

# 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 27, 2017  
Screener: Sarah Lebel  
Panel member validation by: Michael Anthony Stocking  
Consultant(s):

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9880
PROJECT DURATION:	4
COUNTRIES:	Fiji
PROJECT TITLE:	Community-based Integrated Natural Resource Management Project
GEF AGENCIES:	FAO
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forests, Department of Environment, Ministry of Economy
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 the FAO proposal "Community-based Integrated Natural Resource Management Project". The project objective is to "promote community-based integrated natural resource management at landscape level to reduce land degradation, enhance carbon stocks and strengthen local livelihoods in Ra and Tailevu provinces". If set in the right context of tackling the real root causes for deforestation, this project does have a scientifically and technically valid objective for GEF funding, combining multiple possible outcomes from a suite of linked components. However, STAP finds some fundamental problems with the PIF that would benefit from further reflection on both the logic of activities leading eventually to outcomes, and attention to important issues for upscaling such as knowledge management. STAP suggests particular attention to the following to assist with strengthening the project:

1. STAP advises that some of the assumptions behind the presumed linkages between activities and outputs/outcomes are at best excessively simplistic and at worst possibly wrong. For example, a major problem identified in the PIF is illegal and unregulated logging leading to deforestation. The PIF blandly – and without any scientific reasoning – states that this will be addressed (1) "through training of community wardens and adopting community-driven forest protection measures" and (2) "through improved forest management practices at community level" (p.5). These activities mostly focussed around standard training methods (Farmer Field Schools, for example) may help achieve the objective of developing community-based NRM, but the assumption needs testing and verification. Experience elsewhere has found that controlling unregulated and illegal logging needs a far more innovative multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach - see <https://theecologist.org/2011/mar/11/7-ways-help-stop-tropical-deforestation-illegal-logging>. Training would be without value unless issues such as:

- Supply chain traceability tackled, leading to a reduction in demand for forest products
- Forest certification, eco-certification and eco-labelling considered as a means of identifying legitimate forest products and controlling unregulated extraction

- c. Yield regulation systems and demand control for forest products to manage pressure on forest ecosystems
  - d. Stakeholder partnerships instituted so that local communities, businesses and government agencies communicate and work towards the same objectives.
  - e. Enforcement and legislation instituted and acted upon.
- There is a large body of literature to draw upon including experiences from case studies where illegal extraction of forest products has been tackled in alternative ways – see, for example, von Gadow, K, Pukkala T. & Tomé, M (eds.) (2000) Sustainable Forest Management. Kluwer, Dordrecht

2. Part of the problem identified in point 1 above lies in the 'root cause analyses'. The list of identified causes leaves out issues such as legislation, enforcement, demand for forest products and lack of incentives. The first listed 'cause' in the PIF is agriculture and the demand for fertile soils and lack of soil conservation. However, what is behind this 'cause'? A proper political ecology perspective and analysis may reveal, for example, poverty among subsistence cultivators driving demand for fertile pieces of forest land. Corruption is also a possible reason – see <https://www.ficac.org.fj/> for the Fiji perspective on this problem. An analysis of root causes should display an understanding of local conditions and issues, which currently are missing in this PIF.

3. Similarly, the analysis of 'barriers' that follows 'root causes' is simplistic and inadequate. An implication of the second barrier, for example, is that land use planning will help to control deforestation. In the right context and with appropriate legislation and enforcement, land use planning may indeed be part of the process towards controlling deforestation, but lack of land use planning cannot be seen as a 'barrier' unless it is linked to other issues that actually drive deforestation. A sceptical view of this 'barrier' might suggest that it exists only to be a justification for a project with a large element of land use planning.

4. The two main Components of this proposed project are both focussed on local communities and building local capacity to plan and manage land use. While STAP welcomes this overall approach, it follows from points 1 to 3 above that building this local capacity cannot be undertaken in isolation of addressing the fundamental reasons as to why the forests are being degraded and illegal exploitation is occurring. Local people well know why deforestation is occurring; and most of the reasons will be external to the communities themselves and certainly not because of a lack of local knowledge of what is going on.

5. STAP welcomes Component 3 of the project, allocating explicitly funds to monitoring and evaluation as well as some aspects of knowledge management. On p.10, it is stated that "Under this component, project results and achievements will be disseminated for replicability and scaling up." STAP would urge the project managers also to ensure any failures are recorded and assessed to enhance learning from the project. Moreover, in order to strengthen further the knowledge management component, STAP would suggest exploring the implementation of a formal knowledge management system. STAP's on-going advice to the GEF regarding knowledge management can be found at <http://www.stapgef.org/knowledge-management-gef>. In addition, some of the knowledge management tools that are currently recommended can be accessed here: <http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/knowledge-management-systems.html>

6. The PIF states that the innovation from this project will be the use of participatory resource management planning at multiple levels. In addition to nine district level Participatory Land Use Plans, it intends to develop up to 60 different integrated natural resources management plans at the village level, and claims this will enable landscape level benefits. STAP would suggest consulting literature on integrated landscape management to help refine and strengthen the proposed interventions, and perhaps increase coherence. Good starting points include the following: Reed, et al., (2016). Integrated landscape approaches to managing social and environmental issues in the tropics: learning from the past to guide the future. *Global change biology*, 22(7), pp.2540-2554. For more information on methods, these references may be useful: Sunderland, et al. (2017). A methodological approach for assessing cross-site landscape change: Understanding socio-ecological systems. *Forest Policy and Economics*; and the project website <https://www.cifor.org/library/5867/agrarian-change-in-tropical-landscapes/>

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Concur</b>	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.

<b>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</b>	<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>
<b>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</b>	<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>