

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: November 07, 2017
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:	9799
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Lesotho
PROJECT TITLE:	Promoting Conservation, Sustainable Utilization and Fair and Equitable Benefit-sharing from Lesotho's Medicinal and Ornamental Plants for Improved livelihoods
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
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 the project by UNDP entitled "Promoting conservation, sustainable utilization and fair and equitable benefit-sharing from Lesotho's Medicinal Plants for improved livelihoods." Overall, STAP feels that this is a well-written and well-structured proposal to address the loss of critical biodiversity in Lesotho through an access and benefit sharing approach. In general, the project would be much improved with the inclusion of maps to provide the reader with context.

The project objective is to promote conservation, sustainable use and improved access and benefit-sharing from ABS products derived from select Medical Plants in selected Highlands and Foothill areas of Lesotho. The main problems/issues are many and varied, including poor quality of environmental legislation and implementation of laws, low capacity and inadequate financial resources, lack of awareness, etc. The project seeks to conserve important medicinal plants by (1) strengthening Lesotho's ABS institutions and capacity (2) enhancing sustainable use through research, valuation, and small-scale community enterprises and (3) mainstreaming gender and knowledge sharing.

While STAP sees great merit in this project, it would be enhanced greatly through a more in-depth investigation of the underlying issues explaining the reliance on medical plants by local people and whether or not these problems can be resolved through national level actions related to increased cooperation, drafting of plans and legislation, etc. as described in this project. For example, research indicates that 70% of HIV-positive people in some areas of Lesotho use medical herbs to treat their condition without a clear understanding of efficacy or interactions with antiretroviral drugs. (Mugomeri et al., 2016). Perhaps improved information and collaboration with Western doctors, also lacking (Shale et al., 1999), could be built into sections on Stakeholder Involvement and awareness raising to reduce demands for certain herbs that may not be effective, but could be at risk from a conservation perspective. Overall, STAP feels that more attention needs to be paid to the underlying issues related to the use of plants for medicinal purposes (as

well as for magic and sorcery) (Moteetee and van Wyk, 2011) and the important role of women – particularly in a country where 40 – 60% of married women have husbands working abroad – mostly in South Africa.

In addition, STAP believes that in order to be successful, it is critical that the project address community tenure of medicinal plants (at the village or lower scale). While STAP strongly supports the strategy of raising the value of medicinal plants, we note that this will have the opposite effects that the project intends unless rights of use and exclusion are clearly defined (by increasing private benefits and exacerbating environmental degradation in an open-access property regime – Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons). The need for local custodianship is mentioned several times in the PIF, if it is read carefully, but this issue is so important to the outcome of the project that it needs to be clarified in the extreme. Learning from the success of Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the southern African region (especially CAMPFIRE pre-state capture, and CBNRM in Namibia), the critical ingredient is individual or village-level tenure, at least for the raw materials in question. The development of local rights to intellectual property will transform this into a truly innovative project. One example of an effective strategy would be to build the capacity of the regulatory agency to empower communities to exclude others from taking their resources (i.e. "own") without paying a fair price for them.

In addition to these overarching comments, STAP has several secondary observations:

First, illegal exploitation and trade in local and international markets (e.g. South Africa) is listed as a threat; however, it is not clear how activities in any of the Components will directly address problems of biopiracy.

Second, investments in University of Lesotho appear aspirational rather than achievable, because it is unlikely to yield new pharmaceutical products given the high costs and long lead times for these processes. The return on investment would be higher (and more likely) if output 2.1.2 was targeted more towards inventorying medicinal plants and knowledge about them.

Third, community groups, including healers are listed last in the list of stakeholders; however, given that local people are the main collectors and users of plants for medicinal, and other purposes, greater attention should be given to these stakeholders versus focusing on cooperation between Ministries, reviewing policies, creating strategies, etc. at the national level.

Fourth, the project seems to be one-sided in delivering technical support to community-based enterprises; however, given the extensive use of plants by locals for hundreds (thousands?) of years, it would seem to make sense to initiate a process of dialogue that allows local people to share information and knowledge about specific plants, their properties, how they are used, why they are valuable, how they are harvested, etc.

In terms of risk, STAP believes that the greatest risk is doing nothing, so overall this project reduces risk. However, improving the value chain of medicinal plants is risky if it is not accompanied by strengthening the capacity for exclusion (of unsustainable and/or non-paying harvesting). This capacity needs to be strengthened at both national and local level simultaneously. The role of the national level should be to legislate local level rights, and to support local people in protecting these rights (through courts, policing, knowledge, etc.)

Overall, STAP believes that the sum of outputs is likely to contribute to the outcomes if, and only if, the matter of rights of use and exclusion are clarified and operationalized. As noted above, this seems to be recognized in the document in a general way; however, this is a necessary condition for success, and there is knowledge about how to do it, especially within the southern Africa CBNRM and Sustainable Use Movement (Jones and Weaver 2009, Murphree 2009, Child and Wojcik 2014, NACSO 2016). The project should make a point of following principles set forth in sustainable use theory, whereby landholders are critical, through the objective of "maximizing the value of wild resources to the people who live on the land with them" (SASUSG 1996). In this case, the project should focus on communities as resource custodians or intended resource custodians with strong rights to access, use, benefit from, manage and exclude others from medicinal plants as a priority, and as a key goal of the project (Ostrom 1990, Schlager and Ostrom 1992). This should be central and not an afterthought (tellingly, this is last in the list of stakeholders, and mixed up with users).

References:

Child, B. and D. Wojcik (2014). *Developing Capacity for Community Governance of Natural Resources: Theory & Practice*. Bloomington, AuthorHouse.

Jones, B. and C. Weaver (2009). CBNRM in Namibia: Growth, Trends, Lessons and Constraints. Evolution & Innovation in Wildlife Conservation. H. Suich and B. Child. London, Earthscan: 223-242.

Moteetee, A., and B.E. Van Wyk (2011). The medical ethnobotany of Lesotho: a review. Bothalia 41(1): 209 – 228.

Mugomeri et al., (2016). Medicinal herbs used by HIV-positive people in Lesotho. African Journal of Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicines, 13(4): 123 – 131.

Murphree, M. W. (2009). "The strategic pillars of communal natural resource management: benefit, empowerment and conservation." Biodiversity and Conservation 18: 2551-2562.

NACSO (2016). The State of Community Conservation in Namibia. Windhoek, Namibia, Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations.

Ostrom, E. (1990). Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Cambridge University Press.

SASUSG (1996). Sustainable use issues and principles, Southern Africa Sustainable Use Specialist Group, IUCN Species Survival Commission: 23.

Schlager, E. and E. Ostrom (1992). "Property-rights regimes and natural resources: a conceptual analysis." Land Economics 68(3): 249-162.

Shale, T.L., W.A. Stirk, and J. van Staden (1999). Screening of medicinal plants used in Lesotho for anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory activity. Journal of Ethnopharmacology 67: 347 – 354.

<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	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.

