

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 04, 2016
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Consultant(s):

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

FULL-SIZED PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9388
PROJECT DURATION:	6
COUNTRIES:	Lebanon
PROJECT TITLE:	Land Degradation Neutrality of Mountain Landscapes in Lebanon
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Ministry of Environment
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):
Minor issues to be considered during project design

III. Further guidance from STAP

STAP welcomes UNDP's proposal "Land degradation neutrality of mountain landscapes in Lebanon". STAP is pleased to see that the project will focus on an integrated land use planning approach that applies a multi-stakeholder participatory framework focused on ecosystem services. Although the concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) is relatively new and ways to implement LDN are still being piloted, the project offers promising interventions to address land degradation, and rehabilitate, or restore, degraded land to enhance its capacity to provide ecosystem services. The challenges facing Lebanon, particularly in the project area are multiple, complex, and challenging, caused by diverse anthropogenic pressures, and inherent vulnerability. STAP encourages Lebanon and UNDP to apply innovative financing for valuing and managing ecosystem services to support access to resources and markets. In addition, an evaluation of restorative approaches will support learning and further uptake of LDN, which will be important to countries setting their LDN targets. Thus, STAP encourages UNDP and Lebanon to share its experiences on LDN with the GEF, UNCCD and other countries proposing to apply the concept.

To strengthen the project design STAP recommends addressing the following points:

1. In the project document, the components should be detailed further to include the information listed in the project description summary. Currently, there is more information about the components in the project description summary than in the component section 1.3.
2. It will be important to detail in the project design a description of the methods, or approach, used for assessing the suitability of land for restoration or rehabilitation. STAP suggests that a land potential assessment would be beneficial. STAP also encourages the project developers to think carefully about the indicators that will be used to monitor the global environmental benefits. Therefore, in addition to biodiversity conservation indicators, and meeting targets on sustainable land management (page 5), the project

developers are encouraged to consider indicators for land rehabilitation, or land restoration, related to ecosystem services.

3. STAP recommends that the project developers seek close interaction with Lebanon's participation in the LDN Target Setting Programme, and detail the methods for measuring and monitoring LDN. It will be useful to include in the land use planning policy a mechanism to estimate the likely cumulative effects of land degradation, so that rehabilitation can be planned, in order to achieve LDN. The forthcoming report and brief on the Land Degradation Neutrality Conceptual Framework explains this concept further, and may be helpful in designing the project: UNCCD/Science-Policy Interface (2016). Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. Barron J. Orr, Annette L. Cowie, et al.. (Forthcoming). United Nations Convention on Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn, Germany, UNCCD/Science-Policy Interface (2016). Land in balance. The scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality (LDN). Science-Policy Brief 02. September 2016. United Nations Convention to combat Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn, Germany.

4. To complement the background and the problem description, STAP suggests the following report from the Joint Research Centre's that details the soils in Lebanon and the drivers of land degradation, including soil erosion, soil salinity, soil pollution, and other factors: Yigini, Y. et al. "Soil Resources of Mediterranean and Caucasus Countries, Extension of the European Soil Database". (2013). http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ESDB_Archive/eusoils_docs/other/EUR25988EN.pdf

Lebanon and UNDP may also consider using the maps in the JRC report to complement the description of the project sites in the project document.

5. The JRC soil resources report states that "only about 70km² of land located in North Lebanon and central Bekaa plain is characterized in terms of heavy metal content, land quality and suitability for specific agricultural and non-agricultural uses." The authors recommend assessing soil quality nationwide to control crop cultivation on suitable land. STAP supports this recommendation and encourages the project developers to undertake an assessment of heavy metals in the project sites before encouraging restoration, or rehabilitation of lands for agricultural purposes.

6. It would be valuable to describe in detail the mountain ecosystems during the project design along with the social and economic traits of the target sites. This will inform the components and their implementation.

7. STAP proposes identifying the climate risks, and the adaptive management responses to address stresses, such as climate. One source for climate data that the project developers may wish to use is the CGIAR's portal: <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/downscaled-gcm-data-portal#.V-lmoSErKUK>

STAP also suggests the following document as a source of information on climate adaptation in Lebanon: Haydamous, P. et al "Lebanon's agricultural sector policies: considering inter-regional approaches to adaptation to climate change". 2016. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/policy_memos/2015-2016/20160213_lebanon_agricultural.pdf

8. STAP recommends applying the Resilience, Adaptation Pathways Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) Framework. The RAPTA Framework can assist countries in assessing and reporting on resilience. It allows for considerations of social, economic and environmental changes in order to focus efforts where interventions will be more effective. Lebanon and UNDP can apply the RAPTA to assess the current and proposed land uses, and identify the most appropriate sites for restoration and rehabilitation, given the current conditions, constraints and stresses (e.g. influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and the possible increased demand for food, and pressure on land resources; climate change). RAPTA can then help to focus efforts where interventions will be most effective through a structured approach to learning that enables constant improvement and adaptation to change.

9. In the project document, provide detail on the innovative financial mechanisms proposed, including offsets. Offsets are a controversial strategy that requires strong safeguards, to ensure like-for-like substitution. The Land Degradation Conceptual Framework referred to in point 3 includes discussion and guidance on this issue.

10. The table of barriers identifies deficiencies in skills and capacity for assessment and management of rehabilitation, and implementation of good practice in agriculture and forestry. It is not clear how the project response, listed in the table, will address these specific gaps. This should be addressed in project design.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. Concur	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple “Concur” response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	<p>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:</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, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.</p> <p>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>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.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP’s concerns.</p> <p>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>