

# 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: March 17, 2016  
Screener: Guadalupe Duron  
Panel member validation by: Brian Child; Annette Cowie  
Consultant(s):

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

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9193
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Kazakhstan
PROJECT TITLE:	Conservation and Sustainable Management of Key Globally Important Ecosystems for Multiple Benefits
GEF AGENCIES:	UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture
GEF FOCAL AREA:	Multi Focal Area

### 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 acknowledges UNDP's proposal on "Conservation and sustainable management of key globally important ecosystems for multiple benefits" in Kazakhstan. The project seeks to improve the status and management of key ecosystems in arid, riparian, forest and grassland areas "which are threatened due to several reasons. A wide range of activities are proposed, including landscape management, integrating economic and environmental evaluation into national planning, creating an enabling environment for improved local management of resources, and enhanced enforcement of wildlife. STAP appreciates that the proposal seeks to address the root causes of ecosystem degradation, however it will be essential to improve on the logic and other design aspects so the project outcomes are realistic and better linked to its parent program Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program.

To strengthen the project design the following points are proposed:

1. STAP recommends strengthening the links between the activities, outputs, outcomes and the objective. For example, the problem statement (drivers and root causes of degradation) mixes minor issues (e.g. no census of snow leopards), with symptoms (e.g. land conversion) and causes (highly centralized governance, lack of property rights, economic growth); therefore, the concept does not provide a coherent cause-effect logic for how these are related. Similarly, the pathways whereby SFM/SLM indicators and data will be translated into ecosystem outcomes need to be developed "in addition to the pathways linking protected areas, landscape management and snow leopard conservation that are needed to reach the objective.

Articulating a theory of change in the project design can help address this issue, and strengthen the likelihood of achieving the proposed global environmental benefits. When developing the theory of change, the following issues should be addressed: i) involve stakeholders in the development of the theory of change; ii) explore whether the objective can be achieved through incremental changes (adaptation) to the social-ecological system, or whether transforming the system will be required; iii) develop impact pathways

that are needed to achieve the changes required to meet the objective (step ii); and, iv) adjust the theory of change to capture learning, including learning that evolves through adaptive management.

UNDP might consider using the Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) to develop the theory of change, and identify options for adaptive management. RAPTA will be soon available at [www.stapgef.org](http://www.stapgef.org), or by writing to the STAP Secretary, Thomas Hammond: [Thomas.Hammond@unep.org](mailto:Thomas.Hammond@unep.org)

2. STAP suggests reducing significantly the scope of the project initially, and expanding as experience is gained. For instance, the project might focus on:

- using the practical development of a protected area (or a small number of protected areas) to build the capacity of the protected area agency, strengthen guidelines, policy, and legislation on protected areas;
- developing a pilot community land use project in the buffer zones of these protected areas, using an on-ground process to develop national guidelines and capacities. It is likely that Kazakhstan could quickly adopt and adapt a well-tested approach, such as the Namibian CBNRM initiative which combines tourism and hunting to incentivize local communities to rehabilitate habitat and protect wildlife, including endangered species;
- developing a snow leopard conservation program that is linked to the above.

In this way, the project develops communities-of-practice that learn by doing at field level, but are sufficiently connected at the national level to unlock barriers and institutionalize lessons and capacities. This approach might have more impact - start small and use pilot initiatives to identify and address root causes, barriers and opportunities.

3. STAP recommends researching what similar conservation/integrated economic and environment management approaches have worked elsewhere, particular in Central Asia. Learning from past, or on-going, projects (including other projects in the parent program) will strengthen the evidence used to design the project and underpin the sustainability of the proposed activities. For example, the project developers might look into the lessons and successes on creating an enabling environment for community and private investments (output 2.2.2) in South Africa and Namibia – two countries with extensive experience on these issues. Additionally, STAP recommends drawing on best practice of community rhino/wildlife management in Namibia for output 3.

4. For the activities on ecosystem restoration and ecosystem valuation (Component 2), more information, and analyses, will be needed. Specifically, it will be important to detail how ecosystem valuations will translate into land use incentives, and outcomes in Kazakhstan.

5. Additionally, for component 2 the project developers could consult the following paper that characterizes the socioeconomic and agro-environmental challenges on recultivating abandoned croplands. The paper also focuses on the trade-offs between carbon stocks and biodiversity conservation, which might be useful information for designing the project. Meyfroidt, P., et al. "Drivers, constraints and trade-offs associated with recultivating abandoned cropland in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan". *Global Environmental Change* 37 (2016) 1-15.

6. Component 3 as it stands is currently very broad, seeking to achieve outcomes on law enforcement, tourism and hunting management, ecological monitoring, and cross-border participation. A less ambitious focus is more likely to be successful.

7. STAP recommends defining a multi-stakeholder plan that is built on a stakeholder analysis. This will be important because the project will work across sectors and scales, which increases the chances that diverse knowledge and governance arrangements will exist. Accounting for these issues is important for achieving the project outcomes that focus on strengthening landscape approaches for ecosystem management.

Additionally, the stakeholder analysis and plan will assist with understanding which stakeholders should be engaged, at what stage and for what purpose(s) (e.g. to achieve what outputs and outcomes). A well functioning stakeholder plan will also be important to deliver knowledge among stakeholders and to establish a learning framework for the project. Currently, this information is not described in the PIF.

8. For all three components, it will be important to describe in detail the social, economic, and biophysical aspects. This will determine the social-ecological structure and function of the target areas which will be important to integrating protected areas into the wider landscape (Component 1); identifying areas of potential conflict between biodiversity conservation and agricultural/livestock production activities (Component 1); enabling and engaging communities in ecosystem restoration activities such as reforming

land tenure, timber and non-timber markets, improved pasture management(Component 2); and revise hunting and tourism practices (Component 3), and will guide the identification of which of these many proposed interventions are the highest priority.

9. Additionally, STAP recommends defining the spatial scale of each intervention (e.g. community) and their relationships with the scales above (e.g. watershed); and below (e.g. household) to understand the full effect of the intervention. For example, the project intends to modify, or put in place, an enabling environment to engage widely communities and the private sector in ecosystem management in the wider landscape (Component 2). Understanding the links between scales will assist in analyzing the full effect of legislative and regulatory instruments and how they need to be modified in order to achieve the intended outcome.

Analyzing cross scale interactions also will enable the project outcomes to be better linked to its parent program "Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program".

10. STAP recommends building a knowledge management and learning component into the project, or linking it to the program learning. It can benefit the monitoring and assessment of the project and program.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Concur</b>	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.
<b>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</b>	<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.</p> <p>(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>
<b>3. Major issues to be considered during project design</b>	<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>