Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID	10396	
Project Title	Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the sustainable use areas of the State Subsystem of Protected Areas (SEAP) of Ecuador and its buffer zones.	
Date of Screening	6-Dec-19	
STAP member Screener	Rosie Cooney	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment		**Concur**: STAP welcomes the project entitled "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within the sustainable use areas of the State Subsystem of Protected Areas (SEAP) of Ecuador and its buffer zones." Overall STAP believes that this is a solid project with a high likelihood of success. The project supports strong local consultation and buy-in, and recognition of the practical and operational barriers to achieving sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. STAP is concerned, however, over how well the underlying economic drivers of agricultural encroachment into PAs have been addressed, and whether the project takes an unduly optimistic view of the potential to reconcile conservation and local livelihood generation. Finally, illegal extraction from PAs is cited as a driver of threats to biodiversity but is not specifically addressed in the project.
Part I: Project Information		
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	The objective is "Promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and optimize the livelihoods of local inhabitants through the application of an integrated landscape management approach within the State Subsystem of Protected Areas (SEAP), focused on sustainable use areas within PAs as well as adjacent buffer zones, and to build capacities of decision makers for scaling-up throughout the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP)". This is not very clear, and unnecessarily long and complex.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes. Component 2 seems inappropriately named - it does include capacity building, but also developing regulations and establishing new institutional arrangements. And the conceptual distinction between Output 2 and 3 is unclear - component 3 also includes capacity building for more biodiversity-friendly management in the buffer zones. Is the second about establishing the institutional, regulatory and government framework and capacity, whereas the second is about supporting inhabitants to follow biodiversity-friendly practices?
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	This project appears to provide essential elements of achieving these benefits, but it is questionable whether this project alone will achieve them. For instance, better management of sustainable use areas would seem to require more than just an information system, guidelines and training, such as ongoing implementation, monitoring to ensure they are achieving objectives, etc - are other programs going to achieve this? See below for more detail.
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?	In component 1, it seems unlikely that one training program is enough to change practice - what about monitoring and follow-up to ensure practices on the ground have changed? In component 2, are all barriers being addressed here?

