Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10574	
Project Title	Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Rural Landscapes of Mexico	
Date of Screening	22 May 2020	
STAP member screener	Rosie Cooney	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Concur** STAP welcomes this exciting proposal to mainstream consideration of biodiversity within policy, planning, finance mechanisms and practice in 6 rural landscapes in Mexico. The project is clearly written and well-articulated, with a solid internal logic. It builds on strong political will in relevant Ministries and offers high probability of tranformative and durable impact across large landscapes of very high biodiversity value. This STAP review provides a number of recommendations for strengthening its overall design. For example, while a graphic theory of change (TOC) is presented, it does not actually add much to the narrative, as it simply sets outputs and outcomes, with barriers inserted. In addition, sometimes the logical links are difficult to understand (see specific examples provided in the STAP Screen). The STAP Primer on TOCs would be very helpful here. Additional areas that could be strengthened include providing an explicit articulation of assumptions and focused climate risk screening.	
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 set out as "Mainstream biodiversity in rural landscapes by implementing sustainable policies and practices in the

		agriculture sector Indicator (a): Number of hectares of rural landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity Target: 889,106 hectares Indicator (b): Number of hectares of degraded agricultural land restored by intensification practices. Target: 63,000 hectares." It is important in biodiversity mainstreaming projects that mainstreaming is viewed as the mechanism to achieve a biodiversity conservation goal (rather than an end in itself), and so the specification of the conservation goal is welcome (although the wording as Indicators within the Objective is a little unusual). It may be preferable to see the first slightly re-framed to be "improved management *that benefits* biodiversity" (as indeed is done in the indicator under Outcome 2.1) to emphasise that the goal is to reach a real-world conservation outcome (not just a procedural one).
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Landscapes chosen are based on clear criteria. Re component 1, if the Wellbeing for People program already supports best agroecological practice, what sort of changes will be made? Outcome 1.2 is framed in terms of capacity, but isn't this really about increasing knowledge and awareness? There is very little explanation of outcome 2.2, but as this is about the business case for biodiversity-friendly agriculture it would be good to have more explanation of the plans here.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes.
	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?	Only minimal information is given on the outputs, but they all appear well thought-through and contribute to the outcomes.
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?	The threats are particularly clear and well-justified. The root causes are rather superficial and to some extent repeat threats. The problem statement earlier highlights the Green Revolution and political/economic forces and models in driving rapid large-scale land conversion – don't root causes at least partly lie here? Later (at 5.) the project says "Traditionally, the government policies in Mexico incentivize the expansion of the agriculture frontier, as a means for local development and to satisfy market demands" – isn't this a statement of a root cause (although one could of course go even deeper). High production costs of small-scale, traditional, biodiverse crop production are only high compared to the more uniform, industrial model – but what are the root causes of this price differential? Lack of recognition/internalisation of externalised costs (e.g. of loss of ecosystem services) has much to do with it. Unsustainable practices presumably haven't suddenly turned up in the last 30 years, so hard to see them as a root cause of the massive agricultural shift and biodiversity loss over this period – likewise the extensive agriculture system, also highlighted as a root cause. What shifted around 30 years ago that changed agricultural incentives so dramatically? Going deeper here would provide a more complete analysis, even if all root causes shaping the current system can't be addressed by the project. I would also query whether "extensive agriculture" should be framed as a problem (with intensification as the answer, as indicated in the

		objective), given there are major problems with intensification too. It seems from what is presented here that it is the wholesale *expansion* of extensive agriculture which is the problem, driven by a range of factors. We would like to see this be more clearly unpacked and specifically justified.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	See above.
	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?	Previous/ongoing projects are particularly clearly and comprehensively laid out.
	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;	
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Particularly in Fig 15 and accompanying text, there is clarification of how other projects have influenced the planning of this. This is rare in pifs and is extremely welcome. However, this could be considerably stronger - is this project responding to particular shortcomings/failures/gaps in previous work? Is it taking a similar approach to some but scaling up? Is it trying different things based on seeing what didn't work/scale up?
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	See above

3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	A graphic TOC is presented, which is welcome, but (without further development) it does not actually add much to the narrative, as it simply sets outputs and outcomes, with barriers inserted. Note that for component 2 these are not written as outcomes (e.g. one says "Implement business plans…." Rather than "Business plans are implemented…"). Sometimes the logical links are hard to understand. For instance, in component 2, all the work with producer organisations should lead to an interim outcome like "farmers gain increased income from sustainably-produced products" and an outcome like "more farmers switch production to sustainable forms of production". Instead this leads to a land-use planning outcome. TOCs can show multiple interim steps to get to a desired outcome, which allows these to be identified (and monitored). Here it seems there is a step missing (particularly in first two components) between changing the policy/planning system and a very high-level objective (e.g. mainstream biodiversity – which itself is only a process goal; or the GEBs specified.) What are the critical steps to get to the GEBs (e.g. expansion of agricultural frontier is slowed or stopped)? The STAP Primer on TOCs would be very helpful here. It may be worth adding that the TOC is a really helpful participatory project planning tool to help think through how a project is going to bring about the change in the world it seeks, rather than an element to be added once outcomes/outputs etc are already decided. Its great to see one assumption listed here, but there are assumptions likely to be involved at most or many (or all) of the logical steps in a TOC. For instance, land use plans only translate to change land use outcomes if they are implemented, and

		political/economic/lack of verification and enforcement/other reasons don't prevent this. Successful implementation of business plans for sustainable products assumes that favourable markets for these can actually be found, and the process of producing them can be made to be economical. New financing instruments will only change practice if farmers decide to access them. These are only a few examples – and setting out more steps in the TOC allows one to see these
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	This is clear.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	This is clear.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Yes, although underlying assumptions are not clearly addressed – see above. Some are dealt with under Risks.
	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 GEBs in Fig 8 are not consistent with those specified in the Objective, and seem to have a quite different emphasis. We would like to see these made consistent.
	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 yes.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes – this is a large GEF contribution but the scale of projected benefits is likewise very large.
	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 – the indicators are good and set out clearly.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Some measures are included in the Risks section, but given the likely importance of climate change to the achievement and durability of project outcomes this requires additional attention.
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 – as a package of measures it is highly innovative in seeking to embed biodiversity considerations at the core of work led by the Ministry of Agriculture.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes, this is high-level but clear.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	This project is seeking fundamental transformational change, shifting the basis of policy/programs/funding that shape much land use and agricultural activity. Its potential to achieve durable outcomes appears very high, based on the changes to policy/institutions/programmatic frameworks etc that will endure post-project, the buy-in of key stakeholders within the agricultural sector, and the changes to incentives facing producers.
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	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Very sound and well-developed. Great to see the emphasis on FPIC and reference to a rights-based approach being followed.

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.		
	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?	As above
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-	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Yes – this remains very general at this stage.

making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd		
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	
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	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 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?	At a high level the risks appear valid and comprehensive. The climate risk screening is minimal, and a focused climate risk screening following the guidance from STAP (http://www.stapgef.org/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening) is strongly recommended, given the high potential for climate change to impact on the outcomes of the project over the time horizon to 2050.
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?	The pif does an excellent job of outlining other relevant projects and how they relate to this, with at least some clear lessons learned.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	As above
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	As above
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	As 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?	Yes, strong indication of arrangements for coordination and lesson-sharing.
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?	Exceptionally detailed and well thought-through.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	As above.

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.