



MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE **BUILD BACK A BLUE** **AND STRONGER MEDITERRANEAN PROJECT** FINAL REPORT

Prepared by Altai Consulting for Conservation International | August 2025



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GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

GEF Project ID	10685
Project name	Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean
GEF financing	\$5,000,000
Planned and materialized co-financing	Planned: \$40,386,537 Realized (as of June 30, 2024): \$17,568,052 (43%)
Key objectives	Strong, effective and sustainable management of Mediterranean MPAs to address global changes and to provide long-term socio-ecological benefits in the Mediterranean in a post COVID recovery context
GEF Agency	Conservation International
Project countries	Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia
Key dates	Start date: September 9, 2022 Expected completion date: January 31, 2028
Name of the Project Executing Agency(ies)	The MedFund MedPAN
Governance and staffing structure	<p>CI-GEF team consists of four members: a project lead, an assistant project lead, a grants manager, an ESMF manager</p> <p>The MedFund team consists of four members: an overall lead, a finance and grants lead, two technical leads (geographic coordinators)</p> <p>The MedPAN team consists of six members: an overall lead, an MPA support manager, a scientific manager, a financial lead, a communication and logistic support officer, a communication manager.</p> <p>The project Steering Committee gathers GEF operational focal points, SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, Prince Albert II Foundation and the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), The MedFund, MedPAN, CI-GEF.</p>

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACG	<i>Association de la Continuité des Générations</i>
AJEM	<i>Association Jlij pour l'Environnement Marin</i>
AGIR	<i>Association de Gestion Intégrée des Ressources</i>
AGM	Accountability & Grievance Mechanism
ANEF	National agency for water and forests
APAL	<i>Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral</i>
ASPEN	<i>Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Écologique et Naturel du Cap Bon</i>
CAFE	Consortium of African Funds for the Environment
CaMPAM	Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network
CBD	Convention for Biological Diversity
CEPF	Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund
CI	Conservation International
CLAG	Local Support Management Committees
CMI	Center for Mediterranean Integration
COP	Conference of Parties
CTF	Conservation Trust Fund
ESMF	Environmental Social Management Framework
E&S	Environmental & Social
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
GMP	Gender Management Plan
GREPOM	<i>Groupe de Recherche pour la Protection des Oiseaux Marins</i>
INAT	<i>Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie</i>
IUCN MED	International Union for Conservation of Nature – Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated
IW:LEARN	International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
LME	Large Marine Ecosystem
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEA	Management Effectiveness Assessment
MAN	<i>Méditerranée Action Nature</i>
MCPA	Marine and Coastal Protected Area
MMN	Marine Manager Network
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MPN	Mediterranean Posidonia Network
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAPA	National Agency of Protected Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECM	Other Effective Conservation Measure
PIM	Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative

PIR	Progress Implementation Report
ProDoc	Project Document
RAMPAO	West African Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas
RAPA	Regional Agency of Protected Area
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SPAMI	Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance
SPA/RAC	Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre
SPAW/RAC	Regional Activity Centre for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToC	Theory of Change
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOC	United Nations Ocean Conference
WIO-MPAN	Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Network
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Build Back a Blue and Stronger Mediterranean” project, funded by the GEF and running from 2022 to 2027, supports six countries – Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, and Tunisia – with a total budget of \$45.4M, including a \$5M GEF grant. Implemented by CI and executed by The MedFund and MedPAN, the project aims to strengthen the management effectiveness of 20 MPAs. The MedFund is leading the sustainable funding component, while MedPAN is coordinating the capacity building initiatives as well as efforts to strengthen regional governance and cooperation.

Project Theory of Change

Although the context has evolved since the project preparation phase and no longer centers on post-COVID recovery, the ToC remains relevant, addressing persistent barriers to effective MPA management. The project builds on the complementary strengths of its executing partners. However, continued focus on priority activities is essential, and clearer strategies could help link the project more directly to sustainable fisheries and the broader blue economy.

Assessment of results

Progress towards outcomes and outputs was assessed according to GEF rating scale. Progress is generally on track, though some activities have faced delays and require close monitoring.

Table 1. Rating of progress towards outcomes and outputs

Outcomes & outputs	Rating / delivery status
Component 1 Sustainable financing support to core management costs of MPAs in the Mediterranean	
Outcome 1.1 The MedFund generates revenues from investments of an alliance of donors to support sustainable management effectiveness of 432,930 ha of MPAs	Satisfactory
Output 1.1.1 20 MPAs ¹ core management costs supported by 2027, covering 432,930 ha in 6 Mediterranean countries	On track
Component 2 Capacity building of MPAs managers and practitioners and knowledge sharing within the MPA community, for improved MPAs management effectiveness and financing	
Outcome 2.1 Enhanced capacities of managers and other stakeholders to effectively and sustainably manage 20 Mediterranean MPAs	Moderately satisfactory
Output 2.1.1 Managers and other stakeholders of 20 MPAs trained	Delayed
Output 2.1.2 MPA practitioners share MPA’s management and financing solutions at Mediterranean level	On track
Output 2.1.3 Three thematic working groups provide expertise to the MPA community	Delayed
Output 2.1.4 Key outreach materials are accessible to the Mediterranean MPA community	On track
Component 3 Stronger regional and national governance and cooperation & strategies to promote MPAs as solutions to address global changes and provide socio-ecological benefits	
Outcome 3.1 Operational regional mechanism supports the implementation of policy commitments towards MPAs in the Mediterranean, in particular the Barcelona Convention	Moderately unsatisfactory

¹ Nationally designated or under designation process

Output 3.1.1 A Post-2020 MPA Roadmap follow-up and monitoring mechanism is established	Delivered
Output 3.1.2 4th edition of the MPA Forum (2024) & mid-term evaluation of the Post 2020 Mediterranean MPAs Roadmap	Delayed
Outcome 3.2 Increased regional, sub-regional and national cooperation between MPA actors to jointly promote benefits and needs for effective and sustainable MPAs	Satisfactory
Output 3.2.1 Sub-regional and national networks of MPA managers established and/or strengthened	On track
Output 3.2.2 MPA communication and policy tools developed and disseminated through networks	On track
Outcome 3.3 Improved International cooperation between networks of MPA managers and conservation trust funds beyond the Mediterranean (e.g. Caribbean, West Africa, North America), to jointly promote benefits, needs and efficient mechanisms for effective and sustainable MPAs within key international policy-making processes	Moderately satisfactory
Output 3.3.1 Key policy tools jointly produced by networks of MPA managers beyond the Mediterranean	Modified
Output 3.3.2 An international alliance of networks of MPA managers and trust funds established	On track

The relevance of the project is highly satisfactory. Building on a previous GEF project, it aligns with CI-GEF priorities and national agendas, addressing key barriers like funding and capacity. It builds on the core expertise of The MedFund and MedPAN and offers strong potential for replication in other regions.

The effectiveness of the project at this stage is rated as moderately satisfactory. Despite some challenges in engaging more MPAs for funding and delays in some capacity-building activities – partly due to staff turnover within MedPAN and the multiple workstreams in parallel, the project has made solid foundational progress. Internal processes and partnerships are in place to accelerate delivery in the second half.

The project efficiency is rated as satisfactory. Designed to align closely with the missions of The MedFund and MedPAN, the project effectively leverages existing resources, structures, and partnerships to ensure smooth implementation. Most funds are directed to field activities. However, the broad scope of components 2 and 3 has stretched resources and somewhat led to dispersed efforts.

The project sustainability is rated as likely. As with efficiency, the project is well aligned with the long-term missions of its executing partners. Continued impact depends on managing political risks, securing sufficient capitalization of The MedFund, and aligning with MedPAN's revised strategy.

Overall project sustainability and key risks

Overall, project sustainability is rated as moderately likely. Five of the six risks identified in the ProDoc remain relevant, with an additional risk emerging around MedPAN's implementation capacity. The project's strong alignment with the core missions of The MedFund and MedPAN enhances synergies and long-term prospects. However, both organizations still require support to consolidate their structures.

Progress to impact

At this stage, the project demonstrates clear progress toward impact, with previous MedFund beneficiaries helping to illustrate expected outcomes.

Key intermediate results include the strengthening of The MedFund as a donor platform, the emergence of a skilled MPA manager community better positioned to attract future funding, the promotion of best

practices across and beyond the six countries, and the consolidation of co-management approaches at national level.

Long-term contributions include improved MPA management effectiveness – tracked through a dedicated tool and species-based monitoring protocols – alongside activities on fisheries that contribute to linking MPAs to socio-economic co-benefits. The project also produced a range of knowledge products that support learning, visibility, and replication.

Project governance, management and M&E systems

Governance and M&E systems are rated satisfactory. Monitoring tools have supported transparency and adaptive management, with timely reporting and integration of lessons learned. Strategic oversight has been effective, with no major issues reported.

Implementation and execution

Implementation by CI is rated highly satisfactory, marked by flexibility and consistent support.

Execution by The MedFund and MedPAN is satisfactory, leveraging their recognized expertise. Despite staff turnover at MedPAN, adaptive management and clear communication helped maintain continuity.

Environmental and social safeguards

Overall, the environmental and social safeguards are rated as moderately satisfactory.

The project developed key safeguards tools – Gender Mainstreaming Plan (GMP), Grievance Mechanism (AGM), and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) – which were enriched during implementation. However, environmental and social screening at the subgrantee (MPA) level remains insufficient and needs strengthening.

