

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10535
Project Title	Prioritising Biodiversity Conservation and Nature-based Solutions as Pillars of Seychelles’ Blue Economy
Date of Screening	22 May 2020
STAP member screener	Rosie Cooney
STAP secretariat screener	Virginia Gorsevski
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor</p> <p>STAP welcomes this project from UNDP entitled “Prioritising Biodiversity Conservation and Nature-based Solutions as Pillars of Seychelles’ Blue Economy.”</p> <p>Overall this a well-considered PIF, which is clearly well integrated with other ongoing national level initiatives and donor-led projects. While the total projected GEBs are quite minimal (29 km² of area as new MPA or under improved management), if done well it could catalyze additional BD-friendly activities under the Blue Economy plan.</p> <p>The first component includes numerous outputs related to institutional strengthening, coordination, capacity building, increased public awareness, etc. – all of which may be necessary but could be more clearly articulated through a Theory of Change that seeks to explain how these elements, along with components 2-4 are related. What are the underlying assumptions and what strategies or processes are in place to change course if assumptions prove untrue? See Theory of Change Primer (Dec 2019) for more guidance.</p> <p>The title of the project includes the term “Nature based Solutions”; and several specific interventions are proposed under Component 3. However, the project does not recognize challenges specific to NbS related to cost-effectiveness, potential trade-offs and synergies, barriers, etc. and would benefit from a review of literature and lessons learned from other NbS that could significantly impact the success or failure of this project. The project could also benefit from clarity and more detail about how local communities will benefit from proposed NbS in a fair and equitable way</p>

	<p>(see for example Principle 4 of Cohen-Shacham, E. <i>et al.</i>, (2019). Core Principles for successfully implementing and upscaling Nature-based Solutions. <i>Environmental Science and Policy</i> 98: 20 – 29.</p> <p>Finally, as Seychelles is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, it will be important to undertake a detailed climate risk screening (see STAP guidance on climate risk screening).</p>	
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?	<p>The objective of this project is “to conserve globally significant biodiversity through effective management of Seychelles’ Marine Protected Areas system and the promotion of nature-based solutions as pillars of the Blue Economy.”</p> <p>Key threats to biodiversity include climate change, invasive species, disease, high nutrient loads, pressure from tourism (visitors and construction) causing pollution and waste.</p> <p>Therefore, the objective partially encompasses the key threats and the project acknowledges other ongoing activities that are addressing others.</p> <p>Nature based Solutions is in the title of the project; however, little information is provided on specifics aspects of NbS beyond the general IUCN definition.</p>
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project’s objectives?	Yes. The main components are to strengthen the political and institutional framework to implement Seychelle’s MSP; to expand and strengthen Seychelles MPA system; to invest in NbS; gender mainstreaming, KM and M&E. These activities support the stated objective.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. Do the planned outcomes encompass important adaptation benefits?	Yes

	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes
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 – though it’s not clear how the indicators in Component 3 relate specifically to NbS. Management could be a form of NbS but is covered in component 2 as well. More work is needed to understand how NbS are different from non-NbS and how to measure.
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. Threats are well described. Barriers refer to impediments to effective management of Seychelles MPA system only (see below).
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Threats listed above (i.e. degradation, climate change, poaching, etc.). Barriers are listed as 1) gaps in policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks; 2) limited capacity; 3) lack of sustainable Blue Economy business models and income generating activities; and 4) insufficient data and information management.
	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?	The project identifies numerous ongoing and related initiatives and projects in Seychelles.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project’s benefits?	Baseline is clear in terms of existing area of MPAs and proposed expansion and improved METT scores (though not clear what are existing METT scores). Also no baseline information for enforcement issues such as arrests, trials and convictions, etc.

