

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 06, 2011

Screener: Christine Wellington

Panel member validation by: Sandra Diaz
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I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4586

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : Jordan

PROJECT TITLE: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation in Tourism Sector Development in Jordan

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA)

GEF FOCAL AREA: Biodiversity

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

The project aims at "mainstreaming" biodiversity conservation into tourism sector development in Jordan as a whole and more specifically in critical areas for biodiversity in the Jordan Rift Valley. The project is designed specifically to reduce threats to biodiversity from the current and future development of this fast growing sector, which has seen an increase in visitors of 27% over the last 6 years, with a concomitant growth in the ecotourism subsector of about 3%. These upward trends are expected to continue.

The PIF states that at present, tourism is concentrated (1) in the three Tourism regions/zones: Ajloun, Dead Sea and Petra, all of which are ecologically sensitive areas; and (2) in wider areas between these regions/zones and the existing and planned protected areas. These Tourism regions/zones lie in high biodiversity areas and in the proximity of several protected areas (PAs). Although few of Jordan's current visitor intake are nature tourists per se, tourists do visit protected areas around the tourism regions/zones as part of their tour itinerary. The Government is seeking to expand the tourism sector "and will market Jordan as a destination for nature-based tourism with wilderness being a key attraction (hiking, camping and other activities). PA visitation is thus expected to grow over time.

The project is expected to address the direct and indirect threats to biodiversity, including, inter alia:-

- (i) The undermining of PAs through the fragmentation and loss of habitat and connectivity due to development of hotels and other tourism infrastructure in ecologically sensitive areas;
- (ii) Habitat disturbance and breeding disruptions of fauna arising from high visitor numbers in sensitive environments and protected areas (eg through trampling, trekking, hunting, plant collecting etc);
- (iii) Effluent discharges, litter accumulation and extensive abstraction of water.
- (iv) Opening up of ecologically sensitive areas through increased road development and access;
- (v) Increased demands on the provisioning, regulating and other ecosystem services by the local populations in the tourism areas as demand for agricultural products increases to meet the increased demands for food from the growing tourism activities in the relevant areas (such that one might expect increased loss of natural vegetative cover, more wood-cutting, overgrazing and increased water demands by livestock etc)

In terms of geographic scope. the project focuses on three levels:- (1) at the national level"influencing regulations and investment strategies; (2) at the landscape level in the tourism zones"where physical development occurs and where there is a need to change the trajectory of that development to address direct and indirect threats; and (3) at the site level" in protected areas and sensitive corridors, where additional management intervention is needed to address direct pressures on ecosystems from visitation.

Overall, STAP welcomes this initiative and submits that the likelihood for success is reasonably good. However, STAP notes that the main stakeholders mentioned for partnership are the Jordanian Government, Tourism Development Authorities, and tourism-affiliated private sector. Local participation is not well defined “ although there is mention that local stakeholders will be identified during the PPG.

Given what they hope to achieve with this project, the Panel urges that more emphasis be placed on activities that directly involve the local stakeholder than is currently evident, particularly when there is a clear admission that local populations already place notable demands on the provisioning and regulating services of the ecosystems present. The setting up of PAs must consider at its core indigenous community needs, alongside all the top-down controls and frameworks that one might need to manage such PAs. In reading the PIF, it would appear that the local stakeholder is only viewed as being a part of the tourism development process in terms of being part of the mechanism to provide services to visitors, as opposed to being a core beneficiary of improved biodiversity conservation in the area. It doesn't look as though there is any consideration of compensation to local stakeholders in the event that ecosystem services access is curtailed as new PAs are set up, nor is there consideration of the potential for "spill over effects" as new PAs are set up, and more pressure is put on existing PAs by increased tourist visits.

Regarding project component 3 specifically looking at financial viability of PAs, it is puzzling that there is no mention of intent to explore the setting up of Payments for Environmental Services (PES) schemes. One might think that the Jordanian project environment lends itself to consideration of PES, since it does appear to bear some of the hallmark characteristics for setting up of PES. STAP urges the project proponents to consider the document "Payments for Environmental services and the GEF" (STAP, 2010).

Taking into consideration all of the above, the recommendation, therefore, is that in preparing the project document, there be:-

- a) Serious attention paid to exploring a properly targeted PES programme, so that local stakeholders might more directly benefit from the Tourism development. As it stands, the PIF assumes that all local livelihoods are tourism driven, and in fact subsistence needs are not well considered.
- b) Related to this, if the needs of local communities are not directly taken into consideration in project design, the future viability of these PAs (and therefore the majority of expected project outcomes) may be threatened. The project speaks of the intent to "transform the investment practices of private sector investors. Collectively, the planned interventions will ensure that tourism development is avoided in the most biodiversity sensitive areas, and that impacts are reduced, mitigated and offset as necessary elsewhere, thus reducing pressures on biodiversity." However, without careful consideration of biodiversity pressures at local levels OUTSIDE of tourism, then the impact of investment, PA integrity, and indeed any tourism product, is also threatened.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (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.