

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10462	
Project Title	Conservation of Wetland Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Freshwater Ecosystems in the Western Dvina/Daugava Transboundary River Basin	
Date of Screening	19 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 efforts to establish transboundary governance in river basins of northern Belarus. Whilst the intervention proposes to use well-established approaches to develop transboundary cooperation, and implement improved land and water management activities that are mostly quite well-known, these have the potential for significant regional and global benefits.</p> <p>During project design, STAP urges proponents to (i) improve the language used to describe outcomes, to be clear what impact is being sought; (ii) develop a better theory of change that accounts for acknowledged risks from disenfranchising local fishing/hunting enthusiasts and disadvantaging poorer resource users (and well as other actors whose power may undermine implementation of wider basin planning); consequently (iii) pay attention to how these interests are appropriately engaged in some level of co-design rather than purely top-down promulgation of regulations; and (iv) consider how to avoid benefit ‘leakage’ whereby pressures that are managed in the target catchment areas are simply 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?	The outcomes are generally described more as outputs than ultimate impacts – e.g. 1.1 is ‘mechanisms for transboundary cooperation’ rather than the effects to be achieved due to this cooperation. As a consequence some of the indicators (e.g. first 2 under Outcome 1.1) are just confirmation that outputs in the project have been completed, rather than that they have achieved anything. STAP recommends that the language in these items be re-visited and made more impact-oriented during further development, to help project implementators recall that they are seeking to achieve content not just process. Comments below on the ToC may help with this.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Plausible
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?	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?	Multiple causes of declining water quality and availability, with consequences for biodiversity including RAMSAR wetlands, are adequately outlined, with the ultimate causes for this partly being the lack of a shared management regime across the border, as well as controls on production activities and dams in Belarus. It is not so clear how fast the problem is growing, with growing population and demand for resources (including energy, water, fishing), which would help determine whether the intervention might be overwhelmed by these drivers.

	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Six significant barriers are outlined. However, some of these do not fully encompass risks outlined in the separate Safeguard Analysis document, such as resistance to regulation from recreational fishers; and whether the pressures to use natural resources vastly exceed the will to protect them.
	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?	The problems clearly have international water, biodiversity and land degradation elements, as well as climate adaptation implications.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	The baseline is expressed with respect to two problems – lack of well-developed transboundary agreements, and the declining state of water-related resources within Belarus. These are adequately described, and show both that there is developing will to act but not yet the instruments in place. However, it would help to further quantify the rates of increasing pressures from agriculture, water use, waste water, due presumably to rising population and demand. The quantified implications of climate change are also not addressed. These change drivers need to be specified in order to ensure that responses are able to have a significant effect given these rates of change.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Further quantification during project design would help.
	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;	Partially but not necessarily in this section.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	The proposal clearly draws on long experience in transboundary development processes. It seems likely that there is experience elsewhere in managing peatlands that could be drawn upon.

	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?	The ToC is weak and the diagram in support of it (Annex E) is a log frame rather than a true ToC. Most of the (often implicit) logic is plausible, but risks being incomplete. STAP urges the proponents to further develop this to ensure that all barriers and enablers have been considered in context, that logic chains are clear, and that monitoring is established to test these. STAP's ToC guidance may be of help for this (and explains the difference between a log frame and ToC). Refer to: https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Component 1 argues that running a TDA with backing data and establishing a joint basin commission, will enable a basin plan and a bilateral agreement to be prepared; leading to effective integrated management of water in the basin – this is plausible and would be supported by the other component which aims to provide diverse tested examples of policy and management actions. However, a more comprehensive ToC process would probably identify some other issues such local power dynamics with water users, especially significant industries; challenges from community resistance in relation to fishing/hunting; vulnerability of low income users; and the need for changes in cultural norms to back up regulatory changes. This in turn might create suggestions for an expanded or complementary scope of appropriate multi-stakeholder processes for the two components.
	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?	Many of these are, but a better ToC would make these assumptions more explicit and enable monitoring to test them

	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Reasonable
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?	If outputs are achieved, this is 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 simply being moved to other parts of the basin or country? (whether the pressures are industrial water use, recreational fishing/hunting or agricultural pollution etc, and even if the intent to avoid this is built into the basin plans – the pressures could move to other basins). It would help to link these interventions to a national approach to land degradation neutrality where land degradation is concerned, and similar instruments as regards biodiversity or water in order to use governmental processes to ensure that benefits from this project are not offset elsewhere.
	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) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes
	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
	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 transboundary process (component 1) 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 more local activities?
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?	Not particularly, but valuable in context
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	The basic project in fine, but more explicit consideration could be given to how the local actions can be scaled to the whole basin – simple availability of the knowledge is unlikely to suffice – for example, exchange visits among land users in different parts of the basin as successes start showing could assist with this. It might be worth develop a small ToC aimed specifically at scaling processes (extending the ‘replication’ section) as part of project design.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	The project is relatively incremental, but could lay the foundation for more transformation change.
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	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	At this stage yes, but from outside it sounds as if better engagement to the point of co-design with some potentially undermining interests such as hunters and fishers will be helpful in the next stage of design.

<p>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.</p>		
	<p>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?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>The PIF notes the reality of a gendered society. Collecting data that is disaggregated by gender may at least help surface these issues.</p>

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /td		
	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	<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? • 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? 	<p>Key risks related to lack of support from the community are noted; these should be designed in to the ToC more explicitly rather than being handled as a post hoc risk assessment.</p> <p>For climate risks, see above.</p>
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?	Other projects in Belarus are noted, but it could be helpful for UNDP to tap into its experience in peatlands and other similar environments elsewhere in the world more explicitly.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	See above.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, lessons from the Bug-Neman project will be used to develop this project.
	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, monitoring system will be develop. Suggest linking the theory of change with this monitoring system.

<p>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.</p>	<p>What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?</p>	<p>In general, ‘sharing knowledge’ is not enough for scaling – greater engagement and consideration of barriers to scaling is needed; STAP again recommends some thought is given to a small ToC for scaling beyond the immediate project. In addition, note that this will be important to minimize ‘leakage’ of the benefits due to rising pressures elsewhere.</p>
	<p>What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?</p>	<p>The PIF states that a variety of knowledge management tools and communication materials. STAP suggests acting on its advice described above.</p>

Notes

STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed
<p>1. Concur</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>* 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></p>
<p>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</p>	<p>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:</p>
	<p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p>
	<p>(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.</p>
	<p>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>

<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p>	<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>