

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 12, 2012

Screeener: Lev Neretin

Panel member validation by: Thomas Lovejoy
Consultant(s): Brian John Huntley

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 5062

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : Comoros

PROJECT TITLE: Development of a National Network of Terrestrial and Marine Protected Areas Representative of the Comoros Unique Natural Heritage and Co managed With Local Village Communities

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Production, Energy, Environment, Industry and Handicraft (MPEEIH)

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): **Consent**

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes this excellently presented proposal to establish an expanded and functional system of protected areas (PAs) in the Union of Comoros, representative of the country's biodiversity endowment and with good prospects for a sustainable future'.

1. The project objective, outcomes, outputs and indicators are clear, logically framed and achievable. The biodiversity importance of both terrestrial and marine systems of the Comores is concisely described and the threats to their maintenance clearly and objectively presented. The links to GEF and Aichi targets is strongly made.

2. The baseline description provides a well-referenced synopsis of the island system and the global significance of its biodiversity resources. STAP welcomes the adequate citation of key scientific results on information directly relevant to the project. The multiple and rapidly increasing threats to the biodiversity and ecosystem services - (i) Habitat / land use change; (ii) Invasive Alien Species; (iii) Overexploitation; and (iv) Climate Change, the main threat being the loss of forest habitat to encroaching agriculture are clearly described and convince the reader that these are urgent and well researched priorities for action. Steps to remove or reduce the barriers to realizing the project objectives are sensibly approached. The need for a more thorough gap analysis to finalize the suite of 'centers of biodiversity conservation' through considering both scientific information and societal feasibilities is well argued.

3. The importance attached to the key role of tenure and governance systems in negotiating the way forward identifies what is perhaps the most difficult barrier to early success of the project. The cautionary note against unrealistic expectations for major income development from tourism is sensible.

4. Halting biodiversity loss in areas immediately outside PAs is crucial for the effective biodiversity protection inside PAs as the recent analysis of the effectiveness of tropical PAs showed (Laurance et al., 2012. Averting biodiversity collapse in tropical forest protected areas. Nature. 2012 Sep 13;489(7415):290-4.). Therefore, provision of alternative livelihoods/incomes for communities surrounding PAs is of paramount importance to assure effective PAs management. While these activities are largely beyond scope of the proposed project (only listed as Output 2.4), STAP recommends project proponents to develop gap analysis and establish appropriate formal and informal partnership arrangements with stakeholders to enhance income activities diverting local communities from unsustainable use of forest resources and fishery resources in areas surrounding PAs.

5. The risk analysis is particularly thorough and objective. The analysis indicates the considerable challenges to early success in a logical and realistic summary.

6. STAP commends the strong links with scientific and conservation organisations in the project, and the emphasis given to strengthening capacities throughout the project components.

7. In summary, STAP commends this PIF for its clear, well-researched and concisely documented presentation of all significant issues relevant to a challenging but highly important biodiversity project.

[Note: Brian Huntley was the primary screener on this PIF]

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