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| Part I: Project Information | | Response |
| GEF ID | | 10204 |
| Project Title | | Transforming agricultural systems and strengthening local economies in high biodiversity areas of India through sustainable landscape management and public-private finance |
| Date of Screening | | 24-May-19 |
| STAP member Screener | | Graciela Metternicht |
| STAP secretariat screener | | Guadalupe Duron |
| STAP Overall Assessment | | <p>STAP rating: minor issues to be considered during project design.</p> <p>STAP welcomes UNEP's and IUCN's project "Transforming agricultural systems and strengthening local economies in high biodiversity areas of India through sustainable landscape management and public-private finance". The project proposes innovative financing mechanisms to encourage greater adoption of sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka regions. Other innovative aspects are the proposed integrated landscape management through sustainable farming practices such as Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), blended finance with the private sector, and the use of supply chains as a means to manage and mitigate risks resulting from degradation. Additional policy innovation is shown through the proposed linking of project outputs with the country's commitments to set LDN targets. STAP recommends that the project team consider the checklist for Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes devised to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners design effective Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP). https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/LDN%20TPP%20checklist%20final%20draft%20040918.pdf</p> <p>STAP welcomes the clear identification of drivers and barriers to project implementation, and strongly encourages the project team to prepare a detailed Theory of Change. This exercise will facilitate project planning, including the identification of the desired vision (long term outcomes). In addition, it would be useful to validate the assumptions underlying the outcomes on environmental certification and sustainable financing to contribute to the evidence base. The realization of transformational change will require barriers to scaling to be assessed and addressed. These barriers include addressing differences in stakeholders' perspectives. STAP encourages the project team to consider applying the Resilience, Adaptation Pathway and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework to assess climate change resilience, farm resilience, and to identify opportunities for transformational change through stakeholder engagement and governance. STAP also recommends acknowledging the socio-environmental impacts of deforestation when developing the country projects, because agricultural expansion for commodities may lead to complex impacts on land rights, and land tenure. Applying a framework that assesses trade-offs between benefits is highly encouraged. STAP recommends building on two approaches: the RAPTA framework, and UNCCD's Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. Lastly, given the large number of co-financing actors from public and private sector, STAP recommends the establishment of a Project Steering Committee, which ideally should be involved in the development and/or refinement of the project's Theory of Change to ensure all the necessary preconditions for success are identified.</p> |
| Part I: Project Information | What STAP looks for | Response |
| B. Indicative Project Description Summary | | |
| Project Objective | Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis? | Yes. |
| Project components | A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives? | Yes. |

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| Outcomes | A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. | Yes, the outcomes include important global environmental benefits. The potential of achieving global environmental outcomes is high if the theory of change is revisited and the necessary adjustments are made to the impact pathway. |
| | Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits? | |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | |
| 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? | Same as above. |
| 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 described. The status, and drivers of, land degradation and biodiversity are described at the national level, and for each target site. The problem analysis also discusses (generally) how climate change is affecting agricultural productivity and biodiversity. The underlying drivers for land degradation and biodiversity loss are also described, and a good analysis of barriers to transformative scale uptake of the proposed initiatives of ZBNF and sustainable agriculture are presented and analysed. For example, the connections between pesticide pollution, quality of groundwater, soil health, land resources and biodiversity are described. Barriers associated with embedding climate resilience in institutional frameworks, and activities are also described. |
| | Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references? | |
| | 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? | Yes, the baseline is defined and identifies initiatives the project can catalyze to replicate best practices and scale learning. |
| | Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits? | |
| | Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project? | |
| | 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? | |

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| 3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project | What is the theory of change? | <p>The project aims to achieve transformational change through sustainable land management/sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The project will apply financial mechanisms to induce market transformations for commodities (e.g. coffee). At the landscape level, the project will build on sustainable governance to manage land restoration, and improve ecosystem services.</p> <p>An illustration, or narrative about, the theory of change does not appear to be included in the PIF. Thus, STAP recommends including the theory of change (narrative and illustration) in the project document. It will be valuable to describe the assumptions and impact pathways to reach the project objective and achieve transformational change. The Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework describes how to build a theory of change while pursuing resilience, adaptation, and transformational change. See: http://www.stagef.org/rapta-guidelines</p> <p>STAP also recommends acknowledging the socio-environmental impacts of deforestation when developing the country projects. This is because agricultural expansion for commodities may lead to complex social impacts that need to be reflected in the supply chains. Applying a framework that assesses trade-off between benefits and manages leakage of deforestation is highly encouraged. STAP recommends two approaches: Resilience, Adaptation Pathway and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework: http://www.stagef.org/rapta-guidelines; and, UNCCD's Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality: https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/guide-scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality</p> |
| | What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes? | |
| | · What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | |
| | · Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions? | |
| | · Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes? | |
| 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? | The project has good potential to achieve the incremental activities, especially if the theory of change recognizes the assumptions underlying the outcomes, the innovative financial and institutional mechanisms. |
| | LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change? | |

