

<b>Part I: Project Information</b>		Response
GEF ID	10381	
Project Title	Enhancing capacity for sustainable management of forests, land and biodiversity in the Eastern Hills (ECSM FoLaBi EH)	
Date of Screening	23-Nov-19	
STAP member Screener	Graciela Metternicht	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron	
STAP Overall Assessment		<p><b>Minor issues to be considered during project design.</b> STAP welcomes FAO's project "Enhancing capacity for sustainable management of forests, land and biodiversity in the Eastern Hills (ECSM FoLaBi EH)". The project seeks to mainstream biodiversity conservation into land use planning. STAP is pleased the project will develop a theory of change, and that the project will draw upon a history of experience and lessons on biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and forest management. STAP believes the project could use a framework to plan and sequence its interventions on biodiversity mainstreaming, land use and forest rehabilitation, or restoration. In this regard, STAP wishes to recommend UNCCD's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Framework, and STAP's guidelines on LDN to guide that process. Further details about the framework and guidelines are provided below. STAP recommends the project team reads the LDN TSP report and proactively work to incorporate LDN targets RELEVANT to the objectives of this project. STAP notes the project document replicate the LDN targets of the country, and it requests that the team be specific on which of those targets this project can realistically help to deliver. STAP notes that national and sub-national sources of data/information/knowledge for component 1 of the project may have been omitted, and hence requests a thorough exercise of 'mapping the landscape of existing data and knowledge' be undertaken to reduce the expenditure of component 1. In addition, STAP welcomes the climate change context provided in the PIF. As the PIF mentions, Nepal is vulnerable to climate risks. STAP strongly encourages the project developers to take into consideration Nepal's climate vulnerability as they develop the interventions. For example, how will climate stressors (e.g. changes in temperature and rainfall, and increased drought conditions) affect biodiversity conservation planning, land use restoration, and the production of non-timber forest products? Thus, STAP wishes to see stronger efforts being made to embed climate change resilience into the project design and implementation. Below, STAP suggests various resources for undertaking a climate risk assessment, or a resilience assessment.</p>
<b>Part I: Project Information</b>		
<b>B. Indicative Project Description Summary</b>		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes.
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 global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Partly. The outcomes encompass global environmental outcomes on biodiversity. However, outcomes derived from sustainable land management (via Land Degradation Neutrality) are less clearly defined in the indicative project description summary.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes, with careful monitoring. STAP notes that close to 1.5 million dollars will go into component 1 of helping 34 communities with preparing a policy and planning framework for landscape level biodiversity sensitive land use and forest management. For component 3 that is about <b>implementation of actions on the ground less than that amount is allocated</b> . the project claims that the interventions will benefit a total of 200,000 ha through avoid, reduce, reverse hierarchy of interventions. With the information provided this appears a highly ambitious and, to an extent, unrealistic set of outputs.
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, however, as noted above, concerns exist on the allocation of funds to component 3 to enable the implementation of activities that will deliver the expected outcomes. STAP recommends that component 1 relies more on existing (though fragmented) information from national stakeholders (including Universities and NGOs).
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
<b>1. Project description. Briefly describe:</b>		

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, the problem analysis and context (in which the project will be situated) are thoroughly described.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, the barriers and threats are described thoroughly.
	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 project identifies drivers of forest and biodiversity degradation, which require integrated land use planning.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, a narrative baseline is provided.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Indicators for biodiversity are provided. It is possible that additional indicators will be identified during the project design. Indicators for land degradation, however, appear absent.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, the baseline supports the incremental reasoning.
	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;	STAP encourages identifying indicators for land degradation. Below, STAP provides guidance on what these indicators could be - i.e. LDN indicators on land use, land productivity, and soil organic carbon.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Yes, the baseline section lists how a number of initiatives can link to this project. It would be valuable to describe the projects' lessons, or the experience to date, and how they will inform the project design.
	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 preliminary theory of change for the project is described as: "The project will aim to remove the barriers by mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use into local level planning and production practices." The project will work at the landscape level, household and community forest management unit." Three components will be implemented to achieve the desired change: 1) Instruments and capacities for biodiversity-sensitive landscape planning; 2) Knowledge management, monitoring and adaptive management; and, 3) Implementation of community-based conservation and sustainable production, management and restoration practices.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above. STAP recommends developing a theory of change, describing the sequence of events that will lead to the desired outcome, and identifying the assumptions required to reach the project objective. STAP recommends that internal and external factors that may impact the project deliverables are considered during the preparation of the theory of change, and that barriers identified in the project document are included in the 'current situation' to enable identifying key stakeholders and activities that can assist in overcoming these barriers.
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	See above.
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	See above.
	· 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. Component 2, knowledge management, monitoring, and adaptive management, appears to focus principally on monitoring biodiversity conservation. STAP suggests strengthening the sub-section on land use monitoring. Suggestions are provided below on how LDN framework could be used to monitor land use planning.

