Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID		10220
Project Title		Protecting biodiversity and recovering degraded ecosystems - RECOVER Honduras
Date of Screening		24-May-19
STAP member Screener		Graciela Metternicht
STAP secretariat screener		Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment		STAP rating: minor issues to be considered during project design.
		STAP welcomes UNDP's and FAO's project "Protecting biodiversity and recovering degraded ecosystems – RECOVER Honduras". The project aims to strengthen the enabling governance framework on sustainable productive landscapes, and build capacity for biodiversity conservation in northern Honduras. It is expected that strengthening governance and land tenure security will help forest and protected area dwellers deal with the root causes of degradation. The project also aims to apply integrated approaches and tools to improve biodiversity conservation in production landscapes. Since the project aims to establish a framework for Honduras for achieving LDN goals based on the validation of baselines for LDN, STAP recommends applying the "Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality" because it includes safeguards to reduce the possibility of leakage, and negative externalities, between social, environmental and economic trade-offs. Currently, the project does not describe how trade-offs that result from agricultural commodity supply chains will be managed. Managing trade-offs and potential leakages is an important element for the project to embed in its activities. STAP also encourages the project team to apply the checklist for land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes prepared to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners to design effective Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP).
		STAP recommends developing a theory of change with relevant stakeholders, mapping the impact pathways, and identifying the assumptions that underpin the environmental outcomes the project intends to deliver. Revisiting the theory of change over the project's lifetime will facilitate adaptive learning and management, including accommodating unforeseen changes of internal/external factors relevant to project delivery.
		The project identifies strategies for long-term outcomes. The theory of change should identify the assumptions that are built into the project rationale, acknowledging and documenting where uncertainties exist.
		Further details about these tasks are described below along with recommendations on how to strengthen the project's design.
Part I: Project Information	What STAP looks for	Response
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
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?	Partly – the components appear to focus on sustainable land management and less on mainstreaming biodiversity in production landscapes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	Yes, if a theory of change is developed and managed so it responds to the barriers and assumptions.
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	

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?	See above.
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, the global environmental problems and root causes are described. When the project is design, STAP suggests describing the global environmental problems and the context (social, economic, policy) underlying them. Climate change projections are available for the region (e.g. works of the Instituto Hondureño de Ciencias de la Tierra (IHCIT), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)). STAP recommends searching this information and considering it in the planned interventions and actions designed to achieve the desired outcomes. Besides describing the barriers, STAP suggests embedding the barriers into the project's theory of change. This will help determine the conditions necessary for achieving the outcomes. (A minor point: It would be better to type the barriers into the document than to cut and paste text from a previous document.)
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	
	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?	
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	
	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?	The project seeks to strengthen the enabling governance framework, and capacity for biodiversity conservation and improved connectivity between protected areas and key biodiversity areas in production landscapes. Lessons learned will be used for adaptive management of the project. Though mentioned in the 'taxonomy', The PIF did not include a theory of change, which STAP recommends developing for the project. It would be valuable to describe the theory of change, including: the impact pathways, the barriers, and assumptions underlying each outcome. The Theory of Change should encompass activities such as i) an outline of the current situation and desired vision; ii) stakeholder analysis, to identify which stakeholders should be involved in model development; iii) the scoping and planning exercise that underpins any model development; ensuring that underpinning assumptions are documented; and iv) noting internal and external factors – including related activities – that may influence outcomes.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	
	· 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?	Yes, the interventions can lead to global environmental benefits if the preconditions and the barriers are dealt with through a theory of change, or a planning methodology. Currently, the project is focused on multiple environmental and social objectives – which may be conflicting. Managing the assumptions related to the delivery of multiple benefits (thorugh a well developed Theory of Change) will be important to the project's success, and provide realistic outcomes of global environmental benefit.
	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, and are they measurable? | The project aims to address multiple benefits related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable land and forest management, strengthened polycentric governance, and improved livelihoods. STAP recommends applying a landscape management framework to address multiple benefits, and manage trade-offs between competing benefits.

