

Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID	10365	
Project Title	Implementation of Armenia's LDN commitments through sustainable land management and restoration of degraded landscapes	
Date of Screening		
STAP member Screener	Graciela Metternicht	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron	
STAP Overall Assessment		Minor issues to be considered during project design. STAP welcomes FAO's project "Implementation of Armenia's LDN commitments through sustainable land management and restoration of degraded landscapes". STAP is pleased to see Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) being applied as a method to address land degradation in Armenia. STAP encourages FAO to apply UNCCD's Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality" and the STAP guidelines on LDN (www.stapgef.org). Both resources describe the response hierarchy to achieving LDN - avoid, reduce, and reversing, which should be used to plan LDN interventions. STAP also recommends for a climate risk assessment to be conducted before designing the project, so the findings can inform the interventions. Climate change is projected to impact agriculture, rangelands, ecosystems, and water resources. STAP also recommends developing a theory of change, which encompasses describing at greater length the problem context, identifying the causal outcomes needed to achieve the project objective, and defining the assumptions underlying the success of the theory of change. STAP's theory of change primer can assist FAO in this regard.
Part I: Project Information		
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes. The problem statement describes Armenia's challenges with land degradation as a result of multiple drivers, including climate change. The need for an integrated land use planning method, such as LDN, is warranted. STAP would encourage the project developers to strengthen the description of current policy environment and inter-governmental conditions. Providing this context would support the logic underpinning component 1.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	Yes.
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes if component 3 (monitoring and assessment and learning) is implemented successfully.
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?	Yes.

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?	Yes. See comment above on providing further information on policy and inter-ministerial relationships.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Partly. In the full project, STAP recommends providing more detail on the barriers (e.g. describe further the current agricultural policy), and citing references supporting the information.
	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?	Does not apply.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes, a baseline narrative is provided of on-going initiatives that are relevant to the project.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	A quantifiable baseline is not provided. STAP expects for the indicators and their methodologies to be described at length in the full project. A brief mention is made to indicators on land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon which will help establish the LDN baseline. These 3 core indicators need to be complemented by relevant, context-based indicators that can enable quantifying the projects' benefits as established in the LDN Conceptua framework.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes. This project clearly focuses on applyign LDN as integrated land use planning approach to achieve sustainable land management.
	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;	Does not apply.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Yes, several projects and their lessons are described, and will be used to design the project.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	See above.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	The project's theory of change is based on removing the barriers to SLM in Armenia by pursuing LDN. The project will "...take a three-pronged approach starting with strengthening the enabling environment for LDN, followed by support to scaling up of resilient SLM practices in degraded landscapes. These two components will be underpinned by monitoring, evaluation and dissemination and communication of lessons learned that would support further scaling up of resilient SLM practices in Armenia in support of LDN targets." STAP recommends the theory of change also identifies the underlying assumptions that will help attaining the desired outcomes.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	See above. STAP recommends FAO uses the recent UNCCD SPI publication on https://knowledge.unccd.int/publication/creating-enabling-environment-land-degradation-neutrality-and-its-potential to identify the conditions that need to be in place in each of the sequences described above, to attain the desired outcomes.

	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	See above.
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Uncertain. The assumptions need to be defined to gauge the success of the theory of change.
	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Partly. SLM activities will be scaled to address climate risks. STAP recommends below activities to complement this current vision.
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?	Yes. Good monitoring and evaluation of the LDN baseline will be required to achieve the global environmental benefits.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Does not apply.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes, land degradation neutrality is a global environmental benefit, that can be estimated using the 3 core indicators of land cover change, trends in land productivity and soil organic carbon. Soil organic carbon is a global environmental benefit.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Uncertain. It is difficult to understand the scale of the projected benefits since the target area was not described in section 1. STAP suggests describing further the project area, and the context in which the problem is situated. This includes the underlying drivers, or conditions, that may influence the project outcomes.
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, the global environmental benefits are defined.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes, the PIF briefly mentions the use of Collect Earth, or Trends.Earth to measure LDN indicators. STAP recommends FAO exploring complementary indicators and metrics as suggested in the LDN conceptual framework (page 101). STAP welcomes the practice of adopting life cycle assessment of land based value chains as part of the methodology.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	The project aims to scale-up SLM to address risks from climate. STAP, however, recommends undertaking a systems analysis based on climate data, and using the theory of change to develop the pathways of change and intervention options that address the project's resilience.
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, the project is innovative in establishing a LDN baseline for Armenia, and applying the LDN approach to address land degradation. The project can be innovative in various ways if the LDN approach (i.e. UNCCD's scientific framework for LDN) is fully applied. For example, achieving LDN will require adaptive management and learning. The LDN scientific framework, and STAP's LDN guidelines, spell out how a structured learning approach is part of achieving LDN. The project is innovative in its approach to knowledge transfer and training through modifying University curricula to include relevant LDN topics. Given the project identifies the private sector as one of the stakeholders the project could bring some innovation in methods of financing (e.g. exploring public-private partnerships).

