STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**11282**
Project title	**Mainstreaming Climate-Resilient Blue Economy in the BCLME Region (BCLME IV Project)**
Date of screen	**June 7, 2023**
STAP Panel Member	**Blake Ratner**
STAP Secretariat	**Virginia Gorsevski**

1. **Summary of STAP's views of the project**

This proposed project builds on several prior GEF investments in the Benguela Current, including the establishment of the Benguela Current Convention (BCC) Secretariat and the formulation of a TDA-SAP for the LME. The objective of this new project is to mainstream the development of sustainable economies and resilient ecosystems within the BCLME and advance the implementation of the BCLME SAP (2023-2033). The main problems identified are IUU fishing, habitat degradation, marine pollution, and climate change – each with identified (and often overlapping) root causes.

This project is on one hand highly ambitious by seeking to address all of these issues across a broad area, and on the other hand difficult to understand in terms of how specific activities will ameliorate the current situation. The lack of information on lessons learned from past projects or how specifically this will fit within the TDA-SAP, combined with a lack of clarity on causal pathways between the proposed project activities and desired outcomes is troublesome. While there are numerous interesting ideas within the project document, effort is needed to consider how they relate to each other logically and sequentially. There is clearly much to build upon (the proposed project is phase IV) and high political commitment, but the description does not yet do justice to this precedent.

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 rationale includes significant detail among 4 categories of "global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities" but there is little structure to the argument to explain underlying drivers and how various system components interact. The "project objective and justification" in the same section then provides a highly detailed description of economic trends and potential without linking in any structured way to the problems.

The theory of change (ToC) diagram lists a remarkable 17 barriers and 35 actions-outputs, and unfortunately this looks like a situation where greater detail obscures the communication of underlying logic. Moreover, no effort is made to distinguish the connections between barriers and components as well as outcomes and intermediate and longer-term impacts specifically; only in sum. This makes it exceedingly difficult to discern the causal pathways to achieving the ultimate impacts of improved ocean health and socio-economic benefits.

Oddly, sustainable finance is listed as an impact but is that indeed an end goal or is it a means of achieving a clean and healthy ocean over the long term?

The project description comes across as inadequately focused, with so many activities and may benefit from focusing on a few specific areas that will result in the greatest impact rather than spread out so thinly. It is unclear how, specifically, this project builds on (or differentiates from) the BCLME TDA-SAP and other projects. What have been the successes to date? Lessons learned?

Links are provided to STAP documents but it is not clear that information from the documents is being usefully applied to the project. For example, it states that the project will be transformative and innovative but does not specify how.

The mechanisms behind proposed scaling are not clear. Simply rolling out replicable results and building government capacity is not enough to scale solutions. Suggesting that the private sector be involved without details is similarly insufficient to inspire confidence. A separate ToC for scaling may be considered.

Overall, the PIF is disjointed and reads like a long list of problems and actions without a clear logical connection and well-thought out ToC with clear causal pathways, underlying assumptions, etc. There is clearly much to build upon (the proposed project is phase IV) and high political commitment, but the description does not yet do justice to this precedent.

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

STAP has major concerns about the clarity of the project concept as currently presented. Key suggestions:

1. Distinguish between underlying drivers and current barriers to change. Factors currently identified in the Risks table may be useful to consider in identifying underlying drivers and barriers.

2. Shorten and sharpen the whole project rationale and description, focusing on the logical structure so that the change pathways become both clear and convincing. One useful STAP document that is not referenced but that could help to guide the framing of blue economy actions/investments is GEF and the Blue Economy. Another helpful resource is the recent (April 2023) GEF-8 PIF Template and Project Design Training Session.

3. Simplify the theory of change narrative and visual to show the causal pathways to achieving the ultimate impacts of improved ocean health and socio-economic benefits. Consider a separate theory of change for scaling if there are solutions ready for that stage of investment.

4. Identify explicit lessons. It is clear that there are many prior projects in this region to draw from and several times it is mentioned that lessons learned will be applied but nowhere are those lessons explained. Identify clear obstacles encountered and lessons learned from prior efforts, then demonstrate how these have influenced the current design.

5. Amidst the array of proposed interventions, clarify what specifically will be innovative in relation to past approaches and how these measures are likely to significantly shift environmental trends and outcomes.

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.

*categories under review, subject to future revision

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.)