

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: October 17, 2016
Screener: Virginia Gorsevski
Panel member validation by: Brian Child
Consultant(s):

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9403
PROJECT DURATION:	6
COUNTRIES:	China
PROJECT TITLE:	China's Protected Area System Reform (C-PAR)
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP, FECO and CI
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), State Oceanic Administration (SOA), Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai Provinces
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 welcomes this well prepared PIF. Overall, the project is comprehensive, well designed and well written. These compliments can be extended to the equally well conceived child projects.

We full support the conclusion that the institutions governing PA standards needs to be independently and objectively separated from the national, regional and local institutions that are managing protected areas.

We also fully endorse the involvement of communities, private sector and NGOs, as well as the need to consider PAs from a financial and economic perspective. Here we bring to the attention of the project developers the recent PhD completed by Dr. Thiago Souza from the Brazilian PA Authority. He has developed a model to assess the economic performance of many of the PAs in a PA system relative to their tourism potential, to assess whether the limiting factor is internal to the PA (e.g. infrastructure, accom, etc.) or is internal to the region (e.g. roads, accom, etc.), and to then assess the economic impact of addressing these limiting factor in terms of local / regional / national economic growth and employment. Adaptation and adoption of a similar model might well address problems identified in the pif such as "low awareness of government planners and finance departments of the real value of the services that PAs can deliver to the economy".

A few comments:

1. It is clear from the PIF and from the literature that a major problem facing China's biodiversity is that the PAs are small, not-well situated or connected, and that there is lack of planning and information sharing at all levels. In order to avoid making the same mistakes going forward, it will be essential that comprehensive and rigorous analysis be undertaken in the form of a nationwide biodiversity assessment. Affirming project design, Wu et al., have begun this analysis but make it clear that the lack of a comprehensive Nature

Reserve database and the absence of spatial data on locations and boundaries are a major impediment to researchers and planners and if possible, there should be a legal requirement to report such data to the Central Government (Wu et. al, 2011).

2. Given the dynamic pace of development expansion in China which is putting pressure on land resources (e.g. mining, construction, transport hubs, industry, etc.), it might be wise to involve stakeholders from these industries and the private sector in general to ensure that the establishment of new protected areas and the expansion of existing reserves is realistic and sustainable in the long term. Most of the stakeholders currently listed are from various levels of government.

3. The section on Sustainability lacks specificity, stating that "improved use of pastures and enhanced ecosystems should all be sustained" and "seascope approach to marine area planning and management should be instituted." More information is needed on how the project will contribute to sustainable results in these areas, if possible.

Reference

Wu, R., S. Zhang, D.W. Zu, P. Zhao, X., Li, L. Wang, Q. Yu, J. Ma, A. Chen, and Y. Long (2011). Effectiveness of China's nature reserves in representing ecological diversity. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 9(7): 383 – 389.

<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.</p> <p>(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>