

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: Douglas Taylor
Panel member validation by: Meryl Williams
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4646

PROJECT DURATION : 7

COUNTRIES : China

PROJECT TITLE: CBPF-MSL Main Streams of Life “ Wetland PA System Strengthening for Biodiversity Conservation (PROGRAM)

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP and FAO

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: State Forestry Administration, Anhui Province, Hainan Province, Heilongjiang province, Hubei Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region , Jiangxi Province, Xinjiang Autonomous Region

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

STAP welcomes this Program which is well-written and which admirably summarizes past work and synthesizes it into a coherent and useful context. Particularly useful is the analysis of barriers to effective PA management, and the recognition of the need for at least catchment level sectoral coordination to deliver manageable wetland PAs. The Program primarily calls for policy change and capacity building to deliver strategic support for effective wetland PAs, and STAP, beyond supporting this approach, requests that the following minor improvements be acted upon by the proponents prior to CEO endorsement:

1. Fundamentally, wetlands, as the PFD points out, depend on adequate water supply and require inter-sectoral cooperation and well-informed management to retain sufficient resilience. The strategic goal of catalyzing the sustainability of wetland PAs depends upon an explicit commitment from water management agencies to enable water allocations and to set thresholds for management action, however this fundamental aspect does not appear to be dealt with except indirectly through references to relevant agencies and the need for cooperation. The proposed outputs in Component 2 do include mention of "enhancing coordination with other sectors (water, agriculture, infrastructure, mining, energy and fisheries sectors)", but this approach is likely to result in weaker than expected outcomes without a more explicit model for a catchment-based water budgeting mechanism to sit alongside the work planned on wetland economics. The model will also need to incorporate management actions and responsibilities in times of extremes of water availability “ drought and flood. A practical and well-tested framework is available published by the Convention on Wetlands to reconcile the often conflicting needs at national level and below (see Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2010), based on a synthesis of relevant national experiences. The proponents should therefore explain how they intend to elicit at a strategic level the required cooperation and tools regarding allocation of water resources to enable the delivery of biodiversity conservation in wetland PAs.

2. The Program proposes a two part Biodiversity health index, comprising a score of habitat suitability for important biodiversity and status of important biodiversity. What is proposed is both innovative and risky, the former measure likely to suffer from subjectivity while the latter should build on established methodology where possible. The proponents are recommended to consider using and adapting existing indicator frameworks. The most widely recognised are the CBD Indicator Framework and the UN Millennium Development Goals Framework and the proponents are advised to seek peer review of the system proposed, for example, through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (see BIP). The proponents should also explain in the full Program document what plans are in place for peer review of the proposed index.

3. One of the barriers mentioned is a comparative lack of capacity, particularly at sub-national level in agencies responsible for wetlands (see Barrier 1: Weak systemic and institutional capacity for effective PA management at the national, provincial and local levels). However, there appears also to be a more systemic barrier of lack of individual capacity at university and college level. In their review of the status and prospects for China's Natural Wetlands Shuqing An et. al. (2007) cite lack of graduate programs for wetland sciences in universities, which is asserted to be the main reason for the lack of trained researchers and managers available for the relevant agencies to hire. Under Program Component 1, the Program describes several outputs relevant to ad hoc professional training and competency standards, but fails to mention how in an institutional sense this effort will be sustained. Therefore STAP requests that this point be further elaborated by the proponents. For example, if there is no other project active in the field of capacity building in this sector the Program could affiliate with one or more universities to develop graduate programs and there are a number of international training centers (e.g. UNESCO-IHE, Delft, Netherlands) which could assist the Program to develop viable long term training partners and curricula within China.

4. The Program proposed primarily and correctly emphasizes the need for improved management of wetland PAs, and complementary outreach and knowledge sharing. STAP suggests that this be placed more explicitly within a wise use context, which is partly described through the zonation approach being considered for PA management (core vs. buffer and "experimental" zones). However, STAP further suggests that in addition to the systematic scientific monitoring proposed under the program (including the proposed "health status index" for biodiversity conserved in PAs) a simplified status indicator should be promoted as one of the catchment health indicators to provide informative feedback to officials and communities, with the aim of reinforcing wise use.

5. It is noted that under Component 3 the Asian Wetland Inventory methodology norms are being considered for application by the Program, in that connection the proponents may wish to consult ICIMOD which implemented the project Support for the conservation of high altitude wetlands through application of the Asian Wetland Inventory approach and stakeholder-led catchment management in Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, which was funded by the EU Asia Pro Eco Programme, 2005-2008 (see ICIMOD).

6. STAP notes under G, Socioeconomic benefits, that the gender dimensions of the Program and not addressed in a very substantive way, as is the case in many Programs.

References

- BIP. Biodiversity Indicators Partnership. (UNEP-WCMC). <http://www.bipnational.net/Default.aspx>
- Shuqing A., et al. 2007. China's Natural Wetlands: Past Problems, Current Status, and Future Challenges. *Ambio* Vol. 36, No. 4, 335-342.
- ICIMOD. Support for the conservation of high altitude wetlands through application of the Asian Wetland Inventory approach and stakeholder-led catchment management in Bhutan, China, India, Nepal. <http://www.icimod.org/?q=219> accessed October 2011.
- Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2010. Water allocation and management: Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands. Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 10. Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland. (see also relevant water-related Handbooks 8, 9 and 11).

<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: (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

