STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10568	
Project Title	Philippine Rise Integrated Conservation for Enduring Legacies through Ecosystem Support Services (PRICELESS)	
Date of Screening	November 10 2020	
STAP member screener	Rosie Cooney	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor** STAP welcomes the project from Conservation International to support conservation and improved management of the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve. The structure of components and outcomes and outputs is fairly straightforward and conventional; however, many of the critical details are left for the PPG phase. For example, a critical element of the project has to do with ensuring that local people who are dependent upon the fishing industry are able to earn income from other means – particularly during seasons where fishing is not an option. These means are listed as ecotourism (doubtful during COVID), savings groups, incentive agreements and social insurance schemes – all of which will be explored during PPG phase. Another example of lack of detail has to do with the issue of data, which is highlighted as a barrier to better understanding of the biodiversity and threats. However, there is no information on what type of data, how it will be obtained, who will use it and how, how it will be disseminated, displayed, shared, etc. including after the GEF project ends. Another fundamental concern has to do with the fact that the entire project rests on the successful PRMRR achieving full protection under Philippine law. So far, only 3 of the 7 steps have been achieved to reach this designation and the project aims to fulfill the remaining 4. However, these are not insignificant (i.e. submittal and acceptance of a Republic Act by Congress) and many of the other project components depend on	

	this having been achieved in order to be successful. For example, without official designation, user fees cannot be collected for management purposes to help ensure financial sustainability of the project. This uncertainty should be reflected in the project design to make clear which activities are dependent on others and whether or not other aspects of the project would succeed otherwise. STAP is pleased to see a Theory of Change diagram included in the project; however, it is quite static and doesn't identify underlying assumptions or feedbacks or different causal pathways, giving the reader the impression that it was developed after the individual components were determined rather than working backwards from the desired end result. Climate change is mentioned as a general threat to the biodiversity and fisheries, as well as a risk to the project but without any real specificity. The project mentions that it will make use of forecasting tools to better understand the interplay of the marine ecosystem of PRMRR with the impacts of weather and climate and that this information will be included in the updated management plan.	
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?	The project objective is: "By 2025, the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve of 352,390 hectares, consisting of a 49,684 hectares Strict Protection Zone and a 302,706 ha Multiple Use Zone, is conserved and better managed, protecting globally significant biodiversity while facilitating the sustainable use of its marine resources and generating livelihood benefits for adjacent communities." This is very general and responds in a broad way to the need for protection and better management of natural resources.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes

Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Short-term and medium-term outputs are well defined and support outcomes for each of the components; however, key assumptions are glossed over (i.e. specifics about what types of alternative livelihoods and how exactly this transition will occur or how providing information about biodiversity benefits will translate into behavior change over the long run).
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Much rests on whether or not the project will succeed in achieving the required steps for full-fledged PA designation (so far 3 out of 7). Also depends on the extent to which the project succeeds in changing behaviors that result in harmful fishing practices, which in turn depends on whether or not the 'alternative livelihood' options are made available and successfully divert attention away from unsustainable fishing practices.
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?	The outputs are fairly standard for these types of projects and should contribute to the outcomes. However, some of the outputs are quite vague and require more specificity and explanation to determine whether or not they will achieve their desired impact.
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
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes
	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 METT score is 51/102.
	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:	
	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?	There is a ToC presented on page 18. The diagram reads more like a logical framework as it appears quite static and doesn't show alternate causal pathways that might occur given risks outlined in section 5 of the PIF.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	The ToC rests on the notion that by putting in place the conditions for the PRMRR to fully qualify as an MPA, the area will be better managed and financially sustainable with improved well being for local communities. There are many assumptions built into this logic that are not well described (i.e. financial sustainability – how?) and if unsuccessful (i.e. no feasible alternative livelihoods) then it is unclear how this will impact overall likelihood of long-term success.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	First is to gain official designation of the area as an MPA, supported by a suite of activities to incentivize conservation among local authorities and communities, including through improved livelihoods, improved enforcement, monitoring, etc.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	All of the mechanisms are useful and important; however, underlying assumptions are a bit weak and/or lack explanation. For example, a common

		output for projects (as with this one) is to promote community awareness with the assumption that if people know there is biodiversity or that certain laws exist, they will change their behavior accordingly. This may be true, but behaviors are not necessarily changed by lack of knowledge, particularly where they are driven by economic and livelihood incentives.
	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, and this is a problem.
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?	If successful, the project would increase the area under protection and improved management. Without specific data on biodiversity within these areas it is not clear specifically what the benefits will be to biodiversity, per se. However, evidence supports the assumption that protection and improved management should yield conservation benefits.
	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
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	$3.7 million for total area of 352,390 ha ($10/ha). This is very reasonable.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, as per the GEF indicators (total ha)
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Component 4 includes a monitoring and evaluation plan; however, it is very basic.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The improved management of the MPA is intended, in and of itself, to be the primary source of resilience. Though during PPG phase the project will engage other agencies such as the Climate Change Commission to discuss climate risk and presumably how to improve overall resilience, since climate change is mentioned as a risk.

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?	No
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	No – the project mentions activities to scale up but these are standard (i.e. showcase successful stories to other areas in the region). It would be useful to thoughtfully develop scaling activities up front and include alongside the project ToC.
	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.		The geographic coordinates are the centroid for the PRMRR. Latitude - 15 32' 12" N and Longitude - 123 58' 56"E
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
	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?	Outlined in table under Section 2 Stakeholders

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?	Project will aim to mainstream gender considerations during project design and implementation.
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:	5 main risks are identified, mainly having to do with concerns about all levels of government that might undermine overall success (i.e. lack of trust by local government, change in national government priorities) as well as poaching due to lax enforcement.

propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	• 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?	Climate change is listed as a risk that will be addressed through the development of forecasting tools and resulting information will be incorporated into management plan. Specific periods (2020 and 2050) are not mentioned, nor has the sensitivity to climate change and its impacts been assessed, though perhaps will be in the future.
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?	Yes
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Not sure about lessons but seems to be a good understanding of and linkage with the main components of related activities.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	See above
	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?	Unclear if there is a specific mechanism or it will be done through the steering committee
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?	KM is fairly standard with fact sheets, reports, etc.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	Standard – will share outcomes at conferences, etc.

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.