

# 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: May 11, 2010

Screener: David Cunningham

Panel member validation by: Sandra Diaz  
Consultant(s):

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 4091

**PROJECT DURATION :**

**COUNTRIES :** Ethiopia

**PROJECT TITLE:** Capacity Building for Access and Benefit Sharing and Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNEP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** Government of Ethiopia/Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (IBC) and other relevant government agencies

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** Biodiversity

**GEF-4 STRATEGIC PROGRAMS:** BD-4;BD-5;BD-8;

### 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. The title and objective of this project may be a bit misleading as they give the impression that the primary focus of the project is genetic resource access and benefit sharing (ABS). However, the description of the project rather seems to focus on the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants as well as trade in medicinal plants rather than access and benefit-sharing as it relates to genetic resources. The term ABS seems to be interpreted in a broad manner, not specifically restricted to access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits arising from their utilization. In other words, it is not clear whether this is really about access to genetic resources or about the trade of biological resources which may or may not be used for their genetic resources. In the end, this may be an illustration of the difficulties in distinguishing between access and use of genetic and/or biological resources. The full project brief should clarify this aspect of the objective.

2. The Pilot study on additional ecosystem services (Component 1, p.5) should be reconsidered. The PIF goes into great detail on the outputs required to achieve payments for medicinal plants as an ecosystem service and the associated risks, but provides only a vague concept for other ecosystem services as additional revenue, with no specific outputs and no consideration of the risks which will be equally complex as those for the genetic resources payments. The Panel therefore recommends that UNEP focus on the genetic resources project.

If however, payments for another suite of ecosystem services are to be explored then the full project brief will need to set out the rationale and design elements for this sub-project, referring to STAP's general advice on Payments for Environmental Services (available at <http://stapgef.unep.org/resources/sg/PES>).

3. The PIF sets out the elements of an appropriate impact evaluation framework under section H (cost-effectiveness). The anticipated impacts of the project include:

"by mainstreaming medicinal plants conservation through markets, recurrent costs will be virtually eliminated, with conservation supported by economic production systems that increase financial benefits for local communities."

"promote adoption by farming communities outside the project area with farmers using their own resources to replicate practices and achieve scale up"

"the project will have a general impact that will help the rural community to generate income from medicinal plant trade as an alternative livelihood and reduce food insecurity"

"expanding production in the four pilot areas would be sufficient to demonstrate the market value to local communities such that the same activities will be taken up in other areas; i.e. the project will be catalytic in nature."

STAP encourages UNEP to design the project in such a way that these anticipated impacts can be measured. For example, by also collecting baseline data from areas outside the four pilot sites at the start of the project, it should be relatively easy to determine whether the project had the anticipated catalytic effect in these areas after the project. The Panel will examine the full project brief to ensure that it includes indicators based on the above impacts both inside and outside the project area.

4. STAP also recommends providing more details on:

(a) How the expected increase in medicinal plant trade would reduce food insecurity? Is this supposed to be simply a consequence of higher income? Note that switches to market-oriented cultivation can sometimes decrease food security (less land and effort devoted to grow essential food items).

(b) How will the project address power asymmetries in fixing the prices, between small farmers growing the medicinal plants and the demanding markets? This is often essential in determining a significant increase in income and therefore an impact sustained in time.

5. STAP recommends providing more detail on how medicinal plants growing in protected areas will be protected from unregulated harvest under the expected increased market demand generated by the project. Depending to the biology of different plants, it is often easier to illegally harvest them than to cultivate them, even if sound cultivation methods have been developed and local farmers have been trained on them. Therefore a higher demand and a better price could actually have a net negative impact on the survival of the wild stock. In this respect STAP encourages UNEP to design the project in such a way that the possible positive or negative impacts of the project on medicinal plants in in situ conservation core and buffer areas can be evaluated.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	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.
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	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.
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	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.