

Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID		10395
Project Title		RICE-Adapt: Promoting Climate-Resilient Livelihoods in Rice-Farming Communities in the lower Ayeyarwady and Sittaung River Basins
Date of Screening		9-Dec-19
STAP member Screener		Mark Stafford Smith
STAP secretariat screener		Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment		<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design: Minor issues to be considered during project design: STAP welcomes FAO's proposal "RICE-Adapt: Promoting Climate-Resilient Livelihoods in Rice-Farming Communities in the lower Ayeyarwady and Sittaung River Basins". The proposal uses a standard approach to enhancing climate resilience in two major catchments of Myanmar: combining improved capacity for policy coherence with nature-based solutions to improve and diversify local livelihoods; and, market-based approaches to enhance (principally) rice value chains. The proposal comprehensively catalogues a great deal of other development activity in the region, with which this proposal aims to coordinate. The intervention components would benefit from a more formal Theory of Change exercise which could test whether this proposal coupled with baseline activities are truly necessary and sufficient to achieve the objectives. STAP notes three other key issues for further consideration as the proposal is developed. First, the proposal clearly articulates future climate change and population change as key long-term drivers. However, it does not address the uncertainty in the rate with which either may unfold. Consequently there is no analysis of whether the proposed interventions will remain viable under all plausible scenarios of change; hence, whether a consideration of robust rather than optimal options would result in changing the proposal. STAP recommends that the next phase of project development considers the implications of a small number of alternative simple future scenario trajectories (e.g. low/high rates of climate change, levels of population change and demand) to develop possible adaptation pathways for local communities in a participatory fashion, and then assess current plans against these to ensure the intervention is not inadvertently encouraging maladaptation. STAP would be happy to contribute further suggestions in this regard if needed (such approaches has been tested with community contexts in Indonesia - e.g. see Butler et al. (2016) Building capacity for adaptation pathways in eastern Indonesian islands: Synthesis and lessons learned. Climate Risk Management 12:A1-A10. DOI 10.1016/j.crm.2016.05.002. and related special issue papers). Second, the proposal (e.g. p.33) firmly asserts that it is to be participatory in nature (e.g. p.33 - "participatory approaches will be a key tool...") yet the language of most of the text is top-down, technocratic delivery of information or options, even where there are many opportunities to use language like "co-designed with communities". We recommend this is addressed systemically in the next project development phase since, as p.33 rightly says, this is vital for durability. (See STAP's durability and innovation papers: http://www.stagef.org/achieving-enduring-outcomes-gef-investment and http://www.stagef.org/innovation-and-gef). Third, the huge diversity of baseline investments usefully documented here (at least \$800m in total) raises the question of why some of these at least have not already successfully scaled similar activities into the target regions for this proposal; accepting they have not, it would be good to have a very clear analysis of the lessons those other programs provide for how GEF's relatively small (\$9m) leverage in this project could really make an innovative difference in project design processes. Section 6 provides a useful indication of some possible lessons, but these need to be extracted and embedded in the basic design of the new proposal, perhaps partly by analysing them against the issues for durability raised in the STAP paper referenced above, or a similar framework. STAP stands ready to help if needed.</p>
Part I: Project Information		
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes, though it may help in maintaining focus to say "to improve the resilience and adaptive capacities..." in the face of what key drivers? (e.g. climate change, growing population demand, etc)
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	The four components plausibly support the objective, but as noted below a more thorough Theory of Change would help determine whether they are <i>necessary and sufficient</i> for this.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	These are broadly in line with research expectations, but again a more thorough Theory of Change would help determine whether they are <i>necessary and sufficient</i> for this, and a better analysis of long-term change scenarios would help determine whether they are <i>robust</i> across possible futures.
