

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 28, 2016
Screener: Thomas Hammond
Panel member validation by: Brian Child
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9271
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Brazil
PROJECT TITLE:	National Strategy for Conservation of Threatened Species (PROSPECIES)
GEF AGENCIES:	Funbio
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Brazilian Environmental Ministry, ICMBio, IBAMA, Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden
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 issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP notes the proposal to support a National Strategy for Conservation of Threatened Species in Brazil (PROSPECIES). The importance of Brazil's biodiversity and the threats to this biodiversity are well described (and well known), and the coherence of this proposed initiative with national interests and policies as well as Brazil's contribution to the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity are clear. STAP recognizes the long history of significant investment of GEF resources to support efforts to conserve biodiversity in Brazil, and believes that this initiative will eventually represent a positive and much needed contribution to this effort. In addition, STAP is broadly in agreement that investments in the components described are important for long-term management of biodiversity.

The baseline assessment outlines a number of past investments in areas relevant to the project and upon which this initiative builds, a number of which were supported with GEF resources. In addition, the baseline of biodiversity conservation and data/knowledge management initiatives in this domain are well described. However, there is little indication of the quantifiable impact of these past investments or what has been learned which informs the proposed strategy. The alternative scenario would appear to be suggesting that continued investments similar to past GEF and bilateral donor investments are required in order to ensure the sustainability of past investments and to support Brazil's national and international commitments to biodiversity conservation.

STAP notes that the barriers to addressing the challenges described appear to be inadequate institutional coordination and coherence on national policies regarding biodiversity, inadequate institutional frameworks for management of biodiversity, and weaknesses regarding national capacity for knowledge management in this domain. STAP also notes from inferences in the baseline assessment that past investments have also addressed these issues.

Overall, there is no apparent logic structure or theory of change which together would provide a clear rationale for this initiative beyond the descriptions of the 3 main substantive components of the project and to allow an assessment of the likelihood of success. The objective appears to be a summary statement of the three main substantive components. While many project components are well described, there are no stated goals. Moreover, there is no attempt to indicate how expected outcomes from particular components will together achieve the stated project objective. Given the long history of similar past investments and assessments of success, a theory of change should be reasonably straight forward to develop. At present, STAP is unable to determine whether continued investments along the lines of past investments represents a logical way forward, or whether an evidence-based re-thinking of current strategies may be required.

Overall, the information presented suggests an approach which appears to be primarily top-down in nature. An outline of a theory of change would provide a clear logical structure along with the incremental cost reasoning and rationale for GEF funding, all of which are currently lacking. When developing the theory of change, the following issues should be addressed:

- a) Scope/describe the socio-ecological system within which the project resides and identify the key problem(s) to be addressed (details of which have been provided) and propose impact pathways (i.e., results chains) required to meet the stated objective (currently lacking);
- b) Ensure that appropriate stakeholders across sectors are involved in the development of the theory of change (The list of potential stakeholders in Section 2 is noted, however there is little indication of how stakeholders and particularly local communities that depend on biodiversity ;
- c) Explore whether the objective can be achieved through incremental changes/improvements (as proposed) or whether an alternative strategy or transformation of the system will be required; and
- d) Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to capture learning, including learning that evolves through adaptive management, and that these lessons inform decision making.

The investments planned for this initiative appear to be systemic, addressing numerous gaps in the national framework for biodiversity conservation, management, and the generation and curation of biodiversity information, many of which appear to have the potential to carry on as issues to be addressed well into the future. Given that GEF funding is typically meant to be catalytic, there is no description of how this investment will be transformative and ensure sustainability in policy coherence and delivery over the long term while minimizing needs for ongoing outside investment. In addition, the document is silent regarding how implementation of the components proposed will deliver the suggested target of 9 million ha of landscapes/seascapes preserved, or how this figure was determined.

For all three components, it will be important to describe in detail the social, economic, and biophysical aspects. This will determine the social-ecological structure and function of the target areas which will be important to integrating protected areas into the wider landscape. Additionally, STAP recommends defining the spatial scale (where appropriate) and "system" scale of each intervention.

The risk analysis is weak and appears to be significantly under-estimating potential risks, particularly with respect to economic drivers as well as concerning the willingness of other government ministries overseeing production sectors to work proactively with project stakeholders. It would be important to map key sectoral stakeholders across government indicating their roles and responsibilities for the success of this initiative (along with the assumptions associated with this) and the mechanisms required to ensure they are proactively engaged. Issues such as the high transaction costs of developing and implementing NCAPs (as in Section 1.2) and the likely future impacts of climate change on policy coherence and government response are also not mentioned.

STAP strongly recommends a thorough multi-stakeholder engagement strategy that is built on an objective analysis of past experience/success likely partners, both government and non-government. This will be important because the project will work across multiple sectors and scales, which increases the chances that diverse knowledge and governance arrangements will exist. It is particularly important in the context of Component 3, as Brazil has exhibited the growth of a robust community of institutions involved in the collection and management of species data along with related socio-economic data important for better understanding biodiversity mainstreaming activities. Notwithstanding the list of potential stakeholders provided, the strategy as currently described appears largely top-down.

References:

Canhos DAL, Sousa-Baena MS, de Souza S, Maia LC, Stehmann JR, Canhos VP, et al. (2015) The Importance of Biodiversity E-infrastructures for Megadiverse Countries. PLoS Biol 13(7): e1002204. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1002204
<http://www.splink.org.br/index>, <http://www.splink.org.br/showNetwork>

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Concur	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple “Concur” response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	<p>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:</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3. Major issues to be considered during project design	<p>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:</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP’s concerns.</p> <p>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.</p>