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: March 13, 2012 Screener: Thomas Hammond

Panel member validation by: Sandra Diaz
Consultant(s):

I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*
FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID: 4771
PROJECT DURATION : 4
COUNTRIES : Mexico
PROJECT TITLE: Enhancing National Capacities to Manage Invasive Alien Species (IAS) by Implementing the National Strategy on IAS
GEF AGENCIES: UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:
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

STAP welcomes this project and commends the proponents for preparing a sound, well balanced PIF which outlines a comprehensive approach for addressing invasive species management challenges in Mexico. The project as outlined is innovative and should make a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation in Mexico and in the region. The systemic approach that includes activities at both points of entry and the landscape is remarkable. Moreover, it has the potential to demonstrate effective IAS management approaches with high replication potential on this issue within the GEF biodiversity portfolio more generally. In addition, STAP welcomes the attention that project proponents have given to the likely impacts of climate change in IAS management over time within project design, as well as harmonizing information/data sharing and management efforts with neighbouring countries â€“ which represent important potential pathways for invasive species. In the specific case of risks derived from climate change, the PIF focuses on increased risk of disturbances, particularly fire. It should be noted that changes in the climatic regime per se (e.g. decrease in the number of frosts, increased humidity, etc.) can significantly alter the spread of IAS and therefore should be considered as well.

As this project is developed, STAP would like to propose that the following considerations be taken into account in final project design. A typical timeline of invasive species management practice can be described as follows â€“ risk assessment, arrival and early detection, management control (and/or eradication), and adaptation. Upstream investments tend to be much less costly and more effective than downstream investments. STAP acknowledges and welcomes investments in data collection and information management across management and scientific institutions, as this will enhance efforts to understand potential IAS threats and detect arrivals before they are well established. STAP encourages proponents to use existing databases and information management tools (please see for instance http://www.cabi.org/isc/; http://i3n.iabin.net/) wherever possible before building unique datasets, and consider appropriate interoperability standards.

Although the project acknowledges threats to biodiversity from IAS in terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems, reviewers noted that the PIF tends to focus primarily on terrestrial ecosystems (both in terms of concrete examples given in the antecedents and activities proposed) - greater clarity is required on the extent to which aquatic and marine ecosystems will also be addressed; inclusion of some concrete examples of problematic IAS affecting these systems would also be useful. IAS detection and management challenges are very different across terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments. While eradication of IAS is often technically possible in terrestrial ecosystems, for example, once established invasive species are extremely difficult if not impossible to eradicate in marine or aquatic environments (CEC, 2009).

The criteria for the selection of the preliminary list of island and mainland protected areas that will be targeted in the project is not clear. They seem to have been selected on the basis of their biodiversity importance, but no IAS-related criterion is mentioned. Are these indeed areas where IAS-related problems are particularly critical? Some brief mentions to the main IAS in at least some of the cases would be useful.

Project success, as outlined in the PIF, is predicated to a significant degree on effective inter-agency coordination. While STAP concurs, this coordination seems to be limited to relevant federal agencies. Sub national government agencies (state or local) normally also play an important role in IAS management. In addition, examples from other countries on inter-agency cooperation in IAS management (Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand) would seem to indicate that success in inter-agency coordination depends largely on the effectiveness of directives from the Executive Office. STAP would suggest that the risk of failure in coordination of effort across government, and thereby to project success, is under estimated in section B4.
Once invasive species are established, public outreach and engagement are essential to effectively control, adapt to, or eradicate these species. As currently described, the PIF does not adequately outline the role of public engagement or outreach to the success of this project. Nor it does describe how the involvement of local stakeholders (e.g. those involved in fishing and tourism in islands) will be effectively engaged in active prevention of introduction, spread control and in some cases eradication of IAS.

STAP wishes to draw the attention of proponents to the ongoing GEF project "Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean". This project is addressing numerous IAS challenges that also affect Mexico (e.g. Lionfish Petrois volitans) and have also adopted a similar strategy to that outlined in this PIF. In addition, this project appears to have developed an effective public outreach and education component.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
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: (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.