OPS5

FIFTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

EVALUATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL (STAP) OF THE GEF

OPS5 Technical Document #15

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OPS5 Technical Document # 15:
Evaluation of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the GEF

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Contents

I. Main Findings and Recommendations

1. This is the first comprehensive independent evaluation of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)[1]. The evaluation aimed to address three main questions:

1) To what extent has STAP met its core mandate?
2) What factors or conditions have contributed or hindered STAPs fulfillment of its mandate?
3) What steps should be taken to ensure the further strengthening of STAP's strategic, timely and effective advice to the GEF?

2. STAP's effectiveness and strategic focus has increased but there is scope to achieve much more. The evaluation concludes that STAP is a useful and respected body that has made substantial contributions to the functioning of GEF and great strides since its inception and subsequent alterations.

3. Many of the 2007 recommendations were on point and need to be implemented fully. The recommendations provided by this and earlier evaluations call for setting clear priorities and arriving at definitions by the GEF stakeholders, including STAP, so as to achieve greater clarity and shared understanding of STAP's roles and responsibilities, and improvement in STAP services to the GEF family. The findings of this evaluation will be considered in the context of the larger structural changes in the project cycle being proposed as part of OPS-5.

4. With the limited resources STAP is assigned it has been effective in many of its functions. STAP is well aware of several issues identified in this evaluation, as evidenced by its self-assessment. It contained a forthright assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses. STAP's effectiveness has been conditioned, in part, by the nature and quality of interactions with the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Evaluation Office, and the GEF Agencies, and their willingness to engage with STAP. However, resources allocated to STAP are also an issue. They have only increased slightly since 2008, while its workload has gone up more substantially. Going forward the amount of resources to STAP and its allocation among functions will likely become a constraint, given the diverse expectations of stakeholders from STAP and the further likely increase in demand on STAP to deliver multifocal products.

5. There is also near universal view among STAP members that the current arrangement with UNEP involving approval from Nairobi for actual travel and ticketing reduces STAP effectiveness. This calls or more delegated authority by UNEP to improve the administrative effectiveness of support given to STAP. In response to the evaluation, to increase STAP effectiveness, UNEP has begun to delegate some authority to the Washington regional office. Minor decisions have already been delegated, and there is an effort to increase the capacity of the regional office for further support. Such increased capacity of STAP Secretariat will be necessary to enable STAP to meet the demands on its services effectively.

[1] Joshua Gange contributed as research assistant to this technical document.

6. STAP is mandated with providing objective, strategic, scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies and programs and on projects and programmatic approaches. As its role and the GEF portfolios have evolved over time, the lack of a clear definition and a shared understanding of what constitutes "science" has become more problematic. STAP should work with the Council, the GEF, and the GEF Agencies to develop a clear and shared GEF wide concept of science, and a science policy outlining the role of science in the GEF.

Strategic Choices

7. **STAP's strategic contributions are universally recognized.** STAP contributions to the GEF 5 and 6 strategies are widely appreciated. STAP stakeholders would like STAP to further increase its strategic contributions and enhance its visibility. STAP can help identify the system's critical pressure points where interventions can achieve most global benefits in accordance with the GEF's overall mandate. With wide expectations, increasing demands on the STAP's time and only slight growth in STAP resources, there is a need to formulate clear priorities. Foremost among these is the balance between STAP's role in identifying strategic long term issues facing the global environment and its role of ensuring scientific soundness and technical quality through project screenings.

8. Currently, **systematic evidence on STAP contributions through project reviews to ensuring scientific soundness and technical quality is lacking.** Stakeholder views on STAP contributions in this area are mixed. Some stakeholders find them very useful. Others are less certain. The inherent critical nature of these reviews in pushing boundaries may evoke negative responses, and in some cases could be an indication that STAP is doing its job. However, there are also complaints that STAP has at times moved beyond its mandate or advised revisions at odds with the realities on the ground. Given that time and resources of STAP are stretched thin, a decision needs to be made whether to increase STAP resources or to cut back or reorganize STAP's functions. STAP's diverse stakeholders need to reach an agreement on STAP's various roles, expect STAP Secretariat to monitor and report on STAP effectiveness in performing those roles on a routine basis, and reach an agreement on the appropriate balance among them. The key stakeholders who need to be involved in this consensus building include Council Members as governors of the system, the GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, and developing countries as beneficiaries.

9. **Monitoring the effectiveness of STAP in the Project Cycle** needs to become a routine function of the STAP Secretariat, including the provision and monitoring of Agency and GEF Secretariat feedback on STAP screens, if the screening role of STAP is maintained. Beyond the STAP role in screening of all projects to ensure the scientific and technical quality, STAP members and the Council have considered review of projects to be useful to familiarize themselves with the GEF portfolio. This objective could be achieved through other means, but there may be value in retaining the ability to request STAP review on individual projects by the Agencies where it is valued. As a result of the 2007 reforms, the STAP does use a work plan to produce a results based framework, but the process of work plan development has not been seen to be transparent by some stakeholders. Relatedly, there is not a systematic analysis of the implementation of STAP revisions during screenings. Decisions would have to be made by the stakeholders collectively as to whether "screening" is the most effective use of the STAP or if the strategic focus provides more additive value.

10. **Targeted research** is presently a project modality in the GEF through which GEF Agencies can recommend "targeted research projects." In the case of Targeted Research, STAP plays a larger guiding role than in traditional projects, but the implementation is still carried out by the GEF Agencies. Previous evaluations of Targeted research have been mixed. If redesigned, targeted or applied research could potentially play a very important role in enabling STAP to make strategic contributions. As examples, STAP could coordinate research among the GEF Agencies to identify current and future trends in science and how they may be deployed more effectively using scientific methods and strategy. The vast body of evidence from the GEF's completed portfolio can simultaneously be tapped from a scientific perspective in order to provide future guidance in project design and strategic direction from the perspectives of scientific trends and methods. Yet, Targeted Research, in its current formulation, has fallen by the wayside. Reasons for it are explored in the report. Efforts to resuscitate Targeted Research through identifying key areas for research and funding for it should be given high priority. A number of suggestions are contained in the body of this report.

Improved Publication Strategy

11. STAP publications are read and appreciated by the specialized audiences to which they are typically addressed. Currently, the origins of STAP publications, although identified in the work program, are not easy for stakeholders to determine and publications are difficult to find in the literature through search engines. As a result they are rarely cited by users outside the GEF family. Although the primary target of the publications is the GEF family, there is currently only anecdotal evidence of their utilization by the GEF Agencies. Furthermore, the GEF Agencies work with funding sources beyond GEF, where greater utilization of standards promoted in STAP publications could lead to greater influence. By the same token, from the developing country perspective, lack of harmonization among standards established by different funding agencies demands more from their limited planning and implementation capacity. More needs to be done to increase harmonization on a variety of fronts and here STAP's considerable scientific capacity could contribute to establishing global standards going beyond the GEF family. This justification for the areas in which STAP produces publications needs clearer articulation, broader vetting and consultation among the stakeholders. STAP outputs need to link to the relevant networks, beyond the GEF family, in areas where there is now a proliferation of initiatives and funds, whereas GEF was the sole actor in the past. The publications need to target and be utilized by stakeholders both inside and outside of the GEF family. Attention of the broader scientific community would lend greater legitimacy to STAP's products, including potentially, as a consensus builder in strategic areas. Identifying key areas for publications, their completion and peer reviews should become an important feature of this work. Publications should be widely promoted through state of the art dissemination strategies, for both GEF internal uptake and external use.

Clear Organization of STAP Work

12. One agency was critical of the process of selection of STAP members. Some others have been critical of the supply driven nature/ formulation of the STAP work products and still others are unclear of the intended audience of STAP publications. The STAP work program is well vetted and is shared and discussed within the focal area task forces, submitted to the Council; and is a public document within the GEF partnership. Despite this there is a perception among

critics that the STAP process is not transparent. Therefore, clearly its communication to stakeholders needs to be improved. This should include identification of systematic processes for project reviews and how they are carried out as well as a systematic analysis of their impacts at the level of portfolios.

13. **Integrative work across focal areas needs to be strengthened**. This means more team work among STAP members than currently exists, and greater involvement of outside scientific partners to properly address and evaluate the substantially greater challenges of multifocal interventions to determine how the different focal areas can be combined to provide value that is greater than the sum of their parts. Further discussion of the nature and demands of the multifocal and the evolution of environmental project development, throughout the GEF, are discussed in more detail throughout the report.

