

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: November 08, 2017
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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9767
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Regional (Belarus, Ukraine)
PROJECT TITLE:	Fostering Multi-country Cooperation over Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the Underlying Aquifer Systems
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	UNESCO IHP, UNECE
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 fully supports this project to build in depth understanding of the shared water resources in the Bug and Neman river basins, and agrees that the attention to both groundwater and surface water is an innovative approach additional to the standard TDA/SAP methodology proposed. The STAP also welcomes the integration of environmental security concerns, and explicit attention to institutional strengthening to reduce conflict over transboundary resources. A few minor improvements to the project description at CEO endorsement stage would be helpful, as suggested below.
2. It would be very helpful to include [expected] results of at least a few recently completed [or ongoing] efforts/projects in the Baseline Scenario section to allow better assessment of the importance and incremental value of the proposed activities in this project.
3. It would be appreciated if a more precise definition of some of the outcomes could be provided. In general, the presentation of the Outcomes and Outputs in the Proposed Alternative Scenario is rather terse; a sentence or two explaining the content behind these generic statements would be useful. For example: Outcome 1.1 'countries recognize...', would be hard to measure. Is this assumed implicit in publication of a TDA anyway?
Outcome 2.1, what is the level of attainment or measure to be reached to satisfy 'strengthened institutional cooperation...'?
4. With the overall project objective framed in terms of governance, greater specificity is needed about the strategy for engaging different institutional actors and the resultant changes in their capacities and actions. Regarding Outcome 3.1 "Testing of conjunctive management options... builds country and regional institutions and their capacity and commitment to reforms and investments." STAP appreciates the intent to

integrate such elements in the outcome, but more specification is needed in the description of contributing outputs to clarify the link between the pilot testing and the intended effects these have on (a) institutional capacity, (b) policy makers' commitment to reforms, as well (c) as [public and private?] investments. A single output on "implementation of pilot projects and policy measures" appears to conflate several things, which need to be spelled out. The descriptive text should also clarify the distinctions with the related outcomes 2.1, 4.1 and 4.2. One might surmise that the distinctions relate to the different types of institutions engaged at a technical and policy level; those involved in legal reform vs investment planning, etc., but the project description should not leave readers guessing.

5. Moreover, and as an example of the need for a bit more detail, the plan to use ecohydrology and hydrogeology in Component 3 is welcome and promising, but it should be a little more specific about what concepts, techniques, modelling approaches, etc. seem to be appropriate for which aspects of the integrated surface and groundwater system and its analysis.

6. Component 5 is welcome and is essentially about knowledge management (KM), but it entirely omits the need to include a sub-component dealing with the KM strategy of the project itself to allow adaptive management and to learn lessons for transfer and also back to the GEF regarding implementation of TDA/SAP type projects. This lack is also evident in the KM section at the end of the PIF. Please improve this topic: it is really important given the increased attention to KM in the GEF; see for further advice: <http://www.stapgef.org/knowledge-management-gef>

7. Please consider revising and extending the Risks section. In addition to the political risk (the only one alluded to), the inclination of various stakeholders to contribute and collaborate may vary across participating countries. Moreover, there are considerable scientific uncertainties (data about the status, knowledge about the response of the involved ecological and hydrological systems to various kinds of interventions/management actions, and others) that may affect the outcomes of the project and may need suitable risk management strategies. The best might be to use a simple risk – rating – management strategy table to provide a more adequate risk assessment.

8. Please rework the stakeholders section (best presented as a table), because it is necessary to know what each stakeholder's role and commitment is beyond the obvious ones for the four main ministries cited. There are a number of significant stakeholders alluded to in this section that need to be made explicit. Key scientific advisory stakeholders are of particular interest to identify when conducting a TDA so that potential gaps can be identified. "Civil society" is alluded to in general terms, but which are the specific institutions (including NGOs) that can serve as conduits for public involvement? The private sector also appears to be omitted, yet presumably corporate actors are responsible for a large portion of the industrial pollution, agricultural runoff, etc. This requires attention.

9. In addition to the projects mentioned in the coordination section, STAP recommends that the project includes collaboration with the West Balkans Drina River Basin Management Project (World Bank, GEF ID 5556), which has useful technical design lessons to offer within a parallel watershed, EU/non-EU governance context. Additionally, STAP suggests that the project seek not only to foster communication between the two emerging river basin commissions, but, in consultation with the participating governments, to invite formally observers from the Danube ICPDR to participate, at a suitable review point, to comment on drafts of technical and governance-related findings generated by the project.

<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>
<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</p>	<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>