

STAP guidelines for screening GEF projects

Part I: Project Information	Response
GEF ID	10533
Project Title	Degraded Natural Forest Use Land Restoration and Management in Typical Water and Solid Erosion of China
Date of Screening	May 8, 2020
STAP member screener	Graciela Metternicht
STAP secretariat screener	Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment and Rating	<p>Minor issues to be considered during project design.</p> <p>STAP acknowledges UNDP’s project “Degraded Natural Forest Use Land Restoration and Management in Typical Water and Solid Erosion of China”. The project seeks to mainstream sustainable forest landscape restoration into national and local policies and practices in the targeted sites, in tandem advancing LDN in the selected sites.</p> <p>STAP is pleased the project will emphasize continuous monitoring and learning on forest restoration. As the project team assesses the effect of restoration interventions, STAP recommends that restoring the multi-functionality of landscapes is emphasized as an outcome. This perspective will assist in maximizing environmental benefits, such as biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem services – which are essential for ecosystem resilience and long-term adaptive capacity. An emphasis on landscapes, rather than forests, is also recommended because it is inclusive of native pastures and grasses – and not only trees.</p> <p>STAP recommends developing a systems-based theory of change to support multi-functionality landscape management. A systems analysis can help plan for desired and undesired change, and assist in ameliorating many of the risks (climate and non-climate risks) identified in the PIF. STAP’s technical guidelines on land degradation neutrality (published in April 2020) and STAP’s theory of change primer (published in December 2019) are two</p>

	<p>useful resources that can assist the project team design landscape restoration activities based on systems analysis.</p> <p>Below, STAP offers recommendations on how to improve the project design.</p>	
Part I: Project Information B. Indicative Project Description Summary	What STAP looks for	Response
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes, the objective is defined clearly, and consistently linked to the problem statement.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	<p>Yes, the activities support the project objective. STAP recommends the application of spatial planning in the design of component 2. Recent applied research shows there are benefits in applying the spatial characteristics of degraded, or deforested, land to design restoration efforts. Refer to: Zhang, D., & Yin, R. (2019). Spatial characteristics of degraded land and their implications to the design and implementation of landscape restoration programs: West China as an example. <i>Forest Policy and Economics</i>, 107, 101925</p> <p>Further guidance on the use of satellite imagery and other geospatial tools in support of PPG are available in the recent STAP Primer on Earth Observation.</p>
Outcomes	<p>A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.</p> <p>Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits?</p>	Yes, the outcomes focus on global environmental outcomes.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	The benefits are likely to be generated with careful monitoring.
Outputs	<p>A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project.</p> <p>Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?</p>	Yes, outputs are likely to contribute to outcomes.

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?	<p>Yes, the problem is well defined. The drivers of deforestation and land degradation are explained, as so is the context influencing the problems in several of the target sites.</p> <p>Additionally, STAP recommends describing the climate change projections for the country, or for the target sites if this information is available. Climate information will help specify further the problem.</p>
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	Yes, the PIF describes the barriers. STAP recommends identifying and validating the assumptions, which includes an analysis of the barriers, and enablers, to achieve the short-term outcomes.
	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?	<p>Yes, the PIF includes a narrative baseline, describing on-going, future, and past initiatives on LDN targets, soil conservation, land management, and biodiversity conservation, which this project will build on.</p> <p>STAP recommends considering the factors that affect the enabling environment for LDN. The recent publication of the UNCCD-SPI provides lessons and recommendations in that regard: P.H. Verburg, G. Metternicht, C. Allen, N. Debonne, M. Akhtar-Schuster, M. Inácio da Cunha, Z. Karim, A. Pilon, O. Raja, M. Sánchez Santivañez, and A. Şenyaz. 2019. <i>Creating an Enabling Environment for Land Degradation Neutrality and its Potential Contribution to Enhancing Well-being, Livelihoods and the Environment</i>. A Report</p>

