

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 11, 2016
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Panel member validation by: Michael Anthony Stocking
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9264
PROJECT DURATION:	
COUNTRIES:	Global (Central African Republic, Cameroon, China, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Congo DR)
PROJECT TITLE:	TRI The Restoration Initiative - Fostering Innovation and Integration in Support of the Bonn Challenge
GEF AGENCIES:	IUCN, FAO and UNEP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	
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

1. STAP is fully supportive of a multi-national Program to catalyse the Bonn Challenge. Although launched nearly 5 years ago, the Bonn Challenge brings to the international community several important scientific elements in restoring degraded land, including: adopting a landscape approach to restoration; and employing cross-sectoral linkages between forests, agriculture, water and energy.

2. As an implementation platform for a number of major multi-national objectives (such as the UNCCD's Rio+20 land degradation neutrality goal; and the CBD's Aichi target 15), the Bonn Challenge is appropriately structured to deliver multi-focal global benefits in at least several topic areas – inter alia REDD+ goals, rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems, the restoration of ecosystem goods and services, and food and water security. Encompassing these various topics in a holistic and multi-faceted way will be no easy task – the Program will need to set a clear ‘Theory of Change’ and develop uptake pathways that will involve stakeholders at all levels, creating the right incentives and institutional structures to overcome the many barriers to forestland restoration. This STAP screen of the PFD on The Restoration Initiative (TRI) is mainly concerned with whether the Program sets the appropriate scientific and technical guidance to develop innovative, integrative and effective projects in the various partner countries. With such a wide mandate, TRI could, without the necessary program framework, revert to a collection of standard conservation forest projects.

3. STAP supports the intended structure of this Program, consisting of a set of national projects that are collectively linked via Component 4 and its provision of lessons, learning, assessment and monitoring. There is, however, a danger that national projects may be formulated locally with only superficial guidance from south-south exchanges, program monitoring systems, best-practice databases and other provisions of Component 4. The ten countries involved have very different approaches to science, project development

and project implementation. Some have good scientific support; others are weak. Some have top-down approaches to project design; others have embraced participation by local stakeholder groups.

4. TRI is predicated on two fundamental assumptions:

- a. Restoration of degraded land is a priority; rather than, say, protection of land yet to be degraded – an economic efficiency issue;
- b. And given the right tools and incentives, the deforested and degraded estate can be restored – a technical implementation issue

5. Both assumptions need to be questioned and addressed more explicitly in the PFD. STAP is pleased to see the comment that lightly degraded land is less costly to restore (presumably in contrast to seriously degraded land; cf. page 8). However, the least costly option is to maintain land in pristine condition. STAP would like to see reference to some of the seminal work on land conservation economics (e.g Barbier, E.B. and Bishop, J.T. 1995. "Economic Values and Incentives Affecting Soil and Water Conservation in Developing Countries." *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* (March-April):133-137. Incentives are, indeed, important, but so too are land tenure security, access to markets and loans, extension services and technical education. The examples and lessons learned from past efforts at land restoration cited in Box 1 need proper referencing.

6. STAP is glad to see that TRI will have a number of tools that will help unify the Program and enable some consistency in introducing innovation and integration. The Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) features in the PFD as a systematic appraisal of priority areas for restoration and possible interventions. Three other tools are mentioned in the PFD and supporting documents - Bonn Challenge Barometer of Progress, Enabling Investments Rapid Diagnostic Tool, and Typology of Forest and Landscape Restoration – about which little is known or available publicly.

7. STAP is also pleased to see that the Program Framework is populated by 12 ‘child projects’ including a global learning, financing and partnerships project. It is, however, difficult to see how the list of projects and potential global benefits at Annex B (page 30+) represents anything more than a set of individual projects unrelated to each other and not deriving any inputs from the Program Framework. How do the components in the PFD inform these projects?

8. Annex B Supplement in the PFD provides a demonstration of the use of FAO's Ex-Act methodology (EX-Ante Carbon-balance tool) to derive estimates of the impact of agriculture and forestry development projects, programmes and policies on the carbon-balance. STAP supports the intention to estimate carbon balances, but would have preferred to see the inclusion of tools that also crucially monitor and track changes in both above-ground carbon and soil carbon, such as the GEF-developed Carbon Benefits tool – see <http://www.unep.org/climatechange/carbon-benefits/>

9. In conclusion STAP believes that this PFD represents a good starting point for a coordinated effort at forest and land restoration. However, there remains the significant concern:

- How will the Program Framework provide the necessary guidance for child projects, other than in broadly general rhetorical terms? This includes the following elements for a truly innovative and integrative Program:
 - o project design and development,
 - o analysis of costs and benefits of different restoration approaches,
 - o intended use of tools across ‘child projects’,
 - o contributions to a learning platform and
 - o exchange of lessons and project experience.

<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	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed

<p>considered during project design</p>	<p>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. (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>
<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>