

# 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: April 24, 2012

Screeener: 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:** 4883

**PROJECT DURATION :** 5

**COUNTRIES :** Mexico

**PROJECT TITLE:** Integrating the Management of Protection and Production Areas for Biodiveristy Conservation in the Sierra Tarahumara of Chihuahua

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNEP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** CONANP, WWF Mexico/MAR

**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 revision required**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

It was with interest that STAP reviewed this project. The Chihauhuan region of Mexico is extremely important from a biodiversity perspective, while at the same time often neglected in national conservation efforts and priority setting.

The fragile Chihuahuan sierra region and grasslands represent important migration pathways and over wintering habitat for numerous bird species in North America, many of which are threatened or endangered (as noted in this PIF). Much of this habitat, particularly the grasslands, has or is currently undergoing conversion to large scale agriculture and other uses. STAP is well aware of the capacity and experience of local implementing partners in the national environment agency SEMARNAT (INE, CONABIO, CONANP), the national forest agency CONAFOR, and other non-governmental agencies such as WWF Mexico.

A number of biodiversity and NRM related PIFs in Mexico have been reviewed in the current work program, as well as in previous GEF 5 work programs over the past year and there is a high degree of coherence amongst these "independent of GEF Agency. In particular, STAP has noted and concurs with the common conceptual framework found in these initiatives "specifically through addressing biodiversity conservation and natural resource management more generally through an integrated ecosystem-based approach, and engaging directly with local communities as co-managers and beneficiaries in this effort. Given demographic pressures, this approach is now virtually the only option available for advancing and ensuring gains in biodiversity conservation in this important mega diverse country. Improving baseline data including spatially-enabled information management tools, along with improved coherence amongst government and non-government actors, as described in this initiative represents an important prerequisite for success.

These important foundational aspects of the project will go on support the identification and implementation of pilot scale interventions in communities on communal land (ejidos) "including designation of voluntary communal conservation areas, diversified income streams and livelihood alternatives, promotion of certification and PES schemes where possible to support this, and leveraging of traditional knowledge. The PIF suggests that this 3 phased approach will deliver tangible global environmental benefits (GEBs). While STAP agrees conceptually with this approach, no attempt is made to quantify the specific GEBs that will be expected from this initiative nor the extent to which these gains will be stable and resilient to future changes at community level. In addition, the justification for the use of GEF resources it is not clear to STAP reviewers. The bulk of what is described in this initiative are clearly the responsibility of national and local agencies, which are very competent in this country, and the majority of benefits which will flow from this effort will be local. It is at present unclear precisely what global benefits will accrue from this effort.

The PIF notes that this initiative will draw on past experience in GEF projects in the same domain with similar community-focused approaches, and notes in particular the CONAFOR-led environmental services project (GEF 2443) “ which promoted biodiversity conservation through PES frameworks in community managed forests. It would be important to review the empirical evidence of the quantifiable gains made in biodiversity conservation from this initiative, the factors supporting success, along with the expected resilience of these gains as many of these may be directly dependant on grant funding delivered during the project and therefore may not be sustainable (ref “ review of PES scheme Mexico). This may provide a tangible indication of similar gains possible from this project.

In addition, the PIF also notes that direct dependence on the natural resource base in the target communities or ejidos, and unsustainable use of these resources, is the primary factor driving degradation and biodiversity loss. However, there is little attempt to identify the root causes of this reality along with appropriate strategies to address these root causes.

<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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues</li> <li>(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</li> </ul> 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.