Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID	10409	
Project Title	Mainstreaming biodiversity-based tourism in Thailand to support sustainable tourism development	
Date of Screening	9-Dec-19	
STAP member Screener	Rosie Cooney	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment		**Minor issues to be considered during project design:** STAP welcomes this project focused on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into tourism development in Thailand. The project combines national-level elements establishing an integrated enabling framework with site-based work in and around a set of PAs to integrate biodiversity conservation considerations into tourism planning and management and foster community-based, biodiversity-friendly enterprises. Overall these activities appear well-planned to achieve their goal. However, it is unclear whether at site level the project is aimed at improving biodiversity outcomes or averting likely declines - further clarity on the baseline and alternative scenario is required to clarify this. The concept of "biodiversity-based tourism" requires definition. An explicit and comprehensive TOC is absent, and including this would clarify how the proposed set of activities will address drivers, their root causes, and overcome identified barriers to change in order to reach the desired impact, and would enable articulation of key assumptions at each stage.
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 "To mainstream biodiversity conservation into tourism development and operations at national and local levels through policy integration and development of an integrated model for biodiversity-based tourism that avoids tourism impacts on biodiversity and supports biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods improvement." This is very wordy, convoluted - the last half could have been omitted. Given the extraordinary increase in tourism in Thailand, its reliance on natural ecosystems, and the threats to biodiversity it poses, this objective is clearly related to the problem diagnosis.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	The project pursues 3 outcomes, summarised as i. stronger policies, standards and methodologies for sustainable nature-based tourism at national and site level; ii. improved on-the-ground practices for biodiversity-friendly tourism at selected sites iii. Upscaling and replication nationally. These all support the project objective.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	This is clear.

	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes; 104K ha of terrestrial and 2K marine PAs under improved management; 1K ha landscape under improved management for biodiversity, across one contiguous landscape. Note, however, that improved management doesn't equate to improved biodiversity status - the proposal makes clear that expansion of tourism in this area is foreseen, and it is unclear whether the status of biodiversity is expected to improve, or just that the management of the impacts of tourism will improve, making the habitat loss and other impacts of this tourist expansion less damaging than they otherwise would be.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, if project is successful.
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?	
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 problems are made fairly clear, though there is little attempt to describe a system by separating out the problems and their drivers and root causes. The recognition of elite capture of tourism benefits limits the potential for tourism to provide incentives for conserving biodiversity is very welcome.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	The referencing is very poor. Many sections have no referencing at all. Sometimes reports are mentioned, as for TRAFFIC reports in the IWT section, but no references are given. Weak and inefficient mechanisms for protection at site level is given as a driver of threat, but this is not further discussed under barriers - are there no clear barriers to changing this? Likewise, in the description of barrier 4, it would be helpful to relate this back directly to the driver previously highlighted of the monopolisation of tourism benefits by large/foreign companies. Overall the discussion of barriers is not well-connected to the previous discussion of problems/drivers - this section should clarify what factors may make addressing the problems/drivers difficult. Here the entrenched economic self-interest of those who benefit from unsustainable tourism developments, and likely push-back against limitations on this, is surely an important barrier?
	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?	

	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	In the baseline section this is not clearly spelt out, not in the sense of providing a clear indication of what would happen without the project, in a way that justifies the quantified benefits and their incremental costs. What exactly would not have happened without this project, that will happen with it? For example, in component 2 described later, the provincial work in Prachuap Kiri Khan, it is not clear whether it is envisaged that the foreseen tourism development is going ahead and the aim of the project is to make the impacts less negative than they otherwise would be, or whether the intervention will actually improve the biodiversity situation on the ground? It reads very much as the former - that tourism is set to increase in this province and that the main aim of the proposal is to reduce its otherwise very negative impacts. Is this what is intended? This is an important point that is not clarified anywhere in the proposal. Note that the "bio-economy" concept outlined in this section is hard to relate to biodiversity conservation - from what is presented here it seems involve intensive production of various commodities, with no clear link to (wild) biodiversity, and the statement that it is an excellent foundation for integrating biodiversity into development is hard to understand. Note, however, that the identification of the baseline in relation to the project's benefits is more clearly explained in the justication for incremental cost reasoning (p32). Note, however, that here the ongoing and foreseen degradation of natural habitats due to tourism is not included.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	See above.
	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	No, this is weak. Many other relevant ongoing or past initiatives are mentioned, and explicit articulation of the lessons from them for this project would have been very valuable.
	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?	While there is a paragraph on TOC, there is no real theory of change, which would set out one or more pathways by which the project's interventions would address underlying drivers/causes and overcome barriers in order to effect change. A TOC would also enable identification of the assumptions that underlie each step of the transition toward the more sustainable state. However, there is at least a partial implicit theory of change in that within each component, the proposal articulates how this addresses various drivers/barriers to change. But this would be far clearer and more convincing with a graphic representation that showed how the components collectively and incrementally addressed the problems and moved the system toward the desired end state.