The MedFund and MedPAN have shown strong commitment to gender equity. Along with subgrantees, they also demonstrated strong capacity in engaging a diverse range of stakeholders. All grievances were minor and resolved effectively.

Key recommendations

Strategic recommendations	
SR1	Review the approach on training activities to ensure a multiplier effect of efforts
SR2	Strengthen technical collaboration with SPA/RAC and other regional partners, particularly in the area of capacity-building activities
SR3	Build synergies with small grants programmes to help MPAs cover preparatory actions and critical initial costs
SR4	Develop a strategy to better integrate sustainable fisheries and the broader blue economy into project design and implementation
SR5	Improve coherence and compatibility across different MPA management assessment tools
Operational recommendations	
OR1	Continue close monitoring of MedPAN’s strategic review process, and revise the workplan and role definitions as needed
OR2	Maintain engagement with high-level State representatives to align with national strategies and secure timely agreement signings of the grants
OR3	Integrate Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening of MPAs into The MedFund’s processes and ensure related training is provided early in the process
OR4	Streamline and strengthen the use of gender-sensitive indicators

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW & MTR METHODOLOGY

1.1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1.1. CONTEXT

The Mediterranean Sea is a hotspot for marine biodiversity, but it is increasingly under anthropic pressures (overfishing, pollution, unregulated coastline artificialization, etc.), further exacerbated by climate change.

Despite nearly 9% of Mediterranean waters being designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)^{2,3}, only 2.5% have management plans, and a mere 1.3% effectively implement them to deliver positive conservation outcomes⁴. The vast majority of these MPAs suffer from the so-called “paper park” syndrome, which means existing in name but lacking the staff, financial resources, and operational capacity required to ensure effective management⁵. From a regulatory standpoint, only a small fraction of these areas has been designated as no-take zones. Without strong legal frameworks and the means to enforce them, many MPAs remain vulnerable to ongoing pressures such as overfishing, pollution, and unsustainable tourism. Stakeholder engagement and co-management approaches also remain underdeveloped in the region⁶. Ultimately, this gap between designation and real impact undermines the credibility of MPAs among stakeholders, potentially weakening public and political support for the expansion or creation of new protected areas.

To tackle these challenges, the “Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean” project seeks to strengthen the management of 20 MPAs across six Mediterranean countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Albania, Montenegro, and Lebanon). The project focuses on four pillars: securing sustainable financing for MPAs, enhancing capacity building and knowledge sharing for MPA managers, strengthening regional and national governance, and ensuring robust monitoring and evaluation. Implemented by the Conservation International GEF Project Agency (CI-GEF) and executed by The MedFund (a conservation trust fund for Mediterranean MPAs) and MedPAN (Mediterranean network of MPA managers), the project ensures long-term financing and facilitates training and knowledge exchange among MPA practitioners. With a total budget of USD 45 million, funded by the GEF (USD 5 million) and co-funded by various organizations and national governments, the initiative runs from 2022 to 2027. This project builds on a previous GEF-funded project, “Long-term financial mechanism to enhance Mediterranean MPA management effectiveness” (2018-2021), which established The MedFund.

1.1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The GEF requires Mid-Term Reviews (MTR) for all full-sized projects, to serve as an adaptive management tool for the CI-GEF Agency and as a portfolio monitoring tool for the GEF Secretariat. CI mandated Altai Consulting to conduct this MTR, which aims to provide an independent and comprehensive assessment of the project's progress toward its objectives, as well as an evaluation

² What already falls short of international commitments, as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (formerly the Barcelona Convention), adopted in 1976, calls for the protection of at least 30% of marine areas by 2030. The 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework reaffirmed this target.

³ Marine Conservation Institute, 31/10/2024, Falling Short of Potential: Transforming Mediterranean MPAs

⁴ Conservation International, June 2024, Project Implementation Report for the project Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean (FY24)

⁵ Gomei M., Abdulla A., Schröder C., Yadav S., Sánchez A., Rodríguez D., Abdel Malek D. (2019), Towards 2020: how Mediterranean countries are performing to protect their sea. WWF ([link](#))

⁶ Kersting DK.; Gallon S., 2022. Co-management in Mediterranean MPAs: the way forward. MedPAN ([link](#))

of its overall design and implementation. It builds on the first three years of implementation to evaluate the project’s performance to date, identify areas for improvement, and inform future activities.

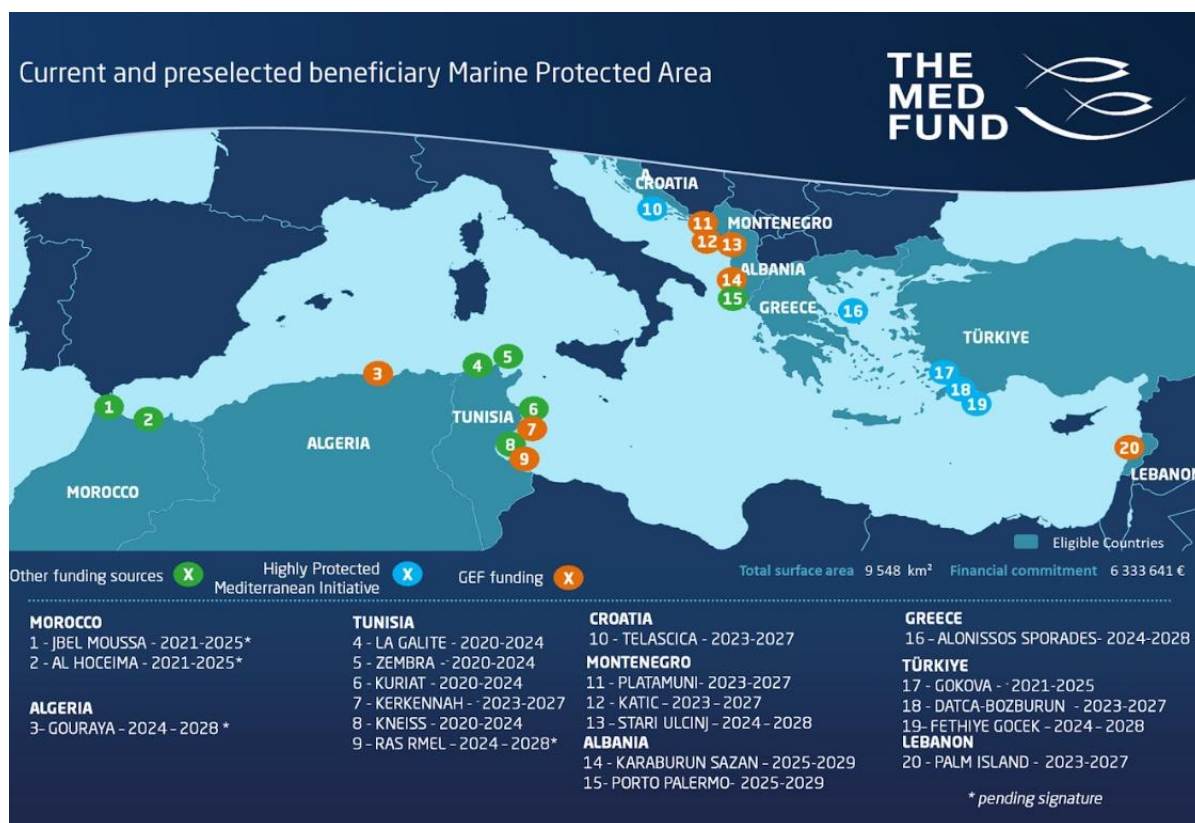
The general objective of the MTR conducted by Altai is to identify lessons learned, offer recommendations, and outline potential forward strategies to optimize the impact and reach of the “Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean” project. The MTR focused on the following aspects:

- Project progress towards expected outcomes and outputs;
- Project impacts, both on financial sustainability of MPAs and on management effectiveness;
- Key risks and coping strategies;
- Project sustainability;
- Coherence with other initiatives and potential opportunities;
- Lessons learned and recommendations, including examples of good practices.

1.1.3. SCOPE

The MTR covers the period ranging from September 2022 to May 2025 (when data collection took place) **across all intervention sites in the six beneficiary countries** (see Figure 1). Given the available budget and the evaluation timeline, a deep dive was conducted in Tunisia through a field visit, while all other countries and MPAs were engaged through virtual interviews.

Figure 1. Map of project intervention sites



The analysis covers the results achieved through the project’s total budget, including both the GEF grant (\$5M) and the co-financing (\$40M). This aims to assess the extent to which GEF funds can catalyze additional and complementary investments. However, during the data collection and analysis phases, particular emphasis has been placed on activities and MPAs funded exclusively by the GEF grant. In addition, the overall coherence of the funding mix has been evaluated to determine

how effectively it supports the project's intended outcomes and sustainability, especially regarding The MedFund's activities.

The MTR addressed the key areas outlined in the Terms of Reference: the project's theory of change, assessment of results, sustainability, key risks, progress to impact, governance, management, and M&E systems. Altai also evaluated project implementation and execution, environmental and social safeguards, and sought to provide lessons learned and recommendations. The project's coherence and complementarity with other interventions in the region was assessed, and potential opportunities for partnerships were identified.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

Each of the abovementioned key areas was examined through a series of evaluation questions. To ensure a comprehensive analysis of project results, the assessment of outcomes was based on four OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

1.2.1. INCEPTION

The inception phase aimed to establish a shared understanding between Altai and CI regarding the MTR objectives and approach.

