Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID		10184
Project Title		LDN Target-Setting and Restoration of Degraded Landscapes in Western Andes and Coastal areas
Date of Screening		28-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 FAO's project in Ecuador "LDN Target-Setting and Restoration of Degraded Landscapes in Western Andes and Coastal areas". The project aims to promote sustainable land and forest management to restore landscapes, improve ecosystem function, and ultimately achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) through interventions to reduce and restore degraded landscapes, but also to avoid further land degradation. STAP is pleased the project applies the UNCCD's "Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality" to define the LDN baseline and to plan interventions. STAP encourages the project developers also to apply components of the LDN framework (or similar approaches that include analysis of trade-offs between current and proposed land uses and land management practices), to assess trade-offs of expected benefits, and for early identification, and minimisation, of potential negative interactions, including climate risk. The STAP emphasizes the need for planned LDN interventions to occur at land- type level, and it further encourages the project team to apply the checklist on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP) designed to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners to design effective interventions. In the theory of change, STAP recommends that FAO defines the assumptions underlying the envisaged outcomes. It also would be useful to add the project objective to the theory of change, map the impact pathways (sequence of outcomes), and option pathways required to achieve the project's objective. For the outcomes focused on demonstration, STAP recommends testing the assumptions by restating them as questions. Doing so will facilitate the generation of evidence, foster adaptive learning, strengthen the project's ability to be innovative, and accommodate unforeseen changes of internal/external factors (e.g. climate change, change in partnerships as the project progresses, etc). One topic the project could generate evidence on is the application of LDN and its ability (contribution) to strengthen synergies between biodiversity conservation, soil carbon management, and livelihoods. In addition, STAP welcomes the project's recognition that governance will be fundamental to scaling. When developing, implementing, and revisiting (as needed) the theory of change, STAP recommends working with multi-stakeholders and establishing governance arrangements to manage the diverse interests at stake, as well as existing knowledge. Working across environmental sectors and spatial scales increases the chances that knowledge and governance differences will exist. Managing cross-sectorial and cross-scale aspects is important for transformational change and sustainability. The Resilience, Adaptation Pathway and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) identified in the theory of change is a useful approach to apply when developing multi-stakeholder interventions and governance plans. Lastly, STAP recommends the establishment of a project steering committee to provide strategic guidance to navigate inter-institutional and cross-sectoral challenges that may arise given the large amount of baseline initiatives that are to be coordinated, and variety of stakeholders that are crucial to the successful outcomes of this project. This is of relevance for component #1 as LDN will be applied at the national level, while interventions will occur in selected sub-national areas. Below, STAP provides further recommendations on how to strengthen the project 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?	Yes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	The benefits are likely to be generated if the theory of change is monitored and the assumptions are addressed during the project implementation. The maps and description of the State of Land degradation are not clear in mentioning how the team arrives to the estimation of the expected outputs (I.e. indicators LD 3.2, 4.3, 4.4. and CC6.1) in terms of amounts of hectares of land that will be restored, the hectares of production landscapes that are not at present under SLM and that by this project will be put under SLM, neither the amount of hectares of high conservation value where forest loss will be avoided. At minimum a baseline map of land use, at a scale of detail of the project area, is needed to back up the claims of these expected benefits /outputs.
	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?	Yes, if the theory of change is managed well for generating knowledge (products) and learning.
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 problem is well described at the project site level. Estimates for forest cover loss is provided per target site. Problems associated with fire, grazing, and unsustainable agriculture are also described The problem analysis also focuses on the importance of ecosystems in providing ecosystem services (water provision and regulation), and delivering global environmental benefits (biodiversity conservation and mitigation climate change). Risks to agricultural productivity, biodiversity and ecosystem services are described. The underlying drivers (eg. lack of access to markets, lack of access to finance), the socioeconomic and institutional contexts in the project area are described. The barriers are clearly identified, including:1) limited knowledge and capacity to apply, monitor, and report on LDN; 2) limited integration of agricultural development across sectors; and, 3) unsustainable land management practices.
