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 18, 2016
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Consultant(s):	

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	**GEF TRUST FUND**
GEF PROJECT ID:	9435
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Cuba
PROJECT TITLE:	Introduction of New Farming Methods for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, including Plant and Animal Genetic Resources, in Production Landscapes in Selected Areas of Cuba
GEF AGENCIES:	FAO
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG)
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

Overall, STAP feels that this PIF does not adequately lay out the global environmental benefits (GEBs) it is targeting except in the most general terms. It is difficult to know if it targets agro-biodiversity, natural biodiversity, which species, and why these species are important.

In addition, the project objective is unclear. What type of biodiversity is the project aiming to conserve â€“ agro-biodiversity? What is "sustainable agricultural production intensification"!? What is "conservation, adaption and rescue of globally-important plant genetic resources"? The vague, all-meaning objective reflects the relatively vague description of the problem in the PIF. The justification for which species and varieties are to be conserved, and why also remains generic and theoretical, rather than specific and operational. The PIF never defines what it means by "genetic diversity" and "target species".

The proposed scale of impact (400,000 hectares) seems to be highly over-optimistic given the uncertainties in the project and the weak baseline.

The section on root causes and barriers is weak. The tradeoff between more diverse but lower productivity "traditional agriculture" and its high demand for land, and modern high-input agriculture (with a lower demand for land?) needs to be carefully considered.

The root causes for why agriculture is disjointed from natural resource protection need to be carefully analyzed, because without this understanding, the project lacks a clear theory of change.

The discussion on protected area buffer zones and corridors lacks specificity.

These issues need to be outlined in detail with respect to the three areas where interventions are planned.

The section describing the project baseline is general, with no dollar figures. It appears that not much is happening except for one FAO project and some civic activities in the agroecological movement in Cuba.

The biodiversity baseline provides a generic listing of species in a useful table. However, the connection between these species /varieties, outcomes/outputs, why these constitute GEBs, and the geographic scope of the project is not clear. It is hard to see how this project can be designed without this specificity unless it is reframed and Component 1 maps biodiversity, while Component 2 experiments with landscape approaches in three sites (see below).

In terms of project design, the methods of achieving the stated objectives are not yet convincing, or clear.

Generically, a combination of knowledge (1.1.4), maps and databases (1.1.3) and a catalogue (1.1.1) plus in situ and ex-situ conservation may increase plant genetic diversity (outcome 1.1). However, the specifics on exactly how 100,000 hectares and x seed banks are going to be implemented remains vague in the document. This needs to be clarified before project approval.

Outcome 2.1 anticipated an increase of 300,000 hectares of productive landscapes that integrate biodiversity through sustainable use, certification, corridors and labelling. The feasibility of this in not addressed adequately and before approval the ProDoc needs to be much more specific about what landscape management practice will be adopted, how, where and why (2.1.2), and what capacities (2.1.3) and incentives (2.1.5) are feasible.

There seems to be some confusion in the program framework with output 2.1.4 (analysis of species and values) seeming to belong more with component 1, and output 1.1.2 (conservation actions) belonging more with component 2.

In the ProDoc, the sequencing of how to achieve Component 3 needs to be carefully assessed. As it stands, this looks more like a top-down office exercise. Serious consideration should be given to utilizing the process of field implementation to build a community of practice and test and develop regulatory frameworks (3.1.1, 3.1.2) and manuals (3.1.3). Please refer to the GEF/UNDP South African grasslands project for an excellent example of adaptive, bottom-up, multi-stakeholder platforms for developing policy and legal frameworks.

The match between component descriptions and outcomes/outputs is also confusing. It is suggested that Component 1 is renamed to include the knowledge, mapping and planning elements and Component 2 to include field action elements.

Stakeholders are identified and roles specified in a very general way. Roles and responsibilities will needs to be clarified considerably in PPG stage.

In terms of risks, there are clearly considerable risks that the methods selected (which are not specified) will not work in the time frame of the project. These risks can and should be averted by adding considerable clarity in the PPG stage about what methods of conservation will be tried in which specific area, the costs and benefits of these approaches, and mechanisms to encourage uptake by communities.

Regarding socio-economics, no data is given about the number of people affected, direction/magnitude of impact, etc.

Finally, there is no indication of learning from other projects or the literature. This needs to be seriously rectified at PPG stage with clear citations of where proposed methods have been tested before, and how well they worked (or didn't).

As a result of these shortcomings, STAP feels that there are a significant number of issues that need to be addressed during the PPG stage. As noted above, the structure of the log-frame needs to be clarified. Even more so, the specifics of what is to be done, for what GEBs, and at what scale is stated generally and without the specificity needed to guide implementation. How these outcomes will be operationalized also needs a far greater level of analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and specification of what will be done by who, where. STAP recommends that before ProDoc endorsement, a complete description of which species will be conserved, why, and how is essential.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
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	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: (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. 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 issues to be considered during project design	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: (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. The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns. 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.