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 06, 2017
Screener:	Virginia Gorsevski
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Consultant(s):	

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	**GEF TRUST FUND**
GEF PROJECT ID:	9847
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Vanuatu
PROJECT TITLE:	Expanding Conservation Areas Reach and Effectiveness(ECARE) in Vanuatu
GEF AGENCIES:	IUCN
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Government of Vanuatu, DEPC
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):
Major issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP acknowledges the project concept note submitted by IUCN entitled "Expanding Conservation Areas Reach and Effectiveness (ECARE) in Vanuatu." While STAP believes this project has potential, as written it lacks clarity with respect to its overall objective and rationale, as well as important details regarding implementation.

To begin with, STAP notes that the actual protected areas to be targeted by this project are never identified. Apart from generalities about the status of biodiversity of Vanuatu, no information is provided to justify where protected areas are needed and what habitats should be protected. Of particular importance, STAP notes that most conservation takes place in Indigenous and Community Protected Areas (ICCAs) whereas the project appears to be focused on developing a much more standard (old fashioned) State protected area agency. In terms of actual implementation, STAP is concerned with the project delivery mechanism. From the description, it is clear that most of the biodiversity in Vanuatu is currently protected through ICCAs/communities, which appear to be doing quite well; however, the project focuses largely on activities to be implemented by some central protected area agency, which is never described. This is a critical alternative that needs to be carefully justified. STAP also notes that the problem definition is weak and confusing. There is considerable emphasis on Vanuatu's bottom-up progress, but no analysis of what central protected area capacity is already in place (e.g. number of PAs, staffing, budget), or what is needed (roles, gaps) and why. In addition, the importance of the land and resource to communities is mentioned several times, yet the synergies and tradeoffs with investments in protected areas (whether these are state PAs or ICCAs, is never clarified) are not assessed.

STAP notes that one of the major issues discussed is the fact that people are increasingly moving inland due to increased infrastructure and development, as well as large scale agriculture along the coastline. Yet, the proposed expansion of protected areas is focused on marine protected areas and coastal zones – hopefully not at the expense of other critical habitats that could be under increased threat due to population

growth and shifting migration patterns. In short, analysis based on carefully considered criteria is needed to identify where interventions should be targeted to have the greatest impact.

Related to this, the project does not provide sufficient information about the global environmental benefits (GEBs) that would accrue as a result. The PIF states that it is not possible or desirable to identify GEBs using only external criteria (which STAP agrees with). However, surely there is some knowledge about how the interaction between local players and GEBs will play out?

STAP agrees with project proponents that locally designed management effectiveness tools are invaluable, but is concerned that this is presented more as the job of technocrats than as a participatory process. Mutually agreed performance metrics provide an excellent foundation for a "learning organization", cross-scale stakeholder participation, and peer review. However, this kind of approach is never mentioned. Given the community flavor of Vanuatu's protected areas (ICCAs), surely a much more imaginative approach is needed? The PIF proposes building an old-fashioned protected area agency in a country with a weak state but strong communities. Why not build a representative community organization with the same goals? And, perhaps also strengthen the Vanuatu NGO Association to provide technical advice.

To improve the project, STAP suggests that consideration is given to community and/or NGO associations. As an example, project proponents can look to the Namibia Association of CBNRM Support Providers (NACSO, 2015). Similarly, the Namibian Management Orientated Monitoring System (MOMS) provides an effective model for community monitoring that proved stronger than standard PA Agency monitoring. (Cassidy, 2007). Zimbabwe's previous Natural Resource Board is a possible model for a civic and democratic conservation structure (Child, 2015).

STAP notes that until these issues (i.e. the situation analysis and theory of change) are clarified, it is difficult to judge the efficacy of the activities (outputs) listed.

On this note, there are currently 19 outputs, 8 outcomes and 4 components. The PIF suggests that the protected area network consists largely of ICCAs, yet Component 2 focuses on improving the financial sustainability of Vanuatu's PA Network though Outcome 2.1 increased government revenue. The PIF fails to be clear about what is being done.

Barrier #3 (page 10) discusses the need to identify fully all of the costs involved in establishing and maintaining a protected area network; however, this analysis should also include potential direct and indirect benefits that can be derived from increased tourism that would result from well-managed protected areas. For example, research in Brazil reveals that every dollar invested in the PA system produced $7 in national economic benefits (Souza, 2016). Similar analysis for Vanuatu could bolster efforts by this project to make an economic case for increased support for improved PA management and investments in infrastructure.

The section on stakeholders would be greatly improved with a table listing each of the proposed stakeholder groups and their role in ECARE going forward. STAP is encouraged by the emphasis on working with local communities and customary landowners, since 98% of land is communal/customary tenure (Scheyvens and Russell, 2013). Given the important role of tourism in Vanuatu which is the primary economic sector in Vanuatu and generating approximately 20% of GDP and directly employing 11,000 people (Scheyvens and Russell, 2013), it will also be particularly important to engage this sector during the stakeholder analysis and in the development of marine spatial plans. Such planning should seek to strengthen the resilience of the tourism industry by incorporating climate change adaptation policies given Vanuatu's vulnerabilities (Klint et al., 2011)

On a more positive note, STAP is encouraged that this project uses a "Thinking and Working Politically" (TWP) approach which emphasizes political dynamics to improve overall impact. STAP agrees that this is innovative and is also encouraged that this project will strive to use local knowledge to inform ways of working. STAP is also pleased to see that data generated by this project will be provided using ‘open access' to promote transparency and easy sharing of information.

Overall, STAP feels that this project needs a much stronger justification in terms of what is being protected, and why the project is proposing a centralized mechanism to do so, rather than building on what sounds like considerable progress in decentralized management.

References:

Cassidy, L. (2007). Management Oriented Monitoring Systems in the Southern African Region: Where we are now and the way forward. Proceedings of the 1st regional MOMS mini-conference. Kasane, Botswana, Dec. 3 - 5, 2007.

Child, G. and Child, B. (2015). The Conservation Movement in Zimbabwe: An Early Experiment in Devolved Community Based Regulation. African Journal of Wildlife Research 45(1); 1 – 16.

Klint, L.M., et al., (2011). Climate change adaptation in the Pacific Island tourism sector: analyzing the policy environment in Vanuatu. Current Issues in Tourism 15(3): 247 – 274.

NACSO. 2015. The state of community conservation in Namibia - a review of communal conservancies, community forests and other CBNRM initiatives (2015 Annual Report). NACSO, Windhoek.

Scheyvens, R. and Russell, M. (2013). Sharing the Riches of Tourism in Vanuatu. Massey University. (https://tourism.gov.vu/assets/docs/reports/SharingTheRichesOfTourismInVanuatuFinalReport2013.pdf).
Souza, T., (2016). Recreation classification, tourism demand and economic impact analyses of the Federal protected areas of Brazil. A dissertation presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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