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 01, 2015 Screener: Virginia Gorsevski

Panel member validation by: Brian Child
Consultant(s):

I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*
FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID: 6958
PROJECT DURATION :
COUNTRIES : Kyrgyz Republic
PROJECT TITLE: Conservation of Globally Important Biodiversity and Association Land and Forest Resources of Western Tian Shan Forest Mountain Ecosystems and Support to Sustainable Livelihoods
GEF AGENCIES: UNDP
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:
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 welcomes the submission of this concept for a project intending to promote biodiversity and land and forest resources in Central Asia.

This $3.988 m project aims to (1) create two national parks (65,705+36,780ha), upgrade status of High Conservation Value Forests (25,000ha) and strengthen PA management capacity (2) improve land management in PA buffer zones (50,000ha) and improve land management in two districts (1,163,100 ha) including restoring degraded rangelands (65,000ha) and establishing an alternative livelihoods program for 20% of the rural population and (3) adopt international standards of monitoring and law enforcement for Snow Leopards.

The project objective is "To promote landscape approach to protection of internationally important biodiversity, land and forest resources in Western Tian Shan in Kyrgyzstan." This implies that the objective is to promote an approach and should be reworded such that the focus is on protection of threatened species and improvements in land and forest resources using a landscape approach.

The biodiversity value of this project is well justified, and the barriers including weak protection of PAs, unsustainable land and forest management, and the need for effective Snow Leopard management are identified. However, given the number of similar Snow Leopard-related projects, the evidence base remains weak in terms of:

- the extent and economics of land uses and alternative land uses,

- the extent of wildlife in the region, and its economic potential through tourism, trophy hunting and so on. For example: How many animals are there? What is their trophy value? How many tourists are there, and how much do they spend?

- little mention is made of the benefits provided by protected areas, their associated financial costs and sustainability, and generally the need to make "a case for PAs and biodiversity",

- the baseline hardly discusses the form and capacity of local institutions and communities, including issues related to individual and collective forms of land use tenure, and land use planning mechanisms, even though the project will clearly need to work through these institutions, and the document later mentions

issues of land property rights, local self-governance bodies, and associations of pasture and water uses (stakeholders section).

If this is not covered in some detail by the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Program (GSLECP), there is justification for specifically developing such an evidence base to support the significant number of Snow Leopard projects that are being developed, including PA economic and financial strategies, wildlife as a land use, land use more generally, and the governance and management of land at individual and collective scales.

Further, there is clearly an opportunity to use some combination of CBNRM with sustainable trophy hunting and ecotourism, but the information on such options remains sparse. Is this an opportunity that is being missed? Would a regional CBNRM initiative, as worked quite well in southern Africa (Suich and Child 2009), be appropriate for this region?

The section on root causes is adequate, albeit noting concerns about the need for a stronger evidence base. The section on barriers is also adequate, though an analysis of land management institutions and governance (e.g. planning legislation, community tenure arrangements and rights to use resources, mechanisms/institutions for collective action, especially at the local level) needs to be added, possibly at PPG stage.

The baseline scenario reflects a growing commitment to PA and Snow Leopard conservation, though the PA agency appears to be under-funded with most money allocated to salaries and insufficient to operations (20%). A rule of thumb is that people are paid to sit unless the operational budget exceeds 45% of the total budget.

The alternatives scenario is sound, combining PA and landscape management. Component 1 is well conceptualized, establishing two new PAs and strengthening the management of four existing PAs. Obviously, this needs to be carefully budgeted in the PPG. Component 2 likewise needs to be further developed in the PPG, especially the practical details involved in establishing buffer zones and corridors, as this may be more complex than envisioned. However, the alternative livelihoods activities are not well analyzed, and are based more on hope than a targeted strategy, stating merely that 20% of communities will be assisted to implement alternative livelihoods through micro-credit, with a possibility that this includes ecotourism.

The PIF/PPG need to be much clearer on how an alternative livelihoods strategy will be operationalized. What is the evidence base that alternative livelihoods reduces pressure on biodiversity, noting that the assumption that increasing income from new enterprises leads to reduced degradation through normal agricultural/livestock practices is highly questionable â€“ in fact, people may use increased profits to expand these activities. The PPG should be much clearer on how micro-credit will improve land use, and perhaps should consider a more targeted approach to people using marginal habitats that are important for biodiversity, such as wildlife-based CBNRM?

Component 3 is standard, but given the relatively limited budgets the PPG should seek to be innovative in terms of monitoring. Note that the need to involve stakeholders is mentioned in the narrative, but the Project Description for Component 3 is largely focused on PA agencies. This needs to be clarified.

Finally, overall the PIF is well presented. However, it would be much easier to follow and much stronger with the inclusion of appropriate maps. In addition, some terms are not defined, e.g. KBAs, aimaks.

Suich, H. and B. Child, Eds. (2009). Evolution & Innovation in Wildlife Conservation. Parks and Game Ranches to Transfrontier Conservation Areas. London, Earthscan.

STAP advisory response	*Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed*
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	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed

considered during project design	with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to: (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. 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.
3. Major issues to be considered during project design	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: (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. The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns. 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.