The kick-off meeting took place on March 27, 2025. After introducing the teams, CI provided a brief project overview, outlined its expectations, and proposed a timeline for the evaluation. Following the meeting, Altai finalized the workplan.

The initial document review took place between April 1-11, 2025. At this stage, key project documents were reviewed, and missing documents were identified.

Altai conducted four inception interviews with key project and evaluation stakeholders (CI-GEF Project Agency, The MedFund, MedPAN) to gather their expectations for the MTR and refine the approach and methodology.

A draft inception report was submitted on April 16, followed by an inception workshop on May 5 where initial findings were presented and feedback was gathered. The final version of the report was delivered after incorporating this input and submitted to CI on August 18.

1.2.2. DATA COLLECTION

The objective of this phase was to gather and analyze relevant information to answer the evaluation questions.

In-depth document review

The document review initiated during the inception phase was expanded to include two main categories of sources:

- Project documents, including the logical framework, social and environmental safeguards plans and tools, financial reports, work plans, and documentation showing progress toward outputs and outcomes.
- External literature, including studies on MPA management effectiveness in the Mediterranean and globally, national and regional policies documents, as well as reports from related projects and initiatives, to offer executing agencies relevant lessons learned and best practices.

Key informant interviews

Altai conducted semi-structured interviews with project direct beneficiaries and key stakeholders, including:

- NGOs co-managing MPAs
- Local representation of government agencies responsible for MPA management
- National authorities responsible for MPA governance
- Key current or potential technical partners (SPA/RAC, CEPF, IUCN-Med, WWF, etc.)
- MedPAN's trainers
- Project teams (CI-GEF, The MedFund, MedPAN)

The list of interviewees is available in Annex 12.2. All interviews with stakeholders based in Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Montenegro, and Morocco were conducted remotely. Interviews in Tunisia were conducted in-person.

Field visit to Tunisia

A field visit was made to Tunisia, as the country hosts 6 of the 20 MPAs supported by The MedFund. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the project's outcomes at the MPA level and how they are perceived by various stakeholder groups. It helped contextualize MPA management conditions and better understand the practical challenges faced by local stakeholders.

The visit was conducted between May 18-28, 2025. The team met with four beneficiary NGOs (Kraten, ACG, NGB, MAN) and visited two sites (Kerkennah and Kneiss islands)⁷, allowing for focus group discussions with stakeholders (fishermen, tourist operators, etc.). The selection was made in consultation with The MedFund, MedPAN, and CI-GEF to ensure a representative sample based on several criteria (GEF-funded or not, funding period, accessibility).

The team also conducted interviews with national-level actors, such as national authorities, research institutes, international NGOs and regional institutions.

1.2.3. REPORT WRITING & DISSEMINATION

Altai analyzed all data collected through the document review and interviews to draw up answers to the MTR questions. Data was systematically triangulated to ensure balanced judgments, considering the context and reliability of each data source.

Report writing followed the outline presented in the ToR. All sections were rated according to the evaluation criteria outlined in Appendix 12.4 and in the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in conducting MTR for full-sized projects.

After submission, CI reviewed the draft and provided comments, which Altai addressed before preparing a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the key findings and initial recommendations.

A webinar was then organized by Altai on July, 22nd, in coordination with CI, to present these findings to key internal stakeholders such as CI-GEF, The MedFund, and MedPAN.

Following the webinar, Altai incorporated all stakeholder comments and finalized the report.

1.2.4. LIMITATIONS

The mission took place during a demanding period for project teams and stakeholders, including the UNOC3 conference in June, which limited availability. Despite multiple follow-ups, a few of the initially scheduled interviews could not be conducted.

The timing also coincided with a transition phase at MedPAN, marked by staff changes and increased workloads. This affected the availability of key personnel – most notably, the lead for training activities was only available for the inception interview conducted in April. The evaluation team was nevertheless

⁷ A visit to Kuriat islands was initially planned but was cancelled due to weather conditions.

able to interview the Policy Manager during the inception interview in April, as well as in a follow-up call in mid-June. The online survey targeting training and workshop participants was delayed and only circulated in late June. A total of 13 responses were collected, of which 6 were relevant for the evaluation⁸. This relatively low response rate was anticipated, given the high volume of survey requests – such as the MedPAN strategic review and post-training surveys already conducted by MedPAN – as well as the summer season, which is a particularly busy period for MPA managers. Still, they offered valuable qualitative insights that supported the evaluation findings and were incorporated into the revised version of the report.

Given the available resources and timeframe for this MTR, Altai conducted the mission remotely in five of the six intervention countries. While Altai strived to cover all stakeholders' perspectives by arranging remote interviews and conducting an in-depth document review, more comprehensive insights were gathered during the field visit in Tunisia. The field visit provided valuable, in-depth insights into MPA implementation at the local level. These findings nevertheless offered transferable lessons for other contexts. Additionally, the field visit in Albania by the implementing and executing agencies in June is expected to further complement and validate the evaluation's regional perspective.

⁸ Other respondents were not from countries covered by the project.

2. PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE (ToC)

2.1. ToC DESCRIPTION

A ToC was developed in the project document (ProDoc), which extensively describes the causal pathways of the project, with expected outputs, outcomes, long-term impacts, and assumptions (see Annex 12.1).

As stated above, the Mediterranean coastal and marine ecosystems are rapidly deteriorating, because of several **drivers**: poor management of MPAs, unsustainable fishing practices, unregulated coastal development, and climate change.

To address these threats to biodiversity, the project **objective** is to achieve “strong, effective and sustainable management of Mediterranean MPAs to address global changes and to provide long-term socio-ecological benefits in the Mediterranean in a post-COVID recovery context”.

It aims to address four main **barriers**:

- i. The lack of consistent and/or sustainable financing for MPA recurrent management costs
- ii. Limited institutional and organizational capacities and incomplete set of tools for an informed approach to achieve objectives of conventions, agreements, and policies
- iii. Insufficient knowledge and experience/practice-sharing on successful models for sustainable fisheries and to guide effective MPA management (regional/global scale)
- iv. Absence of a coordination mechanism to promote and engage the different stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the current 2020 MPA Roadmap and the Post-2020 MPA Roadmap being developed

To this end, the project is structured around four **components**:

- i. Sustainable financing support to core management costs of MPAs in the Mediterranean
- ii. Capacity building of MPAs managers and practitioners and knowledge sharing within the MPA community, for improved MPAs management effectiveness and financing
- iii. Stronger regional and national governance and cooperation & strategies to promote MPAs as solutions to address global changes and provide socio-ecological benefits
- iv. Monitoring & Evaluation

Through its outputs and outcomes, the project ultimately aims to address the barriers to MPA management effectiveness and contribute positively to the following environmental and socio-economic benefits:

- i. Improved management effectiveness of MPAs in the Mediterranean
- ii. Marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels of exploitation
- iii. Increased level of engagement in IW:LEARN⁹
- iv. Increased resilience of livelihoods based on coastal and marine resources exploitation

Validation of the ToC relies on several assumptions, as stated in the ProDoc:

- A1 – Possible fluctuations in future financial return on The MedFund investments are taken into account in The MedFund investment policy and grantmaking strategies.
- A2 – Private sector and public donors are willing (or can be encouraged) to invest in The MedFund’s capital according to The MedFund’s resource mobilization strategy.

⁹ GEF’s International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network.

- A3 – Continued political will and commitment of partner countries.
- A4 – National and regional stakeholders acknowledge the necessity to strengthen collaboration and participate (lead) accordingly and provide necessary resources.
- A5 – Project partners are supportive with provision of information and expertise.
- A6 – A stable political and global health situation allows governments and MPA managers and other key stakeholders and partners to participate in project activities.
- A7 – Lessons learned and capacitated actors (e.g. MPA managers) with new knowledge will take forward good practice.
- A8 – Willingness of other international stakeholders to collaborate and exchange knowledge and tools.

2.2. TOC ANALYSIS

At the midpoint of project implementation, the ToC remains relevant and appropriate to the intervention context. The overall ToC and component design appear highly coherent and well aligned with project objectives, thanks to a well-balanced focus between funding and capacity building activities.

Although this context has evolved since the project preparation phase and no longer centers on post-COVID recovery, the ToC remains valid, as current conditions further emphasize the previously identified barriers. Several global and national crises followed the pandemic, with significant consequences for MPAs. The aftermath of the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis triggered severe inflation, leading to increased operating costs for MPA managers. Politically, these abrupt economic crises – among other factors – have contributed to a rollback of ecological commitments, with many governments receding from earlier pledges and reducing allocated resources.

The project outcomes demonstrate a strong complementarity, operating at multiple levels and leveraging the expertise of the executing agencies. They combine direct support to MPAs – through funding and capacity building – with indirect support at national and regional levels – by strengthening political frameworks and cooperation. This complementarity reflects the respective expertise of The MedFund (responsible for the funding) and MedPAN (responsible for capacity building, policy advocacy, and networking). However, The MedFund also offers technical assistance to MPA managers – for example, by facilitating connections with relevant experts and funders or supporting the development of funding proposals. This individualized support could be more clearly reflected in the ToC and the project’s logical framework to ensure adequate resources are allocated¹⁰, and that it is reflected in the M&E framework.

