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:	Douglas Taylor
Panel member validation by:	Jakob Granit; Ricardo Orlando Barra Rios
Consultant(s):	

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	**GEF TRUST FUND**
GEF PROJECT ID:	9246
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Regional (Guatemala, Honduras)
PROJECT TITLE:	Integrated Environmental Management of the Rio Motagua Watershed
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources MARN Secretariat of Energy, Natural Resources, Environment and Mines SERNA/MI AMBIENTE
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 welcomes in principle this project that is proposed to develop a transboundary framework for sound management of the RÃ-o Motagua watershed including a diagnostic assessment of the transboundary water issues and a strategic action plan and a component including innovative investments to reduced water and coastal pollution from land based sources. The problem statement and environmental context are both well-presented, and the emphasis on overcoming the awareness and capacity barriers is also welcomed.

2. The project lacks, however, a clear theory of change considering that this is a multi-focal area project that should address both, International Waters (IW) issues from the Source to Sea perspective by connecting the project to the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and Chemicals and Waste issues targeting specific innovative investments into pollution control. Such an approach would need a clear theory of change outlining agreed objectives and monitoring and evaluation framework with specific indicators to test whether each focal area contributes effectively to the project's objective which is stated as: " Improve the integrated management of the RÃ-o Motagua watershed and reduce land-based sources of pollution and produced emissions from unintentionally formed persistent organic pollutants (U-POPs) to mitigate impacts on coastal-marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of the local populations".

3. Nevertheless, the STAP finds strong merits in the proposed project considering that the identified pollution control issues are well documented and the project builds on the ongoing activities to improve the institutions and change behavior towards improved waste management and pollution control, including at the municipal levels. From a "Source to Sea" perspective (mentioned in the PIF), the topic of combating pollution at the municipal level has already been identified as a critical and urgent issue. The IW framework (TDA/SAP) would thereby enhance knowledge and cooperative action between the two countries to move towards improved water management and pollution control for the benefits of both nations and the

Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem benefiting multiple nations and providing global public good benefits. This year STAP will present a framework addressing Source to Sea Governance and Management in a forthcoming Information Paper for the GEF Council that could be used to support building a strong theory of change for this project.

4. STAP recommends that the team during the project design phase clarifies the links between pollution control activities and the overall cooperative framework on water management. Typically, a TDA/SAP approach would have preceded an approach to tackle pollution control but as there is an adequate knowledge in the region, pollution reduction activities could be fast tracked in the proposed project to ensure that the proposed measures are indeed incremental and add to the ongoing baseline activities.

5. Component 1. The omission of groundwater-focused studies and pollution reduction activities is of concern, given that the problem statement mentions leachates affecting groundwater. In Component 1 STAP advises the proponents to include groundwater together with surface water issues in the diagnostic analysis, because of the concerns about pollution from POPs and other contaminants.

6. Component 2. STAP understands the work is proposed to support SAP formulation and adoption. Continued stakeholder sensitization and capacity building at the level of municipalities will be critical to build project ownership beyond the national authorities. The pollution control activities proposed all take place at the local level.

7. Although considerable resources are proposed towards building the institutional and decision making capacity, the concept of benefit-sharing in the context of watershed management is not mentioned. The latter could be a potential driver for the improved water quality and enhanced environmental services. Please consider these issues during project design and building project's theory of change.

8. Component 3. As mentioned above, the long list of potential pilots and technologies is interesting and impressive, yet criteria for prioritization are not provided and would normally be guided by the evidence base of the WDA/TDA/SAP outcomes. The proposal should consider the different institutional arrangements for addressing the waste management issues along both sides of the river. The network of stakeholders is complex and as the project correctly stated includes civil society organizations and municipalities. Proper consideration and implementation of technology solutions should be accompanied by a thorough process of human resources training and consider a longer-term sustainability of investments proposed in the project. The innovation component envisaged such as recycling of waste should involve the development of market based incentives to be developed carefully during project preparation. Complementarity of project activities with other ongoing pollution reduction efforts in the region should be assured (i.e., with efforts of global and local NGOs and other entities to protect Mezoamerican Reef against pollution).

9. In the section on innovation, the PIF asserts that active involvement of various groups will ensure sustainability and potential for scaling-up. This could not necessarily be the case. The type of involvement of different stakeholders will be critical and the degree of control delegated to these groups will determine the extent of buy-in and ownership of the project.

10. Coordination with other projects: This section is well-written and sets out the opportunities for contributing to and learning from the related projects cited.

11. STAP welcomes and supports the detailed commitments made in the PIF about knowledge management, including contributing information and sharing via IW:LEARN and other platforms.

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 to be considered during project	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:

design	(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.