Reflections on STAP's Mandate, including a Greater Role of Social Science

14. GEF has defined science broadly to include both biophysical and social sciences[2]. Despite this, there is not a detailed articulation of what aspects of social science fall under the preferred advisory role of STAP. This lack of a clearly defined role of science for the STAP, and the GEF in general, has led to a confusion of what is the proper role of STAP. The GEF Secretariat, and a couple of the GEF Agencies have tended to see the primary role of STAP to focus on the biophysical and ecological, resulting in a haphazard or inconsistent analysis of economic, ethical, or sociological/anthropological aspects of GEF's work. At the same time the GEF portfolio of projects has increasingly been moving towards projects with a greater inclusion of social science components. STAP, among other bodies in the GEF Partnership, needs to be able to properly analyze all scientific aspects holistically, including the social and economic components. Currently, the STAP is lacking in this ability, with a stronger focus on biophysical components. This is not to suggest that the STAP must add a social scientist, but rather the definition of science and expectations through the STAP expert networks should be clearly defined and implemented.

Need for Increased Support from UNEP to STAP

15. The STAP Secretariat is housed in UNEP since the inception of GEF and is stretched too thin in its supporting role. The communications strategy for STAP work is in need of enhancement. The logistical support to STAP work including in the areas of travel and other support services needs to be strengthened. In all these areas stronger support of UNEP could make a clear difference to STAP's effectiveness. UNEP successfully hosts a variety of secretariats with a range of independence. A review could be carried out to assess the optimal arrangement for providing STAP more delegated authority and functional independence.

II. Introduction: The Rapidly Changing Global Context

16. With accelerated economic growth in all developing regions starting 1990 until 2008, pressure on natural resources related to every convention and focal area GEF manages has

[2] *Infra* n.17 for the STAP mandate discussing scientific advice

increased. These pressures emanate from a variety of sources. There is growing and more intense interaction between ecosystem functions and the changing demographic and economic trends, with increased risks and uncertainty. The impacts of these demographic and socio-economic factors on ecosystems were previously smaller, but also underrated.

17. At the same time, with improved economic growth in middle income countries environmental awareness and civil society activism has increased and certain aspects of environmental management have improved. For example rates of deforestation have slowed among the largest deforesters. There is growing awareness of the impending water crisis, and, greater protection of watersheds through the use of payments for environmental services. Middle income developing countries are largely using their own resources to protect watersheds and to reduce deforestation rates. (Lele et al, 2013)

18. Climate change is a game changer with adverse effects on many parts of the world. And yet efforts in the forest sector through REDD+ as a mitigation strategy have faltered as carbon markets have not performed as expected earlier. Benefits of REDD+ are difficult to measure and demonstrate convincingly. Even if REDD+ succeeds it is clearly not sufficient as a mitigation strategy. Efforts are needed in all sectors, as population and income growth results in increased demand for food and energy and makes demands on natural resources. Furthermore even under the most optimistic scenarios on mitigation, countries will still face adaptation challenges. These are already beginning to affect major ecosystems and populations dependent on them. Hence there is urgency of implementation of adaptation strategies to cope with climate change.

19. Patterns of food consumption are changing towards more resource and energy intensive goods, e.g., more livestock products, vegetable oils sugar, fruits and vegetables. The result is hunger and obesity prevailing side by side. Nearly one billion people lack access to food, nearly 3 billion lack access to energy and yet growing reliance on the food industry is leading to increased calorie consumption, imbalanced diets and diseases of the wealthy. Food prices have increased and become more volatile. Changing agrarian structures, agro-industrialization, globalization of food production and reliance on markets accompanied by increased trade in agricultural and forest products poses new challenges.

20. Integration of all commodity markets across sectors is adding to increased risks and uncertainty. Energy demand is growing, at an even faster rate than the demand for food. Increased energy use is leading to very complex land use changes. This is well demonstrated in the case of biofuels depending on the biomass resources and energy conversion technologies used and subsidy policies of energy producing countries.

21. Science and technology offer huge opportunities, as a source of productivity growth. But they also pose very complex challenges for environmental management, e.g., through Jevons' paradox[3]. These dynamic effects need to be managed effectively. In the long run they can only

[3] Jevons paradox, also more commonly known as the 'rebound effect' occurs when an increase in the efficiency with which a resource (e.g., fuel) is used causes a decrease in the price of that leading to increase in the quantity demanded (see supply and demand, curve. The resulting increase in the demand for the resource, known as the rebound effect can offset the original drop in demand from the increased efficiency. The Jevons paradox occurs when the rebound effect is greater than 100%, exceeding the original efficiency gains

be managed effectively through increased domestic capacity in developing countries to deploy science and technology and regulatory regimes in a complex globalized world.

22. Science and technology in turn are progressively becoming private goods, and the scientific processes of discovery and delivery are dominated by the private sector where the incentives are often to increase rather than to contain the use of resources when profits are concerned. Hence the increased importance of the centrality of governance in environmental management and the need for public/private partnerships which go beyond the symbolic corporate social responsibility, and country-led development processes.

23. Aid as a share of domestic capital formation has declined, in virtually all parts of the world, barring low income countries. Reliance of developing countries on domestic resources for environmental management has increased, as has the importance of country led policies and strategies to manage economic growth and domestic expenditures in a sustainable and equitable manner. This means external agencies can play an important catalytic role in improving domestic policies, strategies and quality of investments and provided their project investments can influence the quality of those larger national and regional scale activities.

24. Finally, in a context where carbon and other environmental funds have proliferated, devising consensus on global environmental strategies is a growing challenge as global environmental architecture now contains multiplicity of actors and numerous donor funded initiatives all leading to fragmentation.

25. In this highly changed context GEF's role remains important as the oldest environmental fund with the mandate to implement the largest number of conventions under a single umbrella. But GEF is no more the only actor. Its share in the total environmental funding has diminished, and its catalytic role in influencing the effectiveness of global and national initiatives on the environment has become more critical. In such a changing context STAP's role needs to be revisited.

III. Background to this Evaluation

26. This is the first comprehensive independent evaluation of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), although STAP performance has been reviewed before. The evaluation team's terms of reference have sought to address three main questions:

4) To what extent has STAP met its core mandate?
5) What factors or conditions have contributed or hindered STAP's fulfillment of its mandate?
6) What steps should be taken to ensure the further strengthening of STAP's strategic, timely and effective advice to the GEF?

27. Although there were no previous comprehensive reviews, three previous Overall Performance Studies as well as a self-assessment by STAP following OPS 4 exist. Past assessments of STAP have noted that STAP's voice is not very strong and its role is not clear to

most GEF members (Carlos de Perez de Castillo 2009)'. The 2007 review found that STAP fell short on both developing and delivering strategic, forward-looking input due to lack of sufficient interaction with stakeholders and diverse expectations. Initially project reviews were conducted by independent consultants hired by implementing agencies from a roster formed by STAP, but there were concerns about quality, timing and independence of the reviews. Hence the task was turned over to STAP[4]. However timing of STAP reviews was an issue. STAP advice was provided too late in the project processing cycle to achieve meaningful changes in the project design. The previous reviews also suggested that STAP needed to work across focal areas, and improve interaction among STAP members and between STAP and its stakeholders.[5] A structural change with responsibility to STAP to screen all full sized projects at the PIF stage was adopted. In addition, the OPS-4 review found STAP to be lacking in strategic advice and suggested that STAP should take initiative in presenting strategic and technological advice to the GEF Council on critical policy issues.[6] The problem was reportedly less one of a lack of mandate, than the fact that the mandate had not been exercised strategically and that STAP was much more reactive than proactive for a number of reasons, among others:

- STAP was not given sufficient opportunity to contribute to scientific and technical concerns by the GEF.
- The GEF secretariat had taken over part of STAP's functions at the strategic level;
- STAP'S relations with UNEP and its role vis-a-vis the GEF had impeded STAP from playing a more explicit role.

28. Past assessments also found that while the role STAP with regard to individual projects was in general satisfactory, injection of scientific principles by STAP was not effectively making it into GEF priorities and strategies. STAP had not exercised a "strategic role regarding contemporary issues and challenges of the global environment and how to address them" (personal communication with Perez de Castillo).

29. The conclusion of the present review is that most of the recommendations of the 2007 reforms[7] were on target and there has been considerable improvement in STAP's contribution to strategic issues, e.g. in the GEF 5 and 6 strategies, in the production of some important publications, workshops and consultations. And yet the full potential of other STAP roles has not materialized. Why the past recommendations have not been fully implemented, e.g., whether due to lack of time, resources, feasibility, or agreement among stakeholders on STAP role and priorities, therefore, became a part of this evaluation. Accordingly, whereas some of our recommendations are similar to the 2007 review, additional suggestions are provided for improvement based on the feedback from stakeholders, STAP's self-assessment, UNEP's assessment as host agency of STAP, and our observations.

