

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)

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Screeener: Douglas Taylor

Ravindranath; Thomas Lovejoy

Panel member validation by: Michael Anthony Stocking; Nijavalli H.

Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 4953

PROJECT DURATION : 36

COUNTRIES : Regional (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone)

PROJECT TITLE: Mano River Union Ecosystem Conservation and International Water Resources Management (IWRM) Project

GEF AGENCIES: AfDB

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:

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. While in general terms STAP welcomes actions to address in an integrated manner threats to vulnerable forest ecosystems in transboundary situations, STAP is unable to assess the scientific and technical merits of the proposal in its present form. STAP advises therefore that Major Revision would be necessary in order to develop the aspirations of the PIF into a project which can realistically deliver global environmental benefits. STAP's principal concerns about the project concept are summarized below. STAP requests that the proponents agree to a formal review point well in advance of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.
2. The PIF outlines proposals for incremental addition to three parallel baseline investments comprising capacity building of the Mano River Union Secretariat, a forest ecosystems conservation project (MARFOP) and an investment to build regional capacity to strengthen management of transboundary water resources. The GEF increment is intended to integrate the separate sectoral actions, to develop sustainable economic activities and to promote integrated management of transboundary water resources.
3. General observations. The PIF outlines many anthropogenic threats to the remaining forest ecosystem, and to the livelihoods of the communities associated with the river basin and contains the principal hypothesis that by developing alternative means of income generation forest regeneration will occur. The PIF does not contain any objective evidence that such an intervention could be made to work, indeed it is just as likely that for example, pressure on the forest would be maintained and degradation continued. Regarding stakeholders, it is not clear from the PIF what community land rights exist in order to underpin the proposed certification approach to forest products and presumably also watershed services. To enable the basis of a market-led approach, as is implied, the fundamentals regarding rights to resources and their management would need to be clearly set out.
4. The incremental reasoning of the project also relies on ecosystem valuation and the development of integrated land use plans. Ecosystem valuation varies hugely and the methods in use range from hedonic pricing to contingent valuation. The way that values are assigned affects the results fundamentally, as does whether a land-user or societal perspective is adopted. The project proponents need not only to describe the methods that will be used but also supply the scientific rationale for how "valuation of ecosystems provides opportunities for incorporating biodiversity into integrated land use plans." (pp.11-12)

5. In similar vein, the incremental reasoning includes the implementation of 'best practices' for production activities that currently threaten the forest. This begs the fundamental questions: best practices for whom? How will they be identified? What criteria will be used? What database source will be employed? STAP suggests that reference to an approach such as provided by the GEF-financed LADA and WOCAT projects would provide ideas for making the forest protection component of the project rather more realistic. It would give the evidence-base that difficult methodological issues have been thought through and that experience elsewhere has been consulted.
6. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) is the expected result of effective river basin management, and STAP welcomes the investment being made by the African Development Bank and others to rehabilitate the Secretariat of the Mano River Union. The PIF proposes a three year project, with outcomes that are unlikely to be achieved within that period especially given the time lag that would be expected in order to bring the Secretariat and its operations into effective status.
7. Component 1. (Integrated ecosystem management). The baseline activities proposed appear to impose demarcation of forest areas for conservation and its subsequent guarding implying that communities may be displaced. If so then the GEF increment is proposing to invite communities (whether outside or formerly inside the forest units) to either co-manage the forest or to delegate community management, it is not clear which is being proposed. In addition a number of relatively top-down interventions are proposed, backed by incentives which are stated to be increased revenues from sustainable economic activities. Unfortunately the PIF does not indicate even in general terms what these activities might comprise, apart from the Liberian example regarding forest certification.
8. Component 2. (Sustainable Management of Transboundary Waters). The description of the baseline activities does not allow STAP to understand what baseline actions are to be undertaken to achieve 'water resources management' or 'improving management of freshwater resources'. If the project intends to conduct a transboundary diagnostic analysis (TDA) and generate a strategic action program (SAP) in accordance with GEF practice then the baseline activities associated with TDA-SAP would need to be integrated into the baseline actions. Otherwise the GEF increment would be superfluous regarding the targeting of priority actions based on sound science. The PIF narrative does not mention use of a TDA-SAP approach. This mentioned solely in the Focal Area Strategic Framework (Section A.), and this is not carried forward into the Section B. Project Framework. The Component 2 narrative goes on to describe a range of possible actions, but none are justified or prioritized with reference to baseline information. In any case the implied TDA approach would need to be implemented before deciding on actions (SAP) to address the pressures that would be documented through a TDA.
9. Section B.3. (Socio-economic benefits). This section contains a range of asserted results, including for carbon benefits, largely unsupported by the previous Component narratives. Regarding communities it is unclear what criteria would be used to select communities for support, not is it clear what the relationship is between community forests and protected forests and from where forest products would originate. In developing further these aspects of the project, STAP draws the attention of the proponents to its GEF guidance on community forest management and on certification, both documents are available through the STAP website.
10. STAP, as indicated earlier, requests that the proponents contact STAP to agree an independent review point for the draft project brief well in advance of the submission to the CEO for endorsement, and in the meantime would be pleased to offer further advice to strengthen the proposal.

Please see Langholz, J. 1999. Society and Natural Resources 12 (2) 139-149. An example of the opposite hypothesis that provision of alternative economic opportunities can lead to accelerated destruction of the forest. The key lesson is that there must be other economic, social and environmental incentives in place in order to ensure that alternative incomes lead to forest regeneration.

<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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>