

Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility
(Version 5)

STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: April 13, 2012

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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4760

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : Vietnam

PROJECT TITLE: Conservation of Critical Wetland PAs and Linked Landscapes

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: MONRE

GEF FOCAL AREA: Biodiversity

II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies): **Consent**

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes the proposed project to strengthen wetland ecosystem coverage within the protected area system of Vietnam and notes that the national implementing point for the project, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), is jointly coordinating the commitments of Vietnam to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Fourth National Report to CBD and the National report to 11th Ramsar CoP both stress the importance of further protection to be extended to wetlands, within a broader landscape management approach. The present project is consistent with these aims and the support for capacity building of MONRE at national, level and of critically important counterparts at regional and local levels is especially welcomed. STAP suggests that the project could be strengthened further regarding overall planning and monitoring of wetlands, and offers the following advice.

1. The PIF outlines fairly effectively the barriers to more effective conservation of wetlands and biodiversity and cites several surveys including rapid assessments that provide some strategic context both for future PA site selection and also regarding biodiversity conservation priorities. However, the PIF is less clear about the overall context within which wetlands are managed and in particular fails to mention the critical lack of a catchment-based inventory and database which appears to be a major barrier to identification of more effective integrated wetland conservation within the landscape approach to be taken by the project.

2. Vietnam, through MONRE, identifies four key priorities regarding wetlands within its recent National Report to the Ramsar CoP 2012:

- a) To unify and improve the institutions and policies on wetland from central to local levels;
- b) To develop an inventory and an overall planning of wetlands;
- c) To develop a database and a monitoring program of wetlands from central to local levels.
- d) To strengthen resources (human and finance) for wetland management agencies both at central and local levels.

The present project addresses a) and d), but does not clearly address b) and c), both of which could be developed and structured using experience to be gained from within the proposed project, and if these needs are considered together, the project outcomes would be strengthened considerably, especially since the project identifies the most effective approach regarding wetlands to be the path of establishing a national PA sub-system focusing on wetlands. STAP observes, however, that the PIF has given little detail on how the new system for wetlands PAs and conservation is to be achieved, other than by setting up a "framework for wetlands management" within the Government Action Plan and establishing demonstrations. Much more analysis is needed of the pathways and challenges if this is to eventually succeed. This must take into account the real challenges of how conservation can possibly compete over the huge

challenges of alternative uses of the wetlands such as for rice fields, traditional medicinal products, etc. Few countries or provinces in the world have found this easy

3. It is encouraging that the PIF mentions the opportunity to connect the project to existing relevant initiatives. In particular at a regional scale, and as cited in the Fourth National Report to CBD, the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) which has demonstration sites in Vietnam, offers additional strategic opportunities for strengthening the experience and competencies of MONRE regarding participatory ecosystem-based approaches. Feedback from this project should help to consolidate further Vietnam's participation in wetland-related biodiversity conservation. In this regard, and consistent with the dual and linked reporting of progress on wetland related issues to both CBD and Ramsar Convention, MONRE could be encouraged and supported to establish a National Wetland Committee to integrate civil society experience into wetland conservation and management, building upon the experience gained from operating Vietnam's National Mekong Committee, which acted as a scientific and technical clearing house at inter-ministerial level.

4. The PIF provides a good assessment of risk including those derived from climate change. Further elaboration on how the proposed project could contribute to climate change resilience beyond the lifespan of the project would be desirable.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	STAP acknowledges that on scientific/technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasising any issues that could be improved and 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.
2. Minor revision required.	STAP has identified specific scientific/technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. One or more options that remain open to STAP include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues (ii) Setting a review point during early stage project development and agreeing 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 revision required	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical omissions in the concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. Normally, a STAP approved review will be mandatory prior to submission of the project brief for CEO endorsement. 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.