	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?	Yes. The baseline is clear. The project seeks to build Ecuador's capacity on integrated land use planning to strengthen its ability on LDN. The baseline identifies on-going initiatives on land management, forest restoration, earth observation tools, among others.
	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?	Through the three components, the project will strengthen a wider adoption of SLM and integration across sectors. The LDN's hierarchy approach will be promoted – avoid, reduce, recover – to improve agricultural productivity, strengthen and sustain ecosystem functions. STAP acknowledges the figure on the theory of change. STAP recommends for FAO to define the assumptions underlying the outcomes. It also would be valuable to add the project objective to the figure, and map the impact pathways (sequence of outcomes), and option pathways required to achieve project objective.
	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?	The incremental activities are likely to lead to global environmental benefits. STAP suggests revisiting the theory of change to ensure progress is being made in reaching the project objective.
	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?	Yes. The incremental reasoning and global environment benefits are defined for each component. STAP suggests describing the methods that will be used to measure and monitor the core indicators. In addition, STAP recommends integrating climate resilience throughout the components to identify and manage climate risks. Soil carbon management embraces multi-scale approaches linking micro-processes in the soil with global chemical and water cycles; thereby, offers opportunities to address multiple objectives. In this regard, STAP recommends describing the dynamics between soil carbon management, land use, and global benefits. STAP's report, "Managing Soil Organic Carbon for Global Benefits", highlights how soil carbon supports the GEF's objectives: http://www.stapgef.org/sites/default/files/stap/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/STAP-SOC-Report-lowres.pdf In addition to value chains as an incentive-based mechanism for sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation, the project proponents may wish to consider payment for ecosystem services in the Chimborazo region, especially to influence behavioral change on collectively managed lands. While doing so, the project also can build on the evidence base on the impact of PES on environmental services. The following paper is useful in understanding the impact of PES in certain regions of Ecuador: Hayes, T., Murtinho, F., & Wolff, H. (2017). The impact of payments for environmental services on communal lands: an analysis of the factors driving household land-use behavior in Ecuador. World Development, 93, 427-446.
	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?	The project will focus on technology, finance and policy innovation. STAP encourages FAO to identify the assumption required to meet the outcomes. For the outcomes focused on demonstration, STAP recommends restating the assumptions into formative questions. Doing so will facilitate the generating of evidence and learning, and strengthen the project's ability to be innovative. One topic the project could generate evidence on is on the application of LDN and its ability (contribution) to strengthen synergies between biodiversity conservation, soil carbon management, and livelihoods. STAP welcomes the project's recognition that intersectoral governance will be fundamental to scaling. When developing, implementing, and revisiting (as needed) the theory of change, STAP recommends engaging multi-stakeholders and establishing governance arrangements to manage diverse interests, and knowledge. Working across sectors and scales increases the chances that knowledge and governance differences will exist. Managing these aspects are important for transformational change and sustainability.
	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.		A map is included in the PIF depicting the project sites and land uses, though the scale is too coarse for it to justify how the amount of hectares of degraded land was established, where current landuse/land cover will benefit from avoided land degradation
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?	A stakeholder mapping will be done during the development of the project. See STAP's recommendations under innovation, sustainability and scaling.
	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, gender risks have been identified. However, they can be refined during the project design. STAP recommends consulting a gender specialist during the development of the theory of change.
	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?	Yes. The PIF describes risks to agricultural productivity, ecosystem services and functions, and biodiversity conservation. Climate projections to 2040 are provided along with a description of temperature and precipitation trends. To further strengthen a climate risk analysis, STAP recommends addressing the following questions during the development of the project: 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: • 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 has identified relevant initiatives it can catalyze upon.
	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 recommends relying on the theory of change to manage learning and knowledge. This can be done by monitoring the impact pathways and identifying options for adapting, or transforming, the social-ecological systems being targeted. For advice on developing the theory of change and identifying option pathways, STAP recommends applying the Resilience, Adaptation Pathway Transformation Assessment: http://www.stapgef.org/rapta-guidelines
	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.	