	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	In component 2, part of the aim seems to be to increase benefits from tourism to local communities, but they (or their representative orgs) don't seem to be included in the tourism platform to be established. The relationship of local communities to tourism in the relevant PAs (in component 2) is not made clear - is the idea that communities will benefit from PA tourism? How? Is the idea of the final element to create wholly new tourism products, or divert some of the current tourism into biodiversity-friendly, community-based activities?
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	This does appear to be a sound set of activities/outputs/outcomes to achieve the objectives. It does appear to be a very ambitious suite of activities for the budget. The project at times seems to equate community-based tourism and biodiversity-based tourism - for instance in component 3. Here the mobile application is aimed at expanding biodiversity-based tourism, but is described as a marketplace for tourists and community-based tourism enterprises (only). But clearly not all CB tourism is biodiversity-based, and vice versa. Is this about expanding all BB-tourism, all CB-tourism, or what? Clarifying with much more precision what is meant when these terms are used would be helpful. Component 3 is an interesting approach, but who will identify whether a tourism business is biodiversity-friendly, and on what information base? This could easily be abused unless there are very clear verifiable standards for what constitutes biodiversity-friendly.
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	The concept of biodiversity-based tourism is not defined anywhere. It is presented as a new concept in Thailand, but clearly there is a huge amount of tourism based on biodiversity (coral reefs etc) going on already - what is different about the concept presented here? just that it is a sustainable form of biodiversity-based tourism? (And how, if at all, is this different from the more common term nature-based tourism?)
	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Not explicitly.
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
	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, but see comment under "Outcomes", above.
	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, but see comment under "Outcomes", above.

	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?	None explicit.
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, it is not particularly innovative in a global context, but within the Thai context, it appears so.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes, and this is explicit.
	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.		
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?	Yes, this appears sound and comprehensive.
	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?	
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
	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	Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?	The risks that powerful large/foreign firms will continue to expand biodiversity-unfriendly tourism in Thailand is not highlighted as a risk - but surely this is a very familiar pattern? Is there full confidence that revised government policies will be fully implemented and enforced?
	Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?	Yes - some are covered.
	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?	Climate change impacts on natural habitats are highlighted. These impacts have been addressed by indicating local communities and tour operators will be engaged in design, and that in the PPG phase opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation into the activities will be explored, and that CC vulnerability/adaptation will considered in development of biodiversity-based tourism products. This is a rather vague response - it is hard to see what is meant by the latter point, for example.
	· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?	Not explicitly, apart from the above.
	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	See above.
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	None explicitly mentioned.
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?	Some, but this could be strengthened.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	This could be considerably strengthened. What has worked elsewhere to strengthen nature-based tourism and reduce impacts of unsustainable tourism? What tends to go wrong in such efforts? The proposal contains no learning on this subject from Thailand or elsewhere.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	No - in some cases (e.g. BioFin) the proposal states there are lessons to be learnt, but not what those lessons are.
	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?	There is a good link outlined with BioFin and a GEF project on natural capital, and explicit consideration of how lessons emerging will be fed in to this project. There is a strong link to TRAFFIC and GWP projects also.
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?	These appear sound.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	These are well developed.
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.	