

Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility
(Version 5)

STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: November 13, 2017
Screener: Virginia Gorsevski
Panel member validation by: Brian Child
Consultant(s):

I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9613
PROJECT DURATION:	6
COUNTRIES:	Mexico
PROJECT TITLE:	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation Criteria in Mexico's Tourism Sector with Emphasis on Biodiversity-rich Coastal Ecosystems
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR)
GEF FOCAL AREA:	Biodiversity

II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):
Minor issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes the project from UNDP entitled "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation Criteria in Mexico's Tourism Sector with Emphasis on Biodiversity-rich Coastal Ecosystems." STAP fully supports this project on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation criteria in Mexico's tourism sector with an emphasis on biodiversity-rich coastal ecosystems and is encouraged to see the inclusion of maps depicting each proposed pilot area (pp. 43 – 46). It is clear from the project description that Mexico's high level of biodiversity combined with the country's dependence on tourism for economic growth and development makes this project to mainstream biodiversity into the tourism sector very timely and important.

In general, STAP believes that the theory of change is strong, but the current strategy needs to be streamlined. The length of STAP's detailed comments below is a response to the many ideas (too many) in the narrative, presumably as a result of many people participating in its formulation – which is good. In order to sharpen this proposal, STAP recommends that it be revised such that it retains the key ideas but is more concise and focused. As it stands, many new ideas are introduced in random areas, making it difficult to follow the logic that is set out in the beginning.

In particular, STAP makes the following recommendations:

Component 1 is basically sound, but could be greatly strengthened if Output 1.2.1 is tweaked to develop and train communities of practice (COP) at important sites (rather than just 200 people), and to then work adaptively with these COPs to develop performance criteria (1.2.3) and compliance with them.

STAP welcomes the desire to address market failures in Component 2. However, STAP notes that one of the best strategies for internalizing costs and benefits in complex systems is through well-crafted collective action, including self-made rules, monitoring, sanctions and conflict resolution measures (see Ostrom,

1990). Therefore, STAP suggests that project managers streamline Components 2 and 3 during PPG phase as follows:

- a new Outcome 2.1 develops/strengthens decentralized self-governance at tourism sites (e.g. landscape associations/stakeholder associations). This has many synergies with 1.2.3 above.
- Decentralized associations for collective action then become the operational mechanism for 2.2 (i.e. current 2.1), and are given support to test and institutionalize the many good ideas for addressing externalities and market failures.
- Component 3 (could be combined with 2 and greatly streamlined) then becomes the mechanism for piloting 3.1 (new models) and 3.2 (community-based tourism) which are then managed adaptively as pilots and the learning mechanisms to improve 2.1 and 2.2, and even to feed back into the enabling environment (component 1).

In addition to these specific recommendations, STAP has the following general comments:

The PIF starts out strong with clear rationale and detailed description of root causes and barriers, which are listed as 1) lack of coordination between government institutions, 2) lack of coordination between levels of government, and 3) lack of engagement with the private sector (para. 9). Other issues include confusing laws, vague recommendations and inconsistencies, lack of financial incentives to incorporate biodiversity into the tourism sector, and weak local capacity (pp. 10 – 11). While some of these issues are addressed within the project framework, the details are somewhat vague and even contradictory. For example, para. 33 states that the tourism sector suffers from lack of a long-term vision; however, later paragraphs (80) highlight the Mexico Ministry of Tourism's Strategy for Biodiversity Mainstreaming, which includes a very specific vision (see www.gob.mx/sectur).

Project proponents might also benefit from taking a step back to look at the issue of biodiversity mainstreaming in the tourism from a governance perspective to identify barriers and levers more systematically (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2017) to be sure that the assumptions underlying each of the proposed Components are valid and will likely result in successful implementation.

Also, the project would benefit from examining what has worked and what hasn't in other countries seeking to promote sustainable tourism. One review of the sector found that in general, the main driver for improvement is regulation rather than market measures and that private-sector approaches to sustainability such as self-regulation, corporate social responsibility, eco-certification, and destination marketing and demarketing have been promoted widely, but proved largely ineffective (Buckley, 2012).

Also, STAP feels that the use of the word "criteria" is confusing. Throughout the document and particularly in Component One, it is stated that one of the main barriers to mainstreaming biodiversity in the tourism sector is the lack of biodiversity conservation "criteria." In this case, it is understood that the term implies some sort of standard by which to judge projects. However, nowhere in the PIF is it clear what these criteria are or how they will be developed. Does this mean that certain standards will be developed for tourism projects that must be met before the project is approved? In this case, perhaps the term "standard" or "safeguard" would be more appropriate – especially since the project envisions that these criteria would be mandatory (para. 39). Under Component Three, the term "criteria" is again used – this time as a way to determine which project interventions should be used at a given site (para. 51). In this case the term "criteria" makes sense because they are used to make a decision or selection. Immediately afterwards, however, the project again says it will use BD criteria in areas that have been selected based on these criteria (para. 52).??

Component Two, regarding strengthening enabling conditions to address market failures could also be improved by clarifying some points. For example, para. 44 discusses the need to estimate the overall value of goods and services at a site prior to conducting a business plan for the pilot tourist sites. The paragraph mentions using the results of different studies. Which studies? How will these studies be conducted and using which method or model? Many decision support tools exist for this purpose which require varying levels of time, funds, ability, etc. Reviews like those found in Bagstad et al., 2013 can help project implementers determine which method is most appropriate.

Also in this section, the project discusses the need to evaluate different types of instruments that can be used to promote sustainable tourism (para 45); however, subsequent paragraphs (48) discuss the use of certification giving the appearance that the mechanism has already been pre-selected. Or is it in addition to one of the others listed in para 45? And how do these mechanisms relate to the list of actions to be taken

under para. 53 (laws, regulations, land use planning, capacity building, best practices, monitoring, promotional campaigns, etc.).

Essentially, there are many ideas presented throughout this project proposal which may be valid but they need to be articulated in a clear and logical manner to avoid the appearance that this project proposal has been developed by multiple people/organizations with little overall coherence.

The demonstrative models (pilot sites) discussed in Component Three of this project will "enhance the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in communities associated with the pilot areas." (para. 60) and the promotion of "alternative livelihoods" (para. 73), which will be determined during the PPG phase; however, it is not entirely clear what existing livelihoods are. Alternative to what? Will some people be disadvantaged by the proposed changes? How will this be accounted for in the indicators?

Component Four is focused on Knowledge Management, which centers on the development of a communications strategy and an awareness campaign. Would the awareness campaign be a component of the communications strategy and would this be at the national level or for the proposed demonstration sites? Is this really knowledge management in terms of learning from results, sharing information, etc.?

References:

Bagstad, K.J. et al. (2013). A comparative assessment of decision-support tools for ecosystem services quantification and valuation. *Ecosystem Services* 5: e27 – e39.

Buckley, R. (2012). Sustainable tourism: research and reality. *Annals of Tourism Research* 39(2): 528 – 546.

Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al. (2017). Mainstreaming biodiversity in economic sectors: An analytical framework. *Biological Conservation* 201: 145 – 156.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Concur	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple “Concur” response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
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 GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP’s concerns. 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.
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