

# 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: October 05, 2012

Screeners: Lev Neretin

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit  
Consultant(s):

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 4936

**PROJECT DURATION :** 2.5

**COUNTRIES :** Regional (China, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Timor Leste, Vietnam)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Reducing Pollution and Rebuilding Degraded Marine Resources in the East Asian Seas through Implementation of Intergovernmental Agreements and Catalyzed Investments (PROGRAM)

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNDP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:**

**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 revision required**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP notes the ambition of the participating countries and UNDP for preparing a program aimed at scaling up partnerships, capacities and investments in environmental management of the East Asian Seas (EAS) building on long term GEF and national investment projects tackling sustainable development issues in the coastal zone and the marine environment using LME and ICM approaches. The program consists of three separate projects ( Implementation of the Yellow Sea LME Strategic Action Program for Adaptive Management; Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas; Scaling up the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia) and is proposed to be coordinated by a Program Coordination Committee (PCC) which is a sub-committee under the EAS Partnership Council that is supported in turn by the PEMSEA Resources Facility.
2. GEF's support for this region has been substantial over the last two decades (accounting for about 20% of all IW focal area allocations since 1992 or more than \$210 million in GEF grants and more than \$2bln in co-financing). The GEF continues to be the main donor for coastal and marine transboundary projects in the region (Impact Evaluation of the GEF in the South China Sea and adjacent areas, GEF EO, 2012). Significant progress in governance arrangements, pollution reduction, habitat degradation, fisheries depletion and other transboundary threats to the coastal environment (less so to the marine environment) has been achieved through implementation of almost 30 GEF projects. The Proposed Program Framework Document and its constituent projects are based largely on the lessons learned from these past initiatives (e.g., A. Tengberg and A.S. Cabanban Lessons learned from investing in marine and coastal management initiatives in the East Asian Seas. Marine Policy, in press).
3. In spite of the sustained investments by the GEF and its partner institutions as well as other multiple complementary initiatives, degradation of the coastal and marine environment in the EAS region continues and accelerates, driven largely by the world's highest rates of economic development and the increasing urbanization of the coastal zone (Halpern et al., 2008. A Global Map of Human Impact on Marine Ecosystems. Science 2008: Vol. 319 no. 5865 pp. 948-952; Regional Review: Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) 2003-2011). While the program strides to achieve transformational impact at this stage, its specific components and projects are, however, more incremental than transformational. Given the existence of robust baseline activities at all levels in the EAS region, significant experience in coastal governance and institution building accumulated over the last two decades as well as potential leverage from a number of concurrent ongoing initiatives funded by the GEF and other donors (e.g., GEF WB project 4635 LME-EA Scaling up partnership investments for sustainable development of LME of East Asia and their coasts, Coral Triangle Initiative by the GEF, UNEP Regional Seas Program (COBSEA),

IUCN Mangroves for the Future and many others), this program should in the new phase focus specifically on transformation change and engage stakeholders also beyond the regional networks set up by the earlier GEF supported investments as noted also in the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (2003) to achieve sustainability beyond a project by project approach.

4. STAP supports the focus in this program on up-scaling and finds its structural composition focused on the three main elements (governance improvements, targeted investments in healthy and resilient marine and coastal ecosystems, and knowledge management) as robust. Mainstreaming of climate resilience and adaptation, particularly natural and manmade risk reduction strategies into ICM plans and other initiatives, is innovative element of this program built on the existing regional and national baselines. GEF incremental support compared to the existing baselines is justified and well described. However, a fourth component addressing program wide sustainability issues and tackling the broader regional economic frameworks addressing regional integration issues as defined by the "ASEAN plus three" and the East Asia Summit (EAS) such as trade, energy, infrastructure, labour and investment may be needed for long term success of project outcomes. Such a fourth component could be strategically important in promoting transformational change in creating a sustainable green/blue economy and maintaining and restoring ecosystem services in the LMEs under consideration.

