

Planning for integration: Addressing multiple benefits at project identification stage and in project design, Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, February 2016

1. Introduction

The following refers to a request from the GEF to develop criteria to evaluate multiple focal area projects. In so doing, it became evident that there is no clear definition of what constitutes a good MFA project. Based on STAP's experience in screening projects, we have therefore identified the following essential characteristics of good MFA projects:

- The project objective would not be achievable by addressing a single focal area.
- There are linkages and drivers of environmental degradation common to several focal areas.
- Integration of the different focal areas contributes to maximizing environmentally sustainable development¹, and minimizing trade-offs in relation to the project's objective.
- The project will develop a theory of change which will allow for a robust monitoring and assessment of each of the focal area outputs and specific indicators contributing to the project's objective.

The following was developed to address these four characteristics of MFA projects. This tool draws from a number of approaches and processes, including a theory of change based on a log-frame approach, and resilience thinking. The starting point to the matrix is stakeholder engagement and mapping governance arrangements. This is based on the notion that change is driven by human intervention, and governance is the process of changing and stewarding the rules (institutions). The identification of the problem emerges from the stakeholder engagement (scoping), after which a thorough system assessment is undertaken to identify the stresses, shocks and thresholds of the system, as well as the system's fundamental characteristics. A learning and knowledge management component is included to capture learning through the iterative process within the theory of change.

This screening tool will allow for the consistent screening of future MFA projects. It will ensure consistency among STAP screens in this regard, while concomitantly providing guidance to the GEF Secretariat, and for similar project review processes. In addition, this screening tool can be used by single focal area projects given its emphasis on a 'systems approach' to project design. Within this document, the term 'systems' refers to a social-ecological system, which can be defined as the interaction of ecosystems and humans with reciprocal feedback and interdependence. The idea behind this matrix is based on the growing understanding that project design for complex situations should be based on comprehensive problem with stakeholders, and asking good questions rather than carefully mapping out plans for achieving specific objectives.

¹ Bierbaum, R., Stocking, M., Bowuman, H., Cowie, A., Diaz, S., Granit, J., Patwardhan, A., Sims, R., Duron, G., Gorsevski, V., Hammond, T., Neretin, L., Wellington-Moore, C. (2014). "Delivering Global Environmental Benefits for Sustainable Development. Report of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to the 5th GEF Assembly, Mexico 2014". Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C.

2. Criteria for review of MFA projects and assessing resilience²

Review criteria (Theory of Change)	Questions	Advice from STAP/GEF Secretariat at PIF stage	Comments from STAP/GEF Secretariat at CEO endorsement stage	Agency(ies) response(s)
1. Stakeholders Engagement and Governance	Is the institutional landscape/social system mapped to include stakeholders relevant to the multiple focal areas, and at the appropriate project phases? ³			
	Does the project specify how the different, and combined, roles of the stakeholders will contribute to (and facilitate) reporting on multiple global environmental outcomes?			
	What policies, norms or administrative practices (i.e. institutions) are being changed that increase the opportunities for maximizing global environmental benefits?			
2. Scoping	Does the problem statement/analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas?			
	Is the objective ⁴ well defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal area objectives or programs?			
	What are the lessons learned from similar/related past GEF and non-GEF interventions? How did these lessons inform the design of a multiple focal area project?			
	Do project results/indicators of success support multiple focal area targets and global environmental benefits?			

² The matrix is based on the Resilience, Adaptation Pathways, Transformation (RAPTA) Framework developed by CSIRO and STAP: O’Connell, D., Abel, N., Grigg, N., Maru, Y., Butler, J., Cowie, A., Stone-Jovicich, S., Walker, B., Wise, R., Ruhweza, A., Pearson, L., Ryan, P., Stafford Smith, M. (2016). “Designing projects in a rapidly changing world: Guidelines for embedding resilience, adaptation and transformation into sustainable development projects. (Version 1.0)”. Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C. <http://www.stapgef.org/planning-for-resilience-in-a-rapidly-changing-world/>

³ Different stakeholders will need to be involved in the PIF and project design phases. This means that it might not be relevant to involve all of the stakeholders throughout.

⁴ The project objective should reflect the desired state of the system encompassed by the selected focal areas.

3. System assessment: risks and assumptions	Is there a demonstrated relationship between the activities, outputs, and outcomes between focal areas?			
	Have the system components and key relationships between focal areas been mapped to fully describe the system functions (e.g. livelihoods, and social and biophysical variables' interactions)?			
	Are the expected, or unexpected, thresholds ⁵ , stresses or shocks that the system might face (e.g. crop disease, drought) described? How will they be managed and monitored to maintain sustainability?			
	Have scale interactions and temporal dynamics been described in the project proposal?			
	Are the possible states that the system can potentially be in described? This could be either the preferred state as expressed by stakeholders, or the state reached by crossing thresholds unintentionally. ⁶			
	Does the project define how the system has dealt with previous, or present, shocks and stresses (e.g., through adaptive capacity strategies) and whether the project shows that addressing them would require integration from multiple focal areas?			

⁵ Identifying thresholds includes a shared understanding among all stakeholders about the nature of expected shocks, the critical points of “no return” that hamper recovery to shocks, and the system properties that are helpful for recovering from shocks. This will inform the design of intervention options and adaptive implementation pathways, which is undertaken in the project design phase.

⁶ It will be important to iterate through the various components of a resilience/adaptation/transformation assessment (some steps listed briefly in this matrix and in complete form in the RAPTA guidelines) to check that the preferred state is on the path towards meeting the desired objective(s)/goal.

4. Options and Adaptive Pathways	Can the objective be achieved through small interventions, or will greater changes be needed?			
	Does the project consider multiple pathways in which the objective can be achieved? This includes analysing the trade-offs of the various outputs and outcomes supported by multiple focal area objectives. ⁷			
	Does the project design include adaptive management provisions?			
5. Learning and Knowledge Management	Does the project involve a learning/ knowledge management component, or activities, that focus on assessing and monitoring progress on advancing multiple focal area objectives? ⁸			
	Is a learning and knowledge dissemination strategy defined for the project?			

⁷ Multiple pathways will be important to consider when designing the project.

⁸ This question is linked to developing a comprehensive learning and knowledge management plan – see #5.