

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel that advises the Global Environment Facility



## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: 13 January 2012

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### I. PIF Information

Reducing pressures on natural resources from competing land use in non-irrigated arid mountain, semi-desert and desert landscapes of Uzbekistan. UNDP. GEF Project ID 4600.

### II. STAP Advisory Response (*see table below for explanation*)

STAP welcomes this proposal to foster SLM and INRM in some of the most intractable landscapes in Central Asia – desert, semi-desert and mountain. Building on CACILM experience, plus the existing work of UNDP and GIZ, could be a useful way forward in Uzbekistan so that this project can focus on difficult issues in an innovative and scientifically-valid fashion. STAP does, however, have a number of concerns (detailed below) related to specification of GEBs, lack of baseline quantitative information, cost-efficiency of the approach adopted, lack of methods to monitor impact and progress of the project, as well as lack of information as to how the project will build on existing experience. These concerns lead to STAP’s advisory response of Major Revision.

To revise the proposal to make it compliant with GEF strategies and approaches, STAP suggests addressing the recommendations stated below.

### III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP urges the proponents to make this project distinctively a GEF project with clearly articulated global environmental benefits, an explicit linkage between local activities such as ‘best practice’ technologies and contributions to global impact, the use of GEF-supported initiatives such as protection of ecosystem goods and services and methodologies for tracking global impact. Currently, the project proposal reads as a rangeland and forest support investment with land use planning and national institutional support: i.e. a largely development-oriented project
2. STAP questions the rationale for the sample of just two districts – Farish and Romitan – as representative of two typical Uzbek landscapes and land utilization types, enabling extrapolation of project outputs to the rest of the country. STAP is concerned that the objective of the project to promote integrated management of rangeland and forest is unlikely to be met by just focussing on practices in two relatively small districts. The PIF mentions in passing that one reason for their choice is that UNDP and GIZ have already worked in these districts and local experience will assist the progress of this project. This reasoning could be turned around to provide a rationale for *avoiding* these two districts. Previous projects may well have rendered these districts atypical. So, for example, an Uzbek-German agreement in 2003 has led

to considerable investments in Farish in ecotourism and rural guesthouses. Romitan is only one of eleven districts in Bukhara Province, which in turn is only one province of twelve in Uzbekistan. STAP questions the intensive focus on two small parts of one country, which may well lead only to very local experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere in the country. Furthermore, the PIF does not elaborate on how these pilot experiences will be taken up more widely. Any uptake pathway appears to be outside the envelope of this project.

3. Related to the previous point, the cost-efficiency of this project needs to be questioned and justified. The PIF mentions 6000 hectares of rangeland and 1000 ha of forest will be improved in Component 1 of the project; this equates to approximately US\$1000 of investment per hectare. Is this sustainable and justified, given the low potential productivity of these lands and the small populations supported especially in the arid and semi-arid parts? Some attempt at cost-benefit analysis of the *approach* taken by the project needs to be included in order to make a confident assessment of the likelihood of wider uptake of the project outputs.
4. In the Project Framework, the expected outcomes are merely a more generalized statement of the expected outputs. In one outcome there is an attempt to quantify what the project will produce, but these targets look to be more appropriate for expected outputs. Outcomes should be the broad beneficial changes to which the project should be able to claim some credit but which may only occur well downstream, whereas Outputs are the project's deliverables within the timeframe of the funding. Outputs should, where possible, be quantified and time-bound. UNDP may wish to revise the project framework to reflect the difference between Outcomes and Outputs and to guide project managers in what may be directly expected of the project and to what bigger picture the project should contribute.
5. The PIF lists in Section A1 five 'environmental benefits'. There is double-counting for four of these: carbon stocks and C-Sequestration; soil loss and sediment loads. The fifth appears to be a biodiversity conservation benefit, although it is worded somewhat obscurely and the PIF makes little attempt elsewhere to show that the project has multiple focal benefits. STAP would prefer to see a more robust and scientifically-justified list of GEBs in terms of expected GEF impacts that are (a) able to be monitored and/or measured, and (b) reflect accepted global environmental issues such as ecosystem goods and services, as well as GEF-5 land degradation indicators such as land cover. Alternatively, the project proponents might look at the UNCCD's impact indicators, since these will be used nationally for reporting to the Convention.
6. STAP is concerned that the project proposal does not present any baseline analysis, other than in very generalized, qualitative and unverifiable terms. There is no obvious intention of identifying a baseline at the start of the project, from which impact may be assessed. Project 'impacts' are specified more in terms of activities accomplished.
7. Related to the lack of any quantitative baseline, there is no apparent intention to monitor impact. At the very least, it should be expected that a project partner will measure changes in carbon stocks on rangeland and forest, and assess also changes in land cover. Biodiversity surveys might also be appropriate, as well as changes in key attributes of semi-arid ecosystems such as water use and availability.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Consent</b>	<p>STAP acknowledges that on scientific/technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasizing any issues that could be improved.</p> <p><u>Follow up:</u> The GEF Agency is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project prior to submission of the final document for CEO endorsement.</p>
<b>2. Minor revision required.</b>	<p>STAP has identified specific scientific/technical challenges, omissions, or opportunities that should be discussed by the project proponents during project development.</p> <p><u>Follow up:</u> One or more options are open to STAP and the GEF Agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) GEF Agency should discuss the issues with STAP to clarify them and possible solutions.</li> <li>(ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the GEF Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP's recommended actions.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Major revision required</b>	<p>STAP has identified significant scientific or technical challenges or omissions in the PIF and recommends significant improvements to project design.</p> <p><u>Follow up:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(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.</li> <li>(ii) In its request for CEO endorsement, the Agency will report on actions taken in response to STAP concerns.</li> </ul>