describing initial consultations but no indication of anticipated roles.</p>
	<p>What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?</p>	<p>To be further developed during PPG phase.</p>
<p>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.</p> <p>Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Adequate identification of how women bear the brunt of environmental degradation and yet lack the ability to reverse their situation due to financial constraints, decision making ability, rights, etc.</p> <p>A gender action plan will be developed during PPG phase. In undertaking this, it will be useful to consult analyses of prior efforts, e.g., Collantes et al., 2018 which analyzes combining gender equality and land degradation neutrality interventions.</p>

<p>project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd</p>		
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>Yes. Gender action plan.</p>
<p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? 	<p>Identified risks are reasonable and most are outside of project control.</p> <p>Greater attention should be paid to risks relating to policy development and implementation, including recognition of potential conflicts and negative impacts. In the Blue Economy domain, see, for example, Bennett et al., 2019. (This is distinct from institutional conflicts at the landscape scale, which is also mentioned among risks.)</p> <p>Other supplementary tables on risk include additional detail that could usefully be integrated, including on private sector uptake.</p> <p>A separate Climate Risk Screening is provided as Annex D.</p>
<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Yes, some indications of this.</p>
	<p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p>	<p>Not adequately reflected in the PIF.</p>

	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	
8. Knowledge management. Outline the “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project, and how it will contribute to the project’s overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	Component 3 is dedicated to M&E, KM and upscaling. Products will be developed that stem from Components 1 (plans/strategies/financing) and Component 2 (demonstration projects) that will be shared via IW:Learn and elsewhere.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
	* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that " <i>STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design.</i> "
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;
	(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.
	The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.