STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10970	
Project Title	Groundwater for Deep Resilience in Africa (G4DR in Africa)	
Date of Screening	5 June 2022	
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor.** The PIF provides detailed information on the role of groundwater for climate security and social and economic development across the African continent, as well as the challenges in its conservation and sustainable use. Lack of finance and investment are identified as major barriers to enhancing groundwater protection and sustainable use. Activities under the project aim to catalyze large scale infrastructure investment through institutional capacity support, build the evidence base through analysis and pilot projects, and work with youth to bring greater awareness to the problems and solutions surrounding groundwater pollution and depletion. A TOC diagram is presented that lists the various outputs, outcomes and assumptions – all in support of the project objective. However, the main barriers to conservation and sustainable use of groundwater are said to be lack of finance and investment, and these key elements are not included in the overall TOC. Rather, challenges are presented which seem to be tailored to the outputs and outcomes leaving the reader questioning whether critical pieces are missing or obscured. The statement on innovation is not particularly convincing, with the possible exception of the extensive approach to mobilizing youth for engagement in groundwater management.	

	Consider opportunities to integrate remote sensing tools, such as NASA's GRACE satellite sensor, capable of monitoring groundwater changes from space. Given the continental reach, stakeholder identification is appropriately focused on regional institutions. However, if the pilot projects are to be successful it is likely that local communities and other non-government actors will need to be engaged through well-articulated objectives and incentives. Similarly, it will be important to understand how the various regional institutions are seen to interface with national government, civil society, and private sector actors. This merits further elaboration during PPG stage.	
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?	Yes. The project objective is to "…bring groundwater and its sustainable development and protection to the forefront of water security and adaptation planning and investment in Africa, enhancing deep resilience for humans and ecosystems."
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes. Planned activities include the following: 1. planning support for the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), through their Pan-African Groundwater Program (APAGroP). 2. identifying aquifers that present risk and opportunity to enhance resilience 3. pilot projects to support evidence-based planning. 4. Incorporating G4DR into pan-African Youth Forums. 5. Knowledge Management and M&E Yes. Overall, these activities support the objective of bringing groundwater conservation and

		sustainable use to the forefront of continent-wide planning to enhance water security and resilience; however, much may depend on which aquifers are selected for pilots and the extent to which lessons will be applicable elsewhere, assuming successful results.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes. To improve the likelihood of durable adaptation outcomes, project developers may wish to consult STAP's "Decision Tree for Adaptation Rationale." This step-by-step guide walks project designers through issues they should consider to avoid unnecessary or maladaptive interventions and support those actions that can lead to lasting positive impact.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Pathways to achieve these benefits are plausible, but data is insufficient to assess likelihood.
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?	Yes, structure is clear. Yes, outcomes are plausible.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
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, very well defined, with clear and concise structure.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, with good reference to recent studies.
	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?	N/A

2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Detailed summary of related project investments.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Data is a key barrier, so developing a robust baseline will be critical early in implementation, pointing again to the important role of timing for each of the components and a clear articulation o how they related to each other.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Not at this stage.
	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;	N/A
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	N/A
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	N/A
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	A TOC diagram is presented that lists the various outputs, outcomes and assumptions – all in support of the project objective. However, the main barriers to conservation and sustainable use of groundwater are said to be lack of finance and investment, and these key elements are not included in the overall TOC. Rather, challenges are presented which seem to be tailored to the outputs and outcomes leaving the reader questioning whether critical pieces are missing or obscured.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	The sequence of events is not apparent from the TOC – that is, a clear articulation of how outputs and outcomes related across components. This merits attention during PPG stage.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	Improved governance/capacity building + analysis of groundwater and other factors to show problems and potential + pilot projects in 2 countries + outreach through youth + KM and MEL.

