

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 31, 2018
Screener: Virginia Gorsevski
Panel member validation by: Blake Ratner
Consultant(s):

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

| FULL-SIZED PROJECT | GEF TRUST FUND |
|---------------------------|---|
| GEF PROJECT ID: | 10033 |
| PROJECT DURATION: | 4 |
| COUNTRIES: | Regional (Bhutan, India) |
| PROJECT TITLE: | Manas Integrated River Basin Management Project (M-IRBM) |
| GEF AGENCIES: | WWF-US |
| OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: | India: Central Water Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change, and Assam State Government agencies (Assam Water Resources Department (AWRD), Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Assam Forest Department, Bodo Territorial Council Bhutan: National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, National Environment Commission, and Gross National Happiness Commission |
| 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):
Minor issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes the Manas Integrated River Basin Management Project (M-IRBM) submitted by WWF-US. The objective of this project is to "enhance resilience to climate change and sustainability of ecosystems services in the glacier-fed India-Bhutan transboundary Manas River Basin, through improved transboundary cooperation to facilitate integrated ecosystem-based river basin management."

STAP believes that given the multiple threats facing the Manas River Basin, this project is very timely. However, there are a number of areas in the proposal that merit further consideration. To strengthen the project, STAP recommends addressing the following issues:

1. The project target is limited to corporate result 1 (collective management of transboundary water systems); therefore, one must search for additional measures to characterize the magnitude of the likely global environmental benefits (GEBs). Footnote 1 (elaborating on output 3.1.2) describes the geographical coverage of anticipated pilot interventions and an estimate of the number of people benefiting, but this is in reference to one particular output. Section 5 on global environmental benefits describes the benefits of transboundary cooperation, biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation in

qualitative terms. It would help to also characterize the targeted benefits in quantitative terms, where justified.

2. Several outcomes as written are questionable to characterize as outcomes (as opposed to outputs), notably: Outcome 2.2 – "Generated knowledge to improve planning and decision-making . . ."; Outcome 3.1 – "Demonstration pilots for risk reduction, adaptive management, and improved resilience"; Outcome 4.1 – "Project knowledge and lessons learned disseminated . . ."; and Outcome 4.2 – "M&E to inform adaptive management." Further attention is required to characterize the outcomes, e.g., actors who are expected to demonstrate changes in commitment, coordination and corresponding actions and capabilities.

3. The project theory of change is largely implicit. There should be a much more explicit articulation of how and why the four components are expected to deliver significant and lasting change at scale. For example, in what ways will an enhanced institutional framework enable the identification of appropriate local interventions, learning from these, and scaling of successful approaches to other areas in the basin, with concomitant financing mechanisms to ensure sustainability? Component 4 is especially underdeveloped; while it refers to adaptive management, there is little to indicate the mechanisms through which lessons will be identified and incorporated into future decisions.

4. Component 3.1 ("Demonstration pilots for risk reduction, adaptive management, and improved resilience") is presented in such summarized form that it is difficult to evaluate. While it is understood that details will emerge during implementation, full project development should include examples of the types of interventions that would be considered.

5. Civil society actors are noted as important for project sustainability, but few are identified among the key stakeholders. The next stages of project development should include further efforts to identify and their potential roles, not only as participants in consultations but also as (co-) convenors of multi-stakeholder dialogue, as well as potential proponents and drivers of change efforts.

6. Identification of relevant studies appears to be an adequate start, but there is little data provided on key measures of ecological change or associated livelihood impacts/vulnerabilities to characterize the baseline situation, apart from the description of the key barriers.

7. The description of gender equality and women's empowerment is general text, without any indication of particular priorities or contextual factors specific to this project.

| <i>STAP advisory response</i> | <i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i> |
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| 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 |

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| | <p>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> |
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