

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: February 28, 2013

Screener: Guadalupe Duron

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

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT **MULTI TRUST FUNDS**

GEF PROJECT ID: 5264

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : Gabon

PROJECT TITLE: Sustainable Management of Critical Wetlands Ecosystems

GEF AGENCIES: World Bank

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Environment and Sanitation

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 the initiative of Gabon to focus management attention on its wetlands particularly upon its Ramsar Sites. The Project Concept Note (PCN) provided by the World Bank provides a viable way forward for consolidation of wetland management within the nine Sites designated by Gabon. STAP recommends that the following points be considered during further development of the project, intended to strengthen the likely impact of the project. For this reason STAP recommends revisions as outlined below.
2. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, in addition to maintaining a List of Wetlands of International Importance, encourages contracting parties to practise 'wise use' of all wetlands in their territories, in effect therefore embedding Listed wetlands within a wider landscape approach to watershed management. The PCN does highlight the value of wetlands and their ecosystem services in general terms, but could have more strategically described the context within which they occur so that the linkage and overlap between Sites, river basins, National Parks and their buffer zones are more clearly presented in functional terms, thus acting as a baseline for determining priorities for intervention. In this regard the proposed Key Results should be delivered within a strategic framework, informed by the published guidance provided by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat (Ramsar Handbooks). Particularly relevant guidance is contained in volumes 17 and 18; however, to some extent all the handbooks offer useful input.
3. Component 1 covers the development of knowledge about the wetlands of Gabon; however, it is not clear if the work is to be restricted to Ramsar Sites or the entire wetlands ecosystem complex of Gabon. If the former then the proponents are strongly urged to develop a clear plan to determine the catchment relationships of the Ramsar Sites regarding flows and quality for inland wetlands and in addition for coastal wetlands at least determine point (hot spots) and diffuse sources of pollution for future attention. Gabon has already worked with UNEP and other actors to highlight the challenges of oil exploration and wetlands, for example, in Petit Loango Ramsar Site.
4. Regarding the work described under Sub-Component 1.1 on economic valuation of services delivered by wetland ecosystems, there is a large body of specialized published work available. Most recently the Ramsar Convention and UNEP published "The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands" (TEEB, 2013), which draws together most of this work and offers the project a valuable guide to collection and analysis of necessary datasets. The foundational work described in the PCN can lead to an assessment of whether Payments for Environmental Services (PES) can be tested in this context. STAP emphasizes that PES schemes must be properly designed to avoid unintended consequences, including the unjustified raising of communities' expectations, and recommends that the guidance on PES available through the GEF is cited during project development; while the GEF's recent experience with over 40 projects should also be consulted (see STAP, 2010 and GEFSec, 2010). Noting that the

project will draw on Land Degradation and SFM funds and regarding wetlands and carbon, the PCN is not clear about whether carbon storage/sequestration is to be researched, for example, inland wetland forest carbon stocks, coastal wetland 'blue' carbon.

5. Component 2 identifies supporting measures for wetland management and STAP welcomes the targeted approach to critical wetland ecosystems, and encourages the proponents to set out their selection criteria more clearly. Sub-Component 2.1 should take account of the guidance provided in Ramsar Handbooks 16 and 18, in particular and 19 regarding thresholds for boundary change induced by development. Gabon has in the past (2009) held government/business roundtables to discuss the role of the business sector in wetlands; this legacy should be built upon.

6. Under Component 3, the project proposes essentially to conduct a retrospective assessment of the Ramsar Convention-related institutional systems. Noting that in 2004 Gabon decided to transfer the Convention management from Parks and Wildlife to the General Directorate of the Environment, which manages the other MEAs. This may result in a gap in institutional memory and capacity which may need to be addressed regarding development of wetland policy and the associated development of the National Wetland Committee - particularly in the context of substantive investments in building the capacity of parks and wildlife units within the Gabonese government over the past 20 years. Gabon currently does not have a wetland policy, although has built wetland issues into other sectoral strategies, therefore the project could usefully assess the adequacy of the policy background against which the institutions are working.

7. Given the key importance of capacity building, as highlighted in the risk assessment, the structure and implementation program for capacity and institution building should be given detailed description in the project document.

References:

- The Ramsar Handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition (available in French at: http://www.ramsar.org/cda/fr/ramsar-pubs-handbooks/main/ramsar/1-30-33_4000_1__).
- TEEB, 2013. The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands. See: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/TEEB/TEEB_Water&Wetlands_Report_2013.pdf
- STAP 2010. Payments for Environmental Services and the Global Environment Facility. See: <http://www.stapgef.org/sites/default/files/Payments%20for%20Environmental%20Services%20and%20GEF.pdf>
- GEF 2010. Payment for Ecosystem Services. See: http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/publication/PES_english.pdf

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
2. Minor revision required.	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:</p> <p>(i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions.</p> <p>(ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.</p>
3. Major revision required	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up:</p> <p>(i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a 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>