

# 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: May 06, 2016  
Screener: Thomas Hammond  
Panel member validation by: Brian Child  
Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9445
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Mexico
PROJECT TITLE:	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in Priority Landscapes of Oaxaca and Chiapas
GEF AGENCIES:	CI
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Commission of Natural Protected Areas “Southern Border, Isthmus and South Pacific Region (CONANP) and Conservation International Mexico, A.C. (CI Mexico)
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

This proposed project is aspirational, however with so many activities proposed its risks being unworkable. While the broad logic of using integrated landscape management and protected areas with sustainable agriculture/forestry and fisheries to protect biodiversity is correct and many of the activities proposed are innovative, and participatory approaches with the stakeholders proposed are welcome, the project is attempting far too many which creates risks regarding achievability. The project is unrealistic about the capacities and processes needed for these, their costs, timeframes, results, and conditions for long term sustainability.

STAP recommends that the project considers an overall theory of change which will address the (well described) barriers and underlying drivers provides much more operational detail on how each of the 25 outputs will be implemented, financed and sustained, with reference to how these activities have been done (successfully or otherwise) by other GEF projects and elsewhere. STAP also requests that the approximate costs of these many interventions needs to be reconciled with the project budget, and key interventions prioritized. As it stands the project will attempt 25 objectives, with an average budget of \$3.50 per hectare. The description of co-financing is unconvincing and needs to be clarified.

STAP also requests that potential contradictions between utilizing regulations to control land use options (and their associated opportunity costs) are reconciled with the fact that many people living in these highly biodiverse areas are characterized by high social exclusion and extreme poverty. In other words, how does the project plan to address these challenges while seeking biodiversity conservation? STAP also requests clarity on the governance strategy of the project: Is this a top-down approach run by "we" (as intonated on p 24), or is it a project that empowers grass-roots action and, if the latter, how will this be accomplished?

STAP requests that the project pay careful attention to the sustainable financing aspects of this intervention. The project plans to increase the area and scope of protected areas, yet the current PAs are underfunded and budgets are falling. The Project needs to address this issue giving realistic consideration to public/external funding and how the continued lack of funding may impact activities in sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and presumably the sustainable use of wildlife.

"Working with and strengthening" is not a convincing strategy to reduce weak institutional capacity for planning, management and governance in targeted areas. Nor is "working in a participatory manner with local communities" a convincing strategy to address the very real challenges of "limited capacity, commitment and/or governance among local people in target areas".

The high risk of financial sustainability of PAs (i.e. CONANP's budget) is correctly identified, but corrective measures are unconvincing. This is a "killer assumption" to the viability of a project that aims not only to sustain current PAs, but expand coverage and activities substantially. STAP recommends that the financing model behind this project is carefully developed. If it is anticipated that financial sustainability will be based on public funding in the long term, a convincing explanation of how current retraction of the state from public funding of biodiversity will be reversed or managed is needed. A PES strategy is mentioned, but the explanation is unconvincing, as is the amount of funding for the areas in question.

The adoption of biodiversity-friendly land use plans by government institutions, businesses and communities is a major assumption that needs to be included in risks, especially as reality is trending in the opposite direction. The proposed approach (in the absence of developing a bio-economy) is to control land use through regulation and planning. Regulations effectively tend to reduce the rights and economic opportunities of local actors (without offsetting these opportunity costs) to provide public goods at higher levels. STAP requests that the political economy and social justice implications of this approach, and also its de facto workability, are assessed in more detail.

As noted above, the description of this project at the current stage would benefit from including a clearer description of the practicalities, costs and details of the 25 proposed outputs, many of which are major challenges on their own. STAP requests that these details are provided, using the experience of other projects (including GEF projects) to briefly outline how these outputs will be operationalized in practice, how much they cost, how long they take, and how they will be sustained organizationally and financially. At a minimum the project should address the following proposed outcomes/outputs:

- Integrated management plans and processes, including the mechanisms for sustainable land use plans and how they promote biodiversity conservation, including financial sustainability
- How the implementation of the annual Operation Plan for PAs will be financed
- What a monitoring and evaluation plan for landscapes looks like. Does it include governance and economic monitoring? Who does it and who pays for it in the long term?
- The proposed process and costs of developing and financing 110,000 hectares of PAs in areas where people already live
- What certification standards will be used for sustainable agriculture, fishing and forest production, and how effective certification is for achieving biodiversity outcomes
- What "sustainable production systems are" for agriculture, fishing and forestry, and the strategy and costs of achieving 20% coverage
- How exactly they will increase market share and sustainable product value chains
- A convincing strategy for a 30% increase in household incomes using sustainable production practices
- What exactly the diversified financial mechanisms for conservation landscapes looks like, and how it will be implemented
- How exactly the project will achieve a 30% increase in private co-funding of PA management
- How exactly the project will achieve a 30% increase in federal/state funding in a declining economy

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Concur</b>	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.
<b>2. Minor issues</b>	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed

<p><b>to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:</p> <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised.</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>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:</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns.</p> <p>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.</p>