30. The most significant changes following changes introduced in 2007 were aimed at making STAP's advice more strategic, timely and effective. They include:

[4] See GEF C.27/Inf.4; see also C.32/Inf.7
[5] Id.
[6] OPS-4 Progress Toward Impact, Full Report, (2010) p19
[7] Supra n. 2 for a more comprehensive understanding of 2007 reforms

7) the reduction of the number of panel members from 15 to 6, and increased contractual time of panel members;

8) the replacement of the existing STAP roster of consultants with Memorandums of Understanding with international science institutions that would help expand the technical resources available to the GEF; and

9) the strengthening of the STAP Secretariat to liaise with cooperating institutions and individuals, and the maintenance of databases of experts to carry out selective reviews of projects (GEF/C.31/4).

The STAP Secretariat is currently based at UNEP's regional office in Washington, DC, with backstopping from UNEP HQ.

31. The present evaluation assessed STAP's performance in the four areas set out in paragraph 33, and discussed in section VIII, and identified factors affecting performance. It provides suggestions for reinforcing areas where STAP is doing well, and where it is falling short of the potential, identifies steps needed to improve the effectiveness of STAP.

32. The evaluation of STAP is intended to achieve a quantitative as well as a qualitative assessment from a forward looking perspective. It is comprised of the evidence base consisting of six components::

1. Review of Pertinent Documents
   - Review of STAP Mandates, Reports to Council, Budgets, Work Plans, Project Screenings, and other Operational Documents
2. STAP Self-assessment
3. UNEP Assessment of STAP
4. Independent Technical Review of the STAP Advisory Products
   - 20 Assessments of STAP publications by outside experts in each of the focal areas by an independent external panel.[8]
5. Interviews with Key Personnel
   - 11 Current or former STAP members
   - Selected staff with strong interactions with STAP from all GEF Agencies
   - Selected staff in the GEF Secretariat with strong interaction with STAP
   - Several Council members from both donor and developing countries
6. Survey of GEF Stakeholders
   - 214 surveys sent to STAP stakeholders including managerial, implementation, and operational roles in the STAP, GEF Agencies, and the GEF Secretariat
   - 72 responses (~34%)

IV. Evolution of STAP Mandates

33. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) started operation in 1991 when it was constituted by the three Implementing Agencies. Paragraph 24 of the 1994 GEF Instrument calls

[8] See annex for list of documents and reviewers

for the establishment of STAP as an advisory body to the restructured Global Environment Facility[9]. The GEF Instrument also indicated that UNEP shall provide STAP's Secretariat and operate as the liaison between the GEF and STAP. Documents prepared for the first and second GEF Councils highlight the need for independent advice on GEF strategies and projects to enhance credibility and effectiveness of the GEF (GEF/C1.5). They also indicated that a sound scientific grounding could help steer strategies and programs while at the same time reduce risks inherent in innovative approaches, which GEF was mandated to support.

Drawing on the recommendations from the Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the GEF, STAP's initial terms of reference included:

- Providing the GEF with strategic scientific and technical advice related to policies, strategies and a research agenda of targeted areas of research to improve design and implementation of GEF projects;
- The establishment of a system to ensure that GEF projects are scientifically and technically sound; and
- The coordination for scientific and technical purposes with conventions and other relevant scientific bodies.
- STAP was also asked to guide the choice of scientific indicators to measure project impact and to provide advice on special topics for evaluation.

The STAP was established with 12 panel members, a small secretariat housed by UNEP and a roster of experts, that would review projects with the guidance of panel members, and thereby enable panel members to concentrate on strategic issues (GEF/ C5.5)[10].

34. In June 2007, the GEF Council approved the Revised Terms of Reference of STAP (GEF/C.31/4) indicating that the STAP is to provide "objective, strategic, scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies, programs and on projects and programmatic approaches; and, maintain a database of institutions, networks and individual scientists to provide the necessary expertise and advice for the GEF. STAP's activities shall be coordinated with the activities of the GEF secretariat and the Implementing and Executing Agencies (GEF Agencies) and be consistent with GEF processes and procedures approved by the Council."

35. The Terms of Reference also indicate that "the STAP shall interact in a complementary manner with other relevant scientific and technical bodies, particularly with the subsidiary bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. For focal areas in which the GEF is not operating as a convention's financial

[9] Paragraph 24 of the GEF Instrument refers provides the basis for the creation of STAP by indicating that "UNEP shall establish, in consultation with UNDP and the World Bank and on the basis of guidelines and criteria established by the Council, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) as an advisory body to the facility. UNEP shall provide STAP a Secretariat and shall operate as the liaison between the Facility and STAP".

[10] In July 1995, the fifth GEF Council discussed proposals from UNEP for the structuring of and operations of STAP, providing guidance for the functioning of STAP.

mechanism, the STAP shall advise on the development of scientific and technical criteria and provide scientific and technical advice on priorities for GEF funding. The STAP shall provide expert scientific advice to inter-agency task forces and bodies handling other GEF processes, when such advice is requested."

36. With regard to monitoring and evaluation functions in the GEF, STAP's Revised Terms of Reference indicate that "STAP will provide timely and relevant advice on scientific and technical matters related to monitoring and evaluation activities…" It will also provide opinions on the evaluability of scientific aspects and related methodologies for measuring global environmental impacts, response to evaluation approach papers and Terms of Reference of reports. STAP members may also be called upon to directly support evaluations while respecting the independence both of STAP and the GEF Evaluation office." STAP is also requested to support "the GEF Secretariat in the development and use of scientific indicators to measure impact at national and portfolio levels."

Scope of Evaluation

37. On the basis of the STAP Revised Terms of Reference quoted above, this evaluation has identified the following three core areas of STAP's mandates for evaluation:

- Provision of Strategic Scientific and Technical Advice on GEF policies, operational strategies and programs, which has taken place largely through advisory publications, but also through advice in a number of forms such as the formulation of Focal Area strategies, participation in ad-hoc technical groups convened by the GEF Secretariat (e.g. GEF-6 TAGs, STAR working group, learning missions, KM working group), participation in the focal area task forces throughout the year, presentations of the STAP Chair to the GEF Council, and through targeted research;
- Provision of Strategic Scientific and Technical Advice on projects and programmatic approaches which have taken place largely through the screening of projects at PIF approval stage and by providing advice to programmatic approaches. Maintain a database of institutions, networks and individuals that can provide scientific advice to GEF;
- Coordinate with scientific bodies of conventions.

38. The key paragraphs of the STAP mandate approved by the GEF Council in 1995[11] and the current mandate[12] are similar in some respects, but it is clear that there is now a greater level of specificity. It also reflects an expanded role for the STAP over time. For example, paragraph 5 of the 1995 TOR states, "For focal areas in which the GEF is not operating as a Convention's financial mechanism, STAP shall advise on the development of scientific and technical criteria and provide scientific and technical advice on priorities for GEF funding." In contrast the 2007 mandate[13] in the congruent paragraph states "The STAP shall interact in a complementary manner with other relevant scientific and technical bodies, particularly with the subsidiary bodies

[11] GEF/C.5/5
[12] GEF/C.31/4. The terms were later revised in 2012 by mail.
[13] Id. at ¶2

of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. For focal areas in which the GEF is not operating as a convention's financial mechanism, the STAP shall advise on the development of scientific and technical criteria and provide scientific and technical advice on priorities for GEF funding. The STAP shall provide expert scientific advice to inter-agency task forces and bodies handling other GEF processes, when such advice is requested." Finally, the 2012 amendment to the terms adds a panel member to focus on Climate Change Adaptation.[14]

39. Another key aspect of the STAP mandate is the definition of science, as it informs the overall role that STAP is intended to play. Within the TORs, the loose definition of science has remained constant, and although not explicitly detailed, it is taken up in the provision for strategic advice[15]STAP made further revisions to the TORs in 2012, approved by the Council through mail, seeking to clarify its evolving role[16]. It is stated "STAP shall advise the GEF on ways to advance a better understanding of the issues of the global environment and how to address them; provide a forum for integrating expertise on science and technology, **including their social, economic and institutional aspects**; and function as an important conduit between the GEF and the natural and social science communities and relevant technologists, and synthesize, promote and galvanize state of the art contributions from them." Thus, science, as broadly defined, is tied to the ongoing activities of the GEF, indicating a need to adapt to changing priorities of the GEF.[17]

40. The GEF Instrument original mandate was very broad. It primarily focused on setting up STAP as an advisory body and in a secretariat and liaison role to UNEP, whereas the 2007 reform and the 2012 STAP TOR Revision have been much more specific on the identification of STAP roles in effect placing more demands on the panel. For example, the review of GEF projects is a role that has been altered dramatically over the lifetime of the STAP. Originally, a sample of projects was reviewed extensively prior to council approval. In addition, the projects were reviewed by a STAP-approved reviewer from a Roster of Experts who was hired by the Implementing Agency. The 2007 reforms of STAP and the project cycle moved STAP reviews upstream in the project cycle in an attempt to address concerns that STAP project reviews took place at too late a stage to allow for their suggestions to be seriously considered or incorporated. Furthermore, the Agencies used to select and hire the reviewers. Therefore a perceived conflict of interest was noted as a result of the Agencies being in charge of reviews. This led to assigning the "screening" of projects to the STAP panel members and to rate projects for major revisions, minor revisions, or consent. This now takes place with support from STAP Secretariat staff and consultants. This increased role of the STAP Panel translates into approximately 20-25 days (of 65-70 total) of a Panel Member's time, which may limit the ability to devote time to other roles. The 2007 reform of STAP also charged STAP with the task of maintaining a multidisciplinary expert network, to assist in providing the most up to date and relevant advice.

