

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10717
Project Title	Green and Inclusive Recovery in Mexico (GreenMex): Making high-value ecosystems and rural livelihoods more resilient and sustainable in a post COVID-19 scenario
Date of Screening	November 25, 2020
STAP member screener	Rosie Cooney
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Concur</p> <p>STAP welcomes this interesting and innovative green recovery project from FAO to make high value ecosystems more resilient and sustainable in Mexico (a.k.a. “GreenMex Project”). This is a complex and ambitious program, which is well researched and organized and will likely achieve significant environmental and social benefits.</p> <p>The project includes a detailed theory of change, as well as underlying assumptions. A separate climate risk assessment has been included as part of the project which is very comprehensive and covers all of the issues identified by STAP (i.e. climate risk to 2050, sensitivity, mitigation measures, etc.).</p> <p>Importantly, STAP finds this project to be very innovative for several reasons. It acknowledges and responds to the COVID crisis by incorporating measures to ‘build back better’ for a green recovery. In part, this is done through embracing Nature based Solutions, such as restoration and increased protection. However, the most innovative aspect of this project has to do with its effort to mainstream biodiversity into a social program that is meant to alleviate poverty in rural areas.</p> <p>It will be important for this project to make linkages to a related GEF project proposed for this work program from UNDP in Mexico to foster sustainable, legal and traceable use and trade of wild native species (GEF ID 10689) – STAP is pleased to see that this connection has been noted in the PIF with plans to coordinate.</p>

	<p>Finally, STAP appreciates the project’s use of spatial analysis to prioritize target regions (Figure 1) – this could be a model for other GEF projects. However, along those same lines, STAP would like to see more information on how this, and other data and information (including climate) will be incorporated into the geospatial portal, which is mentioned but not elaborated.</p>	
<p>Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary</p>	<p>What STAP looks for</p>	<p>Response</p>
<p>Project Objective</p>	<p>Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?</p>	<p>The project objective is “to mainstream biodiversity conservation, integrated landscape management and ecosystem connectivity into social policies and programs in Mexico.” To do this, the project will build on the SV Program, the flagship social program aiming to reduce poverty of agricultural households living in (or adjacent to) areas with forest restoration potential.</p>
<p>Project components</p>	<p>A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives?</p>	<p>Yes. The main activities to be implemented under this project include: i) strengthening stakeholders’ capacities for the recognition, valuation and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services; ii) mainstreaming environmental criteria in the SV Program; iii) strengthening territorial governance to improve social representation in decision-making processes; iv) implementing agroforestry systems that rescue ancestral practices while adopting new knowledge and practices; v) promoting ecosystem connectivity through landscape restoration, reforestation and community-based forestry management; and vi) developing market-based tools to promote the inclusive participation of SV beneficiaries in the value-chain of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and underutilized native species (with emphasis on women, youth and indigenous people).</p>

Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	No explicitly, but NbS activities such as reforestation and restoration will confer adaptation benefits.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes
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?	Yes
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 Ministry of Welfare's Sembrando Vida (SV) program does not include biodiversity standards to ensure environmental sustainability and ecosystem connectivity, beyond legal prohibitions forbidding government agricultural subsidies in certain forest areas. This provides an excellent opportunity for biodiversity mainstreaming.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes. Agriculture is identified as the main drivers of deforestation and ecosystem fragmentation and degradation. And biodiversity loss in Mexico is attributed to two major threats and root causes: i) habitat loss and fragmentation, particularly in marginalized rural areas adjacent to globally significant natural areas; and ii) unsustainable natural resources use /overexploitation due to substitution of monocultures and commercial agricultural plantations and unsustainable practices in productive landscapes. Very detailed and well-researched information is provided about the threats to biodiversity for all of the selected landscapes, including maps.

