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: @@@@ @@, @@@@ Screener: Thomas Hammond

Panel member validation by: Michael Anthony Stocking; Thomas Lovejoy
Consultant(s): Brian Huntley

I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*
FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID: 4645
PROJECT DURATION : 6
COUNTRIES : Zimbabwe
PROJECT TITLE: Hwange-Sanyati Biological Corridor (HSBC) Environment Management and Conservation Project
GEF AGENCIES: World Bank
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: WWF
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): **Major revision required**

III. Further guidance from STAP

1. Overall Recommendation

In principle, STAP welcomes the multi-focal area approach outlined in this initiative. The Panel believes that MFAs tend to more accurately reflect reality on the ground and provide mechanisms to address complex challenges more effectively. The overall approach of this project considers biodiversity conservation in core protected areas but also across a diverse production landscape â€“ which is appropriate in the context described. The project is essentially a revamped CAMPFIRE (please see the footnote at the end of this review) on the assumption that Zimbabwe's economic crisis is on its way to resolution and that the right conditions now exist for co-management of wildlife and associated habitats in game corridors and buffer zones. However, there are a number of significant weaknesses with this project and STAP strongly believes that require a major revision and re-thinking of this submission is required.

2. Observation and comments

Given the intention of the project to build on the CAMPFIRE experience, STAP would have liked to see some awareness, if not analysis, for the reasons for success of this particular CBNRM approach in the context of south-central African conditions, including the socio-economic status of local people and the wider economic and political landscape. This awareness is missing in the PIF, and indeed some of the baseline activities specified appear to be quite contrary to published evaluations of How CAMPFIRE worked. The proposers of the project are strongly urged to (1) address the assumption that economic and political conditions, including the status of relations between government agencies, political leaders and local communities, are now conducive in Zimbabwe for effective CBNRM and for effective retention of financial benefits of conservation by those communities; and (2) analyze the ingredients for successful CBNRM using the CAMPFIRE philosophy through a thorough review and distillation of the previous programme in Zimbabwe. A starting point of (2) could be the article: Alexander, J. & McGregor, J. 2000. Wildlife and Politics: CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe. Development and Change 31(3): 605-627.

In the light of the above, STAP has considerable concerns over the viability and status of the baseline activities listed in Section B1. These appear to present a somewhat technocratic and bureaucratic approach to a challenge that is essentially about community involvement and empowerment. So, for example, soil analysis is mentioned in Activity 9 as a means of identifying root causes of land degradation. Soil analysis may identify some of the symptoms of land degradation, such as in the area proposed the locations of soils with high exchangeable sodium and hence a propensity to tunneling and gully erosion, but it will not identify why the degradation processes have reached a critical tipping point. Activity 10 specifies water harvesting as a temporary measure until root cause analysis has been completed.

This statement is extremely puzzling. Water harvesting, often traditionally practiced by communities (e.g. from bare granite outcrops and use of local dambos), is essential and does not need to wait for any scientific analysis from a government or university laboratory. Equally puzzling is the notion that gully erosion threatening hospital and school buildings requires a "holistic approach". This situation is probably due to inadequate storm water management around the buildings, something that likely does not need a 'holistic approach' â€“ simply improved or maintained storm water drains.

A fundamental assumption and untested hypothesis of this project for land degradation to be controlled is that root causes need to be understood. STAP agrees. However, the causal analysis in the PIF is extremely simplistic and does not reflect the now-accepted integrated analysis undertaken at a variety of scales and with a complex of social, economic, political and bio-physical factors. Basic reading for this must include Blaikie's â€˜Chain of explanation' â€“ see Chapter 2 of Land Degradation and Society by Blaikie and Brookfield, published in 1987, for an accessible summary of the sort of analysis that is now commonplace for projects where soil erosion is a major problem for poor rural communities. If such an analysis were to be undertaken, a number of intervention points might be identified, not just the promotion of conservation and SLM techniques to local people who may have few resources to allocate and many other problems to which to give higher priority.

One means of overcoming the natural tendency of agencies to adopt an overly technical bias in issues around land degradation and biodiversity conservation is to understand local people's perceptions of the problem and their understanding of solutions that they know to work. This was also one of the fundamental tenets of CAMPFIRE. A good Zimbabwe-specific paper on this is by Chizana C.T. et al 2007, published in African Crop Science Conference Proceedings, No.8, pp. 1485-1490.

In Component 1 of this project, specifically with respect to sub components iii and iv, STAP would submit that it is insufficient to provide a general indicative list of activities here, noting that these will be developed at a later date â€“ given the extensive knowledge base which exists in the published literature and amongst development agencies. Concomitantly, section B.3 notes that 3,500 families will benefit from alternative livelihood sub-projects provided support from other donors is forthcoming â€“ a significant assumption which entails important risks and should be explained. This section is long on generalities but very short on details as to how these socio-economic benefits will accrue, be sustainable, and in turn support the delivery of global environmental benefits. As the authors of this submission rightly note, the World Bank has many years of experience in the domain of biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, and protected areas in Zimbabwe â€“ and in the region more generally. Given the scope and breadth of this experience, along with knowledge derived from similar Bank-funded activities in Zimbabwe, STAP wishes to suggest that sufficient knowledge is available to inform the description of the community livelihoods sub-components and specifically outline how these activities will support the delivery of GEBs â€“ and address the numerous assumptions contained in this PIF.