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Plausibly, but, as above, further analysis is needed to confirm this
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?	As above. The language in these, whilst not necessarily incompatible with participatory co-design in most places, does not highlight this in 2, 3 and 4. It is very useful that potential indicators are identified, though some of these will need re-visiting as design proceeds (and targets for these defining), and there cases where % rather than # might be more appropriate, assuming a theory of change that says some critical mass of adoption must be reached before a tipping point is reached.
Part II: Project justification		
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?	The basic problem statement is clear, and the rice-focused rationale for the location seems reasonable. However, the key identified drivers of climate change (various elements) and population growth are not quantified, and it would be very useful to have some lower and upper limits on these, illustrating the range of uncertainty to be handled (p.16 suggests there are sets of climate projections available). This would allow a small number of simple, indicative scenario trajectories (e.g. high/low combinations of climate and population perhaps) to be created against which elements of the proposal could be assessed (e.g. to 2030 for immediate implementation efficacy - will it work as it happens? to 2050 for longer-term durability and avoidance of maladaptation pathways - are the outcomes robust in the face of on-going changes?), and with which stakeholders could be engaged (not the full range of climate projections! this does not have to - and should not - be complicated). For example, are the proposed diversified cash crops (p.15) tolerant of different levels of change in likely future climates or salt water intrusion, and will changing patterns of demand support them? by p.19 the key vulnerabilities are stated as crop loss due to extreme events and intrusion of salt water, so these could be the focus of scenarios of change on the physical side.

	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	4 barriers are identified, each credible but mostly focused on information and capacity, and on institutional arrangements including policies and value chain organisation. Scaling and transformation often involves changes in values and culture also, so whether there are any barriers of this nature might be considered.
	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?	Not applicable.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	The proposal identifies the baseline and does an impressive survey of baseline projects.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	However, the baseline is unquantified in terms of things that might be measurably changed by the additional investment - further attention could be given to this in the project development
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the additional cost reasoning for the project?	There are 2 closely aligned projects identified as co-investments - the current proposal is addressing overlapping but different issues in a different geography, but one might ask why both of these are not scaling their results into the target areas of this proposal; and a further >\$1bn of relevant projects are identified. The additional cost reasoning would be greatly enhanced by a deep analysis of the lessons from these investment, particularly as to why they have not already scaled into the target region (some may have, and for these a tighter mapping of complementarities; others are only partially completed so the analysis may need to be prospective); this seems to be planned in the next project development phase but should be a priority as it may dramatically alter the way scaling, transformation and durability is conceived in this the current proposal. Section 6 includes a few useful lessons of this type, but a stronger rationale is needed for what GEF's \$9m will do that the \$1bn to date has not, as this should drive lessons for the science & tech in the proposal, including the social science processes of implementation.
	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;	Not applicable.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	As above, great survey, more analysis needed in the next stage.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	As above
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	The basic theory of change is summarised on p.22 as "To adopt climate-resilient practices in the rice and other agriculture sub-sectors that can withstand changes in climate, Myanmar will need to apply new technologies, modify existing ones, scale up innovations, revise relevant laws and policies to integrate climate change and enhance capacity to access and use finance and technologies.". Noting the 4 barriers above, the project targets (p.27) adaptation mainstreaming, resilient livelihoods, nature-based solutions and market-based solutions through 4 components on the enabling environment, nature based solutions for resilient livelihoods, adaptation technologies and market access on some value chains, and M&E. As noted above, it would be good to see a more critical Theory of Change built backwards from the objective and outcomes to ensure that the actions in proposal in conjunction with existing investments by others are really necessary and sufficient to meet the objective.
	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?	The causal chains to impact and the assumptions underlying these are only weakly expressed so far; research would suggest many are plausible, but probably need a great emphasis on participatory co-design, both in government (which is probably in hand) and within communities (where the current language suggests consultation will only occur after most interventions are already defined).
