Part I: Project Information		**Response**
GEF ID		10113
Project Title		Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: strengthening network of protected areas through advanced governance and management
Date of Screening		21-May-19
STAP member Screener		Rosie Cooney
STAP secretariat screener		Virginia Gorsevski
STAP Overall Assessment		Minor
		STAP welcomes this proposal to enhance conservation efforts in Azerbaijan. The overall objective of this project is worthwhile. However, it appears very ambitious for a relatively small budget ($2.6 million). It includes numerous outputs, that may need scaling back or prioritisation. While the problems facing Azerbaijan are grave, it may make more sense to focus the project's efforts on interventions more likely to lead to successful outcomes. For example, the project is focusing on 4 different sites. Perhaps it would be more prudent to undertake more well thought out and ordered activities in just one PA and surrounding landscape, to provide a tested basis for scaling up. Conversely, the project might work across all of these areas but put greater effort into one or two key interventions. The project gives the impression that the development of a plan or framework is in and of itself a successful outcome. While a plan can represent the culmination of successful coordination, etc. it should not be the end goal, but rather the basis for implementing activities on the ground that result in change. It would be helpful if this end point could be articulated more clearly.
Part I: Project Information	**What STAP looks for**	**Response**
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	The planned activities are pretty standard (enabling environment, capacity building, alternative livelihoods, etc.) however they seem somewhat repetitive and not particularly well articulated in terms of how they will ultimately improve the situation. Mostly it seems like a lot of plans will be generated by this project.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	The outcomes listed are the development of frameworks, improved capacity, and sustainable financing, landscapes with enhanced ecosystem functions and finally project implementation. The first 2 (frameworks and capacity) should not be listed as outcomes as they are means by which to achieve global environmental benefits.
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	The outputs read more like outcomes (strengthened policy and regulatory frameworks, etc.). There needs to be a Theory of Change and a logical framework that clearly links the interventions with the end goal. This doesn't seem to have been done for this project and as a result there are many activities and plans, etc. but not clear how they will contribute to overall objective. This would benefit from strengthening.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe:		

1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Reasonably. The root causes of BD loss and LD are articulated as increasing population and resource demand, political agenda focused on economic growth. These in turn lead to direct drivers of habitat loss, infrastructure development and agricultural expansion, as well as overgrazing, wood collection, poaching and overfishing. However, this problem analysis is superficial, and there is no attention to the underlying policy/institutional drivers that may undermine local incentives and capacities for sustainable management of natural resources (wood/wildlife etc), and incentivise overgrazing/conversion to agriculture etc. Particularly important is understanding local tenure and management rights and abilities to generate benefits from using/managing natural resources. More information on these aspects would strengthen this. All exacerbated by climate change.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes. Barriers are weak enabling environment, limited institutional capacity and financial resources and lack of experience with participatory governance and effective PA management.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	N/A
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	There is no clear baseline. Basically a summary of overall ineffectiveness of staff due to lack of capacity and funding.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	There is no articulated TOC, but the project logic is reasonably clear from articulation of the components. A clear (and graphic) TOC would be helpful.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	The outputs are mainly plans. For limited amount of funds and short duration, it would make more sense to narrow focus on either one PA and surrounding area, or one main barrier (lack of sustainable financing or management, etc). But this project is attempting to do too much with too little and the lack of focus makes in unlikely to live up to its potential.
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	In outcome three, there appears to be is a lot of attention to approaches that in practice rarely work (i.e. PES) and no attention to approaches that appear to be urgently needed i.e. strengthening sustainable use of forests/pastures/fuelwood/wildlife.
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	

	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Unlikely unless the project is revised to be more focused.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	N/A
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	The project claims to conserve BD, reduce LD, capture carbon and improve livelihoods. The only aspect that is 'measurable' is 132 thousand ha of the targeted PAs; however, it is not clear how this figure was derived and how it relates to biophysical improvements on the ground. Also – which communities, where, how to measure improvements in livelihoods? Rather vague.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	Yes, to an extent. Innovative measures include community-based approach (approach not defined but some welcome reference to co-management), economic instruments for PA financing (however, later sections talk about securing additional funding, landscape approach). Train stakeholders on new techniques (e.g. drones) but the purpose unclear here.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Sustainability is predicated on building capacity, enabling environment (more capacity), resource mobilization (co-financing – but this does not ensure sustainability) and training and knowledge. Scaling up is based on involving the private sector in production landscapes and building capacity.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		There is a map but no indication of geo-referencing which is unfortunate since the PAs are clearly defined already. In PPG phase when the landscape approach is developed could provide this information when production areas are defined. Should be easy since buffer zones are already identified in table.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Many stakeholders identified, with Ministries of Ecology and Agriculture as leads. Since funding of PAs is clearly an issue, might want to bring in Finance Ministry or Tourism, etc.?

	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/ tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	Gender sensitive approach will be pursued
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	
5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?	Most of the risks described are the same as the barriers that the project is planning to overcome (e.g. lack of collaboration, lack of capacity, lack of awareness, monitoring, external pressures, etc.).
	Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?	
	For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:	
	· How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?	Otherwise the main risk is climate change. Mitigating measures are unclear (development of proposals?) though formation of a database (what data?) and systematic monitoring is interesting.
	· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?	
	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	Project linked to CACILM and Drylands IP.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	

	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	
8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	The KM section brings up the concept of Land Degradation Neutrality and the need to develop methods and tools for implementation. This is interesting but not mentioned anywhere else in the project so seems like a last minute addition with no activities to support it.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	
STAP advisory response	**Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed**	
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.	
	* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that ***"STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design."***	
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:	
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;	
	(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.	
	The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.	

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:	
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.	