

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: May 11, 2012

Screener: Douglas Taylor

Panel member validation by: Meryl Williams
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4868

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : China

PROJECT TITLE: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Network in the Daxing'anling Landscape

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: State Forestry Administration of China (SFA), Heilongjiang Forestry Management Authority, Inner Mongolia Forestry Management Authority

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

1. STAP welcomes this PIF which is submitted under the Program (GEF ID 4646) CBPF-MSL Main Streams of Life & Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation. The project is well-aligned to the Program and STAP commends the proponents for including in the Project Framework some quantitative targets for the listed outcomes and notes that the PPG will be used to prepare the remaining targets cited in the Framework. STAP wishes to point out a number of issues below which may assist in further development of this initiative.
2. Of the projects within the Program, this one appears to hinge far more upon reaching agreement with the many local communities and authorities to reduce unplanned exploitation and to give up land to increased area of Protected Areas (PAs). STAP requests that the proponents consult STAP or its GEF advisory documents (STAP, 2010a,b) regarding GEF's application of Payments for Environmental Services and Community Forest Management to ensure that best practice is applied and opportunities taken for sound experimental design regarding eco-compensation and co-management proposals within this and other projects of the Program.
3. The baseline summary presented in the PIF contains the hypothesis that the "Master Plan of Ecological Conservation and Economic Transition in Daxing'anling and Xiaoxing'anling Forested Regions (2010-2020)" will, through its rationalization of development around exploitation of ecosystem services, strengthen the nature reserves for wetland and forest conservation. What is the evidence for this? Addressing this question will help the project proponents focus on the trade-offs that will be required. If these ecosystem services, including timber, water, and supply of non-timber products, are all expected to be produced in greater quantities in future, this implies considerable displacement of existing exploiting communities coupled with greater revenues to pay for the rehabilitation of the forest and wetland complex. Nevertheless, STAP expects that the challenges of community dependence and additional expansion of natural resource extraction and agriculture should be rated medium to high in the risk statements.
4. The fundamental concern that STAP shares with the proponents is that (i) the baseline describes an existing fragmented set of PAs and (ii) the baseline assumption that by simply expanding these that a sustainable landscape will result. Clearly a spatial analysis is essential to determine whether the proposed expansions of PAs are the most effective in terms of the biodiversity connectivity of core areas, buffer zone management and hydrological integrity. The map attached to the PIF indicates a series of ridge-top PA sites, but does not demonstrate a rational functional context for these. Without such an independent analysis and feedback to the Master Plan authors, the global environmental benefits expected may not be realized.

5. STAP welcomes the planned review of spatial arrangements within Component 1 and agrees that this is fundamental to the success of every other intervention proposed. However, the PIF does not make clear whether subsequently the physical PA boundaries set by the Master Plan could be challenged using the results of the spatial (and functional) analysis. STAP recommends that the PPG work should expand Activity 1 (of the PPG) which includes an in-depth review of the Master Plan to check the feasibility of its amendment. The Risk Table at B.4, first item should be amended to reflect the risk of inflexibility.

6. The wetland and forest complex was historically a part of the former range of the Amur tiger. Management of the complex to achieve good conservation status would be a useful contribution towards the potential of the area in the long term to host a future tiger population or at least to promote connectivity to the north eastern China population remnant.

References

STAP. 2010a. Payments for Environmental Services and the Global Environment Facility: A STAP advisory document. http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/publication/STAP_PES_2010.pdf

STAP. 2010b. The Evidence Base for Community Forest Management as a Mechanism for Supplying Global Environmental Benefits and Improving Local Welfare: A STAP advisory document http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/publication/STAP_CFM_2010.pdf

<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.