In the conclusion of section B.2, it is suggested that GEF support is essential to realizing effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods for bufferzone communities. While this may in fact be the case, the PIF does not outline a plausible pathway which would support the long term sustainability of project investments. A convincing pathway needs to outline agencies (such as local NGOs), institutions (including legal provisions), technical and extension support, local government and research/monitoring nethods. Section B.3 notes that in the past livelihood opportunities for communities in the vicinity of protected areas in the HSBC region was far better than at present, and which deteriorated through economic collapse. It could be assumed, therefore, that fundamental economic pre-conditions may be essential to project success â€“ yet there is little discussion of this and other core assumptions.

Component 2 outlines a process of mapping, analysis, and modeling to identify the root causes of land degradation in the HSBC region â€“ which will lead to "pilot" restoration investments and SFM activities. Similar to the above, there is little discussion on the specific attributes of these investments â€“ although a formula is suggested for calculating the carbon benefits of SFM investments and a benefit of 40,348 tonnes of CO2 per year over 10 years is suggested through avoided deforestation. These figures would suggest that significant thinking had been invested in the sustainable land management and SFM activities of this project, however this is not apparent in the narrative. Moreover, as is well known 'community forestry' is a slow and unproven approach in the semi-arid regions of Africa, especially given the poor soils and unpredictable rainfall of the project area. Tree planting, without fencing to keep goats and cattle out and unless fast growing exotics are used, is too slow to beat the rates of loss - through deforestation - of timber and fuelwood and is likely to fail.

Following from the above, STAP strongly urges that a calculation of total system carbon from all project activities be undertaken. Results from the recently concluded GEF-funded Carbon Benefits Project should be reviewed and considered in this initiative.

Regarding support for improvements to PA management effectiveness (Component 1, sub-components i and ii), STAP strongly urges the authors of this PIF to review the Results of the GEF Biodiversity Portfolio Monitoring and Learning Mission (Zambia, 12/2010) in considering how best to structure this component of the project.

STAP further suggests that the risk analysis in Section B4 is fundamentally flawed. Essentially, the risk that "Communities may continue with unsustainable practice such as wildlife poaching" essentially says that the project may fail if the project fails. Risks must be external to project objectives and control.

The current GEF Work Program contains similar protected area initiatives under consideration in Botswana, Zambia, and Angola. The proposal also correctly points out the numerous supporting activities already underway in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the trans-frontier region. STAP urges the authors of this submission to consider the significant opportunities which exist for lessons and knowledge sharing with these and among similar initiatives in the design of this project, that could significantly improve the delivery of global benefits both in Zimbabwe and across the sub-region.

Finally, STAP reviewers noted that this PIF contained numerous typographical, syntax, and spelling errors â€“ which may perhaps be an indication of the speed with which this proposal was prepared or the partial evidence that was consulted, or both.

Note concerning resilience to climate change

STAP is currently testing a project screening tool to assess the potential risks associated with climate change to project design. In general, the Panel agrees with the notion that improvements in sustainable land use and agriculture will assist as a climate mitigation and adaptation strategy. However, as noted above this PIF does not provide sufficient detail describing these planned activities and how they will be carried out to allow an estimation of this project's likely resilience to climate change. The change on frequency of the "three 30s" (i.e. air temperatures above 30 degrees; humidity below 30%, and air speed above 30 km per hour) in the region and the increasing extent of wild fires is of significant concern There is no indication in section B.4 as to the likely severity of the risks described.

Footnote:

As the PIF rightly notes, Zimbabwe was formerly a leader in CBNRM through its ground-breaking CAMPFIRE programme, about which much has been written and the reasons for success evaluated by several agencies including IUCN, and IIED. Through the well-publicized troubles of the country, some of the individual CAMPFIRE initiatives have fallen into abeyance. The reasons for this need to be analyzed very carefully to ensure that conditions are now right for the reintroduction of this particular CBNRM model. the view that economic collapse is the root cause of environmental deterioration is simplistic. Most of southern Africa has been only marginally affected by the global financial crisis. The root cause is primarily the collapse of governance, not of economy. Sound governance systems are the primary predictor of environmental health, and in Africa, these need to be coupled, in rural areas, with strong agricultural extension services. The collapse of the extension services, and the national park institutions, led to rapid failure of both agriculture and wildlife conservation.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
1. Consent	STAP acknowledges that on scientific/technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasising any issues that could be improved and the proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
2. Minor revision required.	STAP has identified specific scientific/technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. One or more options that remain open to STAP include: (i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues (ii) Setting a review point during early stage project development and agreeing 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 revision required	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical omissions in the concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. Normally, a STAP approved review will be mandatory prior to submission of the project brief for CEO endorsement. 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.