

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 04, 2015

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: 9054

PROJECT DURATION : 5.5

COUNTRIES : Regional (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa)

PROJECT TITLE: Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM); Government of Lesotho

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

1. STAP welcomes this multi-country project to support the implementation of the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Implementation (SAP). The TDA and SAP development projects (2008-2014) received a favourable Terminal Evaluation Report at the end of the TDA/SAP development project in 2014.
2. The proposal follows carefully the negotiated SAP and takes advice from the terminal evaluation into account. STAP supports the scientific and technical assessment of the priority environmental concerns, shared management issues in the basin and the analysis of root causes as outlined in the SAP.
3. The main concern identified by STAP in the PIF is a discrepancy between root causes as identified in section 16 and 20 that highlight issues related to lack of integrated planning, absence of policy cohesion, few livelihood options and tenures systems as critical to the degradation in the basin and project components proposed to overcome key barriers identified. These root causes that are linked to socio-economic drivers and inappropriate resource use and practice in the basin countries are not necessarily linked to the barriers identified. The barriers identified include: limited basin-wide understanding of available resources; limited potential for additional yields of water; deteriorating water quality; adverse effects of changing water quality; changing hydrological regime; and environmental degradation and unsustainable land use. The linkage between the root causes and the barriers for change identified could be clarified and the role of the project in ORASECOM's broader IWRM work (and other tasks) explained.
4. The first project component targets institutional reform and capacity building towards enhanced transboundary basin planning but does not address planning issues in the planned outcomes. Instead it focuses on data information as a path towards basin planning, SAP updates and communication. The key issue of joint basin planning across the four countries is not demonstrated. If this is happening through the overall IWRM planning undertaken by ORASECOM to which this project contributes with environmental issues it needs to be better explained.
5. The second project component is focusing on reducing stress on water resources quality and has at its main task the establishment of a water quality system. The financial contributions by the countries to this component are 50mln USD. The linkage between the water quality monitoring system and the root causes identified is not clearly demonstrated. It appears to be focusing on pollution control rather than on livelihood opportunities.

6. The third component is tackling changes to the hydrological regime in the basin that has changed significantly with a reduction of flow due to water use. Project outcomes focus on e-flow regimes which in itself is a huge task in a river basin system with significant built hydraulic infrastructure. To determine operational rules in a multi-purpose system (water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus) is a very complex task. This is an important part of the project that would be clearly a part of the theory of change to address the root causes. Co-financing to this objective is modest and the path to achieve such e-flows through consultative processes is not convincing. This key project objective would demand more resources to really make an impact in such a large river basin. A source-to-sea concept is promoted in this component which in principle is encouraged. However, it seems to be focusing on the restoration of the river mouth rather than focusing on all segments of the rivers system connecting the coastal zone with the Large Marine Benguela Ecosystem (addressed by the another ongoing GEF project).

7. Major co-financing is invested in component 4 that will tackle land productivity primarily through invasive species control. In itself this is an important issue in the basin that should be tackled. However, the link between invasive species control and improving livelihoods is not made clear. Also for this component the riparian countries are contributing significant amounts of financial resources and the added value of the GEF funding could be questioned.

8. Together this overview of the key project components highlights a discrepancy between root causes in the socio-economic domain identified and the intended project outcomes. The theory of change to overcome the root causes through this investment could be strengthened. A better explanation of the overall work of the ORASECOM in which this project sits would most likely clarify this issue. The proposed project components in the PIF are indeed noted in the SAP. However, STAP considers that they do not make a convincing case for a limited GEF financing to make a lasting impact on the identified root causes of basin degradation.

9. The project is tackling a broad range of issues and would, according to STAP, benefit from being more streamlined and focused on some key aspects related to how to overcome the root causes/drivers rather than their symptoms. This could be achieved by focusing the project on strengthening ORASECOM's work on planning and policy analysis; to guide the participating governments and on knowledge management through a major investment in the Water Information System (WIS), and a major effort on understanding and finding solutions to E-flow issues promoting a Source to Sea approach. Action on the ground such as invasive species control could possibly be undertaken without limited GEF funding within a broader IWRM program. The SAP is a good tool to identify investment priorities in the environmental management and it should be supplemented by convincing arguments in the PIF which parts of the SAP to finance in the current proposal.

10. On governance, STAP notes the lack of a baseline description of the governance system that has led to the current state of affairs in the basin and how to overcome barriers to effective governance and management of the system moving forward. It is recommended that the project includes solid work on a governance baseline to position ORASECOM in the context of national development and SADC as a whole. Further work on connecting governance in the Source to Sea continuum would indeed be innovative. The governance baseline should assess the regional institutional frameworks and how best to synchronize national and regional concerns, incentives, and benefits to assure the long term sustainability of the Orange-Senqu river basin and the sub-region as a whole including exploring an exit strategy for GEF support. Both, the governance baseline and the exit strategy should take the multiple stages of GEF support to the basin countries into account and provide a scenario for the future in which a possible Source-to-Sea agenda could be important.

11. A minor detail is that the Orange-Senqu river system is not the largest basin in Southern Africa (that would be the Zambezi or the Congo basin depending on where the borders of the region are drawn) (para 1).

References (besides SAP, Terminal valuation and other project documentation) that could be useful to strengthen project design:

Diaz, R. & Rosenberg, R. (2008). Spreading Dead Zones and Consequences for Marine Ecosystems. *Science*, 321(AAAS): 926-929.

Earle, A., Jaegerskog, A. & Oejendal J. (Eds.) (2010). *Transboundary Water Management: Principles and Practice*. Earthscan: London.

Granit, J., Liss Lymer, B., Olsen, S., Lundqvist, J. & Lindström, A. (2012): *Strengthening the Management of Water Resources in the Continuum from Land to the Coastal Sea with Spatial Planning*. Conference Paper East Asian Seas Congress 2012.

Hooper, B. (2006). Key Performance Indicators of River Basin Organizations. The Institute for Water Resources, Alexandria, VA: US. Army Corps of Engineers.

Limpopo River Awareness Kit, accessed 140424, <http://www.limpoporak.com/en/river/geography/basins+of+southern+africa.aspx>

Olsen, S.B., Page, G.G. & Ochoa, E. (2009). The analysis of governance responses to ecosystem change: A handbook for assembling a baseline. LOICZ Reports & Studies No. 34. Geesthach: GKSS Research Center.

SÄ¶derbaum, 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.

VÄ¶smarty, C. J. McIntyre, P. B., Gessner, M. O., Dudgeon, D., Prusevich, A., Green, P., Glidden, S., Bunn S. E., Sullivan, C. A., Reidy Liermann C., & Davies, P. M. (2010) Global threats to human water security and river biodiversity. Nature, 467, 555-561 (30 September 2010). Erratum November 2010.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
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	<p>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:</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>
3. Major issues to be considered during project design	<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>