

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 02, 2014

Screener: Lev Neretin

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit

Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 5729

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : Global

PROJECT TITLE: GEF International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resources Network IW LEARN

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP and UNEP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: CI, GWP, ICPDR, IRF, IUCN, TNC, UNECE, UNESCO-IHP, UNIDO, UNU-INWEH, WWF

GEF FOCAL AREA: International Waters

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

1. IW:LEARN is regarded by STAP as the most important knowledge management platform associated with any of the GEF focal areas and has the potential to complement the GEF PMIS and GEF Evaluation Office systems as well as the future GEF Knowledge Management Strategy to enable lessons and tools to be shared across the GEF partnership. STAP commends the proponents' suggested development of the IW:LEARN platform and agrees that the foundation created has proved to be a viable facility for new and existing projects.
2. However, the PIF lacks the important information about critical lessons learned since the beginning of this initiative, particularly those relevant in the context of OPS5 conclusions and recommendations for GEF-6 and beyond. Key recommendations relevant to IW in the OP5 to consider in the project preparation phase include:
 - a. The business model of the GEF is no longer appropriate and leads to growing inefficiencies.
 - i. How would the new business model look for IW and its premium knowledge learning node?
 - b. Resource mobilization and strategic choices in the GEF need to reflect the urgency of global environmental problems.
 - i. How can IW-Learn contribute to resource mobilization?
3. The PIF focuses largely on the processes and little on substance of knowledge and learning to be supported by IW:LEARN. OPS5 recommendations include a number of critical changes that have to happen in GEF-6 and beyond, including (i) moving from the approval of project concepts towards programming proposals of recipient countries and programmatic approaches of regional and global environmental problems; (ii) substantially reforming the existing burdensome GEF results based management (RBM) framework by reducing the number of outcome indicators and reforming GEF's system of tracking tools, and reducing the monitoring burden of multi-focal area proposals which are increasingly seen as real answers to problems on the ground, and (iii) developing further GEF's integrated knowledge management (KM) and capacity development strategy. The next phase of IW:LEARN should emphasize these emerging elements of the GEF in all project components, particularly how to overcome the existing focal area "silos" in IW operations.

4. The relationship between IW:LEARN and GEF evaluations (particularly, GEF EO Impact Evaluation of GEF International Waters Support to the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas and Fifth Overall Performance Study) should be examined more closely for opportunities to systematize learning at portfolio and thematic level. This is particularly the case in relation to social sciences and governance aspects as stressed in the Impact evaluation and STAPs paper on Regionalism. It is true that formal evaluations of IW projects can be accessed through the GEF PMIS and within listings for individual projects in the IW:LEARN website. However, STAP suggests, within Component 1 of the project, that IW:LEARN partners have an excellent opportunity to extract and analyse lessons beyond the collation of documentation.

5. While STAP acknowledges the significant learning and knowledge management role played by the IW:LEARN initiative for the IW focal area and because of its uniqueness, for the entire GEF partnership, the most important challenge of this program remains its excessive focus on the internal GEF community, including GEF agencies and GEF projects. It is noted that a relatively small amount of total resources, namely in Component 4, is proposed to promote GEF IW results, tools and best practice to the non-GEF community. STAP recommends exploring further options and modalities across the components to propose how the GEF IW community of practice could be expanded to include non-GEF knowledge partners and networks also beyond the IW focal area itself.

6. During PPG phase, STAP recommends exploring existing KM systems and those external to the GEF in other environmental domains, particularly related to energy and food security, land-use management, biodiversity conservation and etc. Not only important lessons from these networks could be used for the benefit of IW:LEARN, but also potential collaborations could be established to expand IW:LEARN issues coverage.

7. STAP believes that, as suggested in the PIF, support for communities of practice is a commendable goal and also the sharing of experience across projects and within regions is likely to lead to greater impact of GEF investments. STAP cautions project proponents on focusing too much on lessons learned databases and publications. Instead, when writing the full project document, STAP recommends emphasizing support for managing knowledge flows within GEF communities of practice and between these communities and external sources of expertise including external to the GEF communities of practice.

8. Most of the GEF IW projects rely on the existing scientific datasets with only a few GEF projects generating new data. This is particularly relevant for the GEF LME projects, because data gathering in the marine environment is costly. Most of the data are possessed by the scientific institutions, often working independently but in the same geographic areas as GEF projects. IW:LEARN has an important role in assessing and building appropriate channels with these scientific institutions and organizations external to the GEF and find ways to make these data available for the GEF and global communities.

9. Regarding Component 2, STAP recommends that IW:LEARN should aim to develop a strategic relationship with new (and if possible existing) GEF programs (including newly proposed Integrated Approaches), particularly over adding value regarding thematic issues and development of within geographic regions. GEF has operational and political focal points at country level, but no equivalent for scientific, technical or capacity building issues, including within the IW focal area. Realistically, beyond the global support role of IW:LEARN (and other GEF bodies including STAP) GEF can choose to offer some regional scale support for learning and capacity building, and STAP suggests that this be tested to determine whether the IW:LEARN platform is able to respond, e.g. through a pilot activity, to catalyse such a network at regional scale which connects to non-GEF regional expert centres.

References:

GEF. Final Report of the Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF: At Crossroads for higher impact. Third Meeting for the Sixth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. December 10-12, 2013, Paris, France

GEF (Global Environment Facility) (2012) Impact Evaluation of the GEF in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas. Washington, D.C.: Evaluation Office, Global Environment Facility.

S nderbaum, F., & Granit, J. (2014). The Political Economy of Regionalism: The Relevance for International Waters and the Global Environment Facility: A STAP Issues Paper. Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C.

| <i>STAP advisory response</i> | <i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i> |
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| 1. Consent | <p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues where the project could be improved.</p> <p>Follow up: The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.</p> |
| 2. Minor revision required. | <p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions. |
| 3. Major revision required | <p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns. |