

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11113
Project title	Promoting sustainable fisheries management in the Red Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (RedSeaFish project)
Date of screen	June 5, 2023
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

The objective of this project is to strengthen regional cooperation and management for sustainable shared fisheries in the Red Sea. Overfishing, pollution, climate change, and coastal development are reducing the abundance of fisheries and impacting marine biodiversity in the Red Sea, which is known for its high levels of endemism. The rationale behind this project is fairly straightforward. The design is logical and includes a well-articulated theory of change with appropriately-defined assumptions. Yet the design also contains important gaps, for which STAP recommends: identifying lessons from past and ongoing related efforts to improve fisheries; addressing incentives for proposed shifts in behavior; elaborating future scenarios; and better specifying elements of innovation and scaling.

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
- X** **Minor** - STAP has identified some scientific and technical points to be addressed in project design
- 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 rationale behind this project is fairly straightforward – that by improving the quality of, and access to, relevant data and by increasing capacity and promoting cooperation, that transboundary countries will improve the management of fisheries leading to greater sustainability, improved biodiversity and socio-economic impacts.

The design is logical and includes a well-articulated theory of change with appropriately-defined assumptions. Yet the design also contains important gap:

- While it is hard to argue against the importance of transboundary cooperation, it is unclear why previous attempts to do so in the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden have so far been unsuccessful as there is no information on lessons learned from past and ongoing projects in the region (as opposed to data generated and capacity built).
- In addition, while the threats to fisheries and biodiversity are straightforward, the underlying trends and drivers are described in general terms and it is not always clear how the project components will address these.

- Future narratives / potential future scenarios are not discussed explicitly, which makes it difficult to assess the feasibility of addressing current barriers, particularly given the importance of economic and governance drivers among these.
- Claims of innovation and potential for scaling remain unconvincing.

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

1. Identify lessons from past and ongoing related efforts to improve fisheries governance and regulatory enforcement at regional and national scales, and ensure these are integrated into project design explicitly. In addition to specific efforts on fisheries governance, monitoring and enforcement, what is being done about related threats, such as pollution? Are there other projects or initiatives that are addressing this?
2. Address incentives for proposed shifts in behavior with specific reference to the socio-economic drivers and governance context. For example, one of the most important drivers behind overfishing (in Egypt) is the increased demand for fish products both locally and in the wider region coupled with the low price of fish and increasing costs of fishing operations, leading to low compliance with regulations. It is unclear how any of the components relating to better information, regional cooperation, etc. will address the current lack of incentives for fisherfolk to comply with local laws.
3. Consider how future scenarios could impact project implementation and outcomes, and demonstrate how these considerations have influenced design. In addition to climate futures, which does feature in design, it is useful to consider the role of conflict risk and stability, particularly in light of the civil unrest in Sudan and ongoing conflict in Yemen. Information on how changing price of fish and fishing operations might impact the behavior of fishermen would be useful as this seems to be a major reason behind overfishing. The potential for increased global demand for sustainably or responsibly managed fish products (assumption D2) is notable and should be included in the future narratives section, as this link to international markets (and associated pricing incentives) can be an important driver for sustainable management. See [Using simple narratives to ensure durability of GEF investments](#).
4. Claims to innovation focus on the newness of effective regional cooperation and application of multi-stakeholder dialogue approaches in this particular geography. This would be more convincing if, in the next phase of project design, more attention is given to particular, innovative approaches to pursue these aims. Are there particular policy measures or financing mechanisms that could be piloted to shift actors' incentives? Additionally, how can technology for monitoring and data management be leveraged more effectively? For example, Saudi Arabia seems to have developed an impressive digital fisheries data system that could potentially be replicated using funding from this project. Is this an option? Regarding scaling, what learning is likely to be generated that can be shared beyond the region? What evidence or strategies for engagement are likely to increase political commitment to regional cooperation or public and private finance for sustainable management?

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.)