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. However STAP recommends for the project developers to describe the land use planning framework to support the delivery of biodiversity benefits. In this regard, the project developers may wish to consider UNCCD's land degradation neutrality (LDN) framework, which emphasizes integrated land use planning. STAP's LDN guidelines can be used to design interventions that result in forest rehabilitation, or restoration, biodiversity conservation, and the generation of ecosystem services: <a href="http://www.stapgef.org/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality">http://www.stapgef.org/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality</a>
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Does not apply.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes. However, STAP recommends describing the methodologies for measuring the indicators associated with each global environmental benefit.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes. The proposed investment should deliver the expected benefits, if the principles of integrated land use planning are applied as suggested in the conceptual framework for LDN. Endurance of these benefits could be maximised if climate-resilient options are considered when designing components 1 and 3.
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	Yes.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Partly. Indicators are provided for biodiversity conservation. However, indicators and methods for land degradation benefits need to be identified. The LDN indicators on soil carbon, land use, or land productivity could be used as land degradation indicators. STAP strongly recommends the team to adopt the International Principles & Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration. The SER guidelines have been published in September 2019 and contain also a A Companion to the Short-Term Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration that could be useful to guide the work of component 1 and 3. <a href="https://www.ser.org/page/SERDocuments">https://www.ser.org/page/SERDocuments</a> . For components 3.3 and 3.4 the team may consider developing alternative livelihoods through development of payment for ecosystem services schemes. The paper of Baumber et al (2019) <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901118312565">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901118312565</a> provides considerations on the potential of market based instruments for LDN, and it draws from PES experiences in biodiversity conservation. This suggestions arises from the description of the current situation around the changes in demographics and the use of the land as consequence.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project does not describe activities to increase the project's resilience. Below, STAP recommends identifying climate risks and stressors, and designing the project with these elements in mind.
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, the project is innovative in its community-based approach to measure and monitor biodiversity
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes, the project plans to involve actors at the community level, sub-national and national levels to facilitate scaling. The project also will build on lessons learned from previous efforts on biodiversity monitoring by the community forest user groups.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	STAP suggests undertaking a climate risk analysis, or an assessment of resilience to identify the change that will be required to achieve the project's objective. One source for assessing for resilience is RAPTA 2: <a href="https://research.csiro.au/eap/rapta/">https://research.csiro.au/eap/rapta/</a>
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Please provide the geocoordinates for the project, and different land use types in the project area.

