

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: March 14, 2016
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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9165
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Regional (Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Chad)
PROJECT TITLE:	Enabling Implementation of the Regional SAP for the Rational and Equitable Management of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS).
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	UNESCO/IHP, IAEA
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):
Major issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

1. Building as it does upon the GEF-supported Shared Aquifer Diagnostic Analysis (SADA), and a series of predecessor initiatives, including regional governance aspects dating back to 1989, this proposed project is a logical next step in delivering sound governance and effective scientific and technical monitoring systems for the conjunctive use and management of the water resources of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS). The proposed actions to be supported identified in the PIF conform closely to the actions in the agreed SAP and address the main conclusions of the Terminal Evaluation of the predecessor project.

2. From a scientific perspective this project proposal is well prepared. There are strong merits in supporting regional collaboration on the transboundary Nubian sandstone aquifer under a common framework. The TDA and the SAP (Shared Aquifer Diagnostic Assessment, SADA) were approved in 2013 which means that the five key environmental problems (declining water levels; damage or loss of ecosystems and biodiversity; water quality deterioration; climate change; and, changes in groundwater flow regime) and actions to address them are well defined. The proposed multilateral institutional framework to provide technical assistance is strong with UNDP, IAEA and UNESCO planning to support the SAP implementation. The global policy framework with the UNGA Resolution on the Law of Transboundary aquifers and UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its groundwater management provisions are also in place and provide global policy advice and guidance. Furthermore, STAP supports the recommendations made in the GEFSec review of the PIF regarding guidance available from the GEF Global Groundwater Governance Project Framework for Action and also supports the intention of the project proponents to use the Groundwater Community of Practice.

3. STAP has major concerns related to high risk of implementation failure. STAP assesses that the risk matrix included in the PIF underestimates all listed risks (in our opinion, all identified risks should be rated as "High") and mitigation strategies proposed are inadequate to the scale of the identified challenges. Because

of the civil strife, the political situation in Libya remains challenging to support cooperation with neighboring countries. Furthermore, the unstable political situation in Western Sudan (in which the NSA is located) is also not conducive for implementing pilot projects. It could of course be argued that this type of regional project can support transition to stability but considering the current major political uncertainty it is unrealistic to believe that the engagement of local stakeholders in the project design and implementation could be assured and successful (which is key factor for the long term project sustainability).

4. The PIF lacks a governance baseline assessment including an institutional assessment which makes it very difficult to assess the quality of the institutions that are listed for execution and if they have adequate capacity to manage the project. Both, the Joint Authority for the Study and Development of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System and CEDARE (Centre for Environment & Development for the Arab Region and Europe) were established in the early 1990s but there is no description of how these institutions function today.
5. STAP recommends including a full governance baseline assessment and institutional analysis if the project is approved for preparation. The implementing agencies could consider a strong regional host for the project that works in partnership with the executing agencies (Joint Authority and CEDARE). The assessment should include understanding the roles of IGAD and AU.
6. The knowledge management aspects of the project are less well synthesized than would be expected from a GEF-6 proposal, the relevant PIF section is missing. Component 2 adequately reflects the capacity building and data standards proposed. However the links to the NSAS Regional Information System (NARIS) are not clear. Therefore STAP recommends that a KM strategy is defined taking into account the wide range of regionally important databases, training materials to be developed and delivered according to the SAP and outlined in the PIF and also how the likely lessons to be learned can be shared effectively.
7. STAP recognizes, however, the importance to keep up analytical work and confidence building measures related to the management of the NSAS in spite of political uncertainty. STAP proposes that the project design is re-considered in ways that elements of knowledge generation on the system as a whole and confidence building measures are kept intact. Pilot projects should only be considered in areas where they have a lasting chance to be well implemented and monitored.

<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	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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. <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	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal</p>

<p>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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