However, during implementation, some actions had to be prioritized, particularly within components 2 and 3. These components span a wide array of actions across national, sub-regional, regional, and global levels – including training, production of materials, event organization, policy advocacy, support to other networks, etc. To prevent the scattering of efforts, the priority of outputs should be re-evaluated, in alignment with the current strategy review process of MedPAN.

The project’s contribution to promoting sustainable fisheries – and blue economy at large – would benefit from greater clarity. The reduction of fish overexploitation is identified as a key expected environmental benefit in the ToC and in selected GEF core indicators. However, fisheries-related activities have been limited at the project level. On the ground, many MPA managers are engaging in activities targeting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing as well as small-scale fisheries, and such activities are reported in The MedFund’s Management Effectiveness Assessment

¹⁰ Notably, no budget was allocated to The MedFund for Component 2 during the project preparation phase. As a result, the recruitment of the North Africa Coordinator – who oversees grant implementation and provides support as needed – was not initially included in the budget.

tool. Discussions on synergies with fisheries-focused projects have also been initiated¹¹. Nonetheless, at this stage, the project could benefit from a more explicit and structured strategy on sustainable fisheries to better identify best practices and foster effective results in terms of preservation of fish stocks and impact mitigation on local livelihoods. Some additional activities on ecotourism could also be further explored¹², in synergies with other specialized actors, and building on the recommendations of the regional experience sharing workshop of 2024 on MPAs and tourism. Still, expanding on these topics should be balanced with the risk of losing focus or stretching efforts.

¹¹ Particularly with the GFCM, which implements the GEF-funded FishEBM Med project (see Section 5.2).

¹² In addition to the 2024 regional workshop in Port-Cros, France, which focused on tourism in MPAs.

3. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS

This section aims to assess the extent to which the project is progressing towards achieving its expected outputs and outcomes. Emphasis is placed on factors influencing the delivery of outputs and the achievement of outcomes, in order to highlight potential risks and identify any necessary corrective actions. Results are assessed against the baseline detailed in the ProDoc.

An overall assessment of the project has also been conducted using four OECD/DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. This aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's strengths and opportunities for improvement. A summary table presenting the outcome ratings over these four criteria has been included at the end of the section.

To avoid duplications, questions related to Component 4 (Monitoring & Evaluation) are addressed under the "Governance, Management, and M&E Systems" section.

3.1. OUTCOMES

3.1.1. COMPONENT 1: SUSTAINABLE FINANCING SUPPORT TO CORE MANAGEMENT COSTS OF MPAs IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Outcome 1.1 | The MedFund generates revenues from investments of an alliance of donors to support sustainable management effectiveness of 432,930 ha of MPAs

Progress towards achieving this outcome is satisfactory. The MedFund benefits from a diversified donor base, contributing either to its endowment fund or sinking fund. To date, \$2.2M has been committed through GEF funding to support 8 MPAs in the 5 countries over a 5-year period. Of this amount, \$286k have already been disbursed to five beneficiary MPAs in three countries¹³ (Q1 FY25).

Outcome achievement will depend on the signing of pending agreements – facilitated by sustained political support, and continued growth in both the number and quality of applications submitted to The MedFund.

Output 1.1.1 | 20 MPAs¹⁴ core management costs supported by 2027, covering 432,930 ha in 6 Mediterranean countries

As of June 2025, 13 MPAs are receiving support through various donors – including the GEF, covering a total area of 376,635 ha. Two additional agreements await signature (see Table 1). Overall, delivery is on track in terms of the number of MPAs supported, although ongoing signature processes will require continued close monitoring.

On average, each MPA receives \$60,000 per year to cover recurrent management costs. Eligible expenditures include salaries, maintenance, purchase of small equipment, training, governance-related activities, field monitoring (ecological and socio-economic), awareness raising, and communication.

¹³ Montenegro, Tunisia, Lebanon (see Section 3.2.3)

¹⁴ Nationally designated or under designation process

Table 2. List of MedFund beneficiaries (GEF funding)

Status	Country	MPA	Funding period	Main beneficiary organization	Granted amount (total)	Area (km ²)	
Current beneficiaries	Montenegro	Platamuni	2023-2027	Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management of Montenegro (JP Morsko dobro)	\$286,2k	27.45	
		Katic	2023-2027		\$286,2k	10.87	
		Stari Ulcinj	2024-2028		\$287k	9.29	
	Tunisia	Kerkennah	2023-2027	Kraten (NGO)	\$286,2k	1091.5	
	Albania	Karaburun Sazan	2025-2029	Flag Pine (NGO)	\$200k ¹⁵	124.28	
	Lebanon	Palm Island	2023-2027	IndyAct (NGO)	\$286,2k	4.2	
Pending beneficiaries	Tunisia	Ras Rmel	2024-2028	AJEM (NGO)	\$287k	18.56	
	Algeria	Gouraya	2024-2028	Gouraya National Park	\$287k	36.5	
					Total (without pending beneficiaries)	1,346M\$	1267.59 km² (126,759 ha)
					Total (with pending beneficiaries)	\$2,2M	1322.65 km² (132,265 ha)

Table 3. Other beneficiaries of The MedFund (non-GEF funding)

Country	MPA	Funding period	Main beneficiary organization	Granted amount (total)	Area (km ²)
Tunisia	Kuriat	2020-2024	NGB (NGO)	€329,6k	844.03
	La Galite	2020-2024	MAN (NGO)	€372,4k	101.85
	Zembra and Zembretta	2020-2024	ASPEN (NGO)	€329,6k	717.04
	Kneiss	2020-2024	ACG (NGO)	€326,6k	296.97
Albania	Porto Palermo	2025-2029	Flag Pine (NGO)	€275k	16.95
Morocco ¹⁶	Jbel Moussa	2021-2025	GREPOM (NGO)	€359k	41.92
	Al Hoceima	2021-2025	AGIR (NGO)	€331k	480
Total				\$2,671M¹⁷	2498.76 km² (249.876 ha)

¹⁵ In line with The MedFund's funding strategy, the Karaburun-Sazan MPA receives a lower level of financial support compared to other MPAs, as it has entered its consolidation phase. In its initial phase, it received \$254k.

¹⁶ Two amendments are currently pending signature from national authorities to shift the two MPAs to GEF funding (see below)

¹⁷ Exchange rate as of June 18, 2025 (1€ = 1,15\$)

➔ **The MedFund’s current beneficiary MPAs (under GEF funding) are located in four countries demonstrating strong political support**

Three beneficiary MPAs are located in Montenegro. The MedFund built upon a previous UNEP-GEF project¹⁸ that facilitated the designation of Montenegro’s first three MPAs between 2021 and 2022. The MedFund has since played a key role in operationalizing these MPAs and implementing their management plans. It began by supporting Platamuni and Katič to initiate collaboration with JP Morsko Dobro (the public enterprise for coastal zone management of Montenegro), which is responsible for managing the country’s MPAs. Building on lessons learned, Stari Ulcinj was also awarded a grant starting in 2024. The three MPAs are expected to create synergies by pooling resources for scientific monitoring, equipment, communication, and other activities.

Another supported MPA is in Tunisia, where The MedFund has established a long-term presence. As one of The MedFund’s founding countries and a pilot site for the MedFund1 project, Tunisia has already received support for four MPAs (NGB, ACG, MAN, and ASPEN). Building on the strong commitment of national authorities, The MedFund benefits from a strong foundation for its operations in Tunisia. The Kerkennah MPA makes a substantial contribution towards achieving the project’s area-based targets. Its extensive surface includes not only the islands themselves but also vast surrounding shallow marine zones (Figure 2). These areas serve as important nursery habitats, particularly due to the presence of large, well-preserved Posidonia meadows (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Zoning of the Kerkennah MPA with water depths (in m)¹⁹

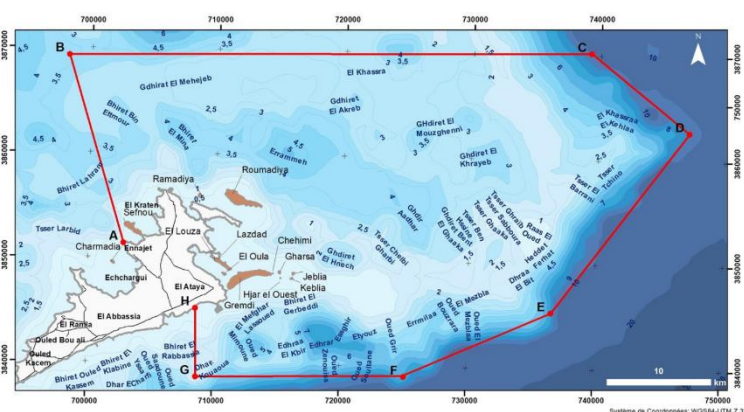


Figure 3. Posidonia seagrass beds in the shallow waters around Kerkennah Islands



The MPA supported in Albania also reflects a long-standing partnership. Albania was another pilot country under the MedFund1 project. The Karaburun Sazan MPA received initial funding for its initiation phase (2020–2025) and has since secured renewed funding from GEF for a consolidation phase (2025–2029)²⁰.

Lastly, an MPA in Lebanon (Palm Island) has been selected for funding, benefiting from a well-defined institutional framework. Although officially designated only recently (in 2021), co-management arrangements are already well established and are overseen by the Appointed Protected

¹⁸ The “Promoting Protected Areas management through integrated marine and coastal ecosystems protection in coastal areas of Montenegro” project was implemented between 2018 and 2022. Funded by the GEF, it was executed by UNEP in collaboration with the Montenegro Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism.

