

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 26, 2013

Screener: Thomas Hammond

Panel member validation by: Brian Huntley
Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 5132

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : India

PROJECT TITLE: Integrated Management of Wetland Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Water and Food Security

GEF AGENCIES: UNEP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India (Executing Agency)

Lead technical and management partner: Wetlands International South Asia (Delhi)

With: State Governments / nodal wetland authorities of Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

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): **Minor revision required**

III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP welcomes this proposal to address sectoral weaknesses in wetland biodiversity conservation and management in India, through development of strategically useful tools and the proposed upscaling of pilot site actions designed to demonstrate how ecosystem-based wetland management could be delivered. STAP also welcomes the linkages outlined with TEEB and World Resources Institute Corporate Ecosystem Services Review tools.
2. While STAP considers that the project fills a strategic gap regarding wetland conservation and management in India, some improvements could usefully be made to the project design concerning points that are either weak or unclear, accordingly STAP advises that it is recommending Minor Revision, and requests the proponents to address the following points to improve the design within the forthcoming project brief.
3. Given the wide range of issues that the project addresses, STAP finds it surprising that the project is not prepared within a multi-focal framework. Many actions proposed appear to be cross-cutting and would be expected to encompass expertise in water, land degradation, climate change, socio-economics in addition to wetland management for biodiversity.
4. The PIF provides a limited description of the three pilot wetland sites chosen for the key activities - out of 115 wetlands in the NWCP, and 26 Ramsar sites. An indication of the criteria used to select these three sites would be helpful and given the high level of activity relating to the Ramsar Convention stated in the report to the 11th COP, one might expect that a good biophysical data base would be available for the three sites, STAP advises that strengthening the project brief on this point should be undertaken by the proponents.
5. In addition to the above basic questions about site selection, STAP has concerns about the GEF focal area match with the project sites. Kabar Taal appears to be a very small wetland, completely surrounded by intensive agriculture and villages – the PIF states that it is eutrophic and sustains rich plant and animal diversity - but none of this is

described. The second site - Sambhar salt lake - is also heavily transformed, but much larger and possibly regionally important, while Gapsagar is an ancient impoundment, also surrounded by urban development. None of these appear to have special biodiversity values, at least not from the PIF description. The choice of these sites might be that there are no better sites in India, but then this becomes more of a land degradation and water management project than one on biodiversity. STAP requests clarification of the focus for this project.

6. The PIF outlines components dealing with development of technical outputs to support the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA), led by the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD), whose principal mandate appears to be related to pollution control. While this approach is welcome and focused, it is not clear how this agency of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) will translate the envisaged project outputs targeted at national policy support to address the constraints outlined within the Project Overview (B.1). Specifically the project design appears over-ambitious regarding the likely improvement of inter-sectoral practice, e.g. within water and lands management under the authority of, for example, the ministries of water resources, drinking water and sanitation, and of agriculture, all of which are not explicitly engaged within the project design, except in general terms regarding partnerships. This is surprising given the description of the problem which lists lack of inter-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming amongst the constraints. STAP requests further clarification to address these project vulnerabilities.

7. Considering the scientific elements of the PIF, in the final project brief these could more directly address the drivers of degradation and barriers to be removed, as well as verifying that wetland management outcomes can be realistically measured in terms of water and food security. It is a concern that the PIF is unclear regarding the strategy for choice of indicators and targets to be used to measure delivery of the range of GEBs expected. These should be set out in the project framework in the project brief.

Component 1.

8. STAP would appreciate more explanation of the proposed development of the "Adaptive risk management system", including providing examples of such systems and their effectiveness.

9. What is the relationship between the management effectiveness tool proposed to be developed by the project and the existing GEF METT? Given that the METT is used to track management effectiveness of protected areas in a standardized manner what advantage is there in development of an alternative tool? The project brief should clearly describe the incremental value of the proposed tool compared to the use of the GEF METT. STAP agrees that regarding the fine-scale monitoring of performance needed at the three pilot sites, the METT is too coarse-grained to be of use, but the project brief should describe the connections envisaged.

Component 2.

10. Regarding the capacity building and partnerships for strengthening of MoEF related science centers outlined in this Component. The actions outlined appear to be narrow in a sectoral sense, restricted to the usual wetland conservation-linked interests and not sufficiently reaching out to science centers dealing with related sectors. However, STAP welcomes the example of partnership between, for example, the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee to complement the IIT-Roorkee regarding technical linkage to its parent, the Ministry of Water Resources. The project brief could usefully highlight these partnerships in the context of the specific actions set out in the project Components.

Risks.

11. Regarding climate risks, the risk of impact of climate change upon wetlands needs also to be considered and evaluated in the full project brief.

12. Regarding cross-sectoral communication, the national level should also be considered, which otherwise would raise the risk level. This is particularly important regarding perceived incentives for MoEF partners to engage through the demonstration of the valuation of benefits derived from sustainable wetland conservation and management.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues where the project could be improved. Follow up: The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.
2. Minor revision required.	STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.

	<p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.
<p>3. Major revision required</p>	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.