

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 05, 2016
Screener: Thomas Hammond
Panel member validation by: Brian Child
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9424
PROJECT DURATION:	6
COUNTRIES:	Dominican Republic
PROJECT TITLE:	Mainstreaming Conservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Productive Landscapes in Threatened Forested Mountainous Areas
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
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 issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes this well-considered project in the Dominican Republic. This is a good project, with an achievable scope, and a participatory approach to sustainable landscape management, protected areas and corridors, and reduced land degradation, in three catchment landscapes in the Dominican Republic. It could be even better if it increased its emphasis on using on-the-ground implementation to build the enabling environment adaptively from the bottom up.

However, while many of the outputs are planned technical activities, the most important barrier discussed is the lack of implementation. STAP therefore recommends that serious consideration be given to increasing the emphasis on obtaining on-the-ground practical experience by implementing its objectives in the three landscapes. This would slightly change the wording of the Project Objective to emphasis more practice, and less policy. The wording and emphasis (including outputs) of Component 2 should also be modified to reflect the use of a bottom up approach, using clear targets in terms of land protected, poverty reduction, etc. to focus the project and to drive changes to the enabling environment in terms of higher level policy/practice and technical approaches/applications. In addition, STAP recommends greater use of lessons from such approaches to mainstreaming, including local government planning approaches, democratic catchment committees/ communities and principles of collective action (please see Eleanor Ostrom's work in this area).

STAP recommends that during the PPG a stronger understanding of the relationship between small scale farmers, trends in cocoa and coffee industries, land sales and environmental pathways as it develops its intervention strategy should be undertaken. As noted, when marginal smallholders go out of business, what happens to this land? The processes and root causes driving these trends need to be better understood. What are the implications, for instance, of supporting the development of (and subsidizing) coffee/cocoa production, biodiversity mainstreaming, and land management activities as described versus using these

same subsidies more directly for biodiversity through tourism development, PES, etc. STAP would encourage proponents to review the recommendations in the STAP Publication "Payments for Environmental Services" <http://www.stapgef.org/payments-for-environmental-services-and-the-global-environment-facility/>.

STAP requests that the issue of "more sustainable practices" and "alternative land uses" is evaluated carefully, taking a systems thinking approach. Are they really available and/or viable, and do they really have positive environmental impacts, or is this merely hopeful wishful thinking? Where do they exist, what is the evidence base that they are better, and if they are, why have they not already been adopted?

STAP compliments the criteria used to select landscapes, and the limited and manageable scope of the project. On the specific issue of planning for mainstreaming and sustainable production, STAP would urge proponents to review STAP's recently published guidelines on "Designing Projects in a Rapidly Changing World". <http://www.stapgef.org/stap/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/RaptaGuidelines-A4-WEB.pdf>

The GEBs are well defined. Barrier 1 is wordy, and does not reflect the meat of the argument that there is little practical on-the-ground experience in the application and compliance of policy. Likewise, barrier 2 might focus more on municipal authorities following the narrative. Barrier 3 is fine, though the narrative around the issue of sustainable land use practices is weak and sometimes confusing. The link between improving production and contributing to biodiversity is not made (p11). The text on productive sectors and their links to economics and biodiversity impact, although quite long (p7-10) is insufficiently clear (para 4 exactly repeats para 3). How exactly does cocoa and coffee contribute to biodiversity, and when small holders go out of production what are the alternatives – does land revert to forest, or does it get incorporated into large commercial plantations? Understanding these pathways is important for project design. For instance, without clarity one could argue that the project subsidizes marginal farming (coffee/cocoa) of land that could revert to forest.

The incremental cost reasoning for this project is strong. It builds on past initiatives (p21/22, p11-12), and its main goal is to take policy into practice. The reasoning would be even stronger if it focused, as its priority, in making the three landscapes work, using the multi-stakeholder forms and actions taken as a learning process that contributes to scalability (please look at the UNDP/GEF South African Grasslands Project for how "short hook" strategies (solving problems in the field, and getting to indicators for biodiversity) were translated into "long hook" approaches (changes in policies and approaches) through such a process, the key to which was high quality technical facilitation.

The stakeholder analysis is strong. The role of municipalities and local communities in implementation could be emphasized, including an assessment of their capacity to take on these roles (the PIF states that this area has been chosen partly because some communities have some governance capacity, but does not elaborate on this).

Perhaps the biggest assumption (risk) is whether land use models are available to carry the aspirations of this project. It is easy to talk about introducing more sustainable models. But are these available? The availability of such models (or not) and supportive science/extension services should be included as a risk.

On a minor note, the description on the baseline (p11-12) is both unclear (para 23) and incomplete (the important paragraphs 26 and 27).

<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

	<p>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>
<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>