¹⁹ Source: SPA/RAC. Light blue indicates areas where the water depth is less than 3 meters.

²⁰ The MedFund follows a long-term support strategy spanning 15 years, structured into three 5-year phases: the initiation phase, the consolidation phase, and the autonomy phase (see section 3.2.2 for further details).

Areas Committee (APAC), which includes representatives from relevant municipalities, local NGOs, and scientific experts.

↪ **Four beneficiaries are still awaiting approval from national authorities**

In Tunisia, the agreement for the Ras Rmel MPA is currently under revision by the national authority (APAL) and is expected to be signed shortly. As several agreements have already been signed with APAL, all parties are familiar with the process, and no significant issues are expected.

In Algeria, the situation remains uncertain, due to lengthy approval processes. For all NGOs, the legal and administrative framework for receiving foreign funds is restrictive and complex, requiring high-level government approval, which may be denied or delayed at any stage. The MedFund began drafting a funding agreement in early 2024 and has since held numerous discussions with the ministry of Agriculture, which requested several revisions. Despite repeated updates, the agreement has yet to receive final validation. The retirement of The MedFund's primary contact within the ministry has further delayed progress, and efforts to identify a new focal point have not yet been successful. In June 2025, The MedFund formally reached out to Monaco's ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue an official letter and seek a meeting with Algerian representatives at the UNOC3, in hopes of advancing the signature process.

In Morocco, contract amendments are still pending but are expected to be signed soon – at least for one of the two MPAs. The original agreements were signed in 2021 with the national agency for water and forests (ANEF). However, a subsequent legal reform transferred certain responsibilities for MPA management to the department of marine fisheries, which oversees all marine area activities. To ensure MPA managers operate within a clear legal framework, The MedFund prepared contract amendments in early 2025 to establish a tripartite agreement involving both ANEF and the fisheries department. As part of this process, The MedFund also proposed shifting the two MPAs currently supported by other donors to GEF funding. In June 2025, it met with Moroccan counterparts during the UNOC3 in France to help accelerate the signing process. The department of marine fisheries expressed its willingness to move forward with the agreement for Al Hoceima, pending legal review, but indicated that Jbel Moussa is not currently a priority, as it has yet to be officially designated. The current agreements are set to expire in December 2025, after which an evaluation will be carried out to determine potential eligibility for the consolidation phase.

↪ **The number of awarded grants depends on the number and quality of applications, which increased in 2025 due to several factors**

The 2022 call for proposals was successful, receiving 10 applications and leading to the selection of 4 MPAs – Palm Island, Katic, Platamuni, and Kerkennah – spanning three countries and enabling a swift project launch.

However, the 2023 and 2024 calls yielded disappointing results, with only 5 applications each and overall weak quality. Common issues included outdated management plans, poor alignment between proposed activities and existing plans, unbalanced budgets between salaries and operational costs, and missing endorsements from national authorities. The 2024 cycle also suffered from diluted outreach, with two separate calls issued (one for the six GEF-eligible countries and another focused on full protection under MAVA and Pew Bertarelli funding), splitting communication efforts.

In response, The MedFund implemented adaptive measures to continue its activities. Three MPAs – Gouraya, Ras Rmel, and Stari Ulcinj – were selected in 2023, building on past experiences in Tunisia and Montenegro. Karaburun Sazan's funding was renewed for a consolidation phase in 2024. To ensure the full engagement of GEF funds before the project ends, The MedFund also decided to transition the two Moroccan MPAs, previously funded by other donors since 2020, to GEF funding as of 2025 (see above).

Following these challenges, The MedFund revised its approach in 2025, which led to a significant improvement, with 15 applications received. It merged all funding streams into a single

call to engage all partners and increase visibility (MedPAN, SPA/RAC, French Embassies, etc.). A two-stage application process was also introduced with an initial expression of interest followed by a full proposal phase. To boost application quality, The MedFund now provides individual technical support to applicants during preparation, helping ensure more coherent and complete submissions.

↪ The MedFund achieved a satisfactory return on investment from its sinking fund

Approximately \$3 million from the GEF grant was invested in 2022 for the five-year duration of the project, generating \$221,000 in returns as of 31 December 2024. This performance can be considered satisfactory considering current financial market conditions and in comparison to similar CTFs²¹.

These funds were managed under a responsible investment policy that prioritizes ethical standards and minimizes risk. The sinking fund operates under a slightly more flexible investment framework than the endowment fund, which adheres to the stricter guidelines of AFD and FFEM, allowing for potentially higher returns. However, all investments made through the sinking fund are capital-protected instruments, such as fixed income term deposits. Ongoing discussions with the asset manager aim to further enhance performance while maintaining compliance and risk control.

3.1.2. COMPONENT 2: CAPACITY BUILDING OF MPAs MANAGERS AND PRACTITIONERS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITHIN THE MPA COMMUNITY, FOR IMPROVED MPAs MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND FINANCING

A detailed analysis per evaluation criteria is available in Section 3.2.

Outcome 2.1 | Enhanced capacities of managers and other stakeholders to effectively and sustainably manage 20 Mediterranean MPAs

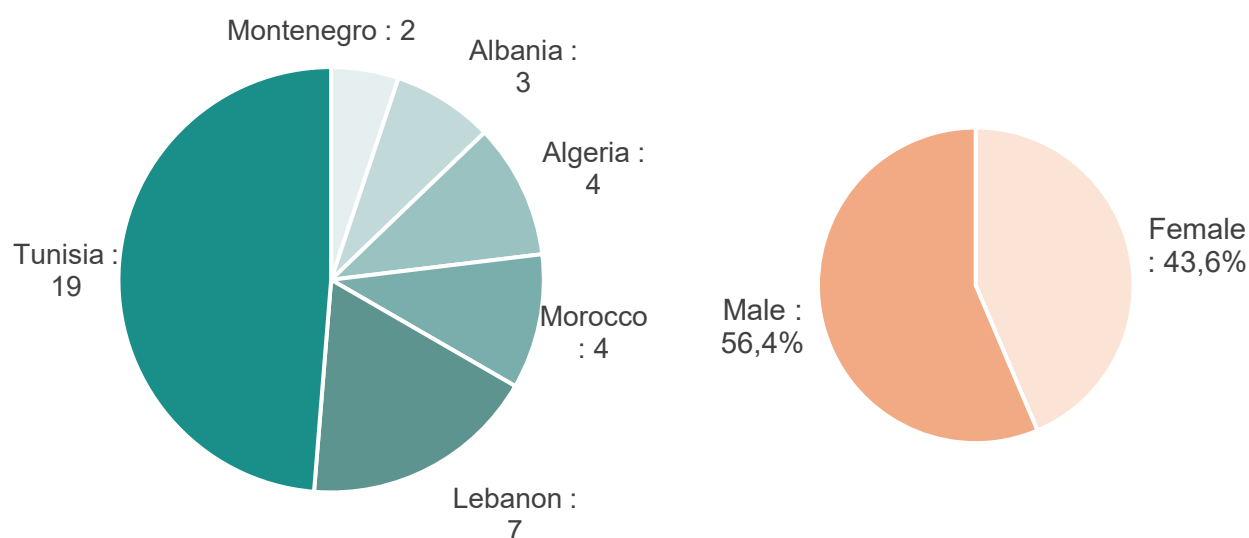
The progress towards achievement of this outcome is **moderately satisfactory**. Strong momentum was built in 2023-2024, marked by numerous activities and outreach materials that engaged a wide range of stakeholders and received positive feedback. However, this momentum has been somewhat slowed by recent staff changes within MedPAN.

Output 2.1.1 | Managers and other stakeholders of 20 MPAs trained

Through four training sessions, 39 managers and additional stakeholders from 18 MPAs across six countries have been trained (see Figure 4). Delivery is on track in terms of the diversity of participating MPAs. However, some key activities have been delayed.

²¹ According to the Conservation Trust Investment Survey conducted by WCS (2018), nominal returns for sinking funds between 2015 and 2018 ranged from 2.6% to 7.1% ([source](#))

Figure 4. Country of origin and gender of participants



Training topics were selected based on MPA managers' needs and regional priorities (see Table 4). They included fundraising, governance, MPA management fundamentals (such as management plans and monitoring), and fisheries-related challenges. The last two trainings, planned for Q4 2025, will focus on ecosystem restoration – aligning with the new European Nature Restoration Law introduced in 2024, as well as climate change.

Table 4. Training sessions organized by MedPAN

Topic	Date	Location MPA)	Format	Participants
Fundraising “Develop and implement a fundraising strategy for your MPA”	September 2022 May 2023 (2 sessions ²²)	Tunisia (Kuriat)	2-week distance learning 4-day face-to-face	35 staff (in total)
Governance “Improving governance practices in MPAs”	September 2023	Lebanon (Tyre)	4 days face-to-face	16 staff and local stakeholders ²³
Fisheries “Getting started: characterize fishing activities in your MPA”	April 2024	Online	Self-directed learning (1 short launch webinar + 3 video tutorials)	21 staff
Fundamentals of MPA management	October 2024	Türkiye (Gökova)	4 modules online 4-day face-to-face	11 staff
Restoration in MPAs	November 2025	Spain (Cabo de Gata)	Online modules, 4 online sessions, 4-day face-to-face	Ongoing application process

The MedFund beneficiaries accounted for 45% of trainees, highlighting synergies with MedPAN’s activities. Affiliation with a MedFund-supported MPA was one of the participant selection

²² The first session was held at the beginning of the project in September 2022, based on an existing MedPAN training module. With GEF funding, the content was enhanced, and the training was repeated in May 2023.

