

Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID	10367	
Project Title	Sustainable Forest and Rangelands Management in the Dryland Ecosystems of Uzbekistan	
Date of Screening	18-Nov-19	
STAP member Screener	Graciela Metternicht	
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron	
STAP Overall Assessment		<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design. STAP welcomes FAO project "Sustainable Forest and Rangelands Management in the Dryland Ecosystem of Uzbekistan". STAP is pleased the project will apply the land degradation neutrality (LDN) framework to achieve the project's goal. To complement the LDN framework, STAP encourages the application of its LDN guidelines, recently completed. The LDN guidelines can be accessed at: http://www.stapgef.org/guidelines-land-degradation-neutrality STAP believes the project can be strengthened in several ways. Firstly, the project needs to develop a theory of change, including identifying assumptions, and feedback loops (positive and negative) between the variables. STAP's primer on theory of change is one source that can be used: http://www.stapgef.org/publications Secondly, climate change is expected to increase temperatures in Uzbekistan, and rainfall is expected to be variable across different agroecological and climate zones. The project needs to use climate data to design its interventions. Below, STAP recommends how to design the project based on the projected climate change risks, and its effect on natural resources (e.g. water shortage). Guidance on methods is also provided. Lastly, STAP recommends strengthening component 3 focused on monitoring, evaluation and knowledge. Currently, knowledge is focused on the development of products, and their outreach. STAP encourages FAO to think of knowledge management as part of the theory of change - that is, confirming and, or, revisiting the theory of change as needed - including to respond to assumptions - to generate learning, and knowledge, and reach the project objective.</p>
Part I: Project Information		
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes. The various drivers of unsustainable pasture management are described, though hardly any reference is provided to substantiate the claims around drivers, pressures and state of the environment. The description of the drivers and pressures is well linked to the objective of achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN). As a multi-faceted approach, the LDN conceptual framework is considered a valuable methodology to address across scales the drivers of degradation, and improve the efficiency and productivity of the land systems this project will address.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes. The components support the objective.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	

	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	Yes. The outcomes seek to improve soil organic carbon through a "...a strengthened national policies and planning processes at multiple levels to support SLM in production landscapes with focus on pastures". Carbon sequestration will be achieved through improved sustainable land and forest management practices.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	Yes - if the project activities and outcomes are monitored, and adaptive management takes place as needed. That is, if component 3 is implemented effectively.
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Yes.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe:		
1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	Yes. To complement the problem context, the project developers may wish to use the following paper describing challenges associated with water management and soil salinization in the target area: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2017.11.043 "Status quo and present challenges of the sustainable use and management of water and land resources in Central Asian irrigation zones - The example of the Navoi region (Uzbekistan)"
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, the barriers are well described. In the complete project, STAP recommends adding the citations (e.g. IPCC paper on land, page 11) and references to other publications to support the barrier analysis.
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	Does not apply.
2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	The methodology for identifying the baseline is defined clearly.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	The project will have a quantifiable baseline once the LDN methodology is applied.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes.
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	Does not apply.
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	In section 1 (project description) and section 6 (coordination), STAP recommends describing lessons from relevant projects. Currently, the projects are identified briefly in section 6, but the lessons are not described.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	This information is currently absent in the PIF.

3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	Sustainable and pasture and forest management using the landscape approach is required to restore the vast drylands of Uzbekistan and to increase the productivity and efficiency of the livestock sector. SLM, including sustainable forest management, can prevent and reduce land degradation, maintain land productivity, and sometimes reverse the adverse impacts of climate change on land degradation. Using an LDN approach can avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, at scales from individual farms to entire watersheds, can provide cost effective, immediate, and long-term benefits to communities and support several SDGs with co-benefits for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. The project will therefore promote SLM/SFM and landscapes restoration for achieving LDN commitments of Uzbekistan. Moreover, using the landscape approach to integration across sectors and scales increases the chance of maximising co-benefits and minimising trade-offs. The project will meet this objective through implementation of three interlinked components that will strengthen the enabling environment for SLM/SFM to achieve LDN, and scale out successful SLM/SFM practices in the target landscape. This will be underpinned by strengthened knowledge management that will facilitate further scaling up and out at the national level of LDN.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	Strengthening policies on LDN and landscape management at the sub-national and national level, combined with sustainable land and forest management and monitoring and evaluation of these interventions are expected to lead to the goal of achieving LDN. The project components describe the correct sequence of events, and STAP recommends the theory of change includes stakeholder needs analysis.
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	See above for a broad description.
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	No, the assumptions are not defined.
	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	No, the project does not mention adaptation needs as a result of climate change, or other stressors.
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Yes, if the project activities and outcomes are monitored, and frequently checked whether they are on the desired impact pathway.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	Does not apply.
6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	Yes.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Yes.
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	Yes. 13,000 ha restored. SLM and SFM cover 225,000 ha of land (25,000 ha of irrigated agricultural land; 100,000 ha of forest land; and 100,000 ha of rangelands), and sequestration of 6,1Mton of CO2eq thanks to SLM/SFM.