[14] 2012 Annex 2: Revised Terms of Reference ¶7 (March 2012)

[15] Infra n.17

[16] Supra n.13

[17] 2012 STAP Terms of Reference, ¶13

41. The 2007 reform reduced the number of experts from 12 to 6, but also assigned a larger allocation of contractual time given the increased services expected from panel members. As part of this reform the STAP Secretariat was also expanded. Over time the expectations placed on STAP have gradually increased and expanded into new areas. In addition to placing screenings under direct responsibility of panel members, the increase in focal areas has also required additional experts to be consulted. The growth of multifocal projects, which are estimated to typically double the level of effort on the part of STAP to complete, is now resulting in additional demands to STAP to provide guidance in this area. In addition, the need for more work through the Task Forces may complicate procedures and advice, as they are different from traditional focal areas. This work may require greater collaboration among members, or greater reliance on the expert network beyond the STAP members to provide the full complement of relevant advice. Since the 1995 Terms of Reference there has been a call for the inclusion of social science and economics[18], but the attention of STAP to these areas has been low. The GEF, however, has moved to incorporate more social aspects into the project design, and to promote more multifocal projects. But there has not yet been a systematic linking of GEF to the existing global technical and scientific networks relevant to GEF work, and as a way to expand GEF access to scientific knowledge and advice.

Focal Areas

42. The STAP supports all GEF focal areas and other areas of engagement including:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Climate Adaptation
- International Waters
- Land Degradation
- Chemicals
- Sustainable Forest Management/REDD++

Conventions for which GEF is a Financial Mechanism

43. STAP plays a liaison role to the Conventions supported by the GEF:

- Convention on Biological Diversity
    - Entered into force 29 Dec 1993
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
    - Entered into force 21 Mar 1994
- Convention to Combat Desertification
    - Entered into force 26 Dec 1996

[18] ¶13 of GEF/C.5/5 states that "STAP shall advise the GEF on ways to advance a better understanding of the issues of the global environment and how to address them; provide a forum for integrating expertise on science and technology, including their social, economic and institutional aspects; and function as an important conduit between the GEF and the natural and social science communities and relevant technologists, and synthesize, promote and galvanize state of the art contributions from them."

- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
    - Entered into force 17 May 2004
- Minamata Convention on Mercury
    - Convention was signed 10 October 2013
    - GEF is the designated financial mechanism
- International Waters
    - No Convention, but focal area supported by GEF

44. The STAP may work with the scientific bodies of the Conventions, where applicable, to provide information on the goals of the Conventions in the form of technical advice, developed within the broader scientific community. A few of the Conventions and interested stakeholders also work through or with task forces, in which the STAP plays a role including the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund Several stakeholders identified the Task Forces or Convention activities as the area where they have the most personal interaction with the STAP. Some conventions interviewed indicated they have stronger and higher quality interaction with STAP but would like to see more such interaction. With the further engagement of STAP in Conventions, and the addition of Conventions beyond the original mandate, the workload has increased but there has not been commensurate increase in resources to STAP.

V. STAP Resources

45. With the increased mandate, demand for STAP time and resources has increased notwithstanding the increased time given to STAP panel currently consisting of 6 members representing each core focal area. Over the study period, STAP has seen near zero growth in financial allocations in contrast to the budget of GEF Secretariat. STAP share increased in financial years (FY) 2009 and 2010 relative to the 2008 base but then returned to the 2008 level in FY2014.

Overall GEF Budget (in $mil)	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
STAP	1.296	1.815	2.108	2.172	2.244	2.311	2.311
GEFSEC	12.128	13.423	14.837	17.352	18.525	18.525	21.325
STAP as % of GEFSEC	10.7	13.5	14.2	12.5	12.1	12.4	10.8

46. With expanding expectations and a flat budget, it seems clear that there is risk of a diminishing ability of STAP to meaningfully contribute to GEF without prioritization of activities, without increased resources or a combination of both. Beyond material resources, many of the STAP members felt that they were greatly limited by time commitments, through both tasks requested through STAP and their outside duties. One of the Panel Members mentioned that if he had done everything asked of him, he would never be able to do all of it, and instead chose what he felt was most pressing. This sentiment was common among the panel members that there were requests for work that could not always be done personally. This is perhaps exemplified by the observations of several agencies that they saw a significant number of project reviews being done by consultants, and signed off by the panel member. There was a lack of clarity on whether these screenings were held to the same standards and the basis upon

which these consultants are recruited. The STAP has stated that there is a specific procedure by which a consultant must follow, but there appears to be a lack of systematic monitoring of this function by the STAP secretariat or the chair and therefore knowledge of this procedure by the GEF agencies and the GEF Secretariat was reported as unclear.[19] The Agencies and GEF Secretariat state that if the aforementioned internal standards are kept, they are not disseminated to them, resulting in, at least, a lack of transparency. Although perhaps necessary to some degree, this could result in uneven prioritization by different members from the GEF perspective.

VI. STAP Self-Assessment

47. The STAP completed a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, involving current and former panel members. The STAP reported that they felt a greater demand for services in almost all areas, including the time needed for project review, the advisory role with task forces and conventions, and their strategic input. In addition, the workload was reportedly uneven, as reviews were often bunched together increasing time pressure unequally. The STAP reportedly may be required to screen up to 70 projects in a two week period, which could help explain the reliance on outside consultants to complete the screening duties. A few common themes emerged from this exercise:

1) STAP is split on whether individual project screening is the most worthwhile use of their time.

48. Although the STAP feels that they are providing useful, and sometimes necessary, information, there was some acknowledgement that not every project required the same level of input. For example, there may be the implementation of one project design repeated in many areas throughout a country or region. After approval of the methodology and scientific assumptions, there is little advice to be offered for each additional project.

2) STAP needs greater feedback from the GEF Agencies on STAP project screens and whether advice was actually taken up and incorporated into project design.

49. A common complaint of STAP members was that except for extraordinary circumstances where a project team leader reaches out to them for further input, the STAP members are not informed of how useful their advice was found, or if there needed to be increased clarity. If such lack of feedback continues, this could lead to systematic differences in opinion within STAP on what is helpful, and could diminish motivation for thorough reviews.

3) Panel Members would like to devote greater time to strategic and long term issues facing the environment and GEF's role in addressing these issues.

4) Advisory Publications are high quality but need greater promotion and dissemination

[19] STAP's screening process is described in ¶87 of the GEF Project and Programmatic Approach Cycles, GEF/C.39/Inf.3. as well as the STAP website. However, the actual monitoring of contracted screenings are conducted by the individual panel members.

5) Targeted Research needs to be revived to fill observed gaps in research

6) Administrative challenges, involving coordination with the UNEP Secretariat on matters of travel and day to day operations, need to be addressed

VII. Assessment by UNEP

50. As host agency to the STAP, UNEP also completed a review of STAP, and came to several of the same conclusions as the panel's self-assessment. Overarching themes are summarized as follows:

1) STAP project screens seem to provide assurance to the Council of a high level independent scientific review function, but the extent to which reviews are helpful to actually increase the scientific validity and quality of GEF projects is unclear. UNEP feels that the STAP could be more selective in review of projects and still fulfill a scientific quality enhancement

2) The STAP budget has increased only slightly since 2008 while demand and the workload has increased.

3) Some agencies welcome STAP involvement in the design of complex, or cutting edge projects, and invite them to review projects under development especially those that were raised as critical during the STAP reviews.

4) Targeted Research could be used as a strategic resource.

5) There is currently no monitoring or assessment of response to STAP comments or on how STAP comments are addressed by projects.

6) The STAP should increase closer ties with UNEP in the areas of scientific collaboration and outreach, thus better taking advantage of UNEP's resources and capacities.

7) There is insufficient ownership of STAP by the GEF Secretariat and Agencies. UNEP would like to see STAP products and advice being used more extensively and effectively.

