

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: March 12, 2013

Screener: Thomas Hammond

Panel member validation by: Brian Huntley
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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4865

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : China

PROJECT TITLE: Expansion and Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the Greater Shennongjia Area, Hubei Province

GEF AGENCIES: UNEP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Hubei Provincial Department of Forestry

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

STAP welcomes this project which addresses biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in an area of high biodiversity and of important ecosystem services in Central China, as prioritized in the NBSAP and 2nd National Report to the CBD.

In recommending Minor Revision to the PIF, STAP offers the following observations and suggestions for consideration -

The baseline project description indicates the very strong investments by the government of China planned or in progress to address ecosystem health problems. However, STAP recommends that consideration be given to providing more specific information of the threats and the barriers to reducing these. The PIF describes these threats in rather general terms, against which the success of the GEF interventions will be difficult to measure.

The project outputs in terms of establishing new protected areas, increased protection for threatened species, by both in-situ and ex-situ methods, the integration of the valuation of biodiversity assets in regional land-use planning and economic development frameworks, plus an environmental education and communication strategy and implementation, are broad and ambitious, especially given the capacity limitations identified in the proposal.

It is suggested that a more focused program of activities, targeting the core objective of improved management effectiveness in existing PAs, and the identification of key sites for an expanded network in the GSA, be considered.

Further, the existing major projects listed in the baseline description indicate very large government and donor commitments in the country, presenting opportunities to build on established knowledge bases and professional capacity that are not explored in this proposal. The baseline description does not provide detail on the threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services in the GSA, information, on an appropriate temporal and spatial scale, that would be helpful as background information in support of the proposal, which lacks a strong information base, even if this were succinct.

Component 1 - the development of an integrated biodiversity plan is strongly supported. The present description of this component, comprising knowledge generation; validation; endorsement and initial implementation, is rather ambitious, but fundamental to strengthening the PA system. However, no mention is made of the existing PA system and how its

management effectiveness will be improved and against what baseline. The use of the METT is not mentioned. It is recommended that the METT be included as a fundamental component of the project M&E process.

The proposal would be strengthened with more detailed reference to the criteria used to select the project target area within the context of national priorities for biodiversity conservation (NBSAP; 2nd NR to CBD). Section B1 describes in some detail other projects and their relation to the proposal, but it would be useful to position the target area within the national context.

Component 2, which addresses the capacity building needed to mobilize the professionals required to implement the project, is rather ambitious given the timeframe and budget available. The description of approaches and institutions to be involved in this large capacity development program, which accounts for 30% of the project funding request, could be expanded. No reference is made to the Capacity Development Scorecard, that could be used to set a baseline against which performance of the investment might be measured.

Component 3 on education, awareness and communication includes a large investment in this component (\$1,875,000) given the limited budgets for components 1 and 2. While the development of a public education and awareness centre is a valuable investment, it is not clear why this project specifically invests in botanical collections unless they are part of a targeted ex-situ conservation programme based on extensive threat analyses. If this is the case, it is recommended that further detail of the linkage between components 1 and 3 be provided.

The complexity of the project suggests that strong Technical Assistance will be required. The co-financing contribution from UNEP (\$100,000) seems rather modest considering the size of the total investment in this and related projects in China. The PIF might include further description of the execution, administration and reporting arrangements.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
2. Minor revision required.	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <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.
3. Major revision required	<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.