

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10514
Project Title	Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City
Date of Screening	April 30, 2020
STAP member screener	Ed Carr
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design.</p> <p>STAP welcomes UNDP’s project “Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City”. The project aims to increase the climate resilience of communities in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin in Savannakhet Province, and in Luang Prabang – a city most vulnerable to flooding. In response to Laos’s needs, the project will implement three components: improve the country’s climate monitoring and early warning systems; develop capacities for integrated coastal management and ecosystem-based adaptation; and develop a knowledge management and monitoring system. STAP is pleased with the scientific and technical soundness of these interventions.</p> <p>As the project is designed, STAP recommends for the project team to develop a theory of change to specify the causal links between outputs and outcomes; describe the causal pathways by which interventions are expected to have effect, and identify indicators to test their validity over time; and be explicit about assumptions about these causal pathways, which includes an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success.</p> <p>Given the high uncertainty that climate risks pose, as well as other long-term drivers of change (e.g. population, market demands, global environmental change), STAP</p>

	<p>recommends planning for multiple scenarios. This means considering systematically different time scales and spatial scales for designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions under highly uncertain decision contexts.</p> <p>Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) as a climate adaptation strategy in integrated coastal management in the Mekong is relatively nascent. STAP highly encourages the project developers to use the theory of change to test the validity of causal links (and assumptions on) between EbA and climate adaptation outcomes, and to inform scaling opportunities and challenges.</p>	
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, the objective is defined clearly, and consistently linked to the problem statement.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes, the activities support the project objective
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes, the outcomes focus on adaptation benefits.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	The benefits are likely to be generated with careful monitoring.
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, outputs are likely to contribute to outcomes.
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?	Yes. The problem is well-defined for both target areas: Savannakhet province and Luang Prabang.

	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, the PIF describes the barriers comprehensively.
	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?	Does not apply.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	The PIF includes a narrative baseline that lays out the challenges to be addressed. However, in noting that both climate change and forest degradation related to swidden farming are drivers of the challenge (vulnerability to draughts and floods), the baseline should establish the relative importance of these two drivers. Further, there are no citations to support the claims of swidden-driven degradation. As swidden agriculture is often misidentified as a source of new degradation, STAP suggests reviewing existing literature and data on the role of swidden agriculture in this degradation, establishing its importance, and including references to support the project's assessment.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	STAP suggests adding indicators to quantify the baseline during the project design.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	The baseline is sufficiently robust at this stage. Suggest quantifying the baseline and identifying indicators during the project design. Also, strongly suggest improving the evidence base for claims about swidden-based degradation, and clarifying the relative importance of this activity and climate impacts on the problems the project seeks to address.
	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;	Does not apply.

	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Does not apply.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	Does not apply.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	<p>A preliminary theory of change could be described as: “The project seeks to promote integrated management of sites in the Mekong River Basin for increased climate resilience of Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang communities vulnerable to floods and droughts, which are expected to worsen under future scenarios.</p> <p>Through three components, the project will implement integrated catchment management (ICM) and integrated urban flood management within the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and the city of Luang Prabang, respectively, for increased climate resilience of rural and urban communities. This approach will ensure that water resources and flood risks are managed in an integrated manner, considering the spatial interlinkages and dependencies between land use, ecosystem health and underlying causes of vulnerability to climate change.”</p>
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project’s objectives?	See above.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	<p>Unsure as an explicit theory of change and assumptions appear to be lacking in the PIF. STAP suggests developing a theory of change, a figure and accompanying narrative, during the project development to describe the causal logic and assumptions. It also will be valuable to use systems analysis to identify the cross-scale linkages and connections between sectors as the theory of change is developed. Refer to STAP’s theory of change primer: http://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p>

	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	It remains unclear how climate data, or an assessment of resilience, adaptation and, or, transformation needs will be used to design, implement, or evaluate interventions.
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?	Does not apply.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Yes, with careful monitoring (component 3), and a good theory of 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?	<p>Yes, the adaptation benefits are articulated clearly. As previously stated, STAP recommends for the assumptions to be identified in the theory of change. Several assumptions underlie the success of the components, which would be valuable to unpack and test during the project implementation. (e.g. "...improved supply of ecosystem services resulting from restoration activities will help build the resilience of communities in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin...").</p> <p>Additionally, validating assumptions about the effect of ecosystem-based adaptation measures in integrated coastal management will increase understanding about its impact as a climate adaptation strategy in the Mekong River Basin. The project team may wish to refer to the following paper on "Mainstreaming ecosystem-based climate change adaptation into integrated water resources management in the Mekong region": https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-017-1161-1</p>
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Unclear. Suggest identifying the barriers and enablers to scaling in the theory of change.