²³ The training adopted a trio-based approach, grouping participants from the same local context into teams of three – typically including a representative from the MPA management body, a fisherman, and a government official. This setup was designed to promote practical, context-specific applications during the training.

criteria, ensuring that capacity-building efforts directly reinforce the effective use of funding and contribute to improved management outcomes.

Future programming will benefit from a Training Needs Assessment (TNA), initially planned for 2024 but now scheduled for late 2025. To better inform MedPAN’s strategic review, the TNA scope has been expanded to include not only MPA managers but also government agencies and local authorities. It draws on the Global Register of Competences for Protected Area Practitioners, adapted for MPAs. However, staff turnover has delayed its dissemination.

Output 2.1.2 | MPA practitioners share MPA’s management and financing solutions at Mediterranean level

Two hybrid regional experience-sharing workshops have already taken place, gathering 85 participants from the six project countries. The third workshop is planned for 2026 – keeping delivery on track.

These regional workshops attracted a diverse group of participants, fostering a rich dialogue. MPA management bodies, authorities, and stakeholders made up over 50% of attendees. They also included experts from research institutions, other NGOs involved in nature conservation, donors, and intergovernmental organizations. MedPAN scheduled its annual General Assembly around these events to capitalize on the presence of its members and partners.

Each workshop spanned 3 to 4 days and focused on a specific theme, allowing for in-depth exploration through case studies and hands-on applications. The first, hosted in Katic (Montenegro) in October 2022, launched the GEF project and focused on MPA management effectiveness. The second, held in Port-Cros (France) in April 2024, centered on tourism in MPAs. Programs included plenary sessions, discussion groups, field visits, and social events, offering both formal and informal networking opportunities. Overall, participants rated these events positively (85.7% very satisfied in Katic, 76.4% in Port-Cros²⁴). The next workshop will focus on restoration. Each workshop program is carefully designed based on a dedicated survey sent to network members, ensuring it reflects their needs and highlights their expertise.

However, organizing the next regional workshop might prove challenging due to the crowded international agenda and limited internal resources. These workshops were initially held annually, but this frequency was found to be too demanding during the strategic review, placing strain on MedPAN teams and leading to over solicitation of its community. With major events approaching – such as the Barcelona Convention COP in December 2025, the CBD COP17 in Armenia and the preparation of the 4th MPA Forum with SPA/RAC – there may be a need to reassess priorities. Moreover, MedPAN currently lacks dedicated in-house logistics staff, which could further complicate keeping events on schedule and within budget. Nevertheless, periodic regional workshops remain a cornerstone activity for MedPAN and are highly valued by its network members. The MedPAN team remains engaged in ensuring the continued success of these workshops.

Output 2.1.3 | Three thematic working groups provide expertise to the MPA community

The facilitation of the three thematic working groups has been on hold since 2023 due to limited staff availability on MedPAN’s side as well as a change in thematic priorities. Established in 2017, these groups bring together MPA managers and key experts on mobile species, small-scale fisheries, and MPA financing, to identify emerging challenges, share best practices, and provide technical and policy recommendations for the network. They were particularly active up to 2022, notably contributing to the development of a guide on sea turtles and fisheries. However, limited staff availability and changes in thematic priorities within MedPAN led to reducing activities with the working groups. Since

²⁴ Slightly lower satisfaction in Port-Cros was attributed to logistical challenges (accommodation, transport), limited integration of online participants, visa-related absences from some southern countries, and fewer informal networking opportunities. Source: Statistics MedPAN beneficiaries 2018-2024

2024, MedPAN has placed greater emphasis on sustainable tourism and restoration, to align with MPAs' topics for interest, to better link with blue economy and recent policy developments (EU Nature Restoration Law).

Despite this, the working groups have remained occasionally engaged. MedPAN has consulted them by email for input, including document review, and support for the organization of side events. In the coming years, their reactivation is planned. Their value was reaffirmed during the ongoing strategic review. In particular, MedPAN plans to involve them in reviewing the Restoration Guidelines and the updated MedPAN Policy Paper on Restoration currently under preparation. A new working group on climate change may also be established in the coming year.

Output 2.1.4 | Key outreach materials are accessible to the Mediterranean MPA community

Three outreach materials were produced in 2023 to equip MPA managers with practical tools and knowledge to strengthen their management effectiveness. Two additional products are under preparation, keeping delivery on track.

These materials address a variety of themes and audiences. The [management plan toolkit](#) consolidates key resources – methodological guides, tools, and national documents – into a single reference to support both MPA managers, policy-makers and operators in planning processes. The [communication kit on full protection](#) responds to recent momentum around this concept from the EU Biodiversity Strategy, Post-2020 MCPA & OECM Strategy of the Barcelona Convention, and the Kunming-Montreal targets. It provides tools – like a customizable PowerPoint and a communication guide – to help actors promote fully protected areas and secure support from local and national stakeholders. The [video series "MPAs are here for us"](#) aims to raise public awareness – particularly among local artisanal fishing communities – about the role of MPAs, emphasizing both their benefits and the conditions needed for effective management. They cover four topics and are available in 10 languages²⁵. MedPAN also plans two upcoming case studies: one on gender-related challenges in MPAs, and another on marine and coastal restoration.

The deliverables were actively disseminated through different channels to reach regional, national and local actors. They were shared through MedPAN's own channels (newsletter, website) and through its partners – including MedCities, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), SPA/RAC, and The MedFund. While other donors supported content development, the GEF project allowed for broader outreach by leveraging The MedFund's network.

Table 5. Key figures on outreach materials dissemination

Outreach materials	Number of recipients (newsletter)	Open rate	Statistics on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube)
Management plan toolkit	4,029 (EN) 2,050 (FR)	28.6% (EN) 26.0% (FR)	/
Communication kit on full protection	4,141 (EN) 2,113 (FR)	28.1% (EN) 23.9% (FR)	/
Video series "MPAs are here for us" (4 videos)	/	/	Total number of views: 3086 Average per video: 772 Average number of views on Facebook: 341 Average number of views on LinkedIn: 163

²⁵ Topics: Grouper, Turtles, Invasive Species, Human Impact. Languages: French, English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, Turkish, Greek, and Albanian

			Average number of views on Youtube: 267
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Note: Many MPA stakeholders access documents directly through MedPAN’s website. As MedPAN is currently in the process of updating its analytics tools, data from website consultations were not included in the table but should also be taken into account.

3.1.3. COMPONENT 3: STRONGER REGIONAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND COOPERATION & STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE MPAs AS SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL CHANGES AND PROVIDE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Outcome 3.1 | Operational regional mechanism supports the implementation of policy commitments towards MPAs in the Mediterranean, in particular the Barcelona Convention

The progress towards achieving this outcome is **moderately unsatisfactory**. Although the Post-2020 MPA Roadmap monitoring mechanism has been established and some preparatory work has been delivered, no interim report has been produced to date, making it difficult to assess progress. In addition, the 4th MPA Forum has been significantly delayed due to staff changes within MedPAN and a congested international calendar.

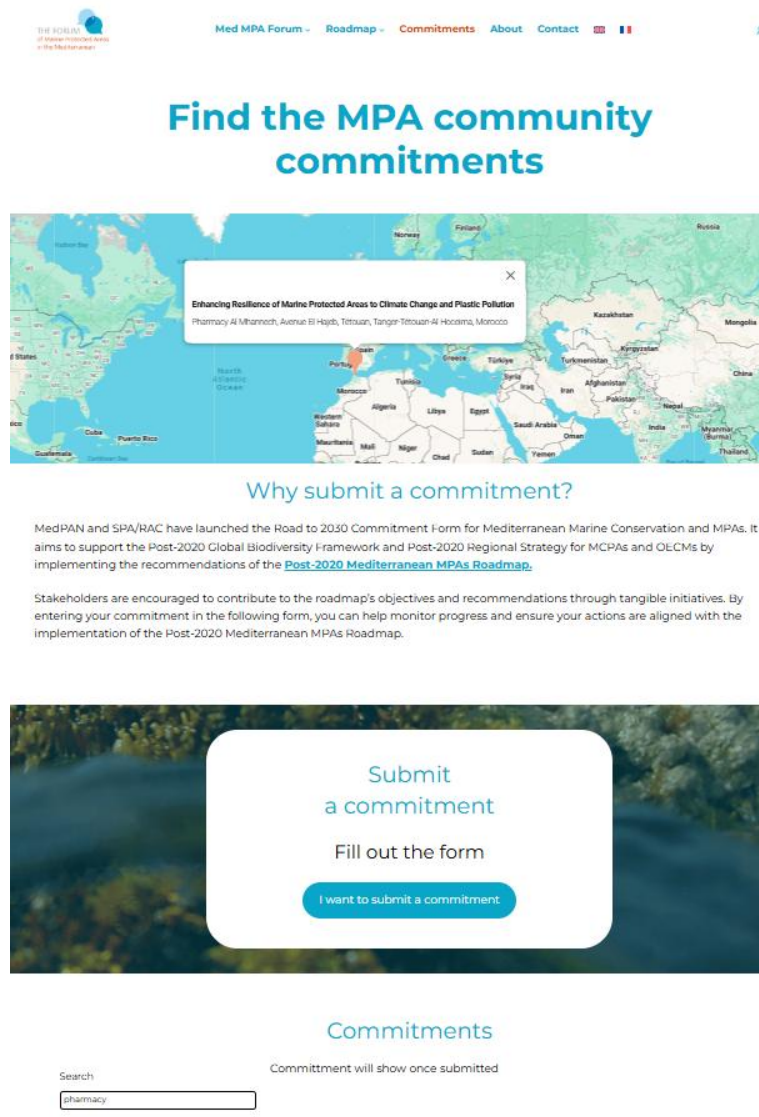
Output 3.1.1 | A Post-2020 MPA Roadmap follow-up and monitoring mechanism is established

The GEF project supported the development of a web platform to monitor collective progress towards regional targets, which is now operational, though some fine-tuning and stakeholder engagement efforts are still needed. This output can be considered as delivered.

