

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

| Part I: Project Information | Response |
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| GEF ID | 10670 |
| Project Title | Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation in sustainable tourism development in Cuba |
| Date of Screening | November 30, 2020 |
| STAP member screener | Rosie Cooney |
| STAP secretariat screener | Virginia Gorsevski |
| STAP Overall Assessment and Rating | <p>Minor</p> <p>STAP welcomes this project from UNDP to mainstream biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation into Cuba’s tourism sector, which is currently stalled due to COVID, but which was steadily growing and will likely rebound in 2021. The project is innovative in that it attempts to holistically address both climate change and biodiversity related challenges within one sector through a wide variety of measures.</p> <p>The theory of change (TOC) is presented graphically and is quite comprehensive. It presents a clear visual depiction of the numerous outputs associated with each of the four outcomes. While all of these outputs should be useful, it is less clear how they will be coordinated and sequenced in a way that will be most effective, particularly given the number of government Ministries and various departments listed as stakeholders. To that end, coordination, communication and project management will be critical to the success of this endeavor. For this reason, Component 4 (M&E) should be elaborated with much more detail, including vis-à-vis knowledge management and communication, which is currently very general and unconvincing.</p> <p>In addition, the project appears to include some major assumptions (i.e. that these sustainable and profitable value chains exist/can be developed, and that the uptake of these is enough to</p> |

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| | <p>lead to sustainable management of biodiversity). These assumptions need to be included in the TOC and elaborated on in greater detail elsewhere in the project design.</p> <p>The risks to the project are well documented, though more information could be provided on how specific interventions will contribute to the project’s resilience to climate change, given the vulnerability of Cuba’s coastal areas combined with the significant ongoing and future planned construction and innovation in the tourism sector. To this end, the growth of Cuba’s tourism sector presents an opportunity for energy improvements (efficiency and renewables) as well as biodiversity-friendly nature based solutions. The key to success will be in overcoming the vested interests of those opposing these improvements, through financial incentives and/or greater enforcement – currently the mitigation measure are insufficient.</p> <p>Finally, this project would benefit greatly by learning from other GEF and non-GEF efforts to mainstream biodiversity and climate change mitigation into the tourism sector, of which there are quite a few.</p> | |
| 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: “to contribute to the sustainability of tourism in Cuba through the mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change with emphasis on vulnerable coastal-marine areas through the design and implementation of innovative models with strengthened capacities and financial mechanisms.” This broadly relates to the numerous challenges facing the tourism sector. |
| Project components | A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives? | Yes. The project activities support larger efforts to strengthen the institutional framework of the tourism sector while simultaneously undertaking targeted interventions related to biodiversity and energy conservation. |

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| Outcomes | A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits? | Not explicitly. Conserving coastal ecosystems would likely have adaptation benefits; however, this is not the focus of the project. |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | Yes, provided that interventions are properly matched up with financial incentives and enforcement actions to avoid risk that vested interests will work to undermine progress. |
| 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. There are numerous outputs for each outcome – all of which will likely be useful. It will be important to coordinate these outputs and ensure that they are utilized/adopted in logical succession and (more importantly) developed in concert with relevant stakeholders who will then be more inclined to utilize them (i.e. certification, methodologies, valuation, etc.) Also – many of these (i.e. financial mechanisms) need to be described in greater detail. |
| 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. There are clearly a number of barriers to conservation and climate change mitigation in the tourism sector. These are: (1) insufficient institutional technical capacity and limited inter-institutional coordination; (2) limitations in the application and development of normative instruments and procedures; (3) lack of implementation and validation of procedures and financial mechanisms for key tourism actors; (4) lack of a proven methodological model of how to incorporate BD conservation and CC mitigation in |

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| | | the tourism sector; and (5) limited management and exchange of knowledge on BD conservation and CC mitigation measures in the tourism sector. |
| | 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? | Yes. The problems facing the tourism industry relate to construction and infrastructure which are simultaneously impacting biodiversity and accelerating climate change through gross inefficiencies in energy utilization, for example. Addressing both issues through one sector – tourism – will likely be more effective and efficient than doing so separately. |
| 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects | Is the baseline identified clearly? | Relevant baseline activities by the Cuban government are provided. As is the general ‘business as usual’ situation with regards to the tourism sector as a whole. |
| | 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; | Yes. |
| | are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and | Somewhat. The project lists several ongoing activities in Cuba which are relevant (i.e. Biofin). However, there are also many GEF projects in other countries focused on mainstreaming biodiversity in the tourism sector – none of which are noted here. It would be useful to look at lessons learned from these projects – particularly those in the Caribbean. |
| | 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? | The theory of change is presented on page 32. In general, it is well done and shows how outputs for each of the Components feed into the outcomes and overall project objective. While Components 1 and 4 are meant to be cross-cutting (2 is focused on biodiversity and 3 is focused on climate change mitigation), a next step might be to show how the |

