STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	**Response**	
GEF ID	10881	
Project Title	Implementing the Strategic Action Programme of the Drin Basin to Strengthen Transboundary Cooperation and Enable Integrated Natural Resources Management	
Date of Screening	7 November 2021	
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor.** Proposed project builds upon a SAP recently endorsed in April 2020, and calls for an 'updated TDA' to incorporate interactions with the marine environment, along with support to the legal / regulatory framework and pilot investments. Lack of detail on expected results. For example, a target is 418,243.00 ha of marine protected areas under improved management; this seems implausible, and there is no information on where or how this will take place. Coordination on the Drin Basin is ongoing several projects have been successfully implemented in the partner countries. What have been the lessons learned and how will these lessons inform this project?	
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, but the objective lacks specificity. The stated objective of this project is to "Advance integrated natural resources management and sustainable development in the Drin River Basin

		and its coastal and marine areas by supporting the implementation of the Strategic Action Program (SAP) agreed upon by the Riparians." This is an overarching objective which responds to the generic problem that plagues many transboundary water basins – that is, lack of shared vision and management necessary for coordinated country-specific action to reduce pollution, prevent loss of biodiversity, etc.
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 adaptation benefits?	Re adaptation, climate change impacts are acknowledged and in theory the achievement of a flood management plan would result in adaptation benefits. However, this is not well articulated in the project design. There is a disconnect between information on climate change, proposed interventions, and beneficiaries.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	One of the indicators is 418,243ha of better managed MPAs. Is this an error? The identified marine area of the basin is a fraction of this size. Without information about where or how this will occur it is not clear if the GEBs will be achieved.
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. There are several strong outputs including an updated TDA, monitoring programs, scientific analyses of the water and adjacent ecosystems, management plans, flood risk management actions, demonstration projects, etc. Combined, they contribute to the general outcomes and ultimate objective of promoting improved transboundary management of the Drin catchment area.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe:	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Yes, the problems affecting the Drin Basin are well known and not uncommon for shared water basins (poor water quality, etc.)

1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)		
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	There is information on barriers hindering regional cooperation such as "limited knowledge of the Basin's characteristics and functioning, lack of permanent coordination management tools/mechanisms, frameworks and capacity." However, it would be good to know what the barriers are to actual implementation of improvements on the ground that could substantially improve water quality and biodiversity (the main problems listed in the PIF). These will likely vary from country to country but still some general information could help to frame the technical assistance envisioned in Component 3.
	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?	Yes, with regards to TDA and country specific information on legal / policy frameworks.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Yes, based upon recent TDA. Good summary of institutional context and related investments.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes.
	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?	The PIF describes the rationale for focusing on institutional strengthening for technical and political cooperation but the 'simplified theory of change' figure provided is primarily a restatement of the project components.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	The general sequence is to enhance capacity and refine the TDA consolidate transboundary institutional, policy and legal frameworks, implement demonstration projects (which presumably would come out of the TDA; however, appear to be known a priori – perhaps as a result of SAP or earlier TDA?); and general awareness raising, conferences, gender action plan, etc.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	As this project follows on from earlier efforts, assumptions may be known to the project designer but are not well articulated in this PIF. Mechanisms of change are plausible; however, it is not clear if the actions are simultaneous or sequential. A revised TOC would be very helpful for clearly articulating the underlying assumptions and causal pathways. See STAP Primer on Theory of Change for more information.
	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 explicit.
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?	Yes.
	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 the benefits are global and in theory measurable.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes however, see prior comment regarding anticipated ha or MPAs to be created or better managed.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
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?	Use of artificial intelligence to support monitoring could be innovative, particularly if tools are transferable to other regions. There is mention of working with the private sector as an innovation but with no concrete actions or detail it is difficult to see how this will be innovative. Similarly, there is mention of business incubators but not information about what these would address.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Not convincing.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	The approach appears incremental; it is unclear how this will address the pace of change in the basin.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		A map is included.

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 PIF refers to extensive consultations leading to the current SAP. Yet, successful uptake of innovations will require new strategies to shift the incentives of local communities, NGOs and the private sector. It is not clear that the regulatory lever alone will be adequate to bring about the necessary shifts. A more detailed stakeholder plan with concrete actions to engage these critical groups would be very helpful.
	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?	
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	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Gender issues are mentioned throughout the PIF; however, there is a lack of clear response measures outlined. For example: A terminal evaluation for the projects upon which this one builds states that one of the lessons is that "Gender strategies are effective if they are developed in early stages of the project in order to guide gender mainstreaming throughout the implementation process." And yet, the PIF proposes a gender plan will be developed as part of Component 4. Why not in the PPG phase so that mainstreaming can occur in the early stages of the project implementation? Given the prior analyses already referenced in the PIF, this would seem feasible.

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		
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	
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?	Apart from COVID-19 considerations, the risks and responses identified are very preliminary.
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?	This project builds on past work in this Drin basin and also mentions a few other related projects that it will work with (UNDP Adaptation project). While a terminal evaluation is provided from the prior GEF project for this basin, it is not clear that the lessons from that evaluation have been directly applied in the formulation of this project.

	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Not explicit.
	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?	
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?	Component 4 includes general KM activities such as 'awareness raising' and annual events, as well as participation in IW:Learn. This element of the project could be much improved.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	

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.