STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**12032**
Project title	**Developing Innovative and Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Guinea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation**
Date of screen	**October 5, 2026**
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges the World Bank's GBFF project, "Developing Innovative and Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Guinea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation." The project will support establishing the Guinea Conservation Trust Fund, a financial mechanism for biodiversity conservation in the Fouta Djallon Highlands. The documents associated with this project indicate substantial innovation. However, important details about the biodiversity values, challenges, risks, and assumptions associated with this innovation need to be defined more explicitly as part of the theory of change, including in the project implementation logic, and be an intrinsic part of the project's monitoring of risks. This will enable project proponents to learn rapidly and implement adaptive management in a timely manner to improve the Fund's effectiveness.

Below, STAP provides its screening assessment, including advice, on how to strengthen project implementation.

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
- □ 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 focuses on improving biodiversity conservation in the Fouta Djallon Highlands in central Guinea. The area is recognized as a key part of the Guinean Forests of West Africa biodiversity hotspot, home to diverse ecosystems and mammal and bird species, including the largest remaining population of the critically endangered western chimpanzee. The Fouta Djallon's peatlands and wetlands are important carbon stores, and the area is also critical for water, as it is the source of three rivers of critical importance to the region: Niger, Senegal, and Gambia. Thus, the project site has strong potential to deliver biodiversity conservation and other global environmental benefits, such as carbon sequestration and the protection and management of transboundary freshwater.

The problems affecting conservation are partially explained (e.g., habitat loss and fragmentation, ecosystem degradation, and increased threats to species), as are the local drivers influencing them (e.g., habitat loss from industrial and subsistence agricultural expansion, mining). Population growth is mentioned as another local driver. Although the Koukoutamba hydroelectric power plant, and deforestation related to woodfuel cooking, are considered major threats to biodiversity in the Fouta Djallon (IUCN 2021), the proponents do not mention them. The system description should be improved at the start of project implementation, with a more comprehensive description of biodiversity values in the project area (e.g., in addition to chimps, the largest and

only viable population of the critically endangered forest elephant in Guinea). The system analysis should also assess, with key stakeholders' participation, how other important local and global drivers are influencing biodiversity degradation. Consideration of the interactions between key global drivers and local drivers (e.g., increased global demand for minerals impacting local forests) is important for the project to remain robust to future uncertainty. In this regard, the system description and theory of change seem to lack future narratives (a description of various plausible futures). Attention to future narratives is warranted and could be developed at the beginning of project implementation with stakeholders.

To address biodiversity challenges in the Fouta Djallon Highlands, the project's rationale focuses on improving conservation finance by establishing a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), which is also the project's specific objective. In STAP's view, the rationale and project description do not sufficiently explain how the CTF will lead to interventions that achieve global biodiversity outcomes. The project will need to explicitly address significant challenges, risks, and assumptions for the CTF to achieve its intended innovative and transformational outcome of becoming a "sustainable, independent financing mechanism for biodiversity conservation and resilient livelihoods." In this regard, STAP would like to see a theory of change, specific to the CTF and its operations, that accounts for future narratives and the challenges and risks that could undermine the project objective. The continuous learning, adaptive management, and scaling the project strives to achieve ultimately depend on: i) explicitly defining and validating assumptions about the CTF (e.g., the fund will deliver stable resources to support protected areas and community-based conservation and improve livelihoods); ii) monitoring consistently; and iii) mitigating risks associated with the CTF's financial and business innovations.

Furthermore, the links to the World Bank project (P168613) are tenuous. The GBFF CEO endorsement document, recommends establishing the CTF as a strategy for long-term financial sustainability, but how this would be integrated with the World Bank project as described in the Project Information Document (PID), is not clear. For example, the project as described in the PID and in the GBFF project for CEO endorsement have different theories of change. The GBFF project also does not address several issues related to the CTFs governance, (such as detailing how investors' and beneficiaries' decisions, along the CTF structure and flow of funds (on page 15), contribute to the outputs and outcomes on page 11) (which can also be detailed in a CTF theory of change), and funding sources. Both are important to ensure coherence between policies, regulations and practices across the mining and environmental sectors to improve biodiversity conservation, as envisioned by the other World Bank project and this one.

