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:	May 31, 2018
Screener:	Virginia Gorsevski
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Consultant(s):	

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	**GEF TRUST FUND**
GEF PROJECT ID:	9909
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Regional (Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives, Malaysia, Thailand)
PROJECT TITLE:	Sustainable Management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme
GEF AGENCIES:	FAO and ADB
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Regional and sub regional executing partners include BOBP-IGO, SEAFDEC, IUCN/MFF, UN Environment (e.g. COBSEA, GPA), UNIDO; APFIC; National execution partners include Ministries of Fisheries and Agriculture, Ministries of Environment, and other national agencies from all 8 participating countries
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):
Minor issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes the FAO and ADB proposal "Sustainable Management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme." The project aims to foster sustainable management of fisheries, support the restoration of important marine habitats, reduce coastal and marine pollution to improve ecosystem health, improve the livelihoods and resilience of selected coastal communities, and strengthen regional planning, coordination and monitoring mechanisms. STAP believes the PIF is generally scientifically and technically sound, but notes below some areas which need to be strengthened prior to or after CEO endorsement.

1. This is a very ambitious program not only in terms of its geographical extent, but also because of the diversity of participating countries, stage of development (GDP/capita), technical/technological capabilities, as well institutional capacities and cultures. The idea of building on existing institutional hierarchies is a practical one, but it is not clear to what extent they will be willing or able to fulfill the functions expected of them. A combination of diplomatic and firm management is likely to be required to ensure efficient implementation.

2. A related concern is financing. Almost half of the co-financing (US$80 million) is expected to come from the eight recipient governments (in unspecified but presumably not equal shares). An indication of which components of the program would be affected if only a part of the expected contributions are provided, how this would affect other components indirectly, and what is Plan B to minimize the resulting deficiencies.

3. The programmatic justification is built on strong foundations, largely coming from Phase 1 of the project. The environmental problems are clearly identified, the three concerns and the three main barriers to be addressed are clearly and convincingly presented. The baseline scenario lists several earlier and ongoing international and national projects on which the new program intends to build. Activities and results of Phase 1 of this program are also documented in such a way that makes the presentation of activities planned in the proposed program more understandable. All these (national and international projects, Phase 1 of BOBLME) form a strong basis for the planned activities; however, they also increase the organization and coordination challenge (and related transactions costs) necessary to avoid overlaps and repetitions.

4. STAP appreciates the chart in Figure 3 supporting the presentation of the theory of change. The five components and the related outcomes are presented clearly. However, the description of the causal linkages between the activities and the desired outcomes is mostly missing. Although the linkages are plausible, it would be useful to add some detail during the PPG phase.

5. Component 1 does not cover the on-board conditions for crews fishing for tuna etc., where concerns have been expressed that crews are not well-managed, including time spent at sea without coming ashore, and very low pay. It is not clear to what extent does the (otherwise commendable) stakeholder involvement plan includes fishing crews (beyond vessel owners and companies). The work of ICSF is mentioned (paras 22, 57 and elsewhere) and STAP wishes to reinforce the essential need for this association – even if this might relate more to small-scale fisheries, than to the crews of large trawlers.

6. The Mandalay Urban Services Improvement Loan Project is an important complementary investment funded from sources external to this project. It might be worth considering similar child projects in the BoB region because they could piggyback on the large BoB program and contribute to its results, without significantly increasing the management complexity.

7. The incremental cost reasoning is convincing, the benefits from coordinating baseline efforts and complementing them with specifically targeted activities are plausible. However, some of the numerical estimates should be reconsidered or at least better documented based on firm evidence – see next two points.

8. In paragraph 66, halting the degradation and the maintenance of existing ecosystem services is estimated to generate economic benefits worth more than US$350 billion: is this new net benefit generated, i.e. an incremental value of ecosystem services relative to today or relative to the decreased value of US$110 billion that would result under the baseline scenario? Moreover, with all the conservation programs and development activities listed in the baseline scenario, is the estimate of degradation of this magnitude realistic? The coordination, integration, and other activities to be undertaken in this program will produce significant benefits, but the estimated magnitude of incremental benefits is difficult to comprehend.

9. In paragraph 67 regarding climate change mitigation benefits, 170,000 t CO2 emissions are claimed to be sequestered through conservation and protection of 200,000 ha of mangroves. It is not clear how this 0.85t CO2/ha was calculated; is it based on UNFCCC inventory or IPCC guidelines? Moreover, mangroves are also sources of CH4 and N2O emissions, therefore a more comprehensive inventory in CO2-equivalent terms should be considered. However, the FAO child project cited to protect 601,700 ha of the Sundarban forests in Bangladesh is claimed to avoid 7,546,292 t CO2. Apart from the spurious accuracy of an estimate to the nearest tonne, this equates to 12.5 t/ha or around 0.6t CO2/ha/year of avoided emissions which tends to confirm that the 0.85t number calculated for the mangroves is reasonable.

10. In a program of this magnitude, stakeholder involvement from various levels (international, regional, national and subnational) will be key to successful implementation. It is understandable that, after initial discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, detailed stakeholder engagement strategies will be developed during the PPG phase. The right methods and sequencing of stakeholder events will be crucial for ensuring buy-in from key stakeholders.

11. The risk assessment and management component is weak. In a complex and ambitious integrated program like this, numerous financial, political, institutional and other risks are looming, therefore a deeper and more detailed risk assessment is needed with not only some sketchy mitigation measures but serious alternative plans for cases should a key institution, stakeholder or action fail to deliver and undermine other activities/outcomes.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*

1. Concur	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple "Concur" response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to: (i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised. (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to 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 issues to be considered during project design	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to: (i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns. 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.