	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Partly. The PIF describes scaling through an enabled-environment, and across the agricultural and forestry sectors. Activities related to outcome 2.2 are ways to scale up, though the vision needs to be better articulated. The project developers may wish to consider the inter-connections between environmental, social, economic, and governance that often enables scaling.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Based on the impacts that climate change is already having in Armenia, the project developers may consider designing the project with transformational change in mind. STAP recommends describing in greater detail the climate change context in the target site, and developing the components bearing in mind the projected changes in temperature and precipitation. Two sources for climate data for Armenia are: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Climate%20and%20Disaster%20Resilience/Climate%20Change/armenia_NAP_country_briefing.pdf https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/armenia
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		STAP recommends providing the geo-referencing information where the project interventions will take place. Currently, the coordinates are missing, and hence it is difficult to ascertain if the said indicators/areas (ha) that will benefit from the interventions are plausible.
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?	STAP recommends developing a theory of change, and identifying the stakeholders that will be required to bring about the desired change. Questions to keep in mind while designing the theory of change include: Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers? 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?
	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?	See above.
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?	A gender analysis will be carried out during the project preparation. During this analysis, STAP recommends addressing the following questions: Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences? Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	See above.

<p>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</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?</p>	<p>Partly. STAP recommends a more extensive analysis of the climate risks in the target area, and developing the components to address these risks. Climate change is already exacerbating land degradation, and affecting household incomes. (See: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Climate%20and%20Disaster%20Resilience/Climate%20Change/armenia_NAP_country_briefing.pdf) Therefore, FAO is encouraged to describe the climate projections (temperature and precipitation) for Armenia - particularly for the intervention area. The PIF provides some useful climate data in section 1, but it is uncertain whether it is for the country, or the project area. STAP also recommends for the project developers to consider: 1) the period of time the intervention is expected to contribute to global environmental benefits, and how the activities may be affected by climate change; 2) how each intervention will be impacted by climate variability, or weather-related disasters (e.g. droughts. floods); and, 3) how might climate, and non-climate stressors (e.g. out-migration?), interact to exacerbate climate risks? The project proponents may wish to refer to the World Bank's Climate Knowledge Portal to obtain climate project data for designing the project: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/armenia. Similarly, the project developers may wish to refer to U.S. AID's Climate Risk and Management tool: https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool; and STAP's guidance on climate risk assessment: http://www.stapgef.org/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening. Likewise, the paper: Gevorgyan, A., Melkonyan, H., Aleksanyan, T., Iritsyan, A. and Khalatyan, Y., 2016. An assessment of observed and projected temperature changes in Armenia. Arabian Journal of Geosciences, 9(1), p.27.</p>
	<p>Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p>	<p>The social risks have not been considered. In section 1, STAP suggests describing the socio-economic characteristics of the targeted population, and potential problems that may affect addressing the project objective.</p>
	<p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p>	<p>STAP recommends addressing the questions below in the full project.</p>
	<p>· 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?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
	<p>· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
	<p>· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
	<p>· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Yes. During the project design, FAO may wish to check whether it has covered all the relevant initiatives and projects it wishes to draw from to develop this project.</p>
	<p>Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?</p>	<p>Yes in the baseline section.</p>

	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Partly. STAP would like to see a more detailed description of the lessons and how they are being used to design the project
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	The lesson will inform the project.
	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?	Partly, through the knowledge management plan. However, STAP recommends developing a more robust knowledge-learning structure so that result indicators are assigned to knowledge management. This structure should also focus on what plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience. STAP congratulates the team for including national academic institutions as partners for training and knowledge transfer. STAP also acknowledges the inclusion of extension services as a form of training (outcome 2.2)
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?	See above.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	See above.
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.	
	<i>* 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."</i>	
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.	

<p>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</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. 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>	