

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10537	
Project Title	Partnerships and Innovative Financing to Mainstream Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management in the Wet and Intermediate Climatic Zones	
Date of Screening	20 May 2020	
STAP member screener	Mark Stafford Smith	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design:</p> <p>STAP welcomes the proposal to improve land management and biodiversity outcomes in tea and rubber plantation areas of Sri Lanka. The intervention builds on strong policy and private sector engagement, and provides a good theory of change.</p> <p>During project design, STAP particularly urges proponents to (i) enhance the theory of change by looking closely at the some assumptions that should probably be built into the project design more; (ii) consider developing a separate ToC aimed specifically at scaling; (iii) ensure ToC assumptions are being formally monitored and evaluated over time to allow learning about these; and (iv) pay attention to the risks of benefit ‘leakage’ whereby pressures that are managed in the target areas are transferred elsewhere in the country, thus undermining the durability of the achievements from a national perspective.</p> <p>Below, STAP describes further its guidance.</p>	
Part I: Project Information	What STAP looks for	Response
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
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, noting comments that follow

Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Plausible; some outcome indicators need tightening in the next design phase (e.g. 1.iii ‘status of endemic fauna...’ – really <i>change</i> in status is what is needed, and detection of change is usually more challenging than description of status).
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: see comments on ToC below
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project’s logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
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?	Core pressures are clearing and loss of forests of high endemicity with high risk of land degradation and remaining intact forest often being in private lands with few apparent incentives to conserve. Root causes include continued demand for more land, over-exploitation of lands and biodiversity directly, invasives, pollution and climate change. Impacts are not only environmental but also declining plantation productivity.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	4 key barriers are identified, including finance, policy coherence and incentives, poor adaptive management at landscape scale, and limited SLM capacity on-property.
	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?	Issues linking land degradation, forest loss, biodiversity and declining resilience of productivity are identified.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, with an encouraging baseline of interested private sector players already involved in BSL, etc, that has demonstrated the feasibility of some finance models that now need more testing and scaling.

		It is also notable that Sri Lanka has LDN commitments defined, which could help with issue of leakage (see below)
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Plausibly
	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;	Probably but not necessarily in this section.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Useful related projects are identified, but there is little on explicit lessons from past interventions.
	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?	A strength of the proposal is an explicit situational analysis, that leads to a well developed ToC, essentially arguing that better information and planning will allow a focus on priority areas and measures; innovative PPCPs will help support this both technically and financially; and KM & MEL will help scale the approach.
	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?	Assumptions are explicitly given, which is great. However, STAP would suggest that the 2 nd stage assumptions – of economic stability and political support – should be built in to the project design by creating approaches that are robust to the level of these and aim to influence them as much as possible rather than having them as hopeful conditions. In fact we felt that a significant part of the intervention is about scaling approaches, some of which are already available, others being tested; therefore we suggest it might help in the next design phase to distinguish 2 ToCs – one establishing the better models through case studies;

		the second aimed specifically at how those models might be scaled. This would help to identify assumptions such as these that might in fact need to become part of project design to maximise the chances of successful scaling (e.g. by marketing the successes to government to enhance political support; or addressing value chain issues specifically with economic stability issues in mind). STAP would be happy to discuss this, if useful.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Yes, but this would be greatly enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing the assumptions in the ToC (as amended, see above), in order that implementation flexibility can learn as the project proceeds. STAP's ToC guide 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?	Yes, plausible. However, there is a risk of 'leakage' which should be addressed as the project design continues – could actions in the target areas result in pressures (e.g. on forest clearing) simply being moved to other parts of the basin or country? It would help to link these interventions formally to a national approach to Sri Lanka's land degradation neutrality commitments where land degradation is concerned, and similar instruments as regards biodiversity etc in order to use governmental processes to ensure that benefits from this project are not offset elsewhere. This is perhaps implied (bottom of p.47) but not made explicit. Note: we are not suggesting this project can be responsible for land use everywhere; but by linking project gains into national monitoring it would be apparent if these are not contributing to a national net gain in benefits.
	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)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes

and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)		
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes (subject to durability of benefits in relation to leakage, as above)
	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?	Ok
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The current design notes that many developments are likely to improve CC resilience, but does not explore whether the rates of implementation are likely to exceed the rate at which climate change exacerbates current problems. This should be considered, as different intervention might be chosen if this is the case. Ideally some attention would also be paid to uncertainty in terms of climate change (and other major drivers like population, economy, etc) to identify solutions that are robust against uncertainty. Having a well-formed partnership process would undoubtedly fit this criterion of robustness, as it allows better negotiations regardless of the precise environmental conditions; but is this true for all the activities? Are any of the actions being promoted actually liable to become maladaptive soon after the term of the project? This issue should be addressed.
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 PPCP builds on existing activities, but is of innovative extent, and the project is seeking to scale this.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	We felt the core of this project is in fact about scaling, and as design proceeds this could be made more explicit and addressed as a separate small ToC exercise to help clarify issues that occur when scaling out, up and deep. Although the text asserts (p.54) the project 'will be designed' with this in mind, it needs to be at the foundation of design.

		(STAP's guidance on Durability addresses issues that are important for durability when scaling, which may be helpful.)
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	This project has the potential to drive transformation change in the region.
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 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?	This seems comprehensive, but we encourage continuous review of this question as ToCs evolve..
	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?	Well stated.
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Ok. It is notable that the entire BSL board is male... (per website)

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p>		
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	
<p>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>	<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? 	<p>Key risks are identified. It would be good to add the issue of leakage of benefits to these.</p> <p>Several of these note uncertainties (economic crisis in the sectors, natural disasters and climate change) – STAP urges proponents to consider a small number (2-3) of simple scenarios of the future that cover the range of uncertainty in these drivers (and others – population, demand pressures?) and then review of the proposal looking for options that are <i>robust</i> to the uncertainty – that is they will perform reasonably in all possible futures, even if they are</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	not optimized for one. This applies at the level of designing partnerships, etc; as well as direction for the industries; and specific land management interventions.
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 is not fully apparent with regards to specific land management options, though there is a good baseline being built upon for the partnership aspects.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	See above.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	See above.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	See above.
	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?	Yes, the project has a monitoring and learning component. However, suggest using the theory of change to complement monitoring of outcomes.
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?	In general this sounds good, including using existing knowledge sharing platforms with CCC and BSL. STAP would note that some modest MEL on the more critical assumptions underpinning the ToC should also be included, to assist adaptive implementation. A separate ToC aimed at scaling may also help identify a few other crucial issues to track.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	See above.

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 <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>
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	<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>