	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	Yes. LDN indicators will be used to measure and monitor global environmental benefits. However, the STAP recommends more clarity in the indicators to be used to ascertain if the estimated CO2eq are to be achieved. The LDN conceptual framework, includes a module to monitor progress. STAP recommends the adoption of sub-national, complementary indicators for monitoring implementation as suggested in the LDN Conceptual framework.
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	These activities have not been specified. STAP offers guidance on addressing climate risk and resilience in section 5.
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	Yes, the project is innovative. LDN methods will be used to measure and monitor project activities and outcomes. In addition, LDN will be applied to as a restoration method balancing gains and losses within the same land types, while monitoring for land productivity and soil organic carbon. Given the project identifies the private sector as a group of stakeholders that are important to this project, the STAP recommends exploring innovative methods of finance such as public-private partnerships. The section on 'private sector engagement' provides indication of the latter, though it can be enhanced. STAP also recommends cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences with the project that FAO proposes for Armenia, as several proposed activities are similar (e.g. use of value chain)
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	Yes. LDN will be used to scale landscape management across geographies. More elaboration is needed on the approach to be adopted to ensure effective scaling up among institutional actors.
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	Possibly incremental adaptation. The PIF does not describe the type of change that is required.
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		Different types of maps land use change, and land degradation are provided in the annex, though some of them are of poor quality. STAP recommends providing the geo-referencing information where the project interventions will take place. Currently, the coordinates are missing.
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities. If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	a very general list of relevant stakeholders is provided. As per LDN methodology, STAP recommends the list is revised as part of the preparatory activities that 'set the stage' for implementation of LDN interventions (enabling environment).
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	STAP recommends describing the stakeholders' roles in relation to the project outcomes. Additionally, it would be valuable to identify how the different stakeholders will contribute to learning and knowledge generated by the project interventions.

<p>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/ tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Not yet. However, STAP is pleased that a gender specialist will be involved in the project development to do a gender analysis of the project interventions.</p>
	<p>Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?</p>	<p>During the gender analysis, STAP recommends for the gender analysis to consider whether the participation of an important stakeholder group is being hindered - and what measures will be taken to address the obstacles.</p>
<p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?</p>	
	<p>Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?</p>	<p>Yes. The project developers are encouraged to describe the climate projections (temperature and precipitation) for Uzbekistan - particularly for the intervention area. The PIF provides some climate data but it is uncertain whether it is for the country, or the project area. STAP also recommends for the project developers to consider: 1) the period of time the intervention is expected to contribute to global environmental benefits, and how the activities may be affected by climate change; 2) how each intervention will be impacted by climate variability, or weather-related disasters (e.g. droughts); and, 3) how might climate, and non-climate stressors (e.g. social changes mentioned in the PIF), interact to exacerbate climate risks? The project proponents may wish to refer to the World Bank's Climate Knowledge Portal to obtain climate project data for designing the project: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/uzbekistan Similarly, the project developers may wish to refer to U.S. AID's Climate Risk and Management tool: https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool; and STAP's guidance on climate risk assessment: http://www.stapgef.org/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening</p>
	<p>For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p>	<p>STAP recommends addressing the questions below during the project design in addition to the questions raised above on climate risks.</p>
	<p>· How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?</p>	
	<p>· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?</p>	

	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	Yes, it appears as if the project is connecting to relevant initiatives. It is uncertain, however, how the knowledge and learning from these projects will be used to design this new project. STAP recommends to describe clearly how knowledge and learning from past, or on-going, initiatives will be used in this new project.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	Partly. The projects are recognized, but the learning derived from them is not clear.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	No.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	STAP encourages (above) to embed lessons from previous initiatives into the design of this project.
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	No or it is not apparent in the PIF.
8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	The PIF describes mainly products and outreach based on lessons learned. In addition to this activity, STAP encourages the proponents to consider how knowledge will be used for adaptive management purposes, and for scaling-up results.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	Currently, the PIF does not describe a knowledge management plan that addresses scaling up results and lessons. STAP encourages the project proponents to elaborate a knowledge management plan that goes beyond communication and outreach of best practices.
STAP advisory response	Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed	
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.	
	<i>* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that "STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design."</i>	
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	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:	

	(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 proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.	