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?	The key problems are identified as escalating encroachment into NPs and illegal extraction from them. But the deeper drivers behind the expansion of the agricultural frontier are not addressed - what drives this? Do the sustainable use zones as outlined in the CODA allow for sustainable use of forest products (sustainable NTFP collection/hunting/fishing/fuelwood or timber use?) This would seem to be more potentially consistent with principles of sustainable use than agriculture, which always involves removal of forest/natural ecosystems. para 5 (p18) indicates activities in buffer zones " must contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives of the National System of Protected Areas", but what exactly are these objectives?
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	The barriers to PAs effectively achieving their objectives are identified as weaknesses in national level governance frameworks (particularly lack of monitoring/accessible information/detailed regulatory framework for newly created land categories inside and outside of PAs); lack of integration of PAs into local level planning frameworks (reflecting lack of local support for PAs); lack of coordination at policy and technical level among different sectors/levels of government; lack of technical/operational capacity of local government actors; and lack of will, incentives and capacity of local actors to implement more sustainable practices. The fundamental economic drivers toward encroachment and illegal extraction don't seem to be adequately addressed. In para 12 and 17 it is assumed that PAs do in fact benefit local people, but that they just don't realise it, and this can be changed with more knowledge. But PAs often do impose a real cost on local people - has this possibility been considered, and is there clear evidence that these PAs do indeed benefit local people? Also, the text assumes that a failure of collective action to achieve sustainability, leading to everyone's detriment (a classic tragedy of the commons) can be cured simply with more knowledge. This is unlikely to be the case - there are many examples of commons tragedies where people are fully aware they are undermining their long-term future, but the short-term incentives mean that they continue the destructive behaviour. Typically this is because either they have no option, or because they know that if they don't, others will. Solving such problems typically takes long-term institution-building to enable collective management. Para 18 is unclear: what exactly is the barrier, and what would overcoming this barrier look like? Is it that unsustainable activity is more economically advantageous than sustainable?
	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?	
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	No, not really. A list of other funds and programs are listed, but what they will achieve in the absence of this project is not clearly articulated. This is better articulated in the "reasoning for incremental cost" section, but remains quite vague. There is a note in the text (para 21) highlighting a discrepancy in figures regarding MAE expenditures.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	No.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	No.
	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;	
	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?	There is a general TOC articulated (primarily para 31 and from 36 on), but it doesn't relate interventions specifically to overcoming barriers and addressing drivers of threat, in a way that sets out a clear logical pathway(s) of steps, with accompanying assumptions, to achieve the objective. The TOC is more clearly articulated in the "Reasoning for incremental cost" section, which articulates how components address the different barriers. However, this still does not address how the intervention addresses the deeper drivers of change, and particularly the economic incentives for unsustainable activities, which appear to be a fundamental driving force.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	p11: why does one column refer to "poaching" and the other to "hunting", when presumably it is the same activity in each?
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	As highlighted above, while the project's interventions seem very important, and crucial steps to achieving outcomes, it is hard to see that alone they will achieve them. The outputs in component 1 (while important) seem unlikely on their own to achieve better management of sustainable use areas, as indicated in Output 1.1, particularly given the indication given that local inhabitants lack incentives or capacity to stop unsustainable practices. Output 1.1 should perhaps be re-worded in line with Component 1, indicating that this is just establishing governance conditions for improved management. In Output 3.2.1, surely the incentives/benefits should only be provided to products produced in a biodiversity-friendly way from the SU/buffer zones, not any products from these areas, as the proposal appears to indicate? Also, is the reference to "non-forest products" meant to say "non-timber forest products"? There doesn't seem to be any reference to illegal/unsustainable hunting or other extraction here - how will this be addressed?
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	The mechanisms of change are plausible but there is no identification of underlying assumptions. This is an important weakness.
	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	No, but the need to adapt in light of monitoring results is recognised. In this respect, however, the proposal states "A mid-term review and terminal evaluation will be carried out with the purpose of informing and advising on the implementation of the project"; the terminal evaluation will not be able to inform the implementation of the project - only the mid-term can do this.
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?	Yes, this seems likely.
	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, 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 explicitly defined?	Yes.

	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
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?	Yes, to some extent - while the approaches aren't particularly innovative they do represent innovations in the national context. Overcoming silo'd governance hierarchies and reconciling conservation and livelihood activities are reasonably innovative. The project seeks to foster implementation of a national high-level legal framework (CODA) that is itself innovative, for instance in recognising the need to recognise and formalise the rights of IPLCs living in national parks, and in enabling and supporting sustainable use by local inhabitants within PAs.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes.
	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 and map where the project interventions will take place.		No map appears to be included.
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?	The strong consultation at this stage is very welcome, and particularly the gaining of feedback and assurance of support from indigenous and local populations, whose buy-in will be critical for success of the project.
	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?	These are clearly articulated and appear comprehensive.
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?	Yes. The site-specific information on gender roles is very welcome.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	Yes, some clear measures are articulated to address these.

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?	
	Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?	With respect to the second risk, it is assumed that technical solutions can be found that effectively conserve biodiversity while avoiding costs to landholders. Is this really a safe assumption? We know there is often some level of trade-off between biodiversity and development/livelihoods generation - how will these be managed, if present? On the third, meaningful participation in decision-making and management would probably be more effective in securing local buy-in than one-way processes of "raising awareness" and "training", which have no real connection to "ownership".
	For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:	
	· 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?	These are not clearly articulated. However, the activities of the project are themselves aimed at building climate resilience.
	· 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?	
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 could be much stronger. There are many other projects running that appears to be working on related issues - surely there are important learnings to be gained from them? What about experiences on sustainable use and buffer zone management from other countries and regions?
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	No, this is rather weak.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	

	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	
	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?	
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?	Little detail is provided in this section, but more is given in section f (p31). Overall this appears sound and well-thought through, with establishment of information-sharing systems and protocols a key feature of the project. However, learning from other projects could be much stronger.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	
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 *"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."*	
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.	