

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: October 05, 2013

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT **GEF TRUST FUND**

GEF PROJECT ID: 5397

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : Vanuatu

PROJECT TITLE: R2R: Integrated Sustainable Land and Coastal Management

GEF AGENCIES: FAO

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 revision required**

III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP welcomes the overall intention and goal of this project to promote integrated land and coastal management for Vanuatu. However, STAP identifies a number of weaknesses which it urges the project proponents to address during project preparation so that the project not only is truly 'integrated' in planning, management and activities but also draws upon its parent program for addressing ecosystem goods and services in all their aspects 'provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural' that will ultimately bring livelihood benefits to the dominantly poor rural populations of the country. Accordingly STAP recommends that the project is subject to minor revision, and would expect that the project brief will reflect the following advice for improving project design.
2. The proposed project focuses, within a ridge to reef (R2R) context, on multiple interventions covering forestry, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and water quality management within selected watersheds. STAP welcomes the focus on community-led and local landowner engagement, including the fostering of local champions and building human resource capacity for conservation. Noting that 75% of Vanuatu's economy is connected with tourism, it is unclear from the PIF whether there are coordination arrangements in place or planned at Ministerial level to provide strategic guidance on land use particularly at the coast, where STAP assumes most tourism is focused.
3. The PIF mentions that the root causes of the noted problems include poverty and population pressure linked to low education (and awareness) levels; development pressures, and inferred from the discussion about land leases, lack of enforceable spatial planning from strategic to local level. The project concept, however, does not address these root causes, except rather tangentially. STAP misses, for example, any mention of incentives for engaging in conservation and land improvement.
4. The text in the proposed alternative scenario section of the PIF promotes a misconception that is propagated throughout the PIF, namely the R2R concept appears to be equated with 'conservation'; this appears to be inconsistent with the overall concept of R2R in the definition advanced by the regional Program. Conservation is just one outcome in the suite of measures enabled through integrated water resource management, spatial planning and agriculture analysis. The disjuncture between the parent program (with its goal of maintaining and enhancing ecosystem goods and services through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity and coastal resource management that contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience) and the project is very apparent throughout the PIF. STAP would wish to see how integrated planning involving whole watersheds and landscapes will be implemented as a mosaic of sustainable land and water uses. As it appears in the PIF, the components seem to be separate and largely unrelated sets of activities.

5. The mention throughout the PIF of various scientific and technically-driven studies and suggestions for interventions is welcome; STAP advises that the provision of this advice should, as far as possible be delivered through local expertise

Component 1

6. In strengthening the national PA network, the project seeks to focus on creating new PAs, without identifying any criteria for selection, given that land is 95% locally owned. STAP would expect to see at least an outline of possible step by step approaches to communities to solicit views on what should be conserved, where and by whom, in order to build a plan for testing against a R2R framework for the selected watersheds. If it is the intention of the project to define PAs through strictly science-led top-down analysis (implied in the PIF by the intention to "promote scientific management of PAs"), then this Component may well fail. Currently the text of this Component reads as if the incentives mentioned will act as compensation for land take from landowners and communities for inclusion in PAs, instead of a benefit derived from community-led R2R planning and management.

Component 2

7. Following on from Component 1, this Component also reads as though the proposed integrated management plan will be offered to communities rather than initiated after capacity building of the communities in the selected watersheds, using resources already identified in Component 4. If this is the case then STAP advises that the intervention should be inverted – invest first in capacity building, followed by investment in a "planning for real" program within the watershed to obtain a set of structured land use and change suggestions from the communities targeted. Experience elsewhere of top-down promotion of land management techniques and practices (green manures and waste composting are mentioned, for example) underlines the importance of involving the communities at the earliest stage and assisting with incentives and compensation because new techniques involve enhanced risk for local people and dubious economic benefits.

