

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10971	
Project Title	Conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the Caroni river basin of Bolivar state.	
Date of Screening	17 May 2022	
STAP member screener	John Donaldson	
STAP secretariat screener	Alessandro Moscuza	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	Minor issues to be considered during project design. Our assessment concluded that this was a reasonably well-written proposal but required some improvements. We identified a number of minor issues throughout the proposal that should be rectified as part of the next step of project development. These include: improving the consistency of the description for the project objective with the problem statement; an overall review and simplification of the language used throughout the proposal, which was found to be unnecessarily complex and laden with jargon; and a revision of the theory of change and list of stakeholders, which were found to be lacking in specific aspects that are further described below.	
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 objective is defined clearly enough but it is not entirely consistent with the problem diagnosis. Having read the proposal in full it is obvious that the problem diagnosis has been well-researched and is also clearly consistent with the rest of the content in the document, whereas the project objective described on page one of the PIF is not. STAP recommends that the project objective is rephrased to ensure that it is consistent with the problem diagnosis and reflective of or directly related to the activities that this PIF is proposing to implement.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	The planned activities are well-described and thoroughly researched, they also fit well into a coherent framework that would in turn support a coherent set of objectives. However, rather disappointingly, it was not possible to

		find anywhere in the PIF a section where the project objectives were clearly articulated all in one place. The same applies to the Theory of Change (ToC), which described expected project impacts and results, but not its objectives. STAP recommends that the PIF should be revised to include a clear set of objectives for the project and that these should be drafted carefully to ensure that they are consistent with the proposed activities as well as the expected project results and impacts described in the ToC. The project objectives should also be incorporated in the ToC diagram.
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?</p>	The PIF provides a list of outcomes, which are integrated into a clearly articulated hierarchical framework structure comprising the following elements: project components , project outcomes and outputs . However, the language used to articulate the outcomes was not always very clear as in the case of outcome 1.1 and 2.1. The technical narrative provided in sub-section 3 (Proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of the expected results and project components) of Part II (Project Justification) of the PIF gives a good explanation that helps put all outcomes into better context, but the language used to phrase the actual outcomes could still be significantly improved. STAP recommends that the language used to phrase the project outcomes should be revised to ensure these are free of jargon and more reflective of the outputs and activities they encompass.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, the PIF makes a solid case in support of a range of GEBs, which cut across three of the GEF focal areas (i.e. Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Land Degradation). However, the language use to describe the GEBs and how they will be achieved was not always very linear and the GEBs could have been described more clearly than they were in the PIF. STAP recommends either a partial rephrasing of the section of the PIF on GEBs (part II/6) or that the GEBs are clearly listed either in a table or as a simple list.
Outputs	<p>A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project.</p> <p>Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?</p>	Yes, for the whole project as a whole, although the logical flow between some of the outputs and the corresponding outcome(s) was more tenuous in some cases (e.g. outputs 1.1.1 and outcome 1.1; output 2.1.3 and outcome 2.1). We also noticed that the outputs and outcomes were not labelled consistently in the ToC diagram.

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, as already outlined, the problem statement section of the PIF was well-researched and appears to be adequately supported by evidence and data from quoted sources (it should be noted that the references do not appear in the PDF version either as footnotes or as a bibliography). Some of the data sources also need to be updated, e.g. identification of threatened mammals and birds relies on data from 1999-2000 whereas all the species listed in the table have been assessed on the IUCN Red List from 2014-2021.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, the barriers are reasonably well described and, in enough detail, to provide a clear understanding of the main issues and challenges affecting the project areas. The four barriers identified vary in the quality and consistency of information and particularly barrier 3 seems vague and less well defined than the other barriers. The headline refers to regulatory frameworks but the narrative deals mainly with weak institutional capacity and information gaps that are already covered in barriers 1 & 2.
	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?	Not applicable.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, the PIF has a dedicated sub-section, which identifies and describes a number of pre-existing and on-going activities in the Caroni basin. The only critical observation we have is that the formatting of this section of the document is inconsistent and therefore slightly confusing for the reader.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Yes, the baseline information provides enough evidence to quantify the value that will be added by this project.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, the PIF provides information related to the necessary incremental investments that would be more difficult to obtain through governmental or non-governmental budgetary sources to achieve sustainable conservation of the biological diversity of protected areas in the Caroni River Basin. It also shows how GEF funding will

		complement the resources that have been allocated by the Government of Venezuela (GoBV) to the region.
	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?	In summary, the TOC argues that the development and implementation of an integrated landscape management plan will bring together social, cultural, economic and governmental actors where everyone wins by coordinating and cooperating to ensure sustainable development. This is further supported by alternative livelihoods based on the functionality and supply of bio-physical and sociocultural elements
	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?	Yes, the mechanisms of change are plausible, and the ToC provides a clear and reasonable pathway to impact that includes the proposed project activities, outputs and outcomes. However, the ToC does not appear to include any underlying assumptions either in support of the intervention or as a condition to the project's success. Identifying and taking into account the impact of (unrealized) assumptions on the potential outcome of the project is an important aspect of ensuring that the ToC is robust. For example, one assumption would be that providing integrated plans will overcome at least one of the barriers. However, as pointed out in paragraph 54, integrated plans have been in place in some sectors since 2004 so what will be done differently during this project to provide a better outcome. STAP recommends that the ToC is revised to include a set of assumptions, which