Co-managed with SPA/RAC, the platform aims to promote the Mediterranean MPA Forum and Roadmap process while collecting and tracking voluntary commitments. It allows a wide range of actors – international organizations, national institutions, NGOs, private sector, etc. – to register their commitments through an online form. However, users currently require additional guidance from MedPAN and SPA/RAC teams to accurately select the Roadmap’s strategic objectives, recommendations, and indicators they are contributing to. As of June 2025, one commitment was visible on the platform²⁶ (see Figure 5).

²⁶ Enhancing Resilience of Marine Protected Areas to Climate Change and Plastic Pollution, by the Pharmacy Al Mhannech in Morocco

Figure 5. Web platform to register voluntary commitments ([link](#))



To boost outreach and participation, MedPAN launched a Mobilisation and Engagement Strategy in 2024 and is leveraging multiple international events. The MPA Roadmap was translated into English, French, and Arabic to improve regional accessibility. Several calls for commitments were issued in 2024 during Monaco Ocean Week, the Ocean Decade Conference, and World Ocean Day, resulting in 11 commitments. A new call was launched in June 2025 at UNOC3.

Output 3.1.2 | 4th edition of the MPA Forum (2024) & mid-term evaluation of the Post 2020 Mediterranean MPAs Roadmap

Due to staff turnover at MedPAN and an already packed international ocean agenda in 2024-2025, the 4th MPA Forum has been postponed, with no new date confirmed – though 2027-2028 was reportedly under consideration. Delivery of this output is delayed.

Co-organized every four years with SPA/RAC, the Forum brings together the Mediterranean and global MPA community, including managers, policymakers, scientists, economic actors, NGOs, and donors. Its aim is to review progress, share challenges, and strengthen collaboration. Previous editions took place in 2012, 2016, and 2021. As with the regional experience-sharing workshops, identifying a suitable date has proven difficult. Prioritization will be addressed with the arrival of MedPAN’s new director in June 2025 and as the strategic review makes progress.

The midterm evaluation of the MPA Roadmap is expected in 2026. Initially planned for presentation at the Forum, it will probably be presented during a dedicated event tied to the launch of MedPAN's new strategy. No progress report has been issued yet, as MedPAN waited for the second call for commitments launched at UNOC3 in June 2025 before consolidating the results.

Outcome 3.2 | Increased regional, sub-regional and national cooperation between MPA actors to jointly promote benefits and needs for effective and sustainable MPAs

The progress towards achievement of this outcome is **satisfactory**. A strong momentum was built in 2023 through the development of several policy tools and support to different networks. However, this dynamic has somewhat slowed in 2024–2025 due to fewer opportunities and MedPAN's internal strategic review process. Activities are expected to resume once MedPAN finalizes its strategy.

Output 3.2.1 | Sub-regional and national networks of MPA managers established and/or strengthened

MedPAN provided technical and strategic support to several networks, though limited resources restrict its ability to meet all demands and its intervention remains dependent on network readiness to receive support. Delivery of this output is considered on track.

Support has been extended to thematic networks, such as the Mediterranean Posidonia Network (MPN), with contributions to its 2030 strategy and assistance in organizing one of its seminars. Geographic networks have also been supported, such as AdriaPAN, notably by facilitating its involvement in the EU Adriatic-Ionian Strategy (EUSAIR) policy processes.

As part of its strategic review, MedPAN is currently reassessing its role in supporting the establishment of national and sub-regional networks. While emerging networks face high support needs²⁷, MedPAN has no financial resources to offer. Its contribution therefore remains focused on technical and strategic support, building on bottom-up initiatives. MedPAN can indeed support a network that has expressed a need for support and is ready to receive it, but it cannot establish a network itself. MedPAN's activities regarding this output thus depend on emerging opportunities in the region. The finalization of MedPAN's strategy, that has been an opportunity to engage the Mediterranean MPA community in co-designing MedPAN's role, is expected to help clarify this and create new opportunities.

Output 3.2.2 | MPA communication and policy tools developed and disseminated through networks

MedPAN can rely on strong partnerships with key regional actors, enabling joint efforts in communication and policy advocacy. Delivery of this output is considered on track.

In 2023, MedPAN produced three policy briefs, drawing on its expertise in policy analysis. A comprehensive policy paper titled "[Effective management of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean for an inclusive, resilient & coherent network of MPAs](#)" was developed and continues to be disseminated, covering major topics such as full protection, tourism, fisheries, and governance. Two additional briefs addressed "[How Fisheries Can Contribute to Marine Biodiversity Protection and Restoration](#)" and the "[Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty](#)". All materials are available on MedPAN's website and were disseminated through various events and partner networks.

In September 2024, MedPAN co-hosted a webinar on OECMs with SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, and the UfM, attracting over 120 participants.

²⁷ Such as hiring permanent staff to coordinate activities, arranging places to hold meetings, improving communication

With support from both the GEF and the REST-COAST projects²⁸, a policy guide on the [EU Nature restoration law](#) was published in March 2025. A technical guide on marine and coastal restoration for MPA managers is under development.

Outcome 3.3 | Improved International cooperation between networks of MPA managers and conservation trust funds beyond the Mediterranean (e.g. Caribbean, West Africa, North America), to jointly promote benefits, needs and efficient mechanisms for effective and sustainable MPAs within key international policy-making processes

The progress towards achievement of this outcome is **moderately satisfactory**. MedPAN and The MedFund have actively shared their experience at various international events, laying a strong foundation for future replication of their model. However, greater emphasis should now be placed on establishing concrete collaborations to meaningfully advance the Global Alliance agenda.

Output 3.3.1 | Key policy tools jointly produced by networks of MPA managers beyond the Mediterranean

While MedPAN focused on developing policy tools for the Mediterranean region rather than at a more global scale, it actively participated in key international events to advocate for the role of MPA networks. This output was adjusted from the original project plan, with MedPAN choosing to share its expertise and experiences mostly through event participation rather than solely producing documents. However, the connections established and the visibility gained through these events can lay a strong foundation for the development and dissemination of future policy documents.

MedPAN coordinated its participation alongside The MedFund and other regional partners – SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, and the UfM – at major events such as UNOC3, the UNFCCC Climate Ocean Dialogue, CBD COP16 in Cali, and several GEF events including LME23, LME24 and the International Waters Conference. The core message shared is the contribution of the Mediterranean MPA Roadmap to achieving the 30x30 target of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as well as the unique partnership between The MedFund and MedPAN that support effective MPA management, KMGBF Target 3 and SDG14.

MedPAN actively contributed to numerous meetings to share its experience and guidance on establishing and strengthening networks of MPA managers, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean. It collaborated with the West African Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas (RAMPAO), with support from the Ocean Governance project²⁹, and with the Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Network (WIO-MPAN). MedPAN also engaged in ongoing discussions in the Caribbean, working alongside the Regional Activity Centre for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPAW-RAC) and the former Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network (CaMPAM).

Output 3.3.2 | An international alliance of networks of MPA managers and trust funds established

Building on the pioneering partnership between The MedFund and MedPAN, the GEF project supported the strengthening of the Global Alliance for Marine Conservation. This output is on track.

²⁸ The EU-funded Large-scale RESToration of COASTal ecosystems through rivers to sea connectivity (REST-COAST) runs from 2021 to 2026. It aims to demonstrate that large-scale coastal restoration is both feasible and vital for climate change adaptation ([source](#))

²⁹ The EU-funded Ocean Governance project (2020-2022) aimed to reinforce synergies with other networks of MPA managers beyond the Mediterranean, positioning the EU as a global actor in international ocean governance. Its activities primarily focused on Southeast Asia, the Atlantic basin, and global-level exchanges ([source](#))

Launched in 2021 under the Ocean Governance project, the Alliance aims to foster a global approach to marine conservation by bringing together MPA manager networks and conservation trust funds (CTFs) to help transition understaffed and underfunded ecosystems into effectively managed marine protected areas – contributing to the global 30x30 goal and SDG14. Ultimately, the Alliance aims to foster partnerships between trust funds and networks of marine protected areas and to support the sharing of good practices and common standards for measuring effective management and sustainable financing to inform the 30x30 goal globally.

MedPAN and The MedFund are part of a core group of four leading organizations³⁰ guiding the Alliance’s development. They regularly showcase their collaboration at international events and have contributed to meetings in West Africa to support closer alignment between RAMPAO and regional CTFs such as the Consortium of African Funds for the Environment (CAFE). Discussions are also underway with the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, which is developing its own MPA strategy.

