

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10692
Project Title	Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Mountain Ecosystems in Southern Kyrgyzstan for Multiple Benefits
Date of Screening	December 3, 2020
STAP member screener	Graciela Metternicht
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design.</p> <p>STAP acknowledges UNDP's "Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Mountain Ecosystems in Southern Kyrgyzstan for Multiple Benefits". The project aims to safeguard globally significant biodiversity, restore degraded lands, and ensure maintenance of critical ecosystem services for sustainable livelihoods. STAP welcomes the complementarity -and co-dependence- of this project with other GEF-UNDP projects, and non-GEF projects. There is a co-dependence for accessing data and information on climate change vulnerability, and therefore good practices of coordination and communication are of outmost importance.</p> <p>STAP notes the project proposes activities focused on LDN. STAP encourages, therefore, for the project team to use the LDN Conceptual framework in the overall methodology. The LDN framework can assist in designing interventions, particularly to restore degraded lands, maintain, or enhance, critical ecosystems.</p> <p>Additionally, STAP recommends for the executing agency to ensure cross-sectoral collaboration with the ministries in charge of the UNCCD implementation (Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration) so the LDN agenda may be implemented in collaboration with the CBD agenda. STAP would like to see the project embrace its innovation potential to support Kyrgyzstan's dual commitments on</p>

	<p>biodiversity and land degradation. In this regard, STAP recommends paying attention to key aspects of ‘enabling’ activities to achieve the outputs and outcomes, and multiple benefits.</p> <p>The risk section assigns a moderate risk to short-term access, and use, of resources by local communities. In addition to the mitigation measures offering compensation to resource users, STAP recommends developing additional mitigation mechanisms, with input from stakeholders. A technical committee that advises on response measures to these risks (and barriers) is an idea the project team could consider.</p> <p>Lastly, STAP acknowledges the project team’s efforts to fully assess climate risks during the design phase. STAP welcomes this effort as identifying climate risks in the project area, and embedding these stressors in the project logic will be critical to conceptualizing the problem, and solutions.</p> <p>Below, STAP details further its comments.</p>	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary	What STAP looks for	Response
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?	Yes
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?</p>	Yes
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Possibly – with a good theory of change, and monitoring. The GEBs benefits the project envisages to deliver are mentioned, though the PIF does not mention indicators and related metrics that

		could enable to ascertain if, and to what extent, these benefits are attainable.
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?	It is unclear how the sum of the outputs will contribute to the outcomes. STAP concerns are on the lack of specificity on activities linked to outputs. The latter is of concern as activities drive success or failure of outputs (e.g. recent literature, and this PIF, cast doubt on the efficacy of creating PAs for safeguarding biodiversity if proper management and finance mechanisms are not present, yet the project proposes expansion of PA network by 331,000 ha.). Additionally, another project output proposes financing protected areas to be improved through community-based ecotourism. Recent assessments of UNEP and other major think tanks point to the serious impact that COVID-19 could have on ecotourism and its future viability as a source of income and financing for developing countries. STAP recommends the PPG appraises whether this may be the case for this project.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	This project proposes an alternative scenario in which integrated and proactive approaches are used to address the interlinked challenges of conflicting and unsustainable land use, with community-based conservation approaches to develop incentives for the conservation of wildlife. Through these approaches, critical populations of high-value species will be more strategically and effectively managed to reduce threats, and coexistence between wildlife and resilient communities will be incentivized, with increased benefits flowing to affected communities. This scenario is centered on socially-inclusive multi-stakeholder collaboration at national, regional and local scales; evidence-driven decision-making and management approaches (based on integrated social, economic and ecological research); and implementation of innovative, fit-for-purpose technologies and best-practices that enhance capacity for prevention and

		management of wildlife crime and human-wildlife conflict.
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?	<p>The project identifies the most serious causes of biodiversity loss in the Kyrgyz Republic are fragmentation of habitat and reduction of the total area of habitat types, as well as the consequences of anthropogenic influences (overgrazing, poaching, illegal take of forest products, etc) and, increasingly, climate change. More to the point, the PIF mentions that mountain ecosystems are considered to be some of the most at-risk ecosystems from climate change, and it is anticipated that ecological zones within the Pamir-Alia will be shifted in terms of altitude, and depending on slope and other factors. This will impact the sensitive alpine biodiversity of the Pamir-Alai, and may significantly reduce the effectiveness of current protected areas.</p> <p>The project proposes LDN-focused management, and STAP strongly recommends the PPG better embeds the conceptual framework for LDN that guides the design of interventions to avoid, reduce and/or reverse land degradation. Refer to:</p> <p>https://www.stapgef.org/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality</p> <p>https://www.unccd.int/publications/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science-policy</p>
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Partly. The threats section mentions the prevalence of cultural norms (e.g. having a snow leopard skin in your house may be considered by some to be a symbol of power and wealth), and high levels of poverty as drivers of local-level poaching, both for subsistence, and as a means to garner extra income. Prior research and good practice indicate that outputs to overcome these threats need behavioral

