

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility  
(Version 5)

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: May 04, 2015

Screeners: Virginia Gorsevski

Panel member validation by: Brian Child  
Consultant(s):

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

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 8031

**PROJECT DURATION :** 5

**COUNTRIES :** Uzbekistan

**PROJECT TITLE:** Sustainable Natural Resource and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity

**GEF AGENCIES:** UNDP

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** State Committee on Nature Protection

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** Multi Focal Area

### II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Minor issues to be considered during project design**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes the submission by UNDP of this important and timely proposal to promote a landscape approach to conservation in Uzbekistan. The PIF presents a comprehensive project that integrates BD, SFM and SLM. Overall, the project seeks to

1. improve mapping and planning of 9m ha (2m people) in the Uzbekistan Pamir Alay and Tian Shan mountains (linked to a regional 10-country initiative?),
2. expand PA systems (225,000ha) and forest PAs (23,000ha) and improve management effectiveness of 718,140ha of PAs,
3. reduce degradation of 29,500ha of mountain forests and 300,000 ha of mountainous pastures, and
4. develop awareness, science and management to support Snow Leopard conservation.

1.1 Project area mapping = 2,000,000

2.1 New PAs = 225,000

2.1 New Forest PAs = 23,000

2.2 Improved Land management = 718,140

3.1 Reduce forest degradation = 29,500

3.2 Reduce mountain pasture degradation = 300,000

TOTAL AREA (ha) = 1,295,640

Budget = 6,209,863

Co-financing = 24,000,000

\$/ha = 4.79

Total \$/ha = 23.32

However, the project objective could be modified to be more clear and concise. As it reads now, it would appear that the objective is the promotion of a specific approach. Perhaps the objective could be better stated as the following "To enhance land and forest resources in biodiverse mountainous ecosystems using a landscape approach and by supporting local development."

The project logic is strong, with the primary concern being whether it is realistic in a \$6.2m five-year project, or should it instead be implemented through a multi-project programmatic approach? The PA agency appears to be new and/or under-resourced. It has a budget of \$4m for 22 PAs covering 4.9% of the country, most of which is allocated to salaries leaving only \$1.5m for operational costs and capital investments. That a Master Plan for the PA System has just been developed with UNDP-GEF also suggests that the PA agency is nascent. The PPG should assess the capacity of the PA agency to undertake this work, and also of the agricultural extension agency to support component 3 on land degradation.

The text would be greatly strengthened by including a map of the areas and protected areas mentioned (from the systems plan?), and by a reduction of the use of acronyms. The lack of a map detracts significantly from the readability of the PIF. There are also some statements in the PIF that surely should be cited or the evidence base provided. This includes the 4-fold decline in pastures, the important species/habitats in the summary of environmental values, the claim that natural forest regeneration has almost dropped to zero, the experience with integrated land use planning (ILUPs). A small number of words seem wrong or need explanation including "normative" legal act, oblast and rayon levels, IUCN-VU, NT, forest "massifs".

The key drivers of environmental degradation for this project are well-defined and listed as 1) unsustainable grazing pressure, 2) unregulated use of forests for cattle grazing, 3) high dependence of communities on forests for energy needs, and 4) poaching of prey and retaliation kills.

The PIF states that the proximate drivers of forest/wildlife losses are over-grazing and unregulated use of forests by cattle, and a high dependence by communities on forests for energy. Reading between the lines, this suggests that the root cause of many of these problems are weak institutions of property rights, community property rights, land use planning and regulation, and extension services.

The PIF and certainly the PPG must address these underlying institutional causes of degradation, which will strengthen the alternative scenario. Thus, the likely cause of "local communities' pursuing biodiversity-incompatible livelihoods" (p8) most probably lies not in ignorant people but in weak institutions of village-level collective action, for planning and controlling the use of village lands, and for the sustainable use of wildlife through high-value alternatives.

The PIF lists sufficient important global biodiversity to justify the project, but the PPG should describe this in a more organized way, and should further develop the biodiversity indicators for Outcome 2.1. Similarly, the METT tends to measure PA management processes rather than outcomes, and the indicators of outcome 2.2 should therefore include baselines and targets for PA biodiversity, financial and socio-economic indicators.

The baseline scenario discusses a national forestry plan developed in 2009, including an inventory of forests and revisions to the financial, institutional and policy instruments for SFM. Since 6 years have passed, what is the status of this plan? Is the inventory available and how will it be integrated into component I regarding planning and decision making. To what extent were local communities consulted as part of the plan?