	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, adaptation benefits are defined.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Indicators will be provided in the final project document. In addition to listing the indicators aligned with the results-based framework of the LDCF strategy, STAP suggests identifying indicators to monitor and track progress of the causal links in the theory of change.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project will focus on reducing vulnerability to droughts and floods in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin in the Savannakhet Province. The project also will address flooding in the city of Luang Prabang. Ecosystem-based Adaptation will be applied to rehabilitate and restore ecosystems. Hydrological and climate risk modelling will inform flood management, and adaptation planning.
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 project is innovative in combining hydrological modelling with integrated coastal management and ecosystem-based adaptation to plan and manage for disaster risk management (e.g. floods and droughts). The assumption is that these efforts, combined with capacity building for these technologies and approaches, will generate the knowledge and institutional conditions to scale across temporal and spatial scales. STAP recommends its paper on durability and theory of change - where it lists principles that need attention to achieve scaling: http://www.stapgef.org/achieving-enduring-outcomes-gef-investment ; http://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	On scaling EbA, it is unclear how the project will address the barrier of replicating, or scaling it as its effects tend to be localized. STAP recommends describing the limitations of EbA, and how its temporal and spatial barriers can be addressed. The project team may wish to consult the paper:

		<p>Piggott-McKellar, A. et al. (2019).“What are the barriers to successful communitybased climate change adaptation? A review of grey literature”</p> <p>https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2019.1580688</p>
	<p>Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?</p>	<p>It is possible that both adaptation and transformational change will be required due to climate stressors. STAP encourages the project team to consider uncertainty to cope with the level of change that may take place; therefore, consider systematically different time scales, as well as spatial scales.</p> <p>The theory of change can do this if it is designed to assess how the targeted social-ecological system functions across scales. STAP recommends building systems analysis into the theory of change. This will facilitate an analysis of factors that inhibit, or facilitate, change. STAP’s theory of change primer is a good resource for developing a theory of change based on systems analysis:</p> <p>http://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p>
<p>1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.</p>		<p>Several geo-referenced maps are provided - all of which have useful information (e.g. target sites, flooding and drought)</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?</p>	<p>Some key stakeholders have been identified while others will be defined once a stakeholder mapping takes place. When a stakeholder mapping, and plan, are developed, STAP recommends describing the actors' roles in relation to how they will contribute (individually and collectively) to achieving the adaptation outcomes.</p>

<p>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. Will the project's results framework or logical</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>A gender assessment and action plan will be developed after the PIF is approved. During the process of assessing gender issues, STAP recommends considering whether the full participation of an important stakeholder group is hindered as a result, and describing how will the project address these obstacles.</p>

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?	See above.
<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? • 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>The PIF summarizes the risks the project may face, including risks from climate change, abandonment of ecosystem-based adaptation practices, conflicts between land users, lack of community buy-in, among others.</p> <p>In addition to the climate risks identified in the PIF, STAP recommends addressing the climate resilience measures described to the left. STAP also encourages the project developers to continually test causal links, assumptions, and risks in the theory of change. This process will enable the project team to assess for the resilience of the system – identify how, and where, the system is weak, or strong, in its capacity to deal with disturbances.</p> <p>Additionally, the project team may find it useful to look at the following resources: STAP’s screening guidelines: http://www.stapgef.org/sites/default/files/document/s/GEF%20AGENCY%20RETREAT%20Mar-Apr%202020.pdf World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/ U.S. Agency for International Development Climate Risk Screening and Management Tools: https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool</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?	Yes, the project will build on the knowledge of other projects based on the baseline projects listed in the PIF, and described in the coordination section.
	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 other (climate) projects were used to develop this proposal.
	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 includes a component on monitoring. The theory of change can also serve as a monitoring tool.
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?	The monitoring component will be used to generate knowledge. STAP recommends considering knowledge management metrics, and specifying how the knowledge generated will influence scaling of results. In addition, it would be valuable to link the knowledge strategy to the theory of change.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project describes several methods to disseminate results and lessons. Detailed plans will be described in the project document.

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>

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.