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| | | <p>middle two components relate to the larger framework and institutional strengthening and Component 4 on M&E.</p> <p>In addition, the structural/root causes (habitat destruction, pollution, etc. are not necessarily root causes but rather the threats. And the barriers are good but barriers to what?</p> |
| | <p>What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?</p> | <p>The project identifies four causal pathways for this project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased access to sustainable and profitable value chains for tourism (including national and international markets) > sustainable management of biodiversity > decreased capture/ disturbance pressure on selected species > species populations are maintained or increased > BD conservation mainstreaming. 2. Improved information management systems and tools + increased capacity for incorporating BD conservation in the tourism sector at the site level > systematization of best practices/lessons on BD conservation in the tourism sector>informed planning of tourism development > ecosystem connectivity. 3. Improved information management systems and tools + increased capacity for incorporating CCM in the tourism sector at the site level > informed planning of tourism development > low carbon technologies + low-carbon anthropogenic activities + decreased GHG Emissions> increased climate change mitigation. 4. Improved monitoring tools+ low-carbon anthropogenic activities + sustainable practices More efficiently monitored and participatory KM on environmental sustainability in the |

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| | | tourism sector > Informed decision-making > ecosystem integrity + more resilience. |
| | What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | See above – described in the TOC as well as via the causal pathways. |
| | 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? | The project claims that the TOC and the M&E Component will allow for adaptive management; however, no information given at this stage on what those adaptations might look like. |
| 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. |
| | 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? | Yes. |
| | Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation? | Yes. |
| | What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change? | The fourth causal pathway, which focuses on improved monitoring and participatory knowledge management contends that these should help increase the project's resilience to climate change. If the interventions are successful and the coastal areas are better conserved, it is likely that these nature based solutions will offer greater resilience in the face of projected impacts of climate change (i.e. increased sea level rise, more frequent hurricanes, etc.) |

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| 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? | Only in that it seeks to address one sector – tourism – from multiple angles (i.e. energy efficiency/renewables to mitigate climate change and numerous interventions to conserve biodiversity). |
| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | Standard (compilation of lessons learned, etc.) |
| | Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability? | Incremental, but important, changes will be needed to transform the tourism sector. This project provides a good foundation. |
| 1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. | | Maps are provided. |
| 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; however, most are from the National Government, including the Executing Agency (Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment). Are all of these necessary? It will be very important to target incentives directly to those who stand to benefit from improvements in energy efficiency, for example. What about the energy provider? Also private sector players along the entire supply chain. Local communities? |
| | 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 (p. 49) |

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| <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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project’s results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p> | <p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p> | <p>Yes, though not clear what is meant by “gender-sensitive staff” (how do you know?) The project will give priority to women-owned enterprises. The project will include a gender analysis, gender mainstreaming plan, etc.</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,</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> | <p>Risks are comprehensive. The project does try to control for them; however, it might be better to try to incorporate them more fully into the project design. For example, risk no. 1 on vested interest could undermine the entire project if people don’t see any financial motivation (or face adequate enforcement action) to support key interventions.</p> |

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| <p>propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</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 mitigation measure of ‘engaging stakeholders and conveying the importance of systemic planning, etc.’ is not convincing.</p> <p>Climate change is mentioned as a moderate risk, referring to a macro project study which describes adverse impacts for 2020 and 2100 related to increase in temperature and rainfall, increased coastal flooding, and increased intensity of hurricanes. More should be done to better integrate this information into the project design, particularly with so much ongoing and planned future development and construction of hotels, etc. along the coast.</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 ongoing projects are mentioned.</p> |
| | <p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p> | <p>Minimal. This project should reach out to other UNDP (and other Agency) similar projects – particularly those related to biodiversity mainstreaming in the tourism sector.</p> |
| | <p>Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?</p> | <p>See above.</p> |
| | <p>How have these lessons informed the project’s formulation?</p> | <p>See above.</p> |
| | <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?</p> | <p>There is a steering committee and project management unit, comprised of implementation and coordination, etc. followed by a narrative of different projects and how this project will coordinate with them on various elements. All of the information is available; however, it would be good to explain in detail how information will be shared as there are many different activities, organizations, etc. so this will be critical to avoid inefficiencies and confusion.</p> |
| <p>8. Knowledge management. Outline the “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project, and how it will contribute to the project’s overall impact,</p> | <p>What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?</p> | <p>Standard. No metrics provided. A UNDP-GEF Regional Service Center (RSC) platform is mentioned with no supporting detail. What type of platform? Publicly accessible? Who maintains?</p> |

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| including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations. | | |
| | What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience? | See above. Standard (website, radio clips, posters, etc.) |

Notes

| STAP advisory response | Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed |
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| <p>1. Concur</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| | <p>* 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></p> |
| <p>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</p> | <p>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:</p> |
| | <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;</p> |
| | <p>(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.</p> |
| | <p>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> |

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| <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> |