		of the Science-Policy Interface. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn, Germany.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	Core indicators will be assigned during the project design.
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	Yes, the baseline is sufficiently robust at this stage.
	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	Partly. In addition to the description of the associated baseline projects, it would be valuable to specify how learning from each baseline project will contribute to this GEF project.
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	During the project design, lessons from previous projects will influence the design of the PES activity. Other lessons from previous projects will also influence this initiative.
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	A preliminary theory of change for the project is: "The proposed alternative will render policy makers at the central level in China aware of the benefits of a multi-level governance and landscape approach to NFUL restoration. To achieve this, the project will undertake four components: i.) national, provincial and local policies updated to bridge the policy and regulatory gaps for NFUL in China; ii) restoration of degraded NFUL protecting ecosystems services and improving livelihood of local communities through improved management in the project targeted landscapes; iii) development and emplacement of innovative financing mechanisms for SFM, FLR and LDN of NFUL in China; and, iv) awareness raising, knowledge management and M&E."

	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	A theory of change will be developed during the project design.
	What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	See above.
	Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	<p>The theory of change will be developed during the project design. STAP recommends for the final project document to include a theory of change narrative and figure, explaining the causal link between the long-term outcomes. STAP also recommends defining the assumptions, which includes a barrier analysis (and identifying enablers of change).</p> <p>STAP's theory of change primer: https://www.stagef.org/theory-change-primer</p>
	Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	<p>Yes. The project will establish a monitoring system in each demonstration site on forest restoration (component 2). The project will use the learning from the sites' monitoring to assess the effectiveness of restoration interventions in maintaining functional landscapes, and embed this learning (data and feedback) to component 1 (review and establish as needed statutes on forest landscape restoration in national forest land use).</p> <p>In addition to this text, STAP recommends specifying in the project document that managing for climate risks (floods and droughts) will require adaptations to the project, which is likely to involve different scenarios (or impact pathways) than what is originally conceived. This is important because the demonstration pilot sites are in five different bio-geographic zones that may be affected differently by climatic events. STAP recommends interventions be assessed for climatic vulnerability (including sensitivity, exposure and adaptive capacity).</p>
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	Yes, with careful monitoring and a good theory of change.

baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing		
	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/adaptation benefits, and are they measurable?	<p>Yes, the global environmental benefits are articulated clearly. Indicators will be provided in the final project document.</p> <p>When designing the project, assessing for restoration opportunities, and managing trade-offs between benefits, STAP recommends applying its LDN technical guidelines released in April 2020, which are more detailed than earlier versions of the guidelines. The technical guidelines can be found at: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/LDN%20Technical%20Report_web%20version.pdf</p> <p>Additionally, STAP recommends using adaptive governance approaches, to build stakeholders' capacity and agency. Adaptive approaches focus on analyzing the social, institutional, economic, and ecological foundations of multi-governance levels to achieve the desired change – in this case, achieving forest landscape restoration. Adaptive governance can also facilitate scaling deep – a focus on understanding social systems to scale deep. When developing the theory of change, STAP recommends relying on adaptive governance approaches to develop the theory of change. Useful resources on the use of adaptive governance in developing a theory of change are: https://www.stapgef.org/achieving-enduring-outcomes-gef-investment https://research.csiro.au/eap/rapta/</p>

		<p>The project team is recommended to think about the different climate stressors related to floods and drought (e.g. what are the key determinants affecting drought tolerance and long-term survival of the selected tree-species?) during the design of the project, and in the theory of change. The following paper may be helpful in the design of drought tolerant forest restoration interventions: Zhu, Shi-Dan, et al. "Drought tolerance traits predict survival ratio of native tree species planted in a subtropical degraded hilly area in South China." <i>Forest Ecology and Management</i> 418 (2018): 41-46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2017.09.016</p> <p>STAP also recommends that the team considers landscape restoration that includes native pastures, native grasslands, not only trees. The concept of mixed forest highlighted in the PIF could include a mix of forest and pastures in selected biomes. More to the point, mixed forest can include Environmental Plantings as done in drylands of Australia, and should include native species that maximize ecosystem services in the selected pilot areas. Examples of good research in this regard: Lu, Yang, Sailesh Ranjitkar, Rhett D. Harrison, Jianchu Xu, Xiaokun Ou, Xuelan Ma, and Jun He. "Selection of native tree species for subtropical forest restoration in Southwest China." <i>PloS one</i> 12, no. 1 (2017).</p>
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	Unclear. Suggest identifying the barriers and enablers to scaling in the theory of change.
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits explicitly defined?	Yes, global environmental benefits are defined.
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	In addition to listing the GEF core indicators related to sustainable land management (i.e. area under improved management and greenhouse gas mitigation), STAP suggests identifying indicators to monitor and track progress of the causal links in the theory of change. These indicators will test the