	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes in terms of increased number/ha of MPAs. Less clear for NbS which will be piloted in 3 project site. Have NbS been piloted previously and if so, what has been the result? Is this the first attempt?
	For multiple focal area projects:	N/A
	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?	<p>No formal theory of change (ToC) is presented in this document; nor a logical framework. One has the impression that this project is primarily meant to build on and help to implement ongoing efforts by the Government of Seychelles and other related projects by filling in some key gaps such as improved management, including regulations and enforcement.</p> <p>Project interventions are meant to complement these efforts by providing incentives for communities and the private sector to engage in income generating activities that minimize land and sea-based impacts on the MNP. This is an important Component; however, the least well developed and articulated.</p>
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Not clear that there is a sequence or if Components take place simultaneously.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	This project operates at different scales whereby the first component focuses on national level coordination and capacity building for GOS and financial services and public; the second component is to expand and strengthen protection of four specific sites; and similarly the third component is site specific near the proposed new protected sites to support income-generating, biodiversity friendly

		activities. A map would be helpful to show how the new proposed protected areas relate to proposed pilot sites.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Yes with the exception of NbS where it is not clear that the project has considered the economics and practicalities of NbS vs. non-NbS (i.e. tourism) including issues of equity, cost-effectiveness, institutional context, etc.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	There is recognition of adaptive management but mainly in relation to the Seychelles Oceans Authority and not this particular proposed project.
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 actual area of MPAs newly created (3 km ²) and under improved management (26 km ²) is minimal. However, given the unique circumstances in Seychelles including high levels of biodiversity, these activities – building on and in conjunction with other projects/initiatives – will be important to support both local and global biodiversity benefits.
	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?	See above.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Total investment is approximately \$5.5 million in GEF funding for just 29 km ² – a tiny fraction of the goal of implementing 400,000 km ² of new MPAs under the Seychelles MSP. However, if successful, the project would also support biodiversity-friendly activities under more comprehensive and wide-reaching initiative such as the Seychelles MSP and Blue Economy strategy.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes

	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Strengthening and adding MPAs as well as (potentially) some NbS depending on how they are designed.
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?	This is the first GEF-financed project under the Blue Economy plan. NbS have the potential to be innovative; however, they are not described in detail here and it is not clear that project proponents have a strong understanding of how NbS differ practically from other interventions.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	No. The project has 'significant potential' for replication in other small island countries in the region and even globally but beyond that there is no specific vision of how this will be scaled.
	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.		Coordinates are provided for Seychelles but not for specific MPAs or project sites. Maps are helpful – particularly the second one; however, it would be even better if the proposed MPAs and NbS project sites could be identified as layers on top of the land cover map. See Earth Observation and the GEF – Section A1.0 (p. 64) for recommendations on providing geo-referenced 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.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Yes

<p>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>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>Roles are clearly outlined. However, one risk is “potential disagreements on governance issues” to be mitigated through stakeholder engagement plan. This plan should detail how the project builds ownership among stakeholders and what are the mechanisms for communication or knowledge sharing. Are the processes structured in a way that enhance stakeholder agency and empowerment, address conflict and future scenarios of uncertainty?</p> <p>For the NbS component in particular, it would be good to review case studies and literature related to stakeholder engagement. See for example, Giordano <i>et al.</i>, (2020). Enhancing nature-based solutions acceptance through stakeholders’ engagement in co-benefits identification and trade-offs analysis” <i>Science of the Total Environment</i> 713. 136552.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/tbd.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</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>Project takes gender considerations into account in Component 4 and throughout the project document.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?</p> <p>Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>Risks are comprehensive with several addressed in the project activities (i.e. weak institutional knowledge and capacity is a risk but also the key objective of Component 1).</p> <p>Climate change figures prominently in the PIF as a threat and risk. PPG will consider climate vulnerability in greater detail.</p>
<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Yes. There is a good understanding of other ongoing and related activities and organizations.</p>

relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives		
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Definitely adequate recognition of previous projects and acknowledgement that efforts have been made to share lessons learned from past previous projects.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	None specifically mentioned.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	This project fills in gaps of previous and ongoing projects and proposes new activities related to NbS. More work is needed to understand lessons learned from past NbS-based projects (GEF and non-GEF) as this is not apparent.
	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 creation of platforms and knowledge-networks (p. 55)
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?	Knowledge management is embedded in Component 4 along with gender mainstreaming and M&E. The KM aspect is fairly standard (see above). Indicators are not precise ("Effective lessons learning and knowledge management within and beyond the project."). A major weakness has to do with describing how communication and outreach would be implemented to consolidate support at the local level for the proposed NbS.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	As above (i.e. platform and networks). Also South-South exchange.

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 <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>
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.