

# 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 08, 2013

Screener: Guadalupe Duron

Panel member validation by: Michael Anthony Stocking  
Consultant(s): Thomas Hammond

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT**    **GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 5356

**PROJECT DURATION :** 3

**COUNTRIES :** Global (Georgia, Madagascar)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Global Forest Watch 2.0 FW 2.0

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNEP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** World Resources Institute (Leading all GFW2.0 partners), Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia, Ministry of Environment and Forests of Madagascar

**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): **Major revision required**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP fully supports the aims and intentions of Global Forest Watch (GFW2.0) to build an open access platform to monitor forests and create a deforestation alert system that provides information that potentially could improve forest management. The proposal makes a compelling case for supporting the WRI's initiative, including why such a system is needed, the potential uses (including MRV and PES) and how use could support both forest management and conservation of biodiversity. The proposal is less compelling in providing evidence that the proposed system will work, that forest management will actually be enhanced and that uptake will be spontaneous.

In making a scientific and technical assessment of this proposal, STAP poses a number of fundamental questions, the most important of which are (1) does the technology work or have the potential to work within the time frame of the project; (2) is the hypothesis tenable that increased availability of information on change in land cover likely to lead to "more effective, rights-based, forest conservation and sustainable management"; (3) will the system be practical and operational for developing countries to apply, use and benefit from the technology; and (4) is the system cost efficient?

(1) The technology. Although there are few details in the PIF, the principal technological aspect of the project is to convert the GFW2.0 Alert System from a 300 metre resolution to 50 metres by changing remote sensing source. There is no analysis as to how or why this change could or will bring about better NDVI data and be able to provide more timely information. It is acknowledged in the risk analysis (Section A3) that there is some "technology development risk" attendant in Component 1. To deal with this risk, it is proposed to "formalize and strengthen the GFW2.0 partnership and establish mechanisms to conduct due diligence on technology aspects". STAP is unconvinced that the technological risk is small, and also that limitation in the technology is a legitimate item of 'risk'. There needs to be some credible scientific support, preferably with independent verification, that the proposed system will work. At a minimum, it would be useful to see references from the copious literature on remote sensing applications in forestry management. It is noted that a risk to the project is that the development of the technology will fail – STAP understands the concept of 'risks' in this case as to be outside the control of the project to be legitimate. There are further technological aspects that the project will need to address including the links between the basic data on change in vegetation and the Alert System including how this will translate to SMS and other means of information transfer. If the project proceeds, these technological aspects will all need to be described. The 'due diligence' process will need to be better articulated, including how the partners involved in technology development will be incentivized to deliver a practical and workable system. Experience in other GEF projects suggests that these aspects are often underestimated in their complexity and difficulty, and that failure here would undermine the entire project.

(2) Information provision leads to change in behavior. The proposal cites three cases from Brazil to support the hypothesis that provision of information on deforestation and change in vegetation status will force change in behavior of forest users and spur sustainable forest management. Two of these cases appear to be reliant on the close involvement of the media. It is clear that greater transparency in issues such as deforestation does indeed lead to change in behavior, but often that change is merely to transfer pressure to other areas where governance arrangements are less effective. Indeed, forest governance is crucial in controlling deforestation – see Maguire, R. (2013) *Global Forest Governance: Legal concepts and policy trends*. Edward Elgar, London ISBN 978 0 85793 606 6

(3) Practical in application. One of the peculiarities in the current proposal is the choice of pilot countries (Georgia and Madagascar) in which to develop and test GFW2.0. It is unclear how experience in these very particular cases would render GFW2.0 appealing to other countries, thereby achieving what the proposal hopes to be a global platform. "Rapid uptake" is mentioned but without saying how this will be achieved other than through a partnership. The PIF claims significant advantages from the GFW2.0, such as "reduced enforcement cost", "more effective advocacy", "increased accountability" and "enhanced effectiveness of law enforcement". No evidence is advanced for these claims, other than a passing mention that WRI has "successfully shown how the system can operate in six countries of the Congo Basin". This raises the additional question as to why not use these countries as the pilot, building on successful application.

(4) Cost-efficiency. There is brief mention that the Congo Basin application mentioned above is done at "low cost". There does not appear to be any provision in the project to assess costs and undertake simple CBA or other measures that would indicate that forest monitoring is economically feasible and really does lead to sustainable and cost-effective savings.

In making its Major Revision advice, STAP is mindful that while Global Forest Watch certainly has very important objectives which definitely need to be addressed as part of KM systems to support the global deforestation challenge, the risks attendant in any one proposal with technology that is untested in its application to deliver real change are great. Evidence needs to be assembled, however, that the proposed way forward is workable, practical, sustainable, cost-effective and attractive.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	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.
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	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.
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	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 point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.