#### Alternative scenario

Component 1 is sensible, putting in place mapping, biodiversity mapping, and economic assessment of land use options as the basis for landscape planning. The PIF refers to the previous Integrated Land Use and Forestry Planning initiative. The PIF and/ or the PPG needs to use the evidence from this experience to establish land use planning going forward. In this respect, the document needs more clarity on exactly how land use planning will be done and enforced - top down broad-brush landscape vision is useful, but for land use planning to be effective it needs to be operationalized through participatory processes at the level of catchments and villages.

In addition, it would be helpful to know specifically what methods will be used for this analysis - remote sensing/GIS seems a likely candidate - if so, are data readily available? Also, do local partners have the capacity to gather, process and utilize this information - not just for this project but after it is over in order to make necessary changes?

Component 2 is sound, and the participatory approaches suggested for PA stakeholder committees and for planning corridors are welcome. Should the PPG not also consider making a case for the PAs as the basis of them being welcomed or even funded by society?

Component 3 is the most interesting and challenging part of the project. Here the PIF is weaker, although the lessons for the GEF Small Grants Program suggests that written agreements with pilot communities about the sustainable management of their land show merit, as is the need for long term user rights for local populations. While not explicitly stated in the PIF, over-grazing and over-harvesting are presumably an outcome of open-access property regimes and population growth, and the absence of individual/village title and collective action. The implication is that if the land is better managed, yields can be increased, the degradation of common assets (forests, pastures, flood protection, etc.) reduced, and the flow of ecosystem service increased.

The solution probably lies in a combination of (1) village-level tenure, (2) improved village level governance to manage village lands including (3) participatory land use planning, and (4) the support of this by meso and macro-level actions. In essence, the efficacy with which system inputs (agriculture, grazing, forests, wildlife, ecosystem services) are converted into system outputs (i.e. livelihoods, sustainability, resilience/adaptability) depends on how well the system is regulated. This regulation requires (1) village rights as the foundation or (2) village and landscape land use planning and associated rules, (3) effective micro- or village-level governance, and (4) cross scale support through extension, capacity-building and other services.

If this is the case, the PPG should draw on theory by (Ostrom 1990) and others in the design of local level institutions for managing common pool natural resources, and perhaps (Child and Wojcik 2014) in the design of local level organizations/ constitutions to manage these rules. Given the potential value of wild ungulates for trophy hunting, the PPG should certainly examine the potential for CBNRM-type programmes to give a value to wildlife (see footnote 8 on page 12).

This section also discusses the development of pasture management plans, which in theory is a good idea. However, it would be useful to have further clarification on whether land use plans are enforceable. Further details about this aspect will help strengthen the interventions and project rationale given it has a strong reliance on land use planning.

Also, it is known that grazing intensity and the type of grazing animals (as well as fire) greatly affects biodiversity (Middleton, 2013) including in mountains (Spehn, E.M., et al, 2010.) Will this project consider the role of disturbance and its role in maintaining species in ecosystems outside of the designated protected areas which are mainly focused on snow leopards?

The PIF concludes that poaching of Snow Leopards is rare, and the real threats are land degradation, retaliation killing and a decline in wild ungulates. Component 4 is perhaps more focused on anti-poaching that the threat levels require, but the monitoring, introduction of SMART, etc. are welcome, though why waste resources on sniffer dogs? CBNRM in Output 4.1.2 is welcomed, but should this not be targeted at PA buffer zones (output 2) or sustainable economic development (output 3)?

In addition, in the threats section it was stated that direct killing of snow leopards is less of an issue that decreases in prey, mainly wild ungulates. Will there also be a plan for protecting prey as a strategy to preserve snow leopards?

## REFERENCES

Child, B. and D. Wojcik (2014). *Micro-Governance in Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa: Enhancing Capacity at the Local Level*. Bloomington, Indiana, AuthorHouse.

Middleton, B.A. Rediscovering traditional vegetation management in preserves: Trading experience between cultures and continents. (2013). *Biological Conservation* 158: 271 – 279.

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press.

Spehn, E.M., Rudmann-Maurer, K., Körner, C. Maselli, D. (eds.) (2010). *Mountain Biodiversity and Global Change*. GEMBA-DIVERSITAS, Basel.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Concur</b>	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple

	<p>“Concur” response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.</p>
<p><b>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:</p> <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised.  (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.</p> <p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>
<p><b>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</b></p>	<p>STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p> <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP’s concerns.</p> <p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>