		should be verified to ensure that they are realistic. The ToC should also be ‘stress-tested’ to ensure that the project will be able to absorb impact of unforeseen external events and still deliver the intended results.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	We found no evidence of any adaptive measures that would ensure the project’s resilience to any unforeseen changes in operating conditions, or other external factors that could compromise the delivery of project activities or results, although the risk section covers some aspects (e.g. political support). Component 4, which is devoted to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) states that it will be based:” <i>on the principles of adaptive management, delivery of measurable and objectively verifiable results</i> ”, although the explanation provided on how this would be achieved in practice was rather weak and appeared to conflate adaptive management approaches and techniques with data disaggregation and gender-related issues.
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, as already outlined, the PIF makes a solid case in support of a range of GEBs, which cut across three of the GEF focal areas (i.e. Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Land Degradation). The project proposal was also quite clear in identifying and describing the GEBs that would be delivered using quantitative indicators.
	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, see above
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	N/A
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	N/A
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project’s resilience to climate change?	N/A

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?	It will be in the sense of introducing practices that may be new or untested in the specific geographical context it will be operating. The project is proposing to adopt a number of techniques and approaches that have been already tested and widely adopted before in other geographical contexts (e.g. territorial and environmental planning, landscape and participatory approaches) in some cases for a few decades. Some elements of the proposed approach (e.g. use of diagnostics to address emerging issues) are more recent and thus in a sense more 'innovative', but the real innovative value of this project will be in testing the adoption of different approaches in the specific socio-economic context of the Caroni river basin.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	The current proposal does not envisage the prospect of scaling up any of the project activities, nor does it provide a vision of how this may be achieved, although component 4 aims to evaluate the potential for replication of project activities in other sites, among other things.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	It is our assessment that this project will require a mix of incremental adaptation and more transformational change in order to achieve long term sustainability. Incremental adaptation will be needed with regard to livelihoods practices, stakeholder engagement and collaborations between different actors, whereas transformational change will be needed for certain aspects of government policy and landscape management.
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.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	The project proposal includes an extensive list of stakeholders, which is complemented by a clear and well-presented explanation of the role of each stakeholder, as well as how they will contribute to the implementation of project activities. However, STAP noted two issues that should be rectified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The list of stakeholders is rather imbalanced in favour of government ministries and agencies; ii) In two specific cases (i.e. Secretary of the National Security Council (SECODENA)

<p>If none of the above, please explain why.</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>and Ministry of the People's Power for Defense (MPPD)), we were not sure the indicated government ministry or agency had been included and what their role would be. For example, we were not sure about the line that referred to “provision of technical guidelines’ in both cases. Whilst it is perfectly understandable that the project may consider it wise to be more inclusive, for both reasons of policy coherence but also in view of the Venezuelan political context, STAP recommends that the list of stakeholders is reviewed to ensure a better balance between different categories of stakeholders (e.g. civil society, academia, private sector and government) and that the role of each stakeholder is reviewed to ensure it is appropriate to the context and meaningful.</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>Please see above for comments and recommendations related to this question.</p>
<p>3. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Yes. The proposal includes a dedicated section on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, which takes into account a number of gender related issues including risks, challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, it also makes numerous references to gender issues throughout the document, including in components 1 (which includes gender as part of the central issues it will tackle) and 4 (which adopts a gender perspective to promoting the adoption of successful approaches and best practices).</p>

<p>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>No, on the contrary the gender considerations included in the proposal enable a fuller participation from important stakeholder groups that might have otherwise been marginalized or excluded altogether.</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?</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? • 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>The project proposal identifies a suitable range of risks, which are well-described it also includes a good section on mitigation measures, which are adequately matched to the description of each risk category. However, risks are only assessed in terms of probability, which is not best practice and not advisable either as it only provides an incomplete picture of how a risk could affect the implementation of project activities or the success of the project as a whole. STAP recommends that the risk section should be revised to include the expected impact of each risk category, as well as the probability of it happening. The mitigations actions section should also be reviewed to incorporate any additional provisions that may be necessary to mitigate any additional issues that may be uncovered.</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, the project implementing agencies (FAO and MINEC) will collaborate with the executing agencies of other programs and projects to identify opportunities and facilitate mechanisms to achieve synergies with other relevant GEF-supported projects, as well as with projects supported by other donors. The emphasis is only on other projects executed in this area and STAP recommends that the proponents also look at other projects that have implemented similar activities in other regions (spatial</p>

		planning, capacity building, alternative livelihoods) so that lessons learned can be considered in project design.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes, the project proposal explained how lessons learned from other projects have been incorporated to improve the design and implementation of the current proposal.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, projects implemented by CORPOELEC, CVG and universities and successful experiences working with indigenous communities, promoting their involvement in the management of natural resources have all been considered. The project has also taken information from other projects in the country ¹ and publications.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	Above comments refer.
	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?	See comments below on knowledge management.
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?	Knowledge products and/or publications will be developed as part of the project activities and results will be shared within and outside the project intervention area through a number of existing networks and information exchange forums. The project may also participate in GEF-sponsored networks and in scientific or other networks that may be beneficial to project implementation.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project will develop a strategic communication plan, which will allow for actors involved to be informed on the project progress and the positive results obtained from its implementation.

¹ Fortalecimiento del Sistema de Áreas Protegidas Marino Costeras de Venezuela, Proyecto 00075653. Diciembre 2018. Caracas- Venezuela

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>