VIII. Evaluation Findings

Role 1: Provision of Strategic Scientific and Technical Advice on GEF policies, operational strategies and programs,

51. STAP's strategic scientific advice has taken place through advice in the formulation of Focal Area strategies, participation in ad-hoc technical groups convened by the GEF Secretariat (e.g. STAR working group, learning missions), participation in the focal area task forces

throughout the year, presentations of the STAP Chair to the GEF Council, as well as through targeted research and advisory publications.

52. Another result of 2007 reforms was a greater engagement between the Panel and the GEF Secretariat. Although difficult to quantify, this increased collaboration likely led to an increased influence in strategic matters. For example, STAP's strategic advice was unanimously highly appreciated. Its contributions to GEF 5 and GEF 6 strategies were considered exemplary. All stakeholders would like increased presence and greater visibility of STAP including to lend credibility to GEF's replenishments efforts.

STAP Chair presentations to the GEF Council

53. STAP's presentations to the Council were similarly well regarded, but could be tailored in the future to reflect increased influence in strategic direction. The Chair of STAP has regularly made presentations to the GEF Council providing up-to-date information on the global environmental challenges and broad paths to address those challenges. The presentations have been designed to inform the council, and not to result in specific actions or council decisions. While STAP's voice in the Council meetings has increased through periodic presentations, there is room for improvement in the STAP's voice in governance, e.g., by STAP being more proactive in drawing out strategic recommendations and innovative ideas presented through scientific evidence. These reports to Council are often the only source of published material containing internal analysis of work of the STAP, the sources of which could assist in other areas of the GEF partnership and greater scientific community.

Targeted Research

54. The GEF defines Targeted Research as "goal oriented research that supports the GEF operational strategy by providing information, knowledge and tools that improve the quality and the effectiveness of the development and implementation of GEF projects and programs".[20] Although STAP does not conduct the research, it plays a stronger advisory role than in standard projects and may wield greater influence. There is debate with regard the degree to which Targeted Research as a modality can be an important source of STAP's advice to the GEF family and the Council. But de facto it appears to have vanished following changes in allocation methodology, beginning with the RAF, and continuing with STAR, through which 80% of GEF resources in the largest focal areas are allocated to countries for projects. In these focal areas, twenty percent of resources are set aside for other purposes, including country enabling activities, but there are significant demands on these "set-aside" funds, and their availability during GEF-5 has been further limited due to short-falls in donor funding. In the current framework, in most cases, a country would have to request such research and contribute the funds needed to the GEF Agency to accomplish it. There is little incentive for this type of request, for purely financial reasons, as well as because of a perception that it is not a useful way of using funds allocated to countries. In addition, there was a suggestion that in many countries, it may be seen as an affront to the national scientific bodies. Yet this modality needs to be truly to be revived, as a function of STAP, for a number of reasons.

[20] GEF/C.9/5 at ¶2.

55. There is a near universal view[21] within the STAP and among external reviewers of STAP publications that ways must be found to reinstate this modality if science is to play a strategic role in global environmental planning.[22] The GEF has stated that GEF financed Targeted Research is particularly justified when there is evidence that the absence of research has hampered the development and implementation of GEF projects and programs,[23]The STAP panel has identified number gaps when observing a portfolio of projects in a focal area, where untested assumptions have been deployed. STAP is of the view, and the evaluation supports this view, that STAP is in a unique position to guide the testing of some of the generic assumptions that are made in the design of GEF projects and to assess their effectiveness. Due to its role of advising all GEF Agencies, STAP can coordinate Targeted Research projects, and offer strong advice as the Agencies undertake such studies. For example, community driven projects are expected to increase benefits and protection, or that subsidies change behavior. All agencies questioned were able to identify such assumptions within their portfolios, and thought it would be good to have the validity of these assumptions investigated in order to improve effectiveness. Although evaluations address some of these assertions through targeted research these could be further tested from a scientific perspective, perhaps with STAP working with the Evaluation Office, or independently altogether, without taking away from previously committed funds. Such investigations could be done for each focal area, and the information could be used to predict or guide future project design and implementation.

56. Targeted research, considered within a framework that combines knowledge management, and evidence-based approaches to operating, is a key component of a broader science policy for the GEF. In and of itself, it is also identified as a way for STAP to synthesize information produced by various scientific bodies into a workable advisory guide specifically targeting the GEF project framework. GEF stakeholders would all be beneficiaries of this type of research allowing for improvements to the full body of future work.

Targeted Research is a possible mechanism for STAP to act in a more strategic manner, while drawing from the vast wealth of knowledge accumulated through project reviews. In this modified use of Targeted Research, STAP would work in collaboration with the Agencies to identify strategic issues either at a portfolio, focal area, or GEF-wide level which could improves future implementation and direction of the GEF.

57. Given the historical reasons, as discussed in paragraph 54, that targeted research has been diminished, in order to promote targeted research, a set aside of financial resources would have to be initiated. Two of the agencies suggested that they would support a set aside, but one mentioned the caveat that it should not come from the country allocation funds.

58. During interviews, the GEF Secretariat suggested that funds could be available for Targeted Research if STAP presented projects which are deemed to be of high priority and

[21] The notable exception is from the World Bank, who has questioned the value of past Targeted Research. The success of future targeted research would require the acceptance and support of the GEF Agencies.

[22] See GEF/STAP/C.43/Inf.02 for a detailed discussion of STAP's proposal for a revision of the Targeted Research Modality. This review would suggest that STAP play a bigger role in identifying and overseeing Targeted research of a strategic value external to specific projects.

[23] Supra n15 at ¶9.

forward looking by the GEF Secretariat and the GEF family. If some funds can be made available for mutually beneficial projects, it would clearly be necessary to improve communication between STAP and the GEF Secretariat.

59. STAP would need to make a stronger case for Targeted Research through well-articulated written documents on the basis of which donors or emerging countries with resources could be persuaded to finance research with global or regional public goods characteristics, i.e., research with spill overs across national boundaries but which will also benefits them.

Publications and Advisory Products

60. Since 2004, STAP has produced 20 advisory publications, covering all focal areas.[24] These publications vary in scope and target audience. Most of the publications were demand driven, being specifically requested either by GEF Secretariat or a Convention. But the evaluation team was unable to systematically assess the origins of all. Some are highly technical in nature and meant to guide GEF operations, whereas others are anticipatory of future problems likely to be encountered by the GEF family. The STAP publications are reviewed by peers, but by and large are not submitted to scientific journals for review and publication. STAP acknowledges this issue. The main reason provided for this independent process is to provide operational and advisory products to the GEF and implementing agencies more quickly than would be provided thorough scientific literature. Furthermore, the publications may be narrowly tailored to specific GEF procedures or implementation, which may not rise to as great a level of general scientific interest. Although the STAP panel and secretariat state unequivocally that their peer review standards are equal to or superior to traditional journals, several of the agencies were unaware of this process, and unclear who the target audience was on various publications. This can be rectified by placing this information on the STAP website and in each publication on the origin of the product. This process needs to be more transparent and clear in order to maintain high levels of credibility perhaps listing the names of external reviewers and a link to the specific published review standards utilized on STAP publications.

61. The primary audience of GEF's published products has been viewed by some key GEF stakeholders as the GEF family. Clearly the use of these products within the GEF family needs to be more systematically and more regularly assessed. But STAP products also need to reach the broader scientific and environmental financing community. A question is how to make this possible. One reason advanced is that it will take a long time for STAP products to get published in journals but nothing precludes secondary publication in a scientific journals STAP should undertake syntheses of knowledge on 'lessons learned' with focus on scientific and technological issues, and these products should be shared by GEF through broader publishing venues. But this is only one of the several potential contributions of STAP.

62. Somewhat similar to the review of project advice, there were mixed reviews of the advisory products.[25] Some questioned whether the topics covered were demand or supply driven; others were unclear whether the publications were intended to assist GEF or the individual stakeholders. Again, the split among the agencies primarily has to do with the access to in-house

[24] Please see Annex 1 for a complete listing of the publications

[25] See Annex I for ratings of publications by stakeholders in the relevant focal areas.

technical capacity within the agency or resources to harness external knowledge. At one end, an agency reported that they greatly appreciate the operational focused publications, and reference them in their project concepts. For this agency, STAP publications provide important information to the task team leaders who implement projects and ensure a similar understanding of what is expected. At the other end of the spectrum, an Agency with greater in-house capacity concerning knowledge of particular topic areas has reported that they do not find the publications helpful and that they do not consult them.

63. When consulting the survey data, almost all publications had responses of "have not read" for 70-80% of respondents. But when filtered to only responses from stakeholders who self-identify with a biodiversity background, the biodiversity focused papers had a "have not read" rate of only around 20-30%. This indicates a reasonably high level of readership by stakeholders interested in the topic. But this varies topic by topic (see table in Annex 2). When publications were read, almost all were rated to be of good or moderate quality, with a few exceptions.