		<p>validity of the causal pathway, which requires the theory of change to be explicit about assumptions (e.g. indicators that validate the multi-dimensionality of forest restoration), barriers, and enablers of change. Therefore, indicators validating the impact pathway will complement the SMART indicators the project will identify for the logical framework.</p> <p>STAP recommends the use of global indicators of LDN and local indicators that can help to measure benefits of the proposed interventions.</p>
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	<p>During the project design, the project team will conduct a climate vulnerability assessment for each site to design climate resilience interventions. STAP recommends embedding the climate risks and stressors, as well as the enablers of change, into the theory of change.</p>
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?	<p>The project is innovative in applying forest land restoration measures focused on converting monoculture forests to mixed forests. Additionally, the project will pilot payment for ecosystem services, and will embed these initiatives in the Natural Forest Protection Program.</p> <p>Integrated land use planning is a key innovation of the project to achieve forest restoration, along with other environmental benefits (e.g. biodiversity conservation) and ecosystem services. STAP is pleased its primer on LDN was referenced in the PIF, and recommends for the project team to apply its technical LDN guidelines developed in April 2020: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/LDN%20Technical%20Report_web%20version.pdf</p> <p>Another useful resource is: Temperton, Vicky M., et al. "Step back from the forest and step up to the Bonn Challenge: how a broad ecological perspective can promote successful landscape</p>

		<p>restoration." <i>Restoration Ecology</i> 27.4 (2019): 705-719. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/rec.12989?af=R</p> <p>PES is an innovative instrument and recent literature can help designing PES in the frame of LDN interventions: Baumber, A., Berry, E., & Metternicht, G. (2019). Synergies between Land Degradation Neutrality goals and existing market-based instruments. <i>Environmental science & policy</i>, 94, 174-181.</p> <p>The assumption is that applying forest restoration (i.e. planting mixed species of trees), integrated land use planning, and financial mechanisms (i.e. payment for ecosystem services) will generate the knowledge and institutional conditions to scale deep (i.e. influence social systems) across temporal and spatial scales; thus, address the barriers (e.g. lack of community engagement). STAP recommends testing these causal links in a theory of change, and referring to its paper on durability and theory of change - where it lists principles that need attention to achieve scaling: https://www.stapgef.org/achieving-enduring-outcomes-gef-investment; https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p> <p>STAP recommends the PPG team explores the possibility of forest restoration along the lines of 'landscape restoration', that is, not limiting restoration to planting trees. Experiences of Australia and the 'carbon farming' initiative may be of interest as it promotes socio-economic benefits to communities, beyond environmental benefits. Baumber, A., Metternicht, G., Cross, R., Ruoso, L. E., Cowie, A. L., & Waters, C. (2019). Promoting co-benefits of carbon farming in Oceania: Applying and adapting approaches and</p>
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		metrics from existing market-based schemes. <i>Ecosystem Services</i> , 39, 100982.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	<p>In addition to scaling up (impacting national and local policies), and scaling out (restoration platforms and global initiatives), STAP recommends thinking how to influence rules, decisions, values (among other factors) in the targeted social-ecological systems.</p> <p>To achieve project's large-scale change, this involves influencing the complexity and variety that characterize social systems. Thus, considering how to scale deep will be important. The project team can refer to STAP's durability paper and the theory of change primer for guidance.</p>
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	<p>It is possible that both adaptation and transformational change will be required due to the drought and flooding. STAP encourages the project team to consider uncertainty to cope with the level of change that may take place. This requires considering systematically time scales and spatial scales when planning the interventions. A systems-based theory of change can do this as it targets how a social-ecological systems functions across scales. Refer to STAP's theory of change primer, which is a good resource for developing a theory of change based on systems analysis: https://www.stapgef.org/theory-change-primer</p>
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		<p>A map of the target sites is provided. The following STAP guidance on earth observation systems can assist in identifying geo-location during project preparation, which addresses recommendations by the IEO: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF%20EO%20Mainstreaming%20March2020%20Final%20200331-v3.0.pdf</p>
2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Yes, the PIF lists a variety of stakeholders which are essential to addressing the barriers and solving the problem.