		insights (included in activities and the Theory of Change). STAP recommends the project components include, where pertinent, consideration of behavioral change (see latest guidelines of STAP in this regard: https://www.stapgef.org/why-behavior-change-matters-gef-and-what-do-about-it)
	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?	Yes.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	Yes
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	At present only a narrative baseline is provided. Baselines for quantifying project's benefit will be further defined at PPG stage.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	See above, STAP is unable to provide feedback on this aspect given the lack of data/information in the PIF.
	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;	The PIF acknowledges that as Kyrgyzstan sees significant ODA investment, there are multiple baseline projects ongoing that have some thematic similarities to the proposed project, and some of the baseline projects will advance knowledge on climate change impacts in the area. The project provides a good list of expected multiple benefits, and STAP recommends a more systematic use of data and references to support the claims of such benefits arising from the project interventions, and indicators to quantify (or qualify) the attainment of these benefits are not provided.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	Somewhat; the PIF manifest the future intention of fully coordinating with a number of on-going relevant GEF-financed initiatives, in order to avoid duplication and increase synergies and effectiveness. The project envisages to draw on

		lessons from 5 ongoing GEF projects (baseline), but it fails to capture other GEF-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan that have potential to provide valuable lessons (e.g. IUCN-FAO-GEF “Participatory assessment of land degradation and sustainable land management in grasslands and pastoral systems”, which is implemented in Kyrgyzstan and 4 other countries)
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	See above. Suggest adding a column to the table under the baseline scenario and spelling out how this project is expected to learn from other ongoing initiatives.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	A theory of change narrative is provided in the PIF” “The project’s strategy targets the identified threats and barriers to achieving the long-term objective. The major root cause of the identified threats ties to poverty, and the project focuses strongly on increasing the ecological sustainability of rural livelihoods, through securing necessary ecosystem services. The project aims to address the poverty-environment nexus in all aspects of the project, including catalyzing community economic benefits from sustainable pasture and forest management.” STAP recommends developing an exercise for testing the assumptions to ensure that to activities are designed (and implemented) in a way that will enable outputs and outcomes that will hold on the assumptions. For example, the assumption that ‘local resource users are receptive to project interventions to modify current resource-use patterns’; how changes (including on behavior) might happen?; are activities and outputs appropriate for influencing the desired changes in this context? How external/internal factors (e.g. climate change, pandemics, and others mentioned in the risk sections) may affect outputs and outcomes; what alternative pathways could be in place to avoid such impacts?
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	The sequence of events are described in the PIF as” “Completely addressing poverty in Kyrgyzstan’s

		<p>Pamir-Alai landscape is a long-term goal that will require significant investment and development aid by many partners. As such, the proposed project takes a highly strategic approach of targeting the geographic areas in the landscape where human land-use activities have the greatest impacts on ecosystems that provide critical ecosystem services. The first component of the project is designed to address the first major barrier identified, related to the lack of a landscape level spatial approach to ecosystem management. The second component works to address the effective conservation of biodiversity across the landscape, increasing the coverage and capacity for effective PA management within southern Kyrgyzstan. Under Component 3 the project will implement a variety of capacity development and knowledge management measures to support successful project implementation, the long-term sustainability of results, and the catalytic influence of the project within Kyrgyzstan and beyond. These interventions are all interlinked through the strategic approach of catalyzing biodiversity-friendly sustainable land use in KBAs, and the immediately adjacent sustainable use zones.”</p>
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project’s objectives?	See above; due to the lack of mention of specific activities, the STAP is unable to provide feedback on whether activities-outputs will address the project objectives. STAP recommends such links be established in the project development phase.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	Partly. A number of assumptions are identified in the theory of change. Suggest revisiting these assumptions during project implementation, and verifying if they remain valid. Additionally, it might be useful to link all the assumptions highlighted in the theory of change with specific outcomes.
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	Not fully as the climate change risks will be analyzed in detail during the project design.

		During the project development, STAP recommends considering more than one plausible pathway to deal with long term changes that may affect the target sites, such as population changes, market fluctuations, and climate change.
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?	Possibly with a close monitoring of the outcomes, and adaptive management.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Non-applicable.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	The benefits the project aspires to deliver are of global importance. STAP recommends the project development phase includes the design of a good monitoring system, with clear indicators for assessing the ex-ante (baseline) and ex-post (after project) environmental state of the project area. With good monitoring, and indicators to track the global environmental benefits and associated social benefits it will be possible to ascertain the GEBs.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	It is plausible the proposed investment will reach the projected benefits; a good theory of change, with careful attention to assumptions and the consideration of adaptive management are recommended.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	The GEBs benefits the project envisages to deliver are mentioned, the PPG needs to identify SMART indicators and related metrics that could enable to ascertain if, and to what extent, these benefits can be achieved.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	Component 1 of the project will be supporting local resource managers and users to develop sustainable pasture and forest management plans, and these plans will be generated considering future climate impacts, in order to support