64. Based on the responses and comments in the survey, as well as during the interviews of managers and staff in the agencies, the most appreciated types of publications fell into one of two categories. First, were the operational technical manuals of those interviewed who identified them as helpful in both project design and as tools to distribute to staff during implementation. This type of publication has a specific purpose and target audience; examples are the *Revised Methodology for Calculating GHG Benefits of GEF Energy Efficiency Projects* and *Calculating GHG Benefits of GEF Transportation Projects*. Of survey respondents that read these particular publications, none ranked them to be of low quality. The second category is of publications "looking over the horizon", or those that identify future issues and propose approaches to deal with problems. For example the two publications dealing with marine debris were very often identified as beneficial publications. The International Waters focal area is not supported by a Convention, and therefore has less external support in shaping projects and future strategies. The publications that fall in the category, unlike in the case of conventions, generally have a less clear target audience. It was suggested by a Council member that the development of guidelines to meet Convention guidance on technical topics, as well as simple and accessible pamphlets on technical issues likely to be encountered across GEF projects, would be greatly appreciated.

65. This evaluation had all 20 publications independently reviewed for scientific rigor and accuracy, the quality of presentation for the intended audience, the practicability of the advice given, and the added value of the publication. Overall, the panel of reviewers considered the publications to be of high quality and generally accurate at the time of publication. Again, however, reviewers expressed concern over the peer review process, what the target audience was in some cases, and whether they were actually being utilized. In some cases, for example, it was unclear if the publication was technical enough for the scientific community or practical enough for the purposes of project design or implementation. In addition, some reviewers identified some of the papers to be too topical, in that they did not embrace a multifocal approach, even when it was called for. Several authors identified their target audience as the GEF family, not the scientific community or the general public. This distinction is increasingly arcane in a highly networked world in which all communities, such as those working on carbon finance interacting with each other or with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Furthermore, the dissemination of these documents was often viewed as either insufficient or using out- of- date methods with the result

that STAP is not getting as much visibility or benefit. STAP does not currently have any internal publishing capability, either in print or online. STAP capacity in this area must be upgraded to allow for better dissemination of knowledge.

Knowledge Management: a missed opportunity

66. Knowledge management of the STAP is challenged in various ways. It is widely recognized that the GEF is sitting on a vast repository of knowledge from its nearly 20 years of developing and implementing projects. By not fully tapping this source, analysis and lessons learned over time are not being adequately utilized to inform future project design utilizing the GEF or outside funds. Data should be collected on projects and made available for study.

67. There is currently no person dedicated to knowledge management, and it is unclear whether this would be best handled by the STAP Secretariat, the UNEP, or the GEF Secretariat. STAP needs a more effective website and a dissemination strategy, greater role for feedback on projects under implementation and more interaction with stakeholders in the GEF family, particularly the scientific community in developing countries whose hearts and minds STAP must influence to bring about real changes in outcomes. To achieve this objective will call for increased collaboration with developing country scientists and greater STAP resources.

68. This lack of dissemination of information was again identified for STAP advisory products. For example, searching Google Scholar for the STAP publications does not produce the publications despite being posted on the STAP website. The exceptions were the publications produced in book format on biosafety which were found, and were cited sparingly. These books were highly specific to particular topics and quite detailed in these areas. In several instances, links to peer reviewed publications by the authors of the STAP publications with nearly identical titles or objectives were found, perhaps indicating a demand for similar publications by the scientific or academic community. If products are not easily found, they will not be used even if there is a demand for this type of specialized knowledge.

69. Knowledge management, promotion and dissemination of STAP advice and analysis is a low hanging fruit. The current system has been described as outdated or non-existent. The Evaluation Office has done a review on knowledge management across the GEF system and found similar problems. Most organizations are now able to “simulcast” events, promote literature, and share ideas freely. The GEF needs to adopt a comprehensive well-funded approach to knowledge management which goes well beyond the evaluation of STAP, albeit with a clear role for STAP.

Role 2: Provision of Strategic Scientific and Technical Advice on projects and programmatic approaches

Project screenings

70. Perhaps the most recognizable aspect of STAP's mandate is the quality assurance and review of projects in the GEF project cycle for the scientific and technical content. STAP became directly responsible for project screenings starting in the GEF 4 period, after moving away from the Roster of Experts. The STAP reviews all full size projects at the Project Information Form (PIF) stage, after review by the GEF Secretariat and prior to council approval. Overall, there is a very mixed perception among the Agencies and the GEF Secretariat of both how useful the STAP reviews are, and whether screenings are the best use of STAP's time. For example, of survey participants, approximately 42% of respondents found that the PIF screenings contributed to assuring the scientific and technical quality of project designs, whereas approximately 33% disagreed. This split of the overall value of screenings was also noted during interviews with the Agencies, and STAP members.

71. The number of projects STAP has reviewed for their scientific and technical content has grown since their inception, but has plateaued or declined in GEF-5 based on data so far, although the entire replenishment cycle is not yet complete. However, the volume is not the only factor. Project complexity appears to have increased. One reason for this seems to be an increased incorporation of social science into project design. While these are changes in the right direction, they may increase the time needed to properly assess projects.

Table 2. Projects by Focal Area*	Pilot Phase	GEF - 1	GEF - 2	GEF – 3	**GEF - 4**	**GEF - 5**	All Phases
GEF Trust Fund	**116**	**371**	**617**	**850**	**751**	**573**	**3278**
Biodiversity	62	203	282	240	**269**	**155**	1211
Climate Change	38	137	209	170	**199**	**113**	866
International Waters	13	14	47	54	**57**	**22**	207
Land Degradation	—	—	1	96	**41**	**50**	188
Multi Focal Area*	1	5	26	191	**104**	**131**	458
Ozone Depleting Substances	2	12	7	3	**3**	**2**	29
Persistent Organic Pollutants	—	—	45	96	**78**	**100**	319
LDCF	**—**	**—**	**—**	**46**	**43**	**72**	**161**
SCCF				6	**19**	**21**	46
NPIF	—	—	—	—	**—**	**5**	5
Multi Trust Funds						**21**	21
All Trust Funds	116	371	617	902	**813**	**690**	3745

*STAP has been screening all full-size projects since the GEF-4 period, and utilized the roster of experts and selective review in the prior stages.

72. Another reason is the significant expansion of Multifocal Area projects during GEF-5 noted by the GEF Evaluation Office. Both the GEF Secretariat and agencies report that this tendency is likely to continue given growing emphasis on interactions across focal areas in GEF projects. While this development is generally accepted as necessary, or at least beneficial, STAP notes that to properly assess such multifocal projects may require up to seven times as much effort. If a project involves multiple focal areas, it is reviewed by multiple GEF Secretariat focal

area teams and more than one STAP panel member. Three agencies have indicated that in many cases the multiple reviews offer contradictory advice, and appear not to have been coordinated resulting in increased time to untangle the suggestions and coordinate these suggestions into complimentary operative instructions involving multiple GEF Secretariat leaders from specific focal areas. A project manager from one of the implementing agencies pointed out that in cases of conflict with the GEF Secretariat, STAP is at a disadvantage as it is the GEF secretariat that signs off prior to sending the project for GEF Council approval, while the STAP has only an advisory role.

73. Several STAP panel members have identified the quick expected turnaround on PIF reviews to be a constraint. There is bunching of projects at least twice a year and some times more and a consequent unequal distribution of project reviews throughout a term, leading to a drought at some points, and a flood of workload at others. Compounding the challenge is the fact that STAP Secretariat is stretched thin when multiple focal areas are experiencing heavy requests. Despite these time constraints, the majority (64%) of survey respondents felt that the STAP provided advice in a timely fashion, as opposed to only 14% who disagreed.

74. The agencies raised concerns regarding the timing of the STAP reviews as they often come after multiple rounds of review with the GEF Secretariat. Three of the agencies suggested that the GEF Secretariat and STAP should strive for more coherent advice. However, it is unclear if such a strategy would be fully workable under the current structure of simultaneous review and tight turnaround schedules, as both the STAP and the GEF Secretariat work under severe deadlines and each party may have a disproportionate number of comments based on the subject matter. In addition, the ability of the STAP to provide meaningful advice is at times limited by a lack of detail in the PIF at time of STAP review. This is a product of the previous reforms, which moved the review to an earlier stage as it was determined that if the review happened at later stages, it was more difficult to incorporate STAP advice and alter project design. When questioned, those with experience under the previous regime agreed the current structure is preferable.