<p>project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.</p> <p>If none of the above, please explain why.</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>STAP recommends the theory of change identify stakeholders that are relevant to overcome each of the implementation barriers.</p> <p>STAP recommends views and values of different stakeholders be included through multi-stakeholder consultations. The PIF mentions some landholders not valuing forest restoration. In this regard, some lessons to overcome this can be drawn from Dou, Yuehan, Lin Zhen, Xiubo Yu, Martha Bakker, Gerrit-Jan Carsjens, and Zhichao Xue. "Assessing the influences of ecological restoration on perceptions of cultural ecosystem services by residents of agricultural landscapes of western China." <i>Science of the Total Environment</i> 646 (2019): 685-695.</p>
	<p>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?</p>	<p>Preparing the concept note (i.e. PIF) involved key stakeholders, which are listed in the PIF. STAP is pleased that a stakeholder engagement plan will be developed during the project design. During the development of the plan, STAP recommends focusing attention on who will be affected by the interventions; and who needs to be involved in the design and implementation of the project. Who is involved may change depending on the learning and adaptation, or transformations, that take place during project implementation.</p> <p>Attention to stakeholders' values, governance arrangements (formal and informal), agents of change (individuals who can catalyze change), and other issues that enable social innovation and drive action towards the project objective.</p>
<p>3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.</p> <p>Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender</p>	<p>Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?</p>	<p>Gender differentiated risks and opportunities will be assessed during the project development. STAP is pleased that a gender analysis and action plan will be developed during the project design. STAP encourages the project team to include in this assessment gender differentiated risks and</p>

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no/tbd</p>		<p>opportunities. Additionally, STAP recommends considering whether the full participation of an important stakeholder group is hindered as a result of the gender analysis, and describing how will the project address these obstacles.</p> <p>STAP recommends building on lessons guidelines from the UNCCD GM, the IUCN and the UNWomen:</p> <p>UN Women, Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and IUCN (2019). A Manual for Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes http://catalogue.unccd.int/1223_Gender_Manual.pdf</p> <p>Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. 2019. Land Degradation Neutrality Interventions to Foster Gender Equality. Bonn, Germany http://catalogue.unccd.int/1222_UNCCD_gender_briefing_note.pdf</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>Unsure as the gender analysis will be done during the project design. STAP recommended (above) to give due consideration of how a gender analysis may hinder the full participation of an important stakeholder group.</p> <p>Additionally, the project has identified as a risk affecting adversely the rights of ethnic minority. As a mitigation strategy, the project will carry out a comprehensive assessment on rights with a focus on gender and ethnic minorities.</p>
<p>5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project</p>	<p>Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project? For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:</p>	<p>The PIF summarizes very well the risks the project may face, including risks preventing communities' full engagement in the project, lack of scoping appropriately the purpose of the project, invasive alien risks, climate risks, among others.</p>