	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Assumptions are included in the TOC but could be unpacked with alternative pathways to depict what would need to happen if the assumptions don't hold. For example, what if there is no buy-in and co-finance to implement pilots? What happens to the rest of the project? It could be useful to elaborate a range of scenarios for project implementation, depending upon key variables.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Not clear.
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?	Focus is on institutional aspects. Potential progress towards longer-term outcomes remains difficult to assess.
	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, in that ensuring the quality and quantity of groundwater for the African continent contributes to security and resilience across the continent as well as having ancillary benefits for people and species that depend on clean water to survive and thrive.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	The level of investment needed to address the continent-wide issue of insufficient and polluted groundwater (now and in the future) is far greater than what this project can provide. However, it appears to be a positive step in the right direction in terms of building the evidence base, supporting African institutional capacity, and engaging youth in communicating the issues.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Core and sub indicators are defined under Indicator 7 related to number of shared water ecosystems under new or improved management – in this case 1.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits	Yes, these indicators are relatively straightforward to measure and monitor. It is not clear how the

	will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	number of direct beneficiaries was determined or will be measured and monitored.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Though no in-depth information is provided on climate change impacts, the project itself is designed to support resilience through conservation and sustainable use of groundwater. This is logical; however, a more explicit link between activities and climate resilience under different climate scenarios would be helpful. While not necessarily applicable at the continental scale, it may need to be refined at project sites and pending the results of the analysis in Component 2.
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?	The statement on innovation is not particularly convincing, with the possible exception of the extensive approach to mobilizing youth for engagement in groundwater management. Consider opportunities to integrate remote sensing tools, such as NASA's GRACE satellite sensor, capable of monitoring groundwater changes from space.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	The assumption is that pilot projects will be innovative and designed with replicability and scaling in mind. However, without information about the pilot projects, this is difficult to assess.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Difficult to assess on the basis of information provided. Incremental change may be sufficient at particular project sites but transformational change is necessary for the groundwater to be perceived and valued differently, and for the innovations to shift governance patterns at scale.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A standard map of the African continent is provided. More helpful would be details on the location of the proposed initial pilots in Uganda and the Shire (Malawi and Mozambique).

2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. 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.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	The section on stakeholders outlines a history of prior engagement in this area. Given the continental reach, stakeholder identification is appropriately focused on regional institutions. However, if the pilot projects are to be successful it is likely that local communities and other non-government actors will need to be engaged through well-articulated objectives and incentives. Similarly, it will be important to understand how the various regional institutions are seen to interface with national government, civil society, and private sector actors. This merits further elaboration during PPG stage, at least through a few examples. Some additional information is provided for the pilot projects in the coordination section of the PIF.
	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?	Continent-wide and regional organizations are well identified as stakeholders. It will be important to also identify stakeholders for the pilot projects in Southern Africa to include local communities, private sector partners (mentioned later in that section), NGOs, etc. to ensure that the pilots are well designed and accepted by people who will be impacted by them.
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. 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	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Yes. The gender transformative approach to be employed by this project is welcome, as is the objective of unpacking the implications of entrenched power hierarchies that determine groundwater management policies, strategies and instruments. Acknowledging the importance of structural inequalities that put women at a disadvantage is an important first step, as is the rarely acknowledged observation that merely engaging women in a

empowerment? Yes/no/ tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd		project (as is the standard language) may actually add to their work burden.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Yes. See above.
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	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? For climate risk, and climate resilience measures: • 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?	The description of risks, while brief, appears to provide good coverage of a variety of environmental and institutional factors, though more information could be provided about climate risk. Please refer to STAP guidance on climate risk screening. Institutional capacity building investments often dissipate. The project would benefit from greater clarity on how African scientists and research institutions will be included in the pan-African assessment described in Component 2 and in the KM&L Component.
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	There is sufficient understanding of relevant, related projects, though additional GEF projects in Africa will be mapped during PPG phase.

relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives		
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	This is not apparent.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	This is not apparent.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	N/A
	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?	Yes, though much more is needed to first identify earlier and ongoing projects in order to systematize the learning and knowledge exchange.
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?	Knowledge capture and management is central to all aspects of this project, including the dedicated component as well as the strategy. However, most of the KM appears to be outward facing, as opposed to knowledge creating and sharing within projects, between countries, etc. Given the geographic breadth, this element is essential. Also absent from this section is detailed information about how knowledge and learning will be systematized within the project so that knowledge is not lost when staff leave or if support for the AMCOW groundwater desk is not sustained once this project has ended and if efforts to secure sustainable financing are not realized.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The standard KM outputs are described (platform, link to IW:LEARN, trainings, dissemination of results, etc.) and publishing results in scientific journals.

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 ***"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."***
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.