STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	**10678**	
Project Title	**Integrated management of multiple use landscapes and high conservation value forest for sustainable development of the Venezuelan Andean Region**	
Date of Screening	11/27/2020	
STAP member screener	Mark Stafford Smith	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor issues to be considered during project design** STAP welcomes the proposal to reduce and reverse forest degradation in production landscape of the Venezuelan Andes. STAP applauds the provision of a theory of change (ToC) at this stage, the description of which helps outline the proposed project logic quickly (although this presentation is more of a logframe and it is hard to be confident that a backwards logical process was undertaken to devise this set of component actions). It would help to make the relationship between different component actions and intended long-term objectives clearer by adding shorter and longer-term outcomes in between. Without this it is difficult to consider whether the components are necessary AND sufficient to achieve the outcomes, and whether there can be confidence in the durability of the outcomes once the GEF investment finishes. This proposal notably embeds gender issues all the way through, not just in section 3, which is also to be applauded. STAP encourages the project team to apply the same rigor on mainstreaming gender during project design and implementation. However, during project design, STAP particularly urges proponents to (i) enhance the ToC by laying out the component activity-to-outcome logic more clearly,	

	working back from the outcomes to ensure the components are not only necessary but also sufficient to achieve the outcomes, and looking closely at the assumptions that are built into the project design; (ii) consider developing a separate ToC aimed specifically at scaling and durability; (iii) ensure ToC assumptions are being formally monitored and evaluated over time to allow learning about these; and (iv) pay more attention to issues that might undermine project durability, including climate change and the potential for population increase to overwhelm improved management in this region or cause damage to leak from here to surrounding areas. Below, STAP offers further details on how to improve the project design.	
Part I: Project Information **B. Indicative Project Description Summary**	**What STAP looks for**	**Response**
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes; and from the start highlights the need for benefits to the local population as well as GEBs.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	These encompass institutional capacity building; sustainable production practices for coffee and cocoa, market mechanisms to provide incentives for this, and adaptive M&E. Subject to the comment above, these appear *necessary* to the objectives; it is less clear whether they are strictly *sufficient* to achieving them, as discussed below (ToC).
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?	Plausible; attention needs to be paid to ensuring they are durable.
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?	Plausibly *necessary* but see following comments on whether they are fully *sufficient*.

Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	We applaud the presentation of a ToC in the PIF, but note that neither the diagram nor the associated text really addresses the question of whether the set of comments is sufficient to achieve the outcomes; we are not confident that a systematic (even if simple) ToC process has been undertaken that works back from the objectives to critically test this (e.g. see STAP ToC Primer: https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer). It would help to do this to provide more insights into whether the components are truly sufficient to achieve the outcomes.
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, including noting rising forest loss and fragmentation, loss of traditional production systems' competitiveness, poor regulatory implementation, increasing but poorly controlled accessibility, population growth, rural poverty, as well as climate change. Some of these may present challenges to the durability of project outcomes that should be addressed further (see below).
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Three barriers are identified – limited institutional capabilities, lack of support to producers who lack knowledge of better practices, and a lack of access to markets that value green practices. Given the pressures of population growth and immigration, it would be good to reflect on whether there are additional barriers to better regional outcomes, such that even if some producers access better returns for their products, others might not continue to damage surrounding areas, resulting in leakage of any achieved GEBs. Also, past examples of certification systems failing when donor funding ends are noted (p.20) – how will this outcome be avoided again?
	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-	Yes, clear links between biodiversity and land degradation (and probably other areas). The objective also appropriately emphasizes integration between local and global benefits.

	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. Table 2 highlights on almost every row that there is limited coordination or networking, which would seem another key barrier to good outcomes: how will this project ensure it does not become another unliked row in the next table like this?
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	There is little quantification in the baseline section (which mostly focuses on other activities and organisations), but there is relevant material earlier and later (e.g. Table 3) in the proposal. It may be good to collate this succinctly here.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Probably
	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;	Probably, though not in this section
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Useful projects identified, but the stated lessons of a lack of coordination among diverse programs should be reflected more in the proposal.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	Good potential.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	It is great that the proposal provides a ToC; however, even in a simple form (which is fine) it needs more detail on how the components add up to lead to desirable outcomes. Whilst the components are plausibly *necessary* for the outcomes, at present it is hard to see any critical appraisal of whether they are *sufficient*. In essence, the proposal is that better institutional strength coupled with better awareness and consequent implementation of sustainable practices, with access to green markets for incentives to do this, coupled with M&E will achieves the outcomes. But it is realistic to expect the green market premiums to exceed the drivers of population pressures and poverty? Even if this is

		so in the short term, what are the prospects of this continuing long-term as population continues to rise and the climate changes? It is useful to have a ToC so as to be able to ask these sorts of questions of the logic.
	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?	As above Some component descriptions contain a worrying number of "we will try to…", "we hope to', "this should…" (others are written more assertively). Where there is genuinely uncertainty, this is fine but these should be expressed as assumptions or intentions, and then explicitly monitored to allow adaptive management.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Broadly; but the ToC lacks a critical appraisal of underlying or implicit assumptions in the logic. STAP recommends that the guidelines for ToCs in STAP's Primer are followed more directly to document these assumptions, and to re-assess '*necessary and sufficient*'. There is a good emphasis on local engagement, and especially women's empowerment. However, noting COVID, it would be good to know this is more than aspirational – do we know that locals want to make these changes? Will the local communities work together to participate (e.g. para89 "with the participation…")? Might there be cultural barriers? etc. para106 has a good outline of supporting government officials to allow more co-design of local plans, but will there be bureaucratic cultural barriers to this? Even if there are not, how will the project ensure that its own participants understand genuine co-design (rather than superficial consultation')? There are many other implicit assumptions which it would help to make clear and then target with some