Mission & objectives of the Global Alliance for Marine Conservation

Vision: 30% of our oceans are effectively managed for the demonstrable recovery of biodiversity and fish stocks to bolster local livelihoods.

Mission: To meet the biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development goals embedded in the 30x30 commitment, CTFs and marine manager networks (MMNs) shall collectively: i) scale global capacity, ii) design, manage and finance marine conservation areas.

Objectives: The Alliance will provide resources and tools to CTFs and MMNs to build collaboration for marine conservation areas in national and regional seas, scale their capacity, and amplify their voices to meet the 30x30 challenge.

- Short term:
 - i) Identify strengths/expertise/geographies/opportunities among current CTFs and MMNs to set priorities for collaboration
 - ii) Prioritize collaboration between MMNs and CTFs in two large marine ecosystems
 - iii) Raise funds for communities of practice to provide capacity building for Alliance members
 - iv) Build a membership and governance structure along with sustained funding for the Alliance
- Long term:
 - v) Spark collaborations in five more large marine ecosystems
 - vi) Encourage international donors to fund the creation of CTFs or MMNs in ecosystems that lack them
 - vii) Establish communities of practice to share best practices
 - viii) Build a shared voice to influence large international financing commitments to marine conservation areas

Governance: MedPAN acts as the Secretariat. The Executive Committee will be composed of CTFs.

³⁰ Including the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Funds (REDLAC) and Costa Rica Por Siempre

3.2. OVERALL PROJECT

3.2.1. RELEVANCE

The relevance of the project is highly satisfactory. It aligns closely with CI-GEF priorities and the national agendas of participating countries. It also responds directly to key barriers to effective MPA management in the Mediterranean – specifically, the lack of sustainable funding and capacity building – which are at the core of The MedFund and MedPAN's expertise. Such barriers also exist in other regions of the world, which makes the MedFund and MedPAN partnership a strong pilot initiative with potential for growth and replication elsewhere.

The project is well aligned with GEF-7 and CI's priorities. It supports the GEF-7 International Waters (IW) Focal Area Strategy, particularly programming direction IW-1.1 “Strengthen blue economy opportunities through sustainable healthy coastal and marine ecosystems”. It also contributes to GEF's IW:LEARN platform by disseminating best practices, especially those developed under Component 2³¹. Moreover, the GEF-7 Biodiversity strategy emphasizes the development and implementation of comprehensive, system-level financing solutions. This project directly contributes to it by scaling up The MedFund – originally operationalized with earlier GEF support – into a long-term financing mechanism for MPAs. Strengthening MPA management effectiveness is also a core strategic goal. In addition, the project supports CI's global commitment to doubling ocean protection.

Globally, the project advances the implementation of several key regional and international agreements. It directly supports the Barcelona Convention roadmap, which seeks to establish a comprehensive and coherent network of Mediterranean MPAs. The project also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 14, promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. Additionally, it contributes to the objectives of the Paris Agreement by recognizing and enhancing the crucial role of oceans and marine protected areas in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Finally, the project aims to contribute to achieving the 30x30 target – an evolution of the Aichi Targets under the CBD – now enshrined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3.

Alignment with country priorities is strong, as many Mediterranean countries simultaneously demonstrate growing ambitions to protect their marine areas and lack budgets to support them. Most are actively expanding their MPA networks – for example, Montenegro recently designated its first MPAs in 2021, while Morocco and Tunisia are in the process of officially establishing theirs³². However, national mechanisms to effectively manage these new MPAs are often underdeveloped, necessitating additional international support.

The lack of sustainable funding for MPAs remains a major constraint across the region – especially in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. National conservation budgets are often tight, forcing MPA management bodies to depend on short-term, project-based international grants. These grants are rarely suited to cover recurrent management costs such as salaries, governance coordination, equipment maintenance, or long-term monitoring. The MedFund was specifically created to address this funding gap.

All interviewed participants of the trainings and workshops confirmed that the topics and formats were well aligned with their needs. They appreciated the practical tools, best practices, and real case studies provided through a balanced mix of theory and hands-on activities. As one participant from Lebanon shared: *“it allowed me to learn from other Mediterranean practitioners and discuss common challenges such as community engagement, sustainable tourism, and enforcement. The*

³¹ MedPAN has shared knowledge products with IW:LEARN and participated in the GEF IW 10th Conference in 2024.

³² However, while the formal designation as MPAs is recent, many of these hotspots were already under protection through other statuses - such as national parks or nature reserves - particularly in coastal zones that encompass both terrestrial and marine areas.

combination of theory and practice was very effective, and the content was directly relevant to the realities I face on the ground”.

The project supports The MedFund’s core mission. As a CTF, The MedFund mobilizes public and private capital to finance MPA operational costs over the long term, while also supporting capacity building. It targets nine priority countries in its strategy³³, six of which are part of the GEF project. Its objective is to grow its endowment fund to €30 million, generating sufficient annual interest to sustainably support 20 MPAs. Because GEF grants cannot be invested in an endowment due to GEF rules, the funding was allocated to a sinking fund. Nevertheless, the GEF project enables The MedFund team to maintain momentum while securing additional co-financing for the endowment. The GEF grant thus bridges the gap, through short- to medium-term support until sufficient interest income is generated.

Capacity building remains a key need for MPAs. Most MPAs in the southern and eastern Mediterranean are newly created and lack institutional experience. Many local NGOs that have assumed MPA co-management roles have backgrounds in environmental education, conservation, or restoration – but lack training in planning, scientific monitoring, governance and stakeholder engagement. Accelerating the professionalization of these actors requires sustained investment in training and knowledge exchange. MedPAN’s mandate is precisely to provide such support.

The project aligns with MedPAN’s strategic focus, although its strategy is currently under review. MedPAN’s mission is to be “the voice of Mediterranean MPAs” and support their development. Its activities include producing tools and guidance, organizing training and exchanges, contributing to policy development, and supporting sub-regional and national networks. These areas are reflected in project Components 2 and 3. However, due to changes in leadership and governance, as well as limited human and financial resources, MedPAN drafted a transition plan and launched a full strategic review. The outcomes of this process will likely influence the prioritization and implementation of project activities under these components.

Focus on MedPAN strategy review

MedPAN’s previous strategy covered the period 2019–2023. However, its review was delayed following the departure of the former Executive Secretary and changes in governance. The strategic review process officially began in 2024 with support from external consultants.

A first draft of the new 2026–2030 strategy is expected by the end of October 2025, with final validation and presentation scheduled for MedPAN’s General Assembly in Spring 2026.

The methodology adopted for the strategy review is structured around a five-step participatory process, emphasizing broad consultation and inclusivity. Actions already completed include:

- A comprehensive policy landscape analysis
- Evaluation of the 2019–2023 strategy
- Dissemination of feedback questionnaires to MedPAN members
- Development of a SWOT analysis
- Definition of MedPAN’s updated vision and mission
- Validation of four strategic themes: i) Governance and network coordination; ii) Sustainable financing for MPAs; iii) Capacity building and knowledge sharing; iv) Advocacy and policy engagement

Next steps will focus on organizing dedicated workshops with members and partners to refine strategic directions, co-develop priority actions, and ensure shared ownership of the strategy.

³³ Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Türkiye, Greece, Albania, Montenegro and Croatia. An agreement has also been reached in 2025 with Libya.

3.2.2. EFFECTIVENESS

The overall effectiveness of the project at this stage is rated as **moderately satisfactory**. While the number of supported MPAs is slightly below initial expectations, and some capacity-building activities face delays – partly due to staff turnover and the multiple workstreams in parallel – significant foundational progress has been made. The first half of the project has been instrumental in strengthening internal processes, establishing strategic partnerships, and setting the stage for accelerated progress in the second phase.

The results related to improvements in MPA management effectiveness are detailed in section 5 (Progress to impact).

Component 1: Access to sustainable funding

The MedFund has built a diversified donor base, enabling sustainable revenue generation to support Mediterranean MPAs. Its donors include both institutional partners – such as AFD and FFEM, which together invested €5 million in its endowment fund in 2020 – and private foundations, whose contributions offer valuable flexibility. Of its overall €30 million target, more than €15 million has already been mobilized, including €9 million capitalized in the endowment fund. The MedFund continues to diversify its donor portfolio to meet its full fundraising objective. Though the GEF grant could not be invested in the endowment fund due to GEF regulations, it has been placed in a sinking fund, which has already generated \$221,000 in interest since 2022. This demonstrates the strategic value of leveraging both financial instruments – the endowment for long-term sustainability and the sinking fund for medium-term flexibility.

The MedFund support is guided by its long-term financing strategy. It provides support to MPAs through three progressive 5-year funding phases: initiation, consolidation, and autonomy (see Figure 6). Renewal of support is contingent on an evaluation at the end of each phase and on the incorporation of The MedFund recommendations into the next action plan.

Figure 6. The MedFund long term financing strategy



For local NGOs that previously relied on small, short-term grants (typically <€50k over one year), The MedFund support has been transformative. It allows them to recruit permanent staff, strengthen technical and financial capacities, and dedicate time to developing a broader fundraising strategy. This long-term visibility improves their chances of securing additional funding, creating a virtuous cycle of financial stability and operational growth.

To date, The MedFund has disbursed funds to six MPAs, but challenges remain in engaging additional MPAs in Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon (see section 3.1.1). In Algeria, disbursement is delayed due to the agreement awaiting approval of national authorities. This uncertainