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 08, 2012 Screener: Guadalupe Duron

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: 5005
PROJECT DURATION : 5
COUNTRIES : Vietnam
PROJECT TITLE: GMS-FBP Integrating Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Resilience and Sustainable Forest Management in Central Annamite Landscapes
GEF AGENCIES: ADB
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONROE)
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): **Consent**

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes this multi-focal project approach to conserving the biodiversity of the Annamite Ecoregion of Vietnam, concentrating on the Central Truong Son which is widely recognized as a priority landscape with globally-significant biodiversity value. Not only does this trans-boundary mountain region have diverse local communities but also it is a critical area for conservation of tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests. The approach of this project to combine biodiversity planning (Component 1) with landscape conservation measures targeted at local community level (Component 2) is entirely appropriate.

In further developing this complex project, STAP advises that a number of scientific and technical issues will need to be addressed in order to make a complex project such as this viable:

(1) STAP notes the expected output 1.2.3 on the establishment of a "trans-boundary conservation mechanism for selected species". However, trans-boundary issues do not appear to feature significantly in project design and proposed activities, even though the Annamite Range is shared significantly with adjacent Laos and to a certain extent with Cambodia. Biodiversity corridors will need trans-national liaison. Possibly of even greater significance will be cross-border contacts between local communities, especially in the viability of the proposed East-West corridor (Output 1.1.2), in the land use plans (1.1.1) and the PA operational management plans (1.1.4). Aspects of Component 2 would seem also to be conditional on trans-boundary influences. All these issues are more complex than the consideration of "selected species". STAP would like to see evidence of cross-border liaison and possible harmonization of strategic approaches to conservation and community involvement.

(2) Outputs 2.3.1 and 2.3.3 (2.3.2 is missing in the PIF submitted for screening) refer to carbon stock baseline assessments and local MRV systems. Changes from primary to secondary forest involve not just a shift in total woody biomass but also major changes to soil quality and productivity. The PIF makes only passing mention of methodologies for these carbon assessments; yet, it is clear that techniques of measurement are critical and should include soil carbon changes. The proponents are urged to use IPCC guidance on forest land carbon stock assessments and internationally-accredited methods such as those developed in the GEF Carbon Benefits Project (CBP). STAP is happy to advise further on this, as it has just completed a review of the CBP tools. The current project in Vietnam would seem to be a good candidate for use of the tools.

(3) Ecosystem valuation and PES schemes are to be assessed and piloted. STAP supports the intention but notes that the potential complexities could be daunting. While village development revolving funds could be one way to ensure buy-in to forest protection, experience elsewhere does need to be included in appropriate design of such schemes

involving monetary flows and community commitment. STAP's 2010 advisory document on the Evidence Base for Community Forest Managements as a Mechanism for Supplying Global Environmental Benefits and Improving Local Welfare (http://www.stapgef.org/biodiveristy-and-biosafety) should be consulted as a starting point. On the economics of ecosystems services, a recent paper - by J. Farley, 2012. Ecosystem services: the economics debate. Ecosystem Services 1: 40-49 â€“ would be instructive in gaining a closer understanding of the issues in valuation and how far this can be taken.

(4) STAP has some concerns about the residual effects of dioxins sprayed as defoliants in the Vietnam War between 1962 and 1971. While the chemicals do readily break down under sunlight, the large amounts sprayed mean that some associate with organic compounds and persist in sediments, fields and forest soils. The defoliants also turned primary and secondary forests into candidates for invasion by aggressive pioneer species such as bamboo. One study has also found existing substantial differences in faunal biodiversity between sprayed and unsprayed areas. These are a very real issues amongst local communities. Residues of toxic chemicals are still said to be affecting the new-born population. A more prominent inclusion of dioxin-related issues might ensure closer community engagement with the project, and may also be ecologically relevant.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
1. Consent	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.
2. Minor revision required.	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.
3. Major revision required	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.