		monitoring to test whether they hold up as the project unfolds – e.g. do the sustainable practices ultimately deliver better livelihoods, etc.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	This would be greatly enhanced by monitoring and evaluation aimed explicitly at testing the assumptions in the ToC (as amended, see above), in order that implementation flexibility can learn as the project proceeds. STAP's ToC Primer discusses this process of adaptive MEL. In addition, Component 4, which deals with knowledge management, should be monitoring and marketing the local benefits in ways that resonate with local participants, to develop and maintain their support (or change the project if these are not being generated). Demonstrating value to participants is a key element of the ToC (also needed for scaling and durability) that might be elaborated. In this regard Component 3 is rather light (p.37), and particularly important to make durable beyond the end of the project investment. Component 4 is vital for several aspects, including any scaling, but rather passive ('project website'?). Here it would help to draft a simple ToC for scaling and ask, what activities in this project would set it up to be more likely to scale afterwards?
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?	Plausible, but dependent on having confidence that the barriers above are really the only ones to achieving the outcomes. In addition, might other drivers like climate change and population increases undermine the durability of GEBs achieved? This should be addressed in further design – might climate change undermine the proposed sustainable practices or crop choices? Might population increase overwhelm improved management in this region or cause damage to leak

		from here to surround areas? Can national policy help avoid these issues?
	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/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, and nicely balanced with intended local benefits that are necessary to maintain local support
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes, though more compelling if eventually scales out beyond the targeted examples.
	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?	MEL needs more development – what might be measured is indicated, but how it will be tracked is not made clear.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The climate risk screen describes a number of interventions that will focus on strengthening the climate resilience of cocoa and coffee production. The project also aims to develop land use plans based on climate assessments that draw from the national meteorological services, and research institutions.
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?	Not in a global sense, but in context possibly. However, greater attention should be paid to durability and scaling in the ToC process (see below), and to whether there are other barriers such as cultural norms, that might impede scaling.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Long-term this project will only have a small impact on GEBs unless it is both durable and scaled; the current section on scaling is thin and wishful, mostly based on a dissemination push model. STAP strongly recommends that more attention be paid now to potential means of scaling (various other mechanisms could be posited, some of which may benefit from preparatory actions during the initial project); ideally STAP suggests a separate ToC be developed for this possible

		eventual phase, so that the ToC for this project can be informed by what might be needed to make scaling more feasible later. (STAP's guide on Durability and its ToC Primer provide more advice on these issues.)
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	With scaling, transformational impact is possible, but attention is needed to how this might occur. In particular, Component 3 is currently the main hope for creating enduring financial incentives for better management, but it is the least developed and convincing part of the proposal.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		OK
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?	Acknowledging constraints from COVID, a range of stakeholders have been engaged; however, STAP would seek assurance that significant discussion have been held on the ground with potential communities to ensure they are supportive and see potential benefits. In addition, the intention to engage the private sector (obviously at early stages) is very vague to date and should be further elaborated, since it is critical to durability.
	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?	OK

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?	As noted, it is good that gender issues are embedded credibly throughout the proposal, as well as summarized here.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	An analysis of this is proposed, and should be progressed very early.
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible,	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: • How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to	Overall the risks seem reasonably comprehensive, except that project durability depends on indefinite adequate financing which is marked as a Low risk, when it would seem in fact High. The climate risk screening provides good information on how the project aims to strengthen

propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	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?	land use planning by relying on climate assessment expertise in the Andes. Additionally, the project will use climate data and information to inform and implement its interventions. However, as currently written, component 1 (and the description of the climate risk screening) assumes that stakeholders will use the climate data and information for developing and implementing climate resilient plans. STAP suggests considering the factors that will enable stakeholders to use the climate modelling knowledge. These enabling conditions include supportive institutions, building agency while capacity is being built, and remaining cognizant of the various social structures (e.g. gender, culture, norms, values) that influence how individuals may process and use the climate information and data. The project team may find the following paper on the use of climate information useful: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2020.100242 Additionally, it would help to have an open appraisal of what processes will be put in place to ensure that villagers are not encouraged to adopt practices or livelihoods that subsequently become maladaptive due to climate change (or indeed any other trends in drivers, e.g. population).
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?	Seems so
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes, but developing coordination beyond just GEF-supported activities would seem desirable.
	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?	
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	This seems to be mainly congruent with Component 4, and as noted above is unimaginative nor obviously tailored to the context. STAP would suggest that a scaling ToC would include more active engagement of other regions in visits to/observing the successes here, to develop champions for scaling during the course of this project, etc. Tracking and demonstrating the livelihood benefits and the success of other incentives would be other examples of explicit actions more likely to create fertile ground for scaling out.

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 ***"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.