

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10520	
Project Title	Enhancing sustainability of the Transboundary Cambodia - Mekong River Delta Aquifer	
Date of Screening	15 May 2020	
STAP member screener	Blake Ratner	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor</p> <p>STAP welcomes the project from FAO entitled “Enhancing sustainability of the Transboundary Cambodia - Mekong River Delta Aquifer.” The project fills an important gap, with past programming focused primarily on surface flows.</p> <p>Intervention logic is well summarized visually in Figure 1. The project would benefit, however, from identification of barriers to achieving objectives at scale, particularly given the fraught political history between the two countries. There is clear scaling intent, but mechanisms for scaling beyond the target aquifer need elaboration. Outcomes are largely dependent upon the quality of stakeholder engagement processes.</p> <p>Omission of international CSOs among stakeholders contributing technical expertise to design appears to be an important gap. Gender equality importance is noted, but treatment is minimal. Description of KM plans are very high-level. Both would benefit from identification and elaboration of specific mechanisms to address anticipated barriers.</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, fills an important gap, with past programming focused primarily on surface flows.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes, clearly structured.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes, well stated, with clear progression.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Project addresses medium- and long-term hydrological processes; well-targeted to generate benefits in a highly productive ecosystem.
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?	Well stated. Outcomes largely dependent upon quality of stakeholder engagement processes.
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, succinct and clear.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes
	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?	Good identification of related investments, including exemplary summary of areas of past investment focus (Table 2).
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Additional baseline data on the aquifer is required, but this is part of the investment.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes
	For multiple focal area projects:	n/a
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	
	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?	Intervention logic well summarized visually in Figure 1. Would, however, benefit from identification of barriers to achieving objectives at scale, particularly given the fraught political history.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	System analysis and stakeholder engagement will contribute to improved groundwater governance and cross-border cooperation, leading to targeted investments to improve water security.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	TDA addresses clear gaps; plans allow for appropriate flexibility in identification of pilot demonstrations.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Efforts to improve governance grounded in technical cooperation.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Description of mechanisms to achieve governance improvements are sufficiently broad to allow for adaptation.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Realization of GEBs is plausible, in line with IW objectives.

expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing		
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Realization of adaptation benefits is plausible, and in clear focus.
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?	Transboundary character of the system is well substantiated; anticipated gains in ecosystem services (e.g., wetlands functions, fish production, biodiversity) are identified but not quantified. Can be 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
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Not in this section
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Focus on groundwater management is a clearly high-priority in relation to climate resilience.
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?	As stated, comprehensive approach to groundwater systems and management options can be innovative. Focus on nature-based solutions vs built infrastructure engineering can be instructive.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Clear scaling intent, but mechanisms for scaling beyond the target aquifer need elaboration.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information		Map provides general indication of extent of the target aquifer.

<p>and map where the project interventions will take place.</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. 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>Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?</p>	<p>Relevant ministries and agencies appear well covered; identification of national CSOs appears very preliminary; international CSOs are included as a category but not named.</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>Omission of international CSOs among stakeholders contributing technical expertise to design appears to be an important gap. Conservation International and IUCN, among others, are undertaking highly relevant work.</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</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Gender equality importance is noted, but treatment is minimal. Notes relevant policies and potential areas of attention. More specific identification of barriers and approaches to address these should be undertaken.</p>

<p>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>These potential barriers are not identified.</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? • 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>Appropriate identification of effective multi-stakeholder engagement, national approval processes and local participatory processes among areas of high risk.</p> <p>Please consult new STAP Guidance Note on multi-stakeholder dialogue (available prior to June 2020 Council meetings).</p> <p>Climate also appropriately identified as high risk; mitigation measures should address more than consequences at pilot-level.</p>

<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Good identification of relevant investments, and appropriate potential focus of learning exchange identified for proposed FOLUR project in Vietnam. Would benefit from similar identification of learning potential from the wide variety of other projects.</p>
	<p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p>	<p>Specific lessons of prior projects not well specified.</p>
	<p>Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?</p>	<p>Given consultations this is likely, but these should be better specified.</p>
	<p>How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?</p>	
	<p>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?</p>	<p>Mechanisms for harvesting and sharing of lessons is presumably a part of the periodic consultations planned; but the mechanisms should be spelled out.</p>
<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>Description of KM plans are very high-level. Would benefit from elaboration of specific mechanisms, including approaches to monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of past efforts, generating lessons and sharing these through diverse communication channels, targeted (in language and accessibility) to key influencer groups.</p>
	<p>What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?</p>	

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.

<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>