STAP recommends applying the "Scientific Conceptual Framework For Land Degradation Neutrality" as a tool for landscape planning with a focus on land and forest restoration. The framework also identifies trade-offs between benefits, and reduces the possibility for leakage, or negative externalities, between social, environmental and economic. The framework can be accessed at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/guide-scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality

The literature indicates the potential of landscape approaches as a framework to reconcile multiple benefits – environmental and social. Nonetheless, there are knowledge gaps in understanding the effects of landscape management in conserving natural resources, and in enhancing livelihoods. The following paper summarizes the evidence on landscape approaches: Reed, J., van Vianen, J., Barlow, J., & Sunderland, T. (2017). Have integrated landscape approaches reconciled societal and environmental issues in the tropics? Land Use Policy, 63, 481-492.)

As the project developers design the components, STAP recommends designing the project so it contributes to the evidence base of landscape approaches in achieving environmental and social benefits. One way is by developing a theory of change and identifying the assumptions that underpin the delivery of each outcome assigned to component 2 and 3. As the project progresses, the theory of change can be refined based on whether the assumptions hold-true. The following link provides information on developing a theory of change: https://www.theoryofchange.org/

For component 3, STAP recommends applying its advice on mainstreaming biodiversity described in its advisory document "Mainstreaming biodiversity in practice": http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Mainstreaming-Biodiversity-LowRes_1.pdf STAP encourages Honduras, UNDP and FAO to contribute to the evidence of mainstreaming biodiversity by designing testable interventions. This can be done by converting the assumptions underlying the outcomes in component 3 (or other outcomes as appropriate) into formative research questions. |
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
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?	In addition to identifying and validating the assumptions through formative questions in the theory of change (described above), STAP recommends building on the evidence base of environmental certification programs in generating environmental and social benefits. STAP describes how to design projects to strengthen the evidence of certification interventions in its paper "Environmental certification and the Global Environment Facility": http://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Environmental-Certification-and-the-GEF.pdf

	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		The project developers may wish to consider designing a map with a higher spatial resolution that can assist with land use planning, and with monitoring land use change at the field level. The current map appears to coarse in its resolution to collect information relevant to measuring and monitoring land use information.
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?	The program aims to support four different actors to reach its goal. These actors include: governments (by developing the enabling conditions for sustainable practices); financial institutions (by supporting engagement with financial institutions); buyers (by supporting supply chain initiatives that contribute to sustainable practices – e.g. certification); and, producers (by enhancing practices and knowledge on landscape restoration and greener supply chains). To enhance its support to multiple actors as well as its overall impact, STAP recommends for the global coordination project to develop a theory of change through multi-stakeholder engagement, and to set-up governance arrangements. Establishing governance arrangements will reinforce the social interactions between stakeholders to help build trust, and the program's vision. This will enable the platform to go beyond exchanging information and resources.
	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?	
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?	Yes, the project considers gender differentiated risks and opportunities. STAP welcomes the involvement of a gender specialist in developing the project. When developing the theory of change, it would be equally valuable to embed gender throughout the impact pathways.
	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?	STAP welcomes the application of UNDP's Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), and its preliminary assessment of the project as high risk. Absent from the risk table is the impact of drug trafficking on forest loss in the target site of Colon. This risk should be recognized in the project as a key threat to sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. Addressing the barrier of weak governance for biodiversity conservation and forest management (page 23) is important as it will strengthen land-users' governance and land tenure regimes. Evidence demonstrates that community-based resource management strengthens land-users' capacities to deal with drug-trafficking land use change. The following two papers are useful for describing the threats and mitigation responses: 1) Sesnie, S. E., Tellman, B., Wrathall, D., McSweeney, K., Nielsen, E., Benessaiah, K., ... & Rey, L. (2017). A spatio-temporal analysis of forest loss related to cocaine trafficking in Central America. Environmental Research Letters, 12(5), 054015; and, 2). Devine, J. A., Wrathall, D., Currit, N., Tellman, B., & Langarica, Y. R. (2018). Narco-Cattle Ranching in Political Forests. Antipode. In addition to the changes the SESP may suggest, STAP recommends identifying the climate change projections for temperature and precipitation. Addressing the following questions also will be helpful in addressing climate risks during the project development: •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?
	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?	
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, the project is tapping into relevant projects, and their lessons.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	

	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	
	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?	
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?	STAP welcomes component 4 focused on monitoring and knowledge management. In addition to the activities proposed in component four, STAP recommends using the theory of change for managing knowledge and learning. The theory of change can be used as a tool, or process, where knowledge is developed, managed. tested (via assumptions),and revised based on continuous learning.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	
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.	