Component 3

8. The PIF states that beef production is a major and expanding part of Vanuatu's economy and proposes that in future beef production will in effect be intensified and rotated, implying detailed land use planning requirements, but not apparently connected to the process outlined under Component 2, which is to produce an integrated management plan. STAP requests that the proponents clarify their intentions in the full project brief, particularly to deal with overall food security considerations.

Component 4

9. STAP welcomes the inclusion of capacity building as a core response to root causes mentioned earlier, but would argue for an addition to this Component to support awareness-raising, including through schools, regarding sound environmental management and the benefits arising from it. Experience from the GEF medium size project on capacity building (GEF ID 3502: "Capacity Building and Mainstreaming for Sustainable Land Management in Vanuatu") should inform the further development of the present project. STAP advises that knowledge management needs to be built into the project also.

Regional considerations

10. The project design has relatively weak links to the regional Program as described, and there are significant opportunities to share lessons and ongoing experience at regional level regarding PA community-based management and financing. STAP urges the proponents to set out their suggestions for collaborative work to connect with the regional support project (GEF ID 5404).

11. Component 4, covering capacity building, is not linked to a provider in this PIF. STAP advises that capacity building needs of the project should be discussed with the regional support project to maximize outreach to regional capacity building and knowledge platforms.

12. STAP recommended in its screening of the regional support project that it should include support for a multi-focal "PacIW:LEARN" for the region, which could act to sustain a peer to peer scientific and technical network for in-service training. This would satisfy the long standing demand under the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, at least in this Pacific SIDS area. This advice was provided for the reason that, given the complex multidisciplinary threats and barriers shared by many of the PICs to be overcome, the sharing of expertise between PICs would strengthen sustainability of individual projects within the Program, but also across the other GEF and non-GEF projects delivering

against allied environmental targets. In this connection the inclusion in the present project of knowledge management, as mentioned above, is essential and STAP advises that the project brief should show how it could connect more formally to the proposed regional network as discussed above. Additionally, the baseline PacIWRM project's successful delivery of distance learning and twinning for IWRM capacity development is an excellent basis to build on regionally and nationally.

13. One of the lessons learned from a related regional project on fisheries (GEF ID 2131 Oceanic Fisheries Management: Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Pacific Small Island Developing States) in the region, coordinated through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), is that each child project in a program through its full project brief needs to detail the support relationship envisaged and responsibilities respectively of the (Vanuatu) project unit and the regional unit.

14. As a member of the R2R Program the present project also needs to show how the scientific and technical linkages outlined in the parent program translate into practical action to benefit Vanuatu. STAP has noted that the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation cites the concept of "SIDSTAP", the operationalization of the small island developing States roster of experts. While little progress has been achieved, as noted in regional meetings held prior to the Rio+20 Conference, the present project has the opportunity, at least alongside the cluster of 14 countries represented with the Program, to benefit from a strengthened set of scientific and technical linkages between the PICs, building upon the SOPAC mechanism. The project brief should therefore detail how the Science, Technology and Resources Network (STAR) of SOPAC could assist the present project to draw upon a regional multidisciplinary network similar to the SIDSTAP concept, augmented with SOPAC-STAR support and in coordination with the University of the South Pacific.

15. STAP advises the project proponents to consider the guidance offered through the joint GEF/CBD publication on Marine Spatial Planning in order to maximize the potential of the ICM/IWRM approaches planned to resolve unsustainable trajectories for biodiversity, land and water use within the coastal zones and related catchments concerned. At present one of the key deficits of the parent Program outlined in the R2R documents is the absence of a strategy for assisting the countries with planning within the Ridge to Reef approach towards a realizable and sustainable future, the present project should show how this strategic support will be realized.

Further reading

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel GEF (2012). Marine Spatial Planning in the Context of the Convention on Biological Diversity: A study carried out in response to CBD COP 10 decision X/29, Montreal, Technical Series No. 68, 16 pp.

<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: (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.</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: (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.</p>