

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: 19 March 2008

Screeener: Douglas Taylor, STAP Secretary

Panel member Review and validation by: Paul Ferraro

### I. PIF Information

#### Program Document for GEF Support to Biosafety in GEF-4

GEF ID 3654

#### GEF Trust Fund

### II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

1. Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Consent**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

The stated aim of the proposed Biosafety Program is "to shape the Strategy for Financing Biosafety into an operational program under GEF-4." STAP applauds the attempt to set up a strategic and common framework for the implementation of the GEF Strategy for Financing Biosafety. STAP has no major concerns about the program document, but does have several suggestions for the authors to consider in formulating their Biosafety Program:

1. Protecting ecosystems and social systems from potential negative impacts from LMOs is a public good for which the production process has the characteristic known as a "weakest-link" technology: the total amount of the public good is constrained by the contribution of its weakest members. For example, Belize may have a strong NBF and association activities, but if Guatemala does not, Belize's investments may be wasted because LMO impacts are unlikely to stop at the border. Although the program document does use words and phrases such as "regional approaches," "harmonization," and "complementarities," it doesn't go far enough to consider the implications of the weakest-link aspects of LMO risk management for GEF investments. For example, if Parties to the Protocol border nations that are not Parties, should the GEF allow investments to be made in capacity building for minimum standards in non-Party nations. The document currently indicates that (22) "...some countries that have not yet ratified the CPB may be restricted to projects for building institutional capacity until such time as they become Parties to the Protocol," but what exactly this implies for expenditures is not clear. Another related issue is the assumption that one can achieve biosafety goals within the RAF. Allocating biosafety funds through the RAF means that "countries can decide the amount they want to allocate to biosafety, depending on how they prioritize biosafety as opposed to other issues within the biodiversity focal area." If nation X wants to allocate a substantial amount of funds, but its bordering nations allocate very little, it is quite possible that the substantial funding allocation for biosafety in nation X will be wasted. Finally, another example of the potential impact of viewing biosafety through the weakest-link lens is whether the GEF should be investing to reduce the heterogeneity of biosafety capacity within relevant bioregions or whether it should be investing to increase the average capacity on the Parties to the Protocol. Each objective has very different implications for the biosafety portfolio and how the GEF would manage and approve projects.
2. STAP concurs with point 39 that implies that capacity building for invasive alien species management/risk reduction may be similar to that for LMOs and thus the GEF should seek potential ways create synergy in these two areas to increase cost-effectiveness.
3. The key implicit assumption of the approach advocated in the program document is that nations are not implementing NBFs and associated activities because of the fixed start-up costs of developing the capacity to do so. The proponents assume that were GEF funds allocated to cover some or all of these fixed costs, the nation would find the benefits of continuing and expanding the biosafety activities to outweigh the variable costs of doing so. Proponents should be required to provide some evidence for this assumption.

4. With regard to monitoring and evaluation, one aspect of the biosafety portfolio that the GEF and IAs should make some attempt to monitor for the purposes of learning and program improvement is the costs associated with implementing biosafety programs. If costs are a key barrier to implementing NBFs and follow-up activities, as well as coordination among national and transboundary actors, the GEF family should be leading the development of evidence on the nature of these costs and how they can be reduced.

5. The document states that “the long-term impact of the Biosafety Program will be measured by GEF’s contribution to help building the capacity of eligible countries to implement the CPB through activities at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.” In addition to the indicators listed in the Biodiversity Strategy document for GEF-4, one could measure, as an intermediate outcome, within-nation discursive and institutional changes that follow GEF investments, as well as the degree of regulatory harmonization and the reduction in capacity heterogeneity across nations (see, for example, Gupta and Falkner, 2006, Global Environmental Politics). A reasonable argument could be made that if such intermediate outcomes do not take place, the higher-level impacts are also unlikely to take place.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	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.
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	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: (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.
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	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.