<p><b>2. Stakeholders.</b> 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.</p>	<p>Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?</p>	<p>Yes, stakeholder consultations have taken place, and will continue to occur during the project development. As part of this process and in the final project document, STAP recommends defining the stakeholders' roles in relation to achieving the outcomes, and the project objective. STAP strongly encourages the team to 'map the landscape of current knowledge and information in the country' by stakeholders such as centres of research, academia, NGOs. This could reduce the expenditure of information gathering, training of local communities and the establishment of the KMIS. Universities and centres like ICIMOD have infrastructure that could be used to the best to ensure sustainability of the outcomes related to information and knowledge management and transfer.</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><b>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.</b> 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</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Yes. In addition, during the project design, careful attention should be paid to whether the participation of a stakeholder group has been hindered as a result of gender considerations.</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><b>5. Risks.</b> 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?</p>	<p>STAP recommends considering the questions below on climate risks during the project design. The project document makes emphasis on the "observed effects of climate change on natural systems in Nepal, these effects result from increased frequency, duration and intensity of floods and extreme rainfall events, increased frequency, duration and intensity of droughts and drying out of water sources, more favourable conditions for invasive species". Hence all planning and interventions related to mainstreaming biodiversity should consider climatic projections. In addition, STAP recommends the project developers to include climate projection data for the target area in the project description. STAP also encourages performing a climate risk assessment, annexing the results of this assessment to the project, and developing the project based on this risk assessment. In this regard, STAP recommends for the project developers to consider: 1) the period of time the intervention is expected to contribute to global environmental benefits, and how the activities may be affected by climate change; 2) how each intervention will be impacted by climate variability, or weather-related disasters (e.g. droughts); and, 3) how might climate, and non-climate stressors (e.g. out-migration), interact to exacerbate climate risks? The project developers may wish to refer to U.S. AID's Climate Risk and Management tool: <a href="https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool">https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool</a>; and the fact sheet for Nepal: <a href="https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20CCIS_Climate%20Risk%20Profile_Nepal.pdf">https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20CCIS_Climate%20Risk%20Profile_Nepal.pdf</a> Additional resources for a climate risk assessment include: STAP's guidance on climate risk assessment: <a href="http://www.stapgef.org/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening">http://www.stapgef.org/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening</a>; or World Resource's Institute climate watch data: <a href="https://www.climatewatchdata.org/">https://www.climatewatchdata.org/</a>. Approaches like the one of Panthi et al (2015) could be considered as well <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-015-0833-y">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-015-0833-y</a>. STAP also recommends that consideration be given to an assessment of current policies of the country around climate change as this can act as barrier for implementation. See: New discourses but same old development approaches? Climate change adaptation policies, chronic food insecurity and development interventions in northwestern Nepal . <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378015300352">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378015300352</a></p>
	<p>Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p>	<p>Yes, out-migration and changes in forest management that may hamper forest health are two possible risks that have been identified in the project.</p>
	<p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p>	<p>See above.</p>

	· 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?	See above.
	· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?	See above.
	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	See above.
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	See above.
<b>6. Coordination.</b> 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?	Partly. STAP recommends describing the learning and experience from on-going, or previous projects, and how this information will be used to design the project. STAP recommends an exhaustive exercise of mapping and collating existing data and information relevant to the area of intervention of this project is undertaken to avoid duplication of data and information.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	See above.
	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?	Yes, through the project's knowledge management and adaptive learning component.
<b>8. Knowledge management.</b> 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?	STAP is pleased to see a component on knowledge management and adaptive learning. STAP encourages the project proponents to consider metrics for knowledge management, and developing a theory of change to facilitate adaptive management - that is, confirming, and-or revising, the theory of change based on learning and knowledge.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	STAP recommends detailing plans for scaling-up results in the knowledge management section.
<b>STAP advisory response</b>	<b>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</b>	
<b>1. Concur</b>	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.	the project should save funding in component 1 by building upon the extensive work that ICIMOD and other centres of research including universities have undertaken in Nepal over the years. A paper by Gimire (2019), summarises key stakeholders that have been working in the space of biodiversity conservation in Nepal, using a landscape approach. The paper highlights main issues around cooperation that needs to exist to deliver on the ground. " DNPWC, WWF, ICIMOD, NTNC and IUCN have been active in landscape scale conservation, but there is still a lack of ownership of the concept among government sector offices, such as Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, Department of Forest and Soil Conservation, Department of Agriculture and Department of Physical Planning and Construction. Thus, it is important to note that landscape scale conservation is a strategic approach of the Nepal government and, therefore, all government agencies, NGOs and INGOs need to operate their plans and programmes according to the spirit of these conservation objectives" <a href="http://journals.grassrootsinstitute.net/journal1-natural-resources/vol-2/issue-3/nr.02-03-2.ghimire.pdf">http://journals.grassrootsinstitute.net/journal1-natural-resources/vol-2/issue-3/nr.02-03-2.ghimire.pdf</a> . This project can collaborate and build upon data and information generated by some of the aforementioned NGOs INGOs and institutes like ICIMOD to be . Saving funds in Component 1 can provide more financial means to the implementation of activities under Component 3, which appears under-funded for the claims of surface areas the project is expected to benefit as result of the planned interventions.
	* 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 <b><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></b>	

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.	