75. A near universal critique has been a lack of feedback on the quality of advice provided to projects by STAP except through informal comments from Council members and from implementing agencies. It is widely understood, despite internal guidelines, that there is not a template or guidelines for STAP screenings to ensure that certain minimum areas are covered by screenings. In addition, there is no tracking in aggregate of whether the advisory comments provided by STAP have been given adequate consideration by project managers. The GEF Agencies are required to respond to the STAP comments, but several project managers reported a lack of response in some cases, or a lack of actual incorporation into the final project design. There may be a number of valid reasons to reject STAP advice either specific to a project or more generally related to capacity, particularly in developing countries, yet a lack of systematic monitoring of advice imparted and incorporated or not, may be preventing a better understanding of the adequacy and the impact of scientific and technical advice on the GEF portfolio. It also limits the scope for improving the quality of advice in the future. In rare instances, project managers have followed up with STAP to seek assistance in conforming to their recommendations. This was anecdotally more often noticed in cases where major revisions were suggested.

76. The view of the quality and helpfulness of the STAP reviews was split. On the one hand, one of the agencies found little to no value in the STAP reviews, and perceived them to be lacking knowledge of project design and implementation issues. On the other side of the spectrum, two of the agencies viewed the STAP review as useful and valuable. The remaining agencies fall somewhere within this range. Some common themes presented are:

1) STAP reviews are more useful when cutting edge science is involved
2) There can be redundancy or conflict with either the GEF Secretariat review, or the agencies own internal preferences
3) Comments can be advisory for avoiding problems in future project design
4) Comments may promote strategies beyond the capacity of the project or target setting of the project in question

77. From our interviews of agencies it seems that some of the different agency perspectives may well be explained by the differences in the sizes of the agencies, their in-house scientific capacities and /or their ability to command external resources. Agencies with fewer resources, perhaps working primarily in countries with smaller scientific communities, seemed to tend to value the STAP input, and advice to a greater extent.

78. In this review we attempted to measure the impact of the STAP advice on the projects. Out of the 500 + projects approved during GEF 5, only 25 projects (approximately 5%) were identified on which STAP comments needed major revisions. Of these 25, only two had moved to the stage where project documents were available to assess how STAP comments were addressed. The sample size is unfortunately too small at this time to judge the uptake of STAP advice. A roster of projects in which major revisions were recommended by STAP with the follow up actions should be maintained as an input into further analysis. In addition, as indicated earlier, currently there is not a standardized process STAP reviews are conducted that is well known to stakeholders, which may complicate any metric for quantifying acceptance of comments.

79. In conclusion, there is a mixed perception of the usefulness of STAP project screenings ranging from some agencies finding great value, to others finding none at all. Some interviewees noted that the review provides assurances to the donor countries that there is an independent, objective body, without gain from pushing through projects, assuring quality. Others also noted that developing countries value this advice and this sentiment was confirmed in discussions with several Council Members from developing states, although there was some concern with conflicting advice between STAP and the GEF Secretariat. The question must be raised, whether there is strong added value in the review of all projects, or if there is a way to maintain this trust function through selected review or focal area portfolio level reviews. If the STAP is to move to a different level of review, opportunities exist to collaborate with the GEF Evaluation Office, by providing a technical level of inquiry not provided by others in the GEF system.

Role 3: Maintain a database of institutions, networks and individuals that can provide scientific advice to GEF

80. The STAP Secretariat has not maintained a publically available database of institutions, networks or individuals, despite being specified as a requirement in the Terms of Reference[26]. The network function of STAP has been interpreted to be the personal network of individual panel members.

81. STAP has sought to provide scientific advice and access to up to date scientific knowledge to GEF by addressing substantive issues in its regular meetings or by holding specialized workshops on deemed relevant to the GEF by STAP members or requested by the GEF Secretariat. STAP typically holds 3 expert workshops per year, as well as side events or mini-symposia. Several of the GEF Agency staff members regarded these topical events to be of the most helpful of the STAP's roles. There were also requests for more such practical events to assist in standardizing expectations for project implementation in specialized technical areas.

82. The STAP meetings are typically found productive and helpful, but there are mixed participation among the stakeholders. It was suggested by all of the agencies not based in North America, that traveling to Washington DC, for a day and a half meeting is very difficult to justify in terms of resources and time. Three options were suggested for greater or more diverse participation. First, the practice could be continued where by one meeting (out of the two meetings) per year could be hosted by different agencies or held in different locations[27]. Second, the meeting could be added to the end of the GEF Council meetings to maximize participation at both. Third, there should be greater options for participation through video or online conferencing. Regardless of the first two options, an increased use of information dissemination through communications technology is advisable.

83. The function, often in conjunction with a convention or conference, of providing technical workshops was universally praised by those interested in the particular technical topic. All who mentioned attendance found the time productive and informative. To improve effectiveness, the workshops should be held in regions where the particular topic has the most current interest.

Role 4: Coordinate with scientific bodies of conventions

84. The STAP Terms of Reference state that "the STAP shall interact in a complementary manner with other relevant scientific and technical bodies, particularly with the subsidiary bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UNFCCC, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. For focal areas in which the GEF is not operating as a convention's financial mechanism, the STAP shall advise on the development of scientific and technical criteria and provide scientific and technical advice on priorities for GEF funding."[28] The STAP's liaison role to the Conventions is found useful, and helps to supplement or improve the scientific bodies of the Conventions, which vary in capacity. One of the Convention leaders suggested that STAP could act in the liaison role to help coordinate efforts among the Conventions and other funds to act in concert or complimentary to each other. For example, there may be questions similar to multiple conventions where

[26] ¶20

[27] The current year has been held in Washington DC at the request of the GEF Secretariat due to the current demands of the replenishment process.

[28] ¶2

redundant studies are being conducted. This role is suggested as STAP is the only body that looks across all Conventions, as opposed to focusing topically but at this stage of drafting the team had been able to reach only one convention which supported this hypothesis. Further questions on coordination, resource allocation and prioritization, and consent by the individual Conventions would likely also have to be worked out prior to designating this as a role of STAP.

STAP Composition

85. The composition of the STAP has changed repeatedly over the course of its history. Most mentioned, was the shrinking of the panel in 2007. Nearly unanimously, it was identified that the smaller size, with greater time allotted, was a superior system and allowed for greater buy in from the panel. However, panel members suggested that dedicated support staff for in each focal area would allow for greater focus and production but would require more resources.

86. As the GEF moves more towards multi-focal projects and the incorporation of holistic analysis including social science, it needs to be noted that there is only a single panel member with a background involving social science or economics. It has been noticed that the STAP, admittedly along with many of the agencies and the GEF Secretariat, don't have a robust record in the social science. The solution is not necessarily to simply add a panel member as he or she would then be expected to oversee all projects for this input.

87. One possible solution would be a greater reliance on the expert network. Unfortunately, the expert network is routinely identified as something that is not working, and the upkeep of such networks to include the most relevant experts may be difficult and time consuming. The ability to maintain an expert network is part of the selection criteria for a STAP member, but emphasis should not be as much on the personal network of the STAP member but on the STAP member's knowledge, his/her ability to link GEF to existing networks of experts and specialized bodies and to facilitate GEF access to networks of networks from multiple disciplines relevant to GEF mission.

88. Furthermore, currently there is insufficient collaboration, team work and inter-personal interaction among the panel members, who contain vast amount of expertise in individual areas. When working as a team, for example on the recent strategy documents, they have been able to come up with more effective advice. This is recognized and emphasized by STAP too. For example, more collaboration among the STAP members to discuss current strategy in their respective areas could result in better multifocal analysis. The lack of social scientists, coupled with increasing attempts to promote social issues may lead to a lack of credibility.

STAP Operations

89. The STAP Panel uniformly identified the current administrative support structure as sub-optimal. The most widely identified issue was the administrative difficulties of travel. With the STAP secretariat located in Washington DC, and many administrative functions being handled by the UNEP offices in Nairobi, there was a good deal of lag in purchase of travel and other necessary functions. With increases in presence in Conventions and Workshops, these delays have reportedly resulted in a lack of willingness to travel to events by the Panel Members. All panel members suggest a shift of administrative tasks to the UNEP regional office in Washington

might result in a more efficient system. Delegated authority to the Washington office should be considered, as STAP secretariat is already overstretched and UNEP is working with UNON to streamline bureaucratic procedures and increase capacity of the UNEP regional office. With increased delegated authority the STAP secretariat in Washington will need more resources. This progress from UNEP should be regularly monitored.

90. Although there are currently restrictions on upgraded airline travel in place by the UN General Assembly, with the high regard for them, their being recognized leaders in their focal areas and demand for the opinions of the panel members, the alternative to travelling by coach is simply to not attend events. The events attended in their roles for STAP are a fraction of their time and can shift to obligations and interests elsewhere. UNEP has reportedly agreed with UNON that STAP would be issued business class tickets as of October 2013.

