

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10698
Project Title	Safeguarding Solomon Islands endemic and globally threatened biodiversity and ecosystem services from key threats, particularly invasive alien species and unsustainable land use practices (SAFE project)
Date of Screening	11/27/2020
STAP member screener	Mark Stafford Smith
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Concur</p> <p>STAP welcomes the proposal to reduce risk to Solomon Islands' biodiversity whilst improving the resilience of community livelihoods.</p> <p>STAP applauds the provision of a theory of change (ToC) at this stage, with an excellent description which helps outline the proposed project logic quickly, with a clear identification of drivers and barriers. At first glance the project seemed to be a poorly aligned set of activities, but the logic outlined in the ToC presented a very convincing case for how the components would work together to achieve the outcomes.</p> <p>The proposal treats local control and the empowerment of women and youth well, in a way that is embedded throughout, and seems to draw real lessons from previous projects.</p> <p>STAP would urge the proponents to continue to pay attention during further design to durability with respect to population pressures and climate change; and formally monitor and evaluate ToC assumptions over time to allow learning about these.</p> <p>Below, STAP describes further its recommendations on how to strengthen the project design.</p>

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
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Plausible; attention needs to be paid to ensuring they are durable.
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?	Plausibly <i>necessary</i> and probably <i>sufficient</i> .
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	We applaud the presentation of a good ToC description and diagram, with a good analysis of drivers and barriers.
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, including noting especially threats from invasive species, habitat destruction and over exploitation, climate change, challenges to economic growth, population growth and rising aspirations. These are juxtaposed with "slow progress in mainstreaming biodiversity".
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes: key barriers are argued to be limited institutional capacity including coordination, lack of a framework for managing invasives, need to demonstrate value of better management practices, inadequate knowledge exchange, and insufficient engagement of women and youth.
	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-	Yes, clear links between biodiversity and land degradation (and probably other areas).

	defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	<p>Yes. The baseline section identifies many other activities, including promising underlying developments with community based management and policy commitments which indicate government readiness to move to the next step.</p> <p>It does note that there has been more than 20y of significant work on invasives, which does raise the question of why these have not yet succeeded and how this project is going to differ from earlier efforts.</p>
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	There is little quantification in the baseline section, but there is relevant material earlier in the proposal and in section 5.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Probably
	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;	Probably though not in this section
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Useful projects identified, and useful lessons drawn.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>It is great that the proposal provides a ToC diagram (simplifications acknowledged) and an excellent short description of the logic (p.19-20); this really helps to lay out how the components will work together to achieve the overall outcomes (that “conservation, IAS and land degradation are fundamentally inter-connected” and must be addressed simultaneously). It also helps to be explicit about assumptions, for example that “enhanced capacity of government officials will lead to improved delivery”, which is probably a challengeable assertion, but now one which can be clearly tested. This also provides an implicit case</p>

		that the set of interventions are both necessary and sufficient.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	As above
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Yes. The components list a lot of activities in total, so it will be important to ensure these are realistic from a budgetary point of view. Components 3 and 4 already address issues that will matter for scaling out the project, which is excellent foresight.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	This could be enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing some assumptions in the ToC, in order that the project can learn about these for implementation flexibility as it proceeds. STAP's ToC Primer discusses this process of adaptive MEL.
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?	Good reasoning in Table. Notably the description addresses robust diversification earlier (p.22), which gives encouragement as regards durability. However, it would be good to maintain a focus on whether the key drivers of climate change, population and increasing consumption identified earlier may undermine the durability of GEBs achieved.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	
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, and nicely balanced with intended local benefits that are necessary to maintain local support
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes, especially with scaling, which is addressed.
	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?	MEL will need more development on details.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The climate risk screening is good – see below.
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 case is credibly made that the real innovation here is not in the individual elements but in their integration, as explained in the ToC.
	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 serious and credible attention provided to scaling.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	A strong case is made that on-going incentives will be created to ensure durability. As noted above, STAP would urge some continued focus on population pressures and the risk of leakage of impacts to places outside the target communities; and on the longer-term implications of climate change.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		OK
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	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Yes, and strong assertion of lessons about good local engagement.

<p>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>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>OK. STAP would note that there are many players (especially external ones) for a low capacity country, so having efficient means of coordinating across these (without creating a million committees) will be important – a generic issue in the Pacific.</p>
<p>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 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-</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Good outline and acknowledgement of cultural challenges, and well embedded throughout the proposal. An early gender analysis is intended.</p>

sensitive indicators? yes/no /td		
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	An analysis of this is proposed, and should be progressed very early.
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>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>Overall the risks seem comprehensive, including an excellent analysis of climate change risks, with a good description of potential changes. The impacts of COVID on tourism (p.19) highlight how important it is not to put 'eggs in one basket'. A key risk from climate change is promoting livelihoods that become incompatible with conditions in the future (e.g. through changes in temperature, or salt water incursion, etc): although there is attention to practices addressing projected impacts in the sense of not being maladaptive (p.43), uncertainty in the rates and degree of change are not covered, and it would be good to explicitly ask whether proposed actions are also robust to this uncertainty – that is they will perform reasonably well in all futures, rather than being good in some futures and failing in others. Diversification (cf. COVID and tourism) is likely to be one such characteristic.</p> <p>But this is a good risk analysis!</p>
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	Seems so.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Beyond learning, there is an issue of coordination in a complex landscape of donors, as noted above.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes.
	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?	

<p>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.</p>	<p>What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?</p>	<p>KM is largely congruent with Component 4 and is handled well (see above).</p>
	<p>What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?</p>	

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
<p>1. Concur</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>* 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></p>
<p>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</p>	<p>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:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p>
	<p>(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.</p>
	<p>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.</p>

<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p>	<p>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:</p>
	<p>(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.</p>