STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response	
GEF ID	10551	
Project Title	The deployment of EarthRanger, a data visualization and analysis software to strengthen Protected Area management Effectiveness in Africa's National Parks.	
Date of Screening	22 May 2020	
STAP member screener	Rosie Cooney	
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski	
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	**Minor** STAP welcomes this highly innovative project from Conservation International to deploy EarthRanger across several protected areas in Africa and is pleased to see increasing uptake of Earth observation technology to support GEF programming (see STAP document Earth Observation and the GEF). This is a straightforward project designed to build on Vulcan, Inc.'s past successes to install and integrate EarthRanger into existing protected management activities in three countries in Africa (Botswana, Mozambique, and Congo). It is not designed to address the numerous and varied threats facing these countries (i.e. habitat loss, unsustainable agriculture, logging, fires, poaching, human-wildlife conflict, etc.); but rather to overcome a major barrier to improved protected area management – that is, the limited ability/resources to patrol large areas effectively). Critically, the project includes training of staff/rangers to use the software, and it also build in efforts to scale EarthRanger to other areas through country exchange, publication of success stories, and by linking with other related GEF programs including the Global Wildlife Program and the Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program. An explicit theory of change is not provided and many of the important details will be provided during the PPG phase, including the specific protected areas and stakeholders. This is an omission and shortcoming of the proposed project, as it seems to have been	

	developed in haste. However, given the very targeted nature of the intervention and the past success of EarthRanger, STAP feels it is likely that the details can reasonably be worked out during PPG phase.	
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 strengthen management effectiveness of priority Protected Areas (PAs) in Africa to deliver Global Environmental Benefits through deployment of the EarthRanger Protected Area Management system and related technologies."
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	The main components are to install and integrate EarthRanger into existing PA management efforts, including Long Range Wide-Area Networks networks to ensure Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) coverage, and staff/ranger training. The third component builds in scaling through learning site visits for future expansion into other areas, which is quite optimistic and predicated on the success of this project.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	The target area for improved PAs under improved management effectiveness is approximately 21,000 km^2. This is a significant area for a relatively low level of funding ($2.4 million). However, this assumes that EarthRanger alone will result in on-the-ground (rather than just operational) changes across the select landscapes.
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?	Outputs are very straightforward – control rooms and supporting infrastructure, communication networks, staff trainings, site visits and success stories.
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 well articulated for each of the target countries in general and share some similarities (i.e. habitat destruction, HWC) as well as some unique challenges in each. Underlying drivers are not described in any detail, though population growth and political instability are mentioned. Lack of funding is a chronic problem.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	See above re threats. Barriers are not country-specific and don't explicitly say what they are a barrier to, but presumably they are barriers to achieving the overall objective, which is to strengthen Protected Area management effectiveness in Africa's National Parks. The link that is missing is between doing this (strengthened management) and reducing the various threats across countries (habitat loss, poaching, fire, climate change, logging, HWC, sustainable agriculture, pollution, IAS). The project would be greatly improved by carefully and explicitly articulating how the incorporation of EarthRanger into PA management would address these threats.
	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?	N/A
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Not in terms of biodiversity. However, this project goes beyond typical PIFs by not only reporting baseline projects but also articulating how PAs are managed in normal circumstances (baseline) without access to EarthRanger or similar types of technology, which can help target interventions more efficiently and effectively.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	The project will use the METT to show how this project improves management in select PAs once successfully deployed and utilized.

	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, assuming METT scores are already available for select areas or that an assessment will be done prior to operationalization of EarthRanger.
	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	
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	No theory of change is presented. This is a major limitation of the project proposal. It assumes a straight line between technology deployment and results (in this case improved management and with it the additional underlying assumption that improved management will result in decrease in biodiversity loss). The project does not consider other elements that may be necessary for improved PA management such as those related to governance, policies, etc. Will these be addressed through other projects or other means? Will benefits still be achievable without these other factors being addressed?
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Technology/software deployed, rangers/managers trained, park is better managed, and threats are mitigated (HWC, poaching, encroachment, fire, etc.). Since the PAs have yet to be identified, STAP recommends that as a first step, project proponents outline criteria for selection of parks with the greatest need as well as the highest likelihood of successful uptake over the long term (i.e. where salaries of control operators

		will continue to be paid after GEF project funding ends).
	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?	Very straightforward and important component that addresses a specific problem – that is, limited capacity and finances to effectively monitor large areas of land to address threats to wildlife and biodiversity. Based on case studies, the assumption is that this technology will be deployed as one of a suite of activities supported by other entities and projects.
	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
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 in terms of ha of area under improved management
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes – for each outcome and output
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project itself through improved management will make PAs more resilient against growing threats to natural capital as demand for land, protein and high-value commodities increase.

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 – EarthRanger is a highly innovative technology – a good example of how Earth observation data can be used to support GEF objectives. See STAP document on Earth Observation and the GEF.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes – Component 3 is dedicated to scaling up across geographies
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Transformational change. With regards to durability, the only cost to continuing the project after the initial GEF investment is and the salaries of control room operators. This is of some concern given financial constraints facing many parks.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Simple map of Africa with three countries highlighted is provided with no georeferenced information. This is due to the fact that the PA sites have not yet been identified and will be during PPG phase. As these are PAs, geo-coordinates can be identified using the WDPA dataset.
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	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	To be identified during PPG phase as the PAs have not yet been identified. Stakeholders have been divided by government institutions, CSOs, private sector and other. Presumably local governments and communities and organizations will be included but this has not been made explicit.

	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?	See 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-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Gender mainstreaming plan to be developed during PPG phase.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	See above
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change,	Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?	Explicitly acknowledges the COVID-19 pandemic and associated risks in terms of

	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?	delays; project lists comprehensive activities/actions to mitigate. Other risks identified that are specific to implementation of this type of technology/software – well thought out and clearly based on prior experience with EarthRanger in other areas. No climate risk screening but not clear how that would be relevant for this project
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		
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?	Yes this project will tap into the Global Wildlife Program, which encompasses Botswana, Mozambique and Congo and the Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes IP which are ongoing. Other projects are described but it's not clear that there is a connection between this proposed project and these other related GEF projects and how exactly they will relate.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes but mainly GEF projects. There are many other donors and organizations working in this space and in these countries.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	This project will benefit from EarthRanger pilots in other countries.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	The lessons inform the risks and mitigation measures outlined in this project
	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 executing agency, Vulcan
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	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	Knowledge management is mainly through hands-on trainings and sharing of lessons learned and site visits (the essence of Component 2) Indicators include the number of learning site visits and success stories and the number of additional countries to install the technology

from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.		
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	See above – component 2 includes learning site visits by other African countries with the expectation that there will be further uptake of EarthRanger in these places.

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.