STAP Overall Mission and Strategic Choices Going Forward

91. Throughout the course of the interviews, with both STAP members and Agency stakeholders, a near universal suggestion was for STAP to move upstream and be more "strategic". Often lost in this push was a definition of strategic. A dictionary definition notes the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them. When pressed, stakeholders defined strategic in a number of ways:

1) Looking to the horizon for relevance and what is coming in next 10-15 years
2) Investigating assumptions repeatedly used in projects for validity
3) Portfolio/program analysis in each focal area for gaps, and what is needed
4) Greater involvement in replenishment meetings
5) Analysis of vast amount of information through history of project review
6) Working to develop best scientific practices and approaches in each focal area
7) Synthesizing efforts between GEF and the Conventions to help promote additional benefits
8) Determining or guiding interaction in multifocal areas to ensure additive benefits from the combination of focal areas
9) Contributing to the guidance of future GEF strategies and focal areas
10) Determination of which scientific project methods are working to meet expectations and which are not
11) Creation of an overarching science policy for GEF-wide use

92. In order to move strategically in one or more of the ways previously discussed, it is important that the mandate and constraints of STAP are thoroughly defined. Most pressing is a broadly shared definition of science as it applies to the STAP, and the GEF more broadly. STAP defines science broadly, integrating science and technology, including their social, economic and institutional aspects. One agency suggested that STAP's greatest comparative advantage to other bodies and academic sources was its ability to offer advice on applied science, incorporating multiple disciplines. This definition allows for a lot of discretion when determining how to

approach project design, and may lead to conflicts with the role of the GEF Secretariat and agency analysis. Therefore, STAP could work to create an overarching science policy to be utilized by the GEF, or at least for their own mandate. Some definitions of science that should be addressed in such an exercise are:

- Is science universal and is it multi-cultural? Does science include all knowledge?
- The observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.
- The systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe. In an older and closely related meaning, "science" also refers to a body of knowledge itself, of the type that can be rationally explained and reliably applied

IX. Conclusion

STAP has a crucial role in the GEF. Its functions have evolved over time as has GEF activity. Both have evolved in a rapidly changed external context of rapid economic growth in developing countries, climate change, expanded but fragmented environmental architecture in which GEF is one of many actors, growing environmental pressures and the increased interface between environment and development.

This is the first independent external evaluation of STAP. It has raised a number of issues for consideration by the GEF family including, particularly, the growing roles of and expectations from STAP. It has offered a number of suggestions to establish a shared view of science in GEF in a changed context, a process for the prioritization of STAP activities and to provide it the necessary resources to increase its effectiveness. -

X. Annexes

Annex 1: List of STAP advisory publications reviewed by the panel of experts and rated for utility by stakeholders through survey.

Publication Readership and Ratings	**Overall**	**Focal Area Specific Respondents**			
	did not read	**did not read**	**high**	**moderate**	**low**
Biodiversity					
Environmental Risk Assessment of Genetically Modified Organisms, Vol. 3: Methodologies for Transgenic Fish	89.23%	86.96%	8.70%	0%	4.35%
Evidence Base for Community Forest Management as a Mechanism for Supplying Global Environmental Benefits and Improving Local Welfare	61.90%	30.43%	52.17%	17.39%	0%
Environmental Certification and the Global Environment Facility	60%	30.43%	47.83%	17.39%	4.35%
Payments for Environmental Services and the Global Environment Facility	48.44%	17.39%	60.87%	21.74%	0%
Climate Change					
Revised Methodology for Calculating Greenhouse Gas Benefits of the GEF Energy Efficiency	57.14%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0%
Climate Change: A Scientific Assessment for the GEF	52.31%	41.67%	16.67%	29.17%	12.50%
Calculating Greenhouse Gas Benefits of GEF Transportation Projects	67.69%	58.33%	25%	12.50%	4.17%
Advancing Sustainable Low-Carbon Transport through the GEF	66.67%	69.57%	17.39%	13.04%	0%
International Waters					
Marine Debris as a Global Environmental Problem: A Solutions Based Framework Focused on Plastics	73.85%	47.06%	35.29%	17.65%	0%
Impacts of Marine Debris on Biodiversity: Current Status and Potential Solutions	75.38%	52.94%	29.41%	17.65%	0%
Marine Spatial Planning in the Context of the Convention	68.75%	41.18%	23.53%	29.41%	5.88%

on Biological Diversity					
Hypoxia and Nutrient Reduction in the Coastal Zone	72.31%	35.29%	41.18%	17.65%	5.88%
Chemicals					
Emerging Chemicals Management Issues in Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition	70%	28.57%	35.71%	28.57%	7.14%
Selection of Persistent Organic Pollutant Disposal Technology for GEF	74%	50%	28.57%	14.29%	7.14%
Land Degradation					
Managing Soil Organic Carbon for Global Benefits: A STAP Technical Report	69.23%	53.33%	40%	6.67%	0%
Multifocal					
Experimental Project Designs in GEF	62.71%	NA	22.03%	10.17%	5.08%
Benefits and Trade-Offs Between Energy Conservation and Releases of Unintentionally Produced Persistent Organic Pollutants	78.46%	NA	15.38%	4.62%	1.54%
Sustainable Forest Management	59.38%	NA	23.44%	15.63%	1.56%

Annex 2: Questions for the Review of STAP advisory publications

1) Does the document address the critical relevant issues in the topic?
2) Does the document draw on the best multidisciplinary (Biological, ecological as well as socioeconomic) and up to date scientific knowledge pertaining to the issue? Also when different perspectives exist on the issues, are these differences properly considered?
3) Is the advice practicable? Does it provide clear options or guidance that can be translated into operations or that can be useful for decision making in a policy, institutional, scientific context?
4) Is the information presented in a way that can be understood by the intended audience?
5) What is the added value of this publication to GEF and other relevant stakeholders? For example does it bring together existing information in a useful way, does it combine information from different disciplines to shed new light into the issues, or does it duplicate work done before?

Annex 3: Self-assessment Questions for STAP and UNDP

Questions to the Panel

1 What is the Panel's overall assessment of STAP's scientific and technical advice to the GEF? Please indicate overall areas of strengths and weaknesses.

2 What are STAP's most important products and services to the GEF? How effective have each of these been as tools to advise and to update the GEF on relevant scientific and technical issues? Please distinguish among those which have been more and less effective and explain why some nave been more effective than others.

3 What have been the factors that enabled or hindered STAP's effectiveness in meeting its mission? Please address the following factors plus others that the Panel considers important:

- Interactions with and responsiveness of other GEF stakeholders such as Council, GEF Secretariat, Agencies, Evaluation Office, Conventions, etc.
- Support provided by the STAP Secretariat
- Composition of the panel
- Support /liaison provided by UNEP
- Other

4 Are there steps that could be taken to strengthen STAP's strategic, timely and effective advice to the GEF? What are those steps and indicate why they are needed and who should take action.

5 What additional considerations or factors would the panel like to address as part of this self-assessment?

Questions to UNEP

1 What is UNEP's overall assessment of STAP's scientific and technical advice to the GEF? Please indicate overall areas of strengths and weaknesses.

2 What are the main functions provided by UNEP to STAP?

3 How effective has UNEP fulfilled such functions?

4 What have been the factors that enabled or hindered STAP's effectiveness in meeting its mission? Please address the following factors and others that UNEP considers important.

- Clarity of UNEPS's mandate
- Interactions with and composition of the Panel
- Interactions with STAP Secretariat
- Interactions with and responsiveness of other GEF stakeholders such as Council, GEF Secretariat, Agencies, conventions, etc.
- Other factors

5 What steps could be taken to ensure the further strengthen STAP's strategic, timely and effective advice to the GEF?

6 What other additional factors or considerations would UNEP like to address as part of this self-assessment?

Annex 4: Experts Consulted through Interviews

STAP Panel Members

Rosina Bierbaum

Henk Bouwman
Annette Cowie
Braulio Dias
Paul Ferraro
Thomas Lovejoy
Anand Patwardhan
N.H. Ravindranath
Ralph Sims
Michael Stocking
Meryl Williams

STAP Secretariat
Thomas Hammond

UNEP as Host Agency to STAP
Maryam Niamir-Fuller

Council Members
Zi Dian Liang
Jean Ilunga Muneng
Raul Pinedo
Leander Trippel
Jozef Buys
Ximena George-Nascimento

GEF Agencies

African Development Bank
- Sebastien Delahaye
- Ignacio Tourino Soto

Asian Development Bank
- Nessim Ahmad
- Bruce Dunn

ERBD
- Marta Simonetti

FAO
- Sally Bunning

Inter-American Development Bank
- Michael Collins
- Christiaan Gischler
- Alexandra Ortega

UNDP
- Adriana Dinu
- Nancy Bennet

UNEP
- Maryam Niamir-Fuller

Geordie Colville
David Piper
Mohammed Sessay

UNIDO

Juergen Hierold
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World Bank

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