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| 6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF) | Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable? | <p>Yes, the global benefits are defined, and core indicators for land and forest restoration, and biodiversity conservation have been identified. During project design, it would be valuable to identify the methods for measuring and monitoring the indicators, and to describe them in the project document.</p> <p>The project will benefit from adopting the core indicators of the LDN and additional local indicators adapted the objectives and related activities the project proposes; it is important that a baseline be established at the beginning of the project so that realistic estimations can be done on whether the expected targets have been met at the end of the project. The Conceptual framework for LDN https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/guide-scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality has a module describing how to estimate the three core indicators of LDN. Furthermore, the good practice guidance for indicator 15.3.1 https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-10/Good%20Practice%20Guidance_SDG%20Indicator%2015.3.1_Version%201.0.pdf summarises a suite of alternatives that countries can use at national and sub-national level to estimate land degradation and advances towards LDN.</p> |
| | Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment? | |
| | Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined? | |
| | Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation? | |
| | 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? | <p>The project focuses on financial innovation to encourage greater adoption of sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. STAP recommends drawing from the evidence on environmental certification (Rainfall Alliance Certification) and sustainable finance ("Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) to develop the project. In this regard, STAP encourages the project developers to cite papers supporting this evidence. Additionally, it would be valuable to identify formative questions, based on the assumptions underlying the outcomes on environmental certification and sustainable financing, to contribute to their evidence base.</p> <p>Putting meaning behind the concept of transformational change will require for barriers to scaling to be assessed and addressed. These barriers include addressing differences in stakeholders' perspectives, which often characterize cross-sectoral and polycentric governance systems, such as this project. STAP recommends applying the Resilience, Adaptation Pathway and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework to assess for resilience, and identify opportunities for transformational change through stakeholder engagement and governance principles.</p> <p>STAP also recommends strengthening the evidence base of the effectiveness of certification programs (component 3) in generating global, national, regional and local environmental benefits. STAP's advice on design environmental certification components can be found in its paper "Environmental Certification and the Global Environment Facility": http://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Environmental-Certification-and-the-GEF.pdf</p> |

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| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | |
| | 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. | | Maps and coordinates for the project sites are provided for each target area. |
| 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? | STAP suggests for the project developers to describe the stakeholder plan the project will apply. Governance plans also should identified for the project. See comments under innovation. Additionally, project developers may wish to consider conditions that improve policies, and that modify behavior of supply chain actors through different forms and levels of information – as well as other aspects that influence governance arrangements in the supply chain system. This effort entails mapping how information in the supply chain is used to: 1) navigate systems thinking and complexity (e.g. what are the dominant trade flows and patterns of ownership and governance behind them); 2) manage risks (e.g. what are the greatest risks to GEBs); 3) improve conditions (e.g. what incentives are needed to improve conditions) and 4) assess progress (e.g. is change occurring at the right pace and scale?). The following paper discusses these issues further, which will be useful to consider in the project design: Gardner, T.A. “Transparency and sustainability in global commodity supply chains”. (2018). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X18301736 |
| | 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? | STAP is pleased the project will conduct a gender analysis during the project design. In addition to this analysis, STAP recommends integrating gender elements into the theory of change. The gender analysis should guide the development of gender-responsive activities, as gender analysis per se is insufficient to empower women. The publication of Collantes et al (2018) Moving towards a twin agenda: gender equality and land degradation neutrality provides clear guidelines on gender-responsive approaches to address land degradation through sustainable land management as envisaged in components of this project. Available at: https://www.unsworks.unsw.edu.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=UNSWORKS&docid=unsworks_modsunsworks_52177&fromSitemap=1 |
| | Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed? | |

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| <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?</p> | <p>The risks have been identified initially. STAP recommends for the risks to be described further – including identifying how climate change will affect the outcomes. It also would be valuable to describe the climate projections (temperature and precipitation) for the target sites (if possible), or the targeted region. If the project develops a good theory of change these risks can be accounted as external factors that may impede delivery of the outputs, and through revisiting of the theory of change adequate alternative management practices or interventions could be identified.</p> <p>When developing the project, STAP recommends addressing the following questions on climate risks:</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>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? | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? | |
| <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>Yes, the project is linking to initiatives on which it can build upon in an important manner.</p> |
| | <p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p> | |
| | <p>Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?</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> | |

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| <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>STAP welcomes component four on monitoring, evaluation and learning. Revisiting the theory of change to inform monitoring and learning will be essential.</p> |
| | <p>What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?</p> | |
| <p>STAP advisory response</p> | <p>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</p> | |
| <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> | |
| <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> | |

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| | <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> | |
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