

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 03, 2013

Screeners: Christine Wellington-Moore

Panel member validation by: Brian Huntley; Jakob Granit
Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT **GEF TRUST FUND**

GEF PROJECT ID: 5348

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : Cook Islands

PROJECT TITLE: R2R- Conserving Biodiversity and Enhancing Ecosystem Functions through a "Ridge to Reef" Approach

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: National Environment Service, Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation

GEF FOCAL AREA: Multi Focal Area

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 welcomes this proposal for support to marine and terrestrial conservation and sustainable use for the Cook Islands. STAP understands that the project has been designed primarily to support the implementation of the government decision to create the Cook Islands Marine Park. The PIF outlines a clear proposal with a practical strategy to deliver the expected outputs, which are mainly targeted at the government, agriculture and tourism sectors. STAP nevertheless has decided that the project design can be improved significantly and advises Minor Revision. STAP requests that the project brief fully reflects the following advice.
2. Given the relatively top-down approach taken by government to declare the Cook Islands Marine Park, STAP expects that significant consultation will be required to enable communities affected by the designation to understand its likely impacts upon existing resource exploitation and upon local economies. STAP notes with appreciation that the project will pursue a gender-sensitive approach whereby women's participation in conservation will be strongly promoted. However, the PIF does not include a component to address this ambition or to support participatory consultation; therefore the project brief should detail how this will be implemented. These uncertain socio-economic aspects may attract a significant risk rating. STAP also advises that the project brief should address the likely trade-offs regarding existing community access and benefits resulting from the all-encompassing nature of the Marine Park, please for example consult McShane, et. al. (2011) for a discussion of trade-offs in the context of biodiversity conservation and human well-being. It is noted that the project will collaborate with the FAO Food Security for Sustainable Livelihoods (FSSLP) project, and STAP recommends that shared expertise from both projects consider the above risks and offers mitigation options to the emergent Marine Park Steering Committee.
3. The large area of land and water to be declared as a Marine Park and the likely mix of economic sectors involved in the long term calls for significant effort to capture, in time and space, a very well defined set of criteria and plans, as the proponents acknowledge within the project overview. STAP understands that the proposed Marine Park may permit seabed mining, in addition to other economic activities. This example illustrates the need for not just holistic Ridge to Reef management but also strategic planning, and STAP recommends careful attention within the full project brief to support this need.
4. STAP recognizes that the Ridge to Reef concept has become more popular and that in some ways it offers a more coherent framework for combining ICM and IWRM into one comprehensive planning model. However, taken in isolation these management approaches, even considered under a Ridge to Reef label should also take account of spatial planning. Spatial planning takes a strategic viewpoint and which is capable of resolving conflicting uses by spatially

planning activities and determining different zones for different uses, or the need to balance development and conservation by spatially planning and zoning according to objectives (conservation, economic development, maintaining existing uses, etc.).

5. STAP advises the project proponents to consider the guidance offered through the joint GEF/CBD publication on Marine Spatial Planning in order to maximize the potential of the Ridge the Reef concept /IWRM approaches planned to resolve potentially unsustainable trajectories for biodiversity, land and water use within the coastal zones and related catchments of the islands concerned. STAP recommends that the parent Program to this project provides the necessary expertise and access to professional networks to implement the required capacity building and in-service training to support the very significant commitments to the formation of the Marine Park and complementary work to achieve well-managed catchments.

Integration and sustainability

6. From the Program perspective the PIF is silent about the regional support expected by the project. For example, regarding capacity building and expertise sharing, STAP advised that the parent Program has the opportunity, at least for the cluster of 14 countries represented with the Program, to strengthen the scientific and technical linkages between the PICs, building upon the SOPAC mechanism. The Science, Technology and Resources Network (STAR) of SOPAC could build capacity to make operational a regional multidisciplinary network similar to the SIDSTAP concept, augmented with SOPAC-STAR support and in coordination with the University of the South Pacific.

7. STAP is concerned that there is no provision for knowledge management and learning in the PIF. In this connection the inclusion of a knowledge management component is strongly recommended, noting that the baseline PacIWRM project's successful delivery of distance learning and twinning for IWRM capacity development is an excellent basis to build on regionally and nationally.

8. STAP recommended in its screening of the regional support project (GEF ID 5404) that it should include support for a multi-focal "PacIW:LEARN" for the region, which could act to sustain a peer to peer scientific and technical network for in-service training. This would satisfy the long standing demand under the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, at least in this Pacific SIDS area. This advice was provided for the reason that, given the complex multidisciplinary threats and barriers shared by many of the PICs to be overcome, the sharing of expertise between PICs would strengthen sustainability of individual projects within the Program, but also across the other GEF and non-GEF projects delivering against allied environmental targets.

References

- McShane, T.O., P.D. Hirsch, T.C. Trung, A.N. Songorwa, A. Kinzig, et al. 2011. Hard choices: making trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and human well-being. *Biological Conservation* 144: 966-972.
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel GEF (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 pages*

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	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. 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.
2. Minor revision required.	STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development. 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.
3. Major revision required	STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design. Follow-up: (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a

	<p>point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP.</p> <p>(ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.</p>
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