		<p>increased community resilience. Under Component 2, protected area zoning will also consider possible ecosystem shifts that might be happening under climate change, and develop zoning regimes in view of achieving maximum climate resilience. However, the components do not specify what activities will be implemented to achieve the former. Moreover, the project plans to use outputs related to climate resilience from other ongoing projects (cited in the baseline); however, there is a lack of specificity on what assessments of those projects will be useful to this one, and how they will be incorporated (i.e. to design activities?, to construct baseline assessment of climate change vulnerability for the pilot project area?). The LDN conceptual framework and STAP LDN guidelines strongly recommend the inclusion of climate change vulnerability assessments as part of the preparatory assessments, and given the focus of this project on LDN, STAP recommends these documents be considered in the design of baselines that in turn will inform activities that are best suited to the area and objective of the project.</p>
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?	<p>The project plans to use integrated spatial management: GIS-based data and analysis, applying new remote sensing tools and data sources. The project also plans to tap into private – public partnerships to help establish a sustainable livestock system, as well as a forward-looking view to develop value-added opportunities to improve local livelihoods through innovations such as community conservancies. More innovation could be brought to this project through including behavioral insights in the design of interventions.</p>
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	<p>Partly. The PIF states that integrated land use planning will lead to innovation. STAP recommends detailing this assumption, and others related to scaling, in the theory of change so they do not undermine the outcomes.</p>

	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Adaptation and transformational change are likely to be required to address the different climate stressors (e.g. droughts)
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Yes, maps are provided. Refer to STAP's guidance on earth observation during project design: https://www.stapgef.org/earth-observation-and-gef
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?	<p>Relevant 'groups' of stakeholders have been identified. During project design, STAP suggests reviewing whether all the key stakeholders are involved, and amend stakeholder plans as needed.</p> <p>Behavioral insights are also important for effective local and multi-stakeholder engagement, which the team acknowledges is critical for establishing the ownership of resource users in securing wildlife populations. Thus, close attention should be paid to involving agents of change in the design and implementation of the project.</p> <p>Refer to STAP's guidance on multi-stakeholder engagement: https://www.stapgef.org/multi-stakeholder-dialogue</p> <p>And upcoming guidance on behavior change: stapgef.org</p>
	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?	STAP welcomes the stakeholder information described in the table. Suggest identifying how stakeholders' roles are affiliated with the planned outputs and outcomes.
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	STAP is pleased that a gender analysis will be applied during the project design. During this assessment, STAP encourages the project team to pay attention to gender differentiated risks and

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p>		<p>opportunities – and whether gender considerations hinder the full participation of a stakeholder group.</p> <p>STAP recommends the team uses the manual for gender-responsive land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes to devise LDN interventions, including training</p>
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<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? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p> <p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? 	<p>The risk section assigns moderate risk and impact to short-term access and use of resources by local communities, including the rural poor and women, as the project works on modifying resource management regimes (e.g. forests, pastures, agricultural lands, biodiversity) toward long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The risk mitigation measures mention that where economic displacement may occur, the project will work with stakeholders to provide compensation to affected resource users. In the unlikely case, should project developers, during PPG, face a</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>situation where a true “economic displacement” is going to be extremely beneficial from global environmental perspectives, STAP recommends the team seek guidance from GEFSEC and STAP to develop mechanisms, then discuss them with end users and seek common final agreement.</p> <p>For climate risks, STAP recommends applying its guidance on climate risk screening: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf</p>
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?	To an extent, suggest reviewing the list of relevant projects during the project design, and to capture better these learnings in the project documentation. Do consult the GEF database to learn of past projects that have been delivered with ‘similar’ objectives in other geographies and reflect the pertinence of transferring lessons from these projects. Do consider the current IUCN-FAO GEF funded project stated earlier, as it has a strong focus on community involvement and LDN.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Yes; and see comments above.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, in some cases.
	How have these lessons informed the project’s formulation?	Partly. Suggest describing in greater detail the lessons learned.
	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?	Possibly through component 3 on knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation. The Project Manager will ensure the collation of all the project experiences and information. This knowledge database will then be made accessible to different stakeholder groups in order to support better future decision-making processes. STAP wishes to note that collation and input into a knowledge database is one step that per se does not guarantee ‘sharing’ and uptake of lessons. More proactive mechanisms need to be included to ensure the knowledge captured is used.

<p>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.</p>	<p>What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?</p>	<p>Knowledge management plans include imparting modules on biodiversity conservation and land use planning on LDN. The project also plans to coordinate information sharing and future initiatives on protected area management in the Pamir-Alai landscape. Suggest linking to WOCAT’s knowledge database to extract and contribute lessons: https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/best-practices-sustainable-land-management/about-unccd-wocat</p>
	<p>What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?</p>	<p>This is not clear besides the intention to share information with the project’s network.</p>

Notes

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 <i>“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.

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