

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 07, 2013

Screener: Lev Neretin

Panel member validation by: Jakob Granit
Consultant(s): Douglas Taylor

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND

GEF PROJECT ID: 5301

PROJECT DURATION : 5

COUNTRIES : Regional (Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan)

PROJECT TITLE: Enabling Country of the Transboundary Syr Darya Basin to Make Sustainable Use of their Ground Water Potential and Subsurface Space with Consideration to Climate Variability and Change

GEF AGENCIES: UNDP

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: UNESCO IHP

GEF FOCAL AREA: International Waters

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 revision required**

III. Further guidance from STAP

1. The project proposal presented in this PIF responds to a scientific and technical knowledge gap regarding the relationship between surface and groundwater resources in the Syr Darya Basin, the surface waters of which were formerly heavily drawn upon upstream and held in dams for centrally planned irrigation. Winter discharges are reported to have increased resulting from an emphasis on power generation causing flooding in the middle stream, coupled with a shortage for summer irrigation. The UNECE Second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters (UNECE, 2011), however, reports that while this release of water from reservoirs in winter for hydropower generation may cause winter flooding in downstream countries, on the Syr Darya this is less of an issue now that Kazakhstan has developed reservoir capacity downstream. It would appear that the principal problem is the lack of summer flow caused by continued water withdrawals for multiple use and impacts of climate change.
2. Apart from the numerous technical and capacity issues raised in the PIF, transboundary cooperation between the countries sharing the Syr Darya Basin is fragile and is based on outdated regulation. Project support is proposed in Component 4 to facilitate dialogue regarding groundwater-related policy issues. However, for conjunctive use of the water resources to be effective, policy dialogue would appear to be important also for surface waters. The UNECE Assessment reported that with the support of the Asian Development Bank, a draft agreement on the Syr Darya was developed in 2005, but its finalization and adoption are still pending. STAP requests the proponents to clarify why GEF support for the adoption of this regional agreement is not included in the project proposal.
3. STAP acknowledges that project design is well informed by the results of research projects and scientific workshops that defined the need to better understand the status of groundwater and its potential to be conjunctively used by the Central Asian countries sharing the Basin. STAP agrees that this is well argued and the baseline well described. Country ownership for the project is, however, less clear, and it is especially unclear within the text of the PIF why Uzbekistan is not a full participant in the project.
4. STAP regards the PIF as very weak from a regional governance perspective. Considering that there are several regional bodies addressing water issues in this region (also noted in the PIF) a regional partner for a project of this nature should be considered. Collaboration with a regional partner could provide longer term ownership and sustainability beyond the project period continuing capacity building efforts on conjunctive use of ground and surface water at the regional and national scales. In spite of noting that regional governance is a key obstacle in central Asia the project proposal does not tackle this and focuses almost entirely on technical elements of managing groundwater. There is no mention of the role, for example, of the International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea (IFAS), or an

analysis of the current transboundary negotiations between the countries of the Basin including the broader political economy, see for example the paper by Libert and Lipponen (2012) and Granit et.al. (2012).

5. A component addressing project management and coordination at the regional scale considering multiple partners and stakeholders should be considered as part of the design in the full project proposal. It could help to mediate the biggest risk for project success such as lack of sustained political support. This identified key risk also needs to be better explained and put into a context of the regional political economy (see #4).

References

Libert, B. and Lipponen, A. 2012. Challenges and Opportunities for Transboundary Water Cooperation in Central Asia: Findings from UNECE's Regional Assessment and Project Work. *Water Resources Development*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 565-576

Granit, J., J ngerskog, J., Lindstr m, A., Bj rklund, G., Bullock, A., L fgren, R., de Gooijer, G., & Pettigrew, S. (2012). Regional Options for Addressing the Water, Energy and Food Nexus in Central Asia and the Aral Sea Basin. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*. Vol, No 3, 419-432, September 2012.

UNECE. 2011. Second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters. <http://www.unece.org/env/water/>

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues where the project could be improved.</p> <p>Follow up: The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.</p>
2. Minor revision required.	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p>Follow up: One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency: (i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.</p>
3. Major revision required	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p>Follow-up: (i) The Agency should request that the project undergo a STAP review prior to CEO endorsement, at a point in time when the particular scientific or technical issue is sufficiently developed to be reviewed, or as agreed between the Agency and STAP. (ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.</p>