In addition, the World Bank Project Paper (PPIAF000279) indicates that the CTF will support "intersectoral coordination tools (between mining and environment)". What are these tools and how will they contribute to biodiversity outcomes and to the KMGBF targets? The Project Paper also discusses a sinking fund together with the CTF, but the CEO Endorsement Document does not say anything about the sinking fund, how it will be capitalized, or how it relates to the CTF. Lastly, the Project Paper indicates that the CTF will support Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) activities, but the MRV activities presented relate to the Paris Agreement, and not to the KMGBF.

Below, STAP describes these points further and offers suggestions.

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 recommends addressing the following issues to strengthen the scientific and technical soundness of the project:

1. Strengthen the system description with contributions from a range of stakeholders. This will help ensure that all key stakeholders have contributed to the project's design. Particular attention should be paid to:

    a. Providing a more comprehensive description of biodiversity in the project area from a systems perspective, including GEBs.
    b. Whether all local and global drivers influencing biodiversity loss in the target site(s) have been addressed. This includes paying greater attention to climate change as a global driver, and to its interactions with other drivers of change, including local drivers. For example, greater attention should be given to the impact of the planned Koukoutamba dam and existing mining concessions within the Fouta Djallon landscape (including within the Moyen-Bafing National Park) which threaten Western Chimpanzees and forest elephants, both of which are critically endangered.
    c. Explicit identification of the target sites. The site locations are currently missing from the CEO endorsement document, with only the Fouta Djallon Highlands mentioned as the project location. There is further confusion because the Project Paper refers to six target landscapes: Fouta Djallon Highlands, proposed Pinselly-Soyah National Park, Kounounkan Forest, Upper Niger Basin, Guinea Forest, and unspecified marine protected areas.
    d. Provide downscaled climate information for the sites, or region, as possible in the CEO endorsement document. Furthermore, it would be valuable to describe the World Bank's climate change and disaster screening results explicitly in the main body of the CEO-endorsement document. Currently, the screening is only briefly mentioned in the World Bank Project Paper.

2. Develop future narratives about how the future could unfold based on the trends in key local and global drivers, and interactions between them – such as development of mining concessions with some of the targeted protected areas, climate change, diseases and other factors that may influence estimates of viable chimp population size, fluctuations in the global economy (or demand) for minerals, and population changes. These drivers, as mentioned above, will need to be reflected in the systems description – ideally, by bringing together the stakeholders to revisit the systems analysis. STAP's advice on future narratives is available through a brief and a primer, here.

3. Develop a separate theory of change for the CTF. Reflect the systems analysis, including the biodiversity values, drivers and future narratives, in the theory of change as much as possible to ensure the project is robust to different plausible futures. For example, current climate projections suggest prolonged drier periods in the Fouta Djallon Highlands, which could pose risks to biodiversity outcomes and influence future private and public investments to the CTF.

4. Reflect the systems description, future narratives and CTF theory of change in the interventions. As currently presented, the activities in the CEO endorsement do not appear to have been sufficiently informed by, or linked back to, the systems description.

5. Ensure that the risks to the CTF's theory of change or project logic are adequately identified and addressed. After accounting for, and addressing challenges, critical assumptions described, and long-term drivers in the project design, any significant residual risks should be captured and addressed in the risk table, with appropriate mitigation measures. This should include, not only risks to chimpanzees and forest elephants, associated with developing mining concessions within the national park, but also risks associated with innovation, given the innovative nature of the CTF and the uncertainties that may accompany its implementation. In identifying and addressing these risks, particularly those associated with innovations, the project proponents may find STAP's guidance on risk and innovation useful, available here. The guidance also emphasizes learning rapidly from innovation risks and using that learning to inform adaptation and enable scaling. This is particularly relevant to the CTF, given its

ambition to establish a sustainable financing mechanism and the assumptions underpinning its longer-term success.