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	
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?	The M&E component 4 does not mention how data collected will facilitate measured flexibility and adjustment of project implementation. Clearly the proponents have thought about indicators since these are listed early in the PIF, and these, further developed, could provide a powerful framework for assessing and learnign about progress within the proeject (ie not just for accountability purposes), and whether any assumptions in the theory of change are not being born out during implementation. STAP urges the active use of a good ToC with reviews during implementation to support legitimate flexibility when the ToC assumptions seems to be failing.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Yes, if realised
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, potentially

	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Plausible subject to the questions above. However, there are assertions such as "sustainable rice cultivation and diversification strategies, which will contribute improve the health of the surrounding ecosystems. The project will also reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses and increase resilience in the wider landscape..." - these are big assumptions in the absence of an analysis of rates of change in climate and population pressures (in this case) to determine whether the rates at which resilience and livelihoods are plausibly being improved actually exceed the rate at which pressures plausibly increase. If this is not (plausibly) the case, the interventions may still be necessary but should be seen more in terms of bridging to other longer-term and more transformative changes, which might imply different actions to pave the way for these; or a complete re-think of the best intervention. Assumptions like these should be reflected in the Theory of Change in causal pathways to these proposed adaptation benefits. [NB the text against the 2 LDCF objectives on p.32 is a good outline of key elements of ToC]
	Are the adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Mostly
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	A start has been made on this, but needs further development in conjunction with a theory of change.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The risk assessment below addresses some aspects of the resilience of the project implementation itself to climate change. As noted above, more needs to be done to affirm that the interventions and consequence impacts are durable and robust (and unlikely to be maladaptive) in the face of uncertain rates of continuing change in climate (and other trends).
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?	Aspects of the approaches seem to be innovative locally, even if not especially so globally.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	There is a partial strategy articulated. However, it would be good to draw more explicit lessons as to why the other investments in the region are not already achieving this into the study area; and to develop a part of a Theory of Change aimed specifically at how to achieve scaling. It is good to see durability ('sustainability') distinguished from scaling here; durability focuses on developing ownership through participatory approaches, which as noted do not come through so well and need to be genuine co-design and co-production rather than consultation about pre-defined issues. Enduring impacts through financial incentives are dealt with well.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	It would be good to address this question more clearly in relation to rates of change in external drivers and project impacts. Can the latter exceed the former under all scenarios, and if not do more transformative approaches need considering?
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?	ok. But Again, framing engagement as co-design rather than consultations (p.38) would be good.
	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?	A comprehensive Theory of Change will enrich this understanding.
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 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	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Issues and an approach are identified. STAP would urge the proponents to charge specific staff with prioritising this issue through all of the next stage of proposal development.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Potentially - needs to be kept front of mind in the next stage of project development
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?	Some key risks handled well. We would suspect there are other risks not addressed - turnover of staff in partners (especially agencies) or in project team? Capacity of agencies and NGOs to engage? In or out migration movements or unforeseen issues such as security of tenure undermining project outcomes?

	Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?	
	For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:	Climate risks are partially addressed. It may be helpful to more clearly distinguish (i) risks to project implementation (what if there is an extended drought or extreme flood event while new cultivars are being established, etc? This is partially addressed) relative to (ii) risks to the durability of outcomes and impacts (e.g. rates of climate change or population increase overwhelm the benefits from the project). The latter risk, which is more a driver of project design, should be dealt with earlier as noted (not here as a post hoc risk assessment), using scenarios to encompass uncertainty and robustness.
	· 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?	as above - trajectories of change would help this
	· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?	as above
	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	as above - only in a relative non-dynamic way
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	as above
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 section contains more lessons than earlier and the commitment to learn from them. As noted, though, further explicit analysis of what can be learned would be beneficial and might alter the priority of project components
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	as above
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	as above
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	as 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?	as above
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?	As noted earlier, this could benefit from (i) being much more participatory, to contribute to community learning and commitment, and (ii) defining explicit pathways to learning and review within the project, perhaps using the Theory of Change as a framework for turning these lessons into amended implementation.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	Mostly information push at present
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.	
	<i>* 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."</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	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.	