		Barriers are similarly well articulated, divided into categories (i.e. institutional, governance, technical and market).
	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?	Yes. Baseline activities – in terms of current government programs – are well defined and quite robust (i.e. CONAP, CONFOR, Banca Social, etc.)
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project’s benefits?	Yes
	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;	N/A
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	N/A
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	N/A
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	The theory of change is presented on page 40. It captures the elements of the project in a clear and coherent manner, including shorter term and longer term outcomes, which combined should achieve the ultimate objective to ‘protect and enhance biodiversity.’ Includes underlying assumptions.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Essentially that key activities (see below) will form the basis for a green recovery through technical assistance and the development of market instruments and sustainable ventures. These will help to mainstream biodiversity in various ways that will also lead to a reduction in rural poverty and reduction in the loss of biodiversity (and possible enhancement through protected areas and restoration)

	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	Specific activities include: review of regulatory framework, impact assessments and socio-economic analyses, strategy for farmer learning communities, green recovery training program, support for the establishment of new areas destined to voluntary conservation (ADVCs), development of business models for BD products, capacity building, social bank feasibility analysis, geospatial platform, communication strategy.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Yes.
	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 really.
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?	N/A
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?	Yes, the project includes very specific indicators responding to the GEF RBM framework (i.e. ha, CO2 avoided, beneficiaries) Table 1 (p. 51) disaggregates GEBs by selected landscapes, which is helpful.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	\$10 million / 100,000 ha PA newly created / 133,325 ha restored land (forests and ag) / 3.8 million ha under improved management / 508,546 CO2 (direct) avoided + 1,429,077 Co2 (indirect) avoided / 370,878 beneficiaries.
	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?	Yes – indicators provided. There is mention of a geospatial platform – not sure how these data will be captured or integrated but that would be interesting and useful.

	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	NbS activities will increase the project's resilience to climate change (restoration, protection, etc.) as will crop diversification.
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, for several reasons. The project supports nature-based solutions to address the pre-existing social, economic and environmental challenges worsened by the health crisis and economic downturn due to COVID-19. Mainstreaming biodiversity into existing poverty initiatives is unique by going beyond merely accounting for 'co-benefits' of environmental projects. This should also increase the likelihood of durability, combined with plans to establish financial and compensatory mechanisms for sustainable agriculture and forestry practices (p. 52).
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	A separate section on scaling is not provided. Any scaling mentioned in this PIF refers to the upscaling of NbS in the SV program, which is a major component of the project.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Both.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Several maps are provided throughout the PIF. No lat/long or specific coordinates are provided. However, the project clearly uses GIS such that shapefiles for the project areas including the new ADVCS will likely be available in the future.
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	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	A preliminary list of key stakeholders is provided, which captures the main organizations and groups targeted by this project (p. 56).

<p>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>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>Identified in the table. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no consultations were held with the peasant and indigenous communities. However, working meetings with the Peasant Learning Communities (SV beneficiaries) were used to consult on the beneficiaries' problems and interests in project intervention territories.</p> <p>During the PPG, a full FPIC process will take place. A socio-economic and gender expert will be hired during PPG. Stakeholders will participate in full project design, whether virtually or through face-to-face meetings. Likewise, government institutions will participate in the design of project preparation activities and local stakeholders will be consulted at the intervention sites.</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 gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Yes. Gender considerations are discussed throughout the document and a full socio-economic analysis and Gender Action Plan will be developed during PPG.</p>

<p>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>See above.</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? 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>PPG phase to carry out explicit climate risk analysis to ensure hazard identification, assessment of sensitivity to climate change and its impacts, risk classification and development of risk.</p> <p>A climate risk screening has been completed for this project and lists the risk as moderate. The screening is very comprehensive and covers all of the issues identified by STAP (i.e. climate risk to 2050, sensitivity, mitigation measures, etc). It is exemplary. The only area for possible improvement is to consider how climate data can be incorporated into the GIS platform, which is described in Component 4 but which is not elaborated.</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>Yes – several relevant GEF projects are listed that this project will tap into and coordinate with.</p>
	<p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
	<p>Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?</p>	<p>None mentioned</p>
	<p>How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?</p>	<p>Not specified</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?	Yes – standard coordination
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?	Component 4, Outcome 4.1 is dedicated to knowledge management. It involves standard outputs (i.e. M&E system, ME and TE evaluation, communication strategy, etc.). One interesting output is a geospatial platform; however, not much detail is provide on how this will operate, who will manage it, what type of data, etc.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	Standard.

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>