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:	March 14, 2016
Screener:	Thomas Hammond
Panel member validation by:	Brian Child
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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL SIZE PROJECT	**GEF TRUST FUND**
GEF PROJECT ID:	9208
PROJECT DURATION:	6
COUNTRIES:	Palau
PROJECT TITLE:	Integrating Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation into development in Palau
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism
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 initiative to safeguard Palau's important biodiversity threatened by unplanned growth - much of which is tourism-related and dependent on the very biodiversity that it is destroying. Rather than trying to implement so many activities, however, the project concept should consider prioritizing.

The Project Objective emphasizes safeguards, but the project also identifies several interventions downstream of the preparatory framework of mainstreaming into planning tools etc., therefore the objective needs reframing. The problem diagnosis is well-argued but underemphasizes one key barrier and that is lack of awareness amongst the population about unsustainable agricultural, forest and fisheries practices. Awareness-raising is mentioned within each Component, but it could be argued to be one of the root causes of problems.

The stated outcomes are primarily targeted at increased capacity to manage vulnerable ecosystems, coupled to the introduction of a national land/coast planning system; if achieved these would underpin the stated goal of mainstreaming, provided that all state and private actors listed were sufficiently incentivized. However, global environmental benefits would not be realized in the short term because the wide range of identified threats would continue to degrade soils, water, forest, reefs and associated biodiversity. Given that the proposed duration of the project is 72 months, project milestones should be established to enable assurance that the enabling activities have been completed (these include creating national and local plans, protocols, awareness-raising etc.) to allow a clear focus and to measure progress regarding biodiversity stress reduction. There is otherwise a real danger that the whole project period could be devoted to preparatory activities before real traction was achieved regarding reversal of the deterioration of biodiversity

As presently described, the project strategy is unconvincing. There are long lists of activities, outputs and outcomes, but little/no reference to how relevant knowledge or learning from other projects or the literature, including GEF, has been incorporated. The cause-effect logic between activities, outputs, outcomes and

objectives in the log-frame is weak and unconvincing. The â€˜strategy' in the concept note is difficult to identify and is buried in too much detail. Further, the real barriers to progress are weak institutions and implementation capacity, yet the project focuses on so many different activities â€“ who and how are these going to be implemented, let alone coordinated. There are clear statements that Palau lacks capacity at many levels, yet the project appears to be attempting a wide range of activities. If it tries to do too much, it will achieve nothing. The project design could also benefit from STAP's guidance on Marine Spatial Planning in order to structure the framework that is necessary to organize the many sectors expected to contribute to achieving sustainable GEBs. STAP accordingly recommends that the project design revisits STAP's guidance to UNDP (and UNEP) in the context of the Ridge to Reef Program.

The project concept could also be strengthened by presenting a much more structured explanation of how the many partners will be coordinated to achieve the outcomes that they will be responsible for. For example, the stakeholder table purports to identify their role and involvement in the project, yet the table merely describes what the stakeholders are but not what actions they will actually commit to. This vital information should be presented in the PPG phase.

Local communities are mentioned regarding implementation, but this is not the same as enabling participation from these communities, which will be essential regarding the need to change systems level agricultural practices and watershed management. There is a complementary risk that the project may appear excessively top-down to some communities. Accordingly the risk table should add a section to identify the risk that non-participation of communities will occur. It should also consider setting in place the institutions, structures and capacities that are needed to deliver all the activities that it has identified. One way to do this is in more manageable segments â€“ i.e., build the institutions (legal/planning rules, and also organizations) by helping them to tackle problems in practice, and limiting this to the most serious problems as this project cannot tackle everything.

Overall, as it currently stands this concept is far too complicated and scattered to provide the necessary guidance going forward. My suggestion would be to outline the concept in the format of a log-frame. This would best be done by a small group in a day or two, and even better through a participatory process with stakeholders, though I know that this is beyond the scope of a PIF. Once the log-frame is clear, then rewrite the document to match the log-frame, reduce activities to what is genuinely feasible, and reduce the length of the document by half. Also, the density of the text and the size of the paragraphs makes it difficult to follow.

The terrestrial carbon sequestration expected is described clearly in the project regarding High Conservation Value Forests; however, the potential of sequestration in the mangrove ecosystem is omitted. See for example GEF project 3821 in Cameroon; and specifically methodology within GEF project 4452 (Standardized Methodologies for Carbon Accounting and Ecosystem Services Valuation of Blue Forests) and various papers from CIFOR. At the very least further consideration of mangrove ecosystem services would strengthen the proposal.

The project concept could also be strengthened by presenting a much more structured explanation of how the many partners will be coordinated to achieve the results/outcomes that they will be responsible for. For example, the stakeholder table purports to identify their role and involvement in the project, yet the table merely describes what the stakeholders are but not what actions they will actually commit to. This vital information should be presented in the PPG phase.

The Knowledge Management section is weak considering the welcome attention paid to KM in the main body of the proposal. Presently the PIF KM section describes only the awareness raising and outreach measures which, useful as they are, form only a minor part of the proposal. STAP recommends strengthening this section to identify how the project KM can contribute towards transformational change

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
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	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed

to be considered during project design	with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to: (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. 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.
3. Major issues to be considered during project design	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: (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. The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns. 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.