5. With respect to program design and transformational change, STAP recommends that the project proponents address the following aspects/elements across individual constituent projects and activities during program/projects preparation (some of these elements are noted in the PFD document, while others are absent or have to be strengthened):

a. The overall program logic and relationship between outcomes from the three projects and the program goal "to rebuild and sustain coastal and ocean ecosystem services across the East Asian Seas (EAS) region through the scaling up of partnerships, capacities and investments at the regional, country and local levels" could be strengthened.

b. A fourth components addressing program wide sustainability and transformational change issues related to regional economic cooperation and integration should be considered to ensure that program results become part of a broader sustainability and growth agenda in the region. The lack of "proper coordination and agreed procedures and methodologies among different regional entities, programs and projects" led to fragmentation and ineffectiveness in using development funds in the region (Tengberg and Cabanban, in press). While it could be challenging to establish formal communication channels between all regional bodies active in the EAS region facilitated by PEMSEA, a much stronger and regular process of information exchange and coordination is feasible and highly desirable between GEF partners active in the area (UNDP, UNEP, FAO, WB, and ADB). STAP recommends institutionalizing this process within the program framework.

c. While the document mentions a range of formal and informal lines of communication between multiple stakeholders active in the region (including UN agencies and MDBs), management of the program by the single UN agency presents certain risks if proper coordination and communication with the ongoing GEF initiatives and regional institutions is not established.

d. There is a need to establish a regionally and nationally recognized depository of environmental information/knowledge coming from past and ongoing assessments of LMEs of the East Asia region. ICM Learning Centers and Communities of Practice, as proposed in the project, might be appropriate institutions for this work, but not necessarily if this information cannot be channelled to decision-making and funding allocation priorities at the regional level. Furthermore, the program remains silent on how the impact of proposed projects and activities as well as results of other initiatives in the region will be measured and reported back to key regional decision-making bodies (e.g., to EAS Partnership Council and other regional bodies).

e. One of the aims of the program is to expand adoption of ICM policies and plans and enhance their mainstreaming into country's sustainable development and financing frameworks. The SEA region became one of the most successful examples applying ecosystem-based management approaches to LMEs using ICM. Application of the ICM on the ground, however, faces a number of challenges such as its limited scope in mainstreaming ecosystem services and multiple benefits and trade-offs for the use of coastal and marine space. Furthermore, ICM applications on the ground have limited scope to mainstream climate variability and change as well as for alternative scenario building. ICM's utility in holistic accounting for multiple ecosystem services, and potential conflict resolution for the use of coastal and marine space, also remains limited. The project proponents are recommended to consider wider support for marine spatial planning (MSP) across the SEA region building on the existing ICM experience. Recently released assessmentes of lessons learned in applying MSP globally, prepared by the STAP for the CBD, could provide a useful guidance in moving forward (CBD and GEF-STAP (2012). Marine spatial planning in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity: A study carried out in response to CBD COP 10 Decision X/29, Montreal, Technical Series No. 68, 44 pp.).

f. Substantial resources in the program are allocated for Component 2: Healthy and resilient marine and coastal ecosystems - testing a range of interventions aimed at reducing different drivers of degradation of the coastal environment. The document does not provide criteria/justification for selecting particular interventions addressing those drivers and it remains unclear whether these activities will have truly catalytic impact at scales they are intended to be applied and, particularly, at the regional scale as the main focus of GEF support. The impact of sector-specific interventions (fisheries, pollutants, water use and efficiency, financial instruments and etc.) on the state of marine environment at different scales will depend on the specific location and circumstances. STAP suggests developing evidence-based criteria that would take into account catalytic and transformational change in selecting interventions under this component. One way to take a more holistic view in prioritizing these interventions would be to use the Marine INVEST model or similar tool that is based on the valuation of marine natural capital assessing the tradeoffs associated with alternative choices in order to identify areas where investments in natural capital can enhance human development and ecosystem conservation (<http://www.naturalcapitalproject.org/INVEST.html>).

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	<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>
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	<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:            (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.</p>
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	<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:            (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.</p>