

# 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: April 09, 2014

Screener: Douglas Taylor

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit  
Consultant(s):

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT    GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 5765

**PROJECT DURATION :** 5

**COUNTRIES :** Regional (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Integrated Transboundary Ridges-to-Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef

**GEF AGENCIES:** WWF-US

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD)

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** International Waters

### 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

1. STAP welcomes this well-presented and researched proposal to invest in regional coordination through an existing body, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), as a regional host strengthening the management of the Meso-American Reef system (MAR). The project will apply ridge-to-reef methods and builds upon previous GEF investments including the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System Project (GEF ID 837, World Bank).

2. STAP had earlier supported the proposal by the World Bank for the GEF project Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef (GEF ID 2885), which would have been the successor regional project. However, this was later cancelled before implementation due to lack of an empowered regional platform to deliver the project. In its screening of the project STAP had cited positively the economics analysis of the joint WRI-WWF 2009 Belize study and the work by TEEB on coral reef and mangrove systems in order to develop ecosystem services valuations. Accordingly STAP supports the present concept to follow-up these earlier proposals and offers the following comments and suggestions for its strengthening.

3. STAP advises that the ICR for the ID 837 project is carefully consulted during project preparation ensuring a robust project design, prioritizing activities and taking the nested governance systems into account. Critical to achieve longer term sustainability will be to support the building of a robust regional governance framework that synchronize national and regional concerns, incentives and benefits. The region is characterized by a diversity of regional governance institutions and the establishment of a regional governance baseline can be critical as a tool to monitor and evaluate progress towards effective governance. Work under the CLME project by Mahon et. al., Olsen on governance and STAP on regionalism can serve to strengthen these aspects during project preparation.

4. STAP observes that an important key to long term sustainable use of the MAR is the fostering of a partnership between private developers and governments set within a clear development framework at regional scale. This goal requires incentives as well as regulations supported by public stakeholders and civil society. The outputs suggested in the project framework are relatively specific regarding the proposed water funds and measures that use incentives, including certification. However, it is less clear what strategies will be used to effect change in the tourism and development sector actors. Section A.2 on Stakeholders goes some way to identify linkages but less so regarding leverage.

5. A second and major tool for MAR sustainable management would be adherence to and enforcement of policies for reduction of environmental degradation to complement incentive-based approaches. STAP notes that the design of the withdrawn World Bank project included support for legal policy and institutional strengthening; however, the present project only weakly supports this sector, therefore STAP regards this as a risk to be mitigated.

6. The PIF mentions invasive alien species, including the impacts of lionfish. STAP recommends that early liaison and collaboration is established between two GEF projects which are implementing lionfish control measures and cooperating at a regional scale. These projects are Building a Sustainable National Marine Protected Area Network (GEF ID 3729, for the Bahamas) and Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean (GEFID 3183, for Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago). In addition an advisory note on lionfish control was provided to both projects and remains valid for consideration by the present MAR project. A regional approach to invasive alien species (including lionfish) is recommended to ensure that a regional reporting system is active that can address the most vulnerable sites and restrict the potential for spread.

7. Regarding the welcome coordination with other relevant GEF projects in the region, in addition to the list provided under section A.4, the proponents are advised that UNDP, with UNEP and FAO, has recently initiated a Ridge to Reef Program for the Pacific Islands (GEF ID 5395 – Program and 14 child projects) which offer the opportunity to study land and water management approaches across a very wide variety of socio-economic and environmental contexts, albeit in a different region.

#### Risk Assessments

8. Noting that the PIF notes a low risk for regional government capacity, the project places a great deal of responsibility upon the CCAD to coordinate and effect change. However, will the CCAD really be able to convene and obtain support from other sectors over which it has little control, such as mining, oil and gas development, land use and transport? Commitment by the four participating countries to an inter-ministerial committee beyond the four environment ministries concerned as necessary to troubleshoot for CCAD may be one way to mitigate the risk. These issues can further be developed in the proposed governance baseline assessment during project preparation taking multi-purpose organizations into account beyond more single-purpose organizations.

9. In order to deliver and sustain an effective set of regional scale ridge to reef policies employing state of the art marine spatial planning and to consolidate this with land use planning, it would appear that CCAD will need significant capacity building, which is not identified within the project framework.

10. As mentioned above, the project appears to lack sufficient support for policy development related legal services and outreach.

#### REFERENCES

1. Charles N. Ehler. An Introduction to Marine Spatial Planning, November 2013. Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security
2. Cooper, E., Burke, L, and Bood, N. 2009. Coastal Capital: Belize. The Economic Contribution of Belize's Coral Reefs and Mangroves. WRI Working Paper. World Resources Institute. <http://www.wri.org/publications>;  
<http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/Coastal%20Capital%20Belize%20final.pdf>
3. Mahon, R., Fanning, L., McConney, P., 2014. Assessing and facilitating emerging regional ocean governance arrangements in the Wider Caribbean Region. Ocean Yearbook, Vol. 28. [www.brill.com/products/book/ocean-yearbook](http://www.brill.com/products/book/ocean-yearbook)
4. Olsen, S.B., Page, G.G. & Ochoa, E. (2009). The analysis of governance responses to ecosystem change: A handbook for assembling a baseline. LOICZ Reports & Studies No. 34. Geesthach: GKSS Research Center.
5. 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, 44 pages

6. SÄnderbaum, F., & Granit, J. (2014). The Political Economy of Regionalism: The Relevance for International Waters and the Global Environment Facility: A STAP Issues Paper. Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C.

7. STAP advice on lionfish control projects.

[https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/repository/Caribbean\\_lionfish%20control\\_GEF\\_3729\\_and\\_3813\\_STAP\\_comments\\_June2009.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/repository/Caribbean_lionfish%20control_GEF_3729_and_3813_STAP_comments_June2009.pdf)

8. TEEB - <http://www.teebweb.org>

9. World Bank, Report No: ICR0000721, IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION AND RESULTS REPORT, (TF-027739)

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