

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 Program Framework Document (PFD)

Date of screening: 7 October 2008

Screener: Douglas Taylor, STAP Secretary

Panel member validation by: Paul Ferraro

I. PIF Information

GEFSEC PROGRAM ID: 3785

GEF AGENCY PROGRAM ID:

COUNTRY(IES): Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

REGION: Africa

PROGRAM TITLE: GEF Program in West Africa: Sub-component on Biodiversity

GEF LEAD AGENCY: World Bank

OTHER GEF AGENCIES: UNDP, FAO, UNEP

GEF FOCAL AREA (S): Biodiversity, Climate Change, (select)

GEF-4 STRATEGIC PROGRAM(S): BD-SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4; CC-SP4

EXPECTED NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER THE PROGRAM DURING CURRENT GEF TRUST FUND REPLENISHMENT PERIOD:
21

Full size project GEF Trust Fund

II. STAP Advisory Response

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

III. Further guidance from STAP

2. The biodiversity value and the need for conservation action in W. Africa are clear and thus GEF investments in the area are welcomed and scientifically justified. Please take into account the following suggestions during further development of the Program.
3. One of the program's building blocks is "Reducing poverty among communities residing in and around protected areas." The PFD states that (p.5), "Biodiversity conservation is inextricably linked to poverty, as the latter drives urgent short-term needs and thwarts more sustainable long-term opportunities." This sentence, and the building block itself, would be more persuasive if the program proponents could provide evidence to support it. In general, the relationship between poverty and biodiversity conservation is complex. Both theory and empirical work have shown that declines in poverty can lead to both contractions and expansions of economic activities that exploit ecosystems and convert them to other uses. Rather than simply assume there is a clear causal relationship between improved social welfare and biodiversity conservation, this program should contribute to our understanding of this causal relationship by formally testing the hypothesis that poverty alleviation leads to improvements in indicators of biodiversity. STAP is willing to advise the project proponents to design such a formal test.
4. Within the poverty reduction component, as well as within the protected area component, the program emphasizes tenure security and decentralization of management authority. The assumption that activities aiming at reducing tenure insecurity or decentralizing management authority to local communities will facilitate the achievement of biodiversity conservation goals remains largely untested (to say that one observes communities with strong institutions and clear rights managing their resources better than communities without them is not the same as observing that outside action to strengthen weak property rights and community institutions leads to better biodiversity outcomes). Published theoretical papers have argued that tenure insecurity can actually constrain ecosystem exploitation because of the uncertainty over returns to investment, and tenure security relaxes this constraint. A forthcoming paper in Conservation Biology ("An assessment of 100 questions of greatest importance to the conservation of global biodiversity") identifies as important open questions the biodiversity impacts of decentralizing management authority and of formally recognizing local customary rights and traditional

institutions. The GEF West Africa program should be designed to contribute to the evidence base in this area, rather than to assume it already exists. STAP is willing to advise the project proponents to design the project in such a way.

5. Although the initiative has merit, the need for a programmatic approach is not transparent in the PFD. The main threats to the area's biodiversity are habitat loss and fragmentation due to smallholder agricultural conversion, and species loss due to unregulated hunting. Although there is one mention that "the drivers of habitat and species loss often extend across national borders," the connection between the threats described, the three program building blocks (reduce poverty, mainstream biodiversity in production landscapes, consolidate PAs) and "the need for a programmatic approach to biodiversity conservation that will enable integration of efforts across multiple scales and national borders, to take full account of the magnitude and extent of fragmentation across ecosystems" is not well described. Is the motivation for a programmatic approach that success in the region is subject to a "weakest-link" constraint, which implies success is constrained by nations who are making the least progress on protecting ecosystems? Is the motivation some kind of economies of scale in the three building blocks? The PFD is not clear, although there is mention that mainstreaming is "strengthened" by a program approach (p.9) and that a "multiplier effect" exists (p.9). The PFD does indicate that the program will permit the construction of "a regional platform for knowledge management, information exchange, and dissemination of best practices," but a knowledge management initiative can be done separately from a programmatic approach.