

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: October 15, 2013

Screeners: Guadalupe Duron

Panel member validation by: Annette Cowie
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT **GEF TRUST FUND**

GEF PROJECT ID: 5479

PROJECT DURATION : 4

COUNTRIES : India

PROJECT TITLE: Integrated SLEM Approaches for Reducing Land Degradation and Desertification

GEF AGENCIES: World Bank

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Ministry of Environment and Forests

GEF FOCAL AREA: Land Degradation

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): **Major revision required**

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP acknowledges the World Bank's proposal "Integrated SLEM Approaches for Reducing Land Degradation and Desertification" in India. STAP welcomes the notion that the proposal will seek to strengthen India's reporting capacity on the implementation of UNCCD's 10 year Strategy. Strengthening reporting capacity on performance and impact indicators is important to the UNCCD and its ability to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

In its screening, STAP reviewed the various documents affiliated with this project and listed on the Project Management Information System (PMIS). These documents included the Project Concept Note, the Project Information Document, the GEF data sheet, and the Virtual PCN review. The lack of detail regarding the incremental cost reasoning, global environmental benefits, including indicators to monitor their outcome, along with a limited description of the components limits the extent to which a review of the scientific rationale of the initiative may be attempted at this time. For these reasons STAP proposes an overall recommendation of "major revision". STAP hopes that these issues pertinent to GEF projects, along with the recommendations below will be addressed during the project development. STAP further hopes that future projects submitted in this form will include the necessary descriptions to undertake a review of the scientific rationale of the undertaking.

1. The proposal clearly outlines the scope of the problem and challenges to be addressed. However, it provides very little detail on the SLEM practices, and how scaling-up will be achieved. Further details about scaling-up efforts would be useful, especially as the project intends to promote already-proven SLEM best practices.
2. The proposal states that the project will utilize existing extension staff, to promote SLEM practices that are already proven. If the practices are already available "off the shelf", and the extension networks are effective, greater clarification would be useful to understand further why the practices have not been adopted already. Perhaps there are significant barriers related to adoption (communication and technical challenges), which would be useful to clarify how the project intends to overcome them.
3. There is much discussion of the plight of very poor rural people including those with very small agricultural plots, and landless livestock owners, and the difficulties in facilitating their adoption of improved management practices. However, it is not clear how the proposed activities (monitoring land degradation, building an internet-based national knowledge network, working with existing extension network) will change behavior. It would be useful to address further this aspect.

4. STAP welcomes the proposed initiative to disseminate knowledge on best practices on sustainable land management by connecting farmers with other experts outside their communities. STAP suggests linking this effort to the World Overview Conservation Approaches (WOCAT) – an informal global network on sustainable land management. The knowledge generated by the project will contribute to WOCAT, and conversely, the targeted land users can benefit from access to this portal on best practices on sustainable land management. Further information about WOCAT can be found at this link – <https://www.wocat.net/>

5. In component 1, STAP notes the project will focus on scaling-up sustainable land management best practices. This includes scaling-up conservation agriculture in mixed crop-livestock systems, given their potential to improve soil health and long-term crop productivity while serving the demands for livestock feed. STAP believes conservation agriculture can serve these joint purposes if the conditions are appropriate – that is, the biophysical and socio-economic conditions are suitable for biomass production to meet the demands of agricultural productivity and livestock feed of small-holders.

6. STAP suggests that the biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of the project sites be defined in greater detail, in order to ensure that interventions be targeted based on these existing conditions. Furthermore, STAP recommends for the World Bank to take into account the potential trade-offs associated with small-holders' use of crop residue. The sustainability of land management depends on the ability to account for small-holders' decisions based on their multiple needs (biophysical and socioeconomic). Accounting for the trade-offs will provide further insights into the challenges and opportunities of applying conservation agriculture in crop-livestock systems. The World Bank could utilize the following paper (and its reference list) to develop further component 1 in relation to farmers' trade-offs for the use of crop-residue – D.Valbuena, et al "Conservation Agriculture in mixed crop-livestock systems: Scoping crop residue trade-offs in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia". Field Crops Research 132, pages 175-184. 2012.

6. STAP suggests reviewing carefully the documents for misspelling and naming errors, such as "United National Convention on Combating Desertification".

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Consent	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. 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.
2. Minor revision required.	STAP has identified specific scientific or technical challenges, omissions or opportunities that should be addressed by the project proponents during project development. 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.
3. Major revision required	STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design. 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.