

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: September 30, 2016
Screener: Sarah Lebel
Panel member validation by: Ralph E. Sims
Consultant(s):

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9265
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Vietnam
PROJECT TITLE:	Mekong Delta Integrated Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Project
GEF AGENCIES:	World Bank
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), MARD; Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (ISPONRE); International Cooperation Department (ICD), MONRE
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 the World Bank proposal "Mekong Delta Integrated Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Project". The project sets to "strengthen research and innovation capacity of research institutions and communities for developing and applying, and encourage innovation relating to land and water management practices, and coastal forest rehabilitation to build climate-smart and climate-resilient natural resources management practices in resilience of agriculture and aquaculture livelihoods for selected provinces in Vietnam's Mekong Delta". STAP recognizes that the project information document is relatively well-developed scientifically and technically, yet would benefit from further clarifications in the areas of climate change mitigation and the linkages between project components.

This multi-focal area 5 year project aims to strengthen research and innovation capacity of research institutions and communities in selected provinces in Vietnam's Mekong Delta where agriculture (mainly rice), aquaculture (mainly shrimp) and livelihoods are under threat. Capacity building and improving livelihoods are key components. "Climate-smart" and "Climate resilient" are the perceived links across the climate change mitigation, adaptation, sustainable forest management and land degradation focal areas as well as fresh water management. However, "climate-smart" although mentioned often, is not clearly defined as to exactly what it entails from the perspective of this specific project.

Establishing a small grants facility to support research, a consortium partnership between government research agencies and universities, and holding short courses are acceptable approaches to diversifying the agricultural productivity of the region. The impacts of up-stream hydro and irrigation systems on the Delta certainly need assessment as does the risk of sea level rise and climate-related extreme weather events. A move towards more resilient practices is required but first needs research and analysis.

Rehabilitation of degraded land includes climate change projections (paragraph 31) but no mention is made of mitigation potentials from soil carbon or afforestation. Climate resilience initiatives were well covered, though perhaps the project could benefit from consideration of the RAPTA Framework (<http://www.stapgef.org/the-resilience-adaptation-and-transformation-assessment-framework/>). The food/water/energy nexus of relevance to this project has been reasonably well researched by FAO, IIASA etc. and project proposers should review the current knowledge to assess its applicability for this project.

The target to avoid 4.5 Mt CO₂-eq is stated, though what this entails and how it was calculated is unclear. It claims to come through "promoting conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests, and other land use, and support for climate-smart agriculture" (paragraph 6). In addition, it is claimed mitigation will result from "direct reduction of anthropogenic emissions and enhancement of carbon stocks in forest and other land use and support of climate-smart agriculture sinks and reservoirs that are necessary for limiting long-term climate damage" (paragraph 30). Reduction of fertiliser application volumes is one aim (section II, A, 1) and this could conceivably contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from during their manufacture as well as N₂O emissions, but again this is not quantified.

Details of how, overall, this 4.5 Mt CO₂-eq abatement level is to be achieved in practice should be outlined in the proposal to enable monitoring and evaluation of the project to be undertaken both at mid-term and on completion. The project, being multi-focal in nature, is relatively complex. There is little doubt that the Mekong Delta is under various threats and that the project is warranted. However how success (or otherwise) is to be measured remains unclear.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
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 design	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: (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.