6. There are several issues related to the CTF that need to be clarified. On p. 13 of the CEO Endorsement document, please explain what is meant by the statement "By year 22 the endowment will be fully recovered"? This implies that endowment assets will be lost or spent down and therefore need to be recovered, but the whole notion of a CTF is that the principal will not be spent, and only some portion of the interest will be spent, so it should not need to be recovered. Does this relate to the sinking fund that is mentioned in the World Bank Project Paper? There is no description of, or assumption about, investment costs associated with managing the CTF investments. Also, the proponents state that the endowment will generate ~USD203,000 in grants by the end of year 3, however, this would seem to assume that none of these funds would be used to support the Secretariat staff and operations. P. 17 and 18 suggest the Secretariat will have ~10 staff and these staff will be paid from the endowment interest. How will $203,000 over 3 years pay the salaries of all of these people, plus provide funding for grants to benefit 3,000 community members, and support conservation and restoration within protected areas?

7. Regarding the private sector funds for the CTF, although it is not mentioned directly in the document, Guinea's proposal for the Fouta Djallon World Heritage site is focused on two protected areas: Moyen-Bafing National Park (MBNP) and the Gambie-Falémé Wildlife Reserve (GFWR) (UNESCO). The financing for the creation and operations of Moyen-Bafing NP comes from biodiversity offsets focused on critically endangered chimps provided by two mining companies. The offsets were required by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which provided loans to the two mining companies, thereby requiring the mining companies to comply with the IFC's Performance Standards (PS). The PS require that the mining companies achieve the goal of No Net Loss (NNL) for Natural Habitat where feasible, and a Net Gain (NG) for impacts to biodiversity values for which critical habitat was designated. Further, PS 6 states that "Any area where there are great apes is likely to be treated as critical habitat."

   Therefore, the two mining companies are aiming for a net gain in chimpanzee numbers, and committed to finance the creation and management of MBFNP for 20 years, but paid over 15 years (IUCN Primate Specialist Group 2021). However, IUCN found that support for 20 years was inadequate to reach a NG in the chimp population, in part, because the planned Koukoutamba dam and mining permits overlap with the MBNP and could impact a significant part of the chimp population in the park. Therefore, the IUCN experts concluded that the offset funding was insufficient to compensate for the permanent loss of chimpanzees in the mining concessions within the park. They recommended that the entirety of the park needs to be protected (i.e., no mining concessions) in perpetuity.

   This should be addressed, as it is directly relevant to the ability of the CTF to lead to enduring biodiversity-related GEBs.

8. The IUCN Primate Specialist Group recommended the creation of a CTF to support mining offsets in perpetuity. After the establishment phase, the recurring management costs for MBNP, are estimated at ~USD 2.5 million per year, or USD 400/km^2 (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation 2019). They estimated that an additional USD 1 million/year or USD 560/km^2 is needed for effective support for local communities, totaling USD 3.5 million/year (note that these figures are not adjusted for inflation).

   Therefore, the project theory of change should indicate what percentage of the annual costs will be provided by the CTF, and also provide a clear logical pathway indicating how and when the CTF will be sufficiently capitalized to provide a meaningful contribution to these annual costs, e.g., the CTF would need a principal of ~ USD 87.5 million to provide the entire estimated annual USD 3.5 million needed. Assuming similar costs/km^2 for GFWR (3,372 km^2), management of GFWR would require an additional USD 1,348,800/year, not considering grants to communities.

Additionally, it seems that there may be an unstated assumption that the private sector capitalization of the CTF will come largely from biodiversity offset funds. This should be clarified in the project documents.

9. Provide more details on how the CTF will advance Guinea's NBSAP. The CEO Endorsement Document mentions that it will advance objectives in the NBSAP, but it does not say which objectives, or how. Meanwhile, the Project Paper indicates the CTF will advance Guinea's NDCs, which relate to the Paris Agreement, but it does not mention the NBSAP.

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.)