<p>objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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? ● Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? ● 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? 	<p>In addition to the climate risks identified in the PIF, STAP recommends addressing the climate resilience measures described to the left. STAP also encourages the project developers to continually test causal links, assumptions, and risks in the theory of change. This process will enable the project team to assess for the resilience of the system – identify how, and where, the system is weak, or strong, in its capacity to deal with disturbances.</p> <p>Additionally, the project team may find it useful to look at the following resources: STAP’s screening guidelines: https://www.stagef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF%20AGENCY%20RETREAT%20Mar-Apr%202020.pdf World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/ U.S. Agency for International Development Climate Risk Screening and Management Tools: https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-screening-management-tool</p> <p>STAP recommends the SPI publication A. Reichhuber, N. Gerber, A. Mirzabaev, M. Svoboda, A. López Santos, V. Graw, R. Stefanski, J. Davies, A. Vuković, M.A. Fernández García, C. Fiati and X. Jia. 2019. The Land-Drought Nexus: Enhancing the Role of Land-Based Interventions in Drought Mitigation and Risk Management. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn, Germany.</p>
<p>6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives</p>	<p>Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?</p>	<p>Yes, the project will build on the knowledge of other projects based on the baseline projects listed in the PIF, and described in the coordination section.</p>

	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	See above.
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	Yes, lessons from other projects will be used to develop this proposal.
	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	See above.
	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?	Yes, the project includes a component on monitoring (component 4). STAP recommends linking the theory of change (i.e. monitoring of short-term outcomes) to the monitoring component (i.e. monitoring of long-term outcomes).
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 knowledge strategy seeks to disseminate project learning through a website, and published material. The strategy also will focus on monitoring the project interventions to generate knowledge. STAP recommends considering knowledge management metrics, and specifying how the knowledge generated will influence scaling of results. In addition, it would be valuable to link the knowledge strategy to the theory of change to link the monitoring of short-term outcomes to long-term outcomes. STAP welcomes the inclusion of blended learning modes, through videos and social media, and recommends such instruments be tailored to the local context of the pilot areas.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	The project describes several methods to disseminate results and lessons. Detailed plans will be described in the project document.

Further literature recommended by STAP:

Restrepo, A. M. C., Yang, Y. R., Hamm, N. A., Gray, D. J., Barnes, T. S., Williams, G. M., ... & Clements, A. C. (2017). Land cover change during a period of extensive landscape restoration in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China. *Science of the total environment*, 598, 669-679.

Zhou, W., Li, J., & Yue, T. (2020). The Variation of Landscape and NPP of Main Pastoral Grasslands in China. In *Remote Sensing Monitoring and Evaluation of Degraded Grassland in China* (pp. 83-104). Springer, Singapore.

Feng, Qiang, Wenwu Zhao, Xiangping Hu, Yue Liu, Stefani Daryanto, and Francesco Cherubini. "Trading-off ecosystem services for better ecological restoration: A case study in the Loess Plateau of China." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 257 (2020): 120469.

Chai, Qinglin, Zhanying Ma, Qiqi An, Gao-Lin Wu, Xiaofeng Chang, Jiyong Zheng, and Guojie Wang. "Does Caragana korshinskii plantation increase soil carbon continuously in a water-limited landscape on the Loess Plateau, China?." *Land Degradation & Development* 30, no. 14 (2019): 1691-1698.

Brancalion, Pedro HS, and Robin L. Chazdon. "Beyond hectares: four principles to guide reforestation in the context of tropical forest and landscape restoration." *Restoration Ecology* 25, no. 4 (2017): 491-496.

Hao, Ruifang, Deyong Yu, Yupeng Liu, Yang Liu, Jianmin Qiao, Xue Wang, and Jinshen Du. "Impacts of changes in climate and landscape pattern on ecosystem services." *Science of the Total Environment* 579 (2017): 718-728.

Du, Bingzhen, Lin Zhen, Yunfeng Hu, Huimin Yan, Rudolf De Groot, and Rik Leemans. "Comparison of ecosystem services provided by grasslands with different utilization patterns in China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region." *Journal of Geographical Sciences* 28, no. 10 (2018): 1399-1414.

Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. 2019. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting: Initial findings and lessons learned. Bonn, Germany. http://catalogue.unccd.int/1217_newLDN_TSP_Initial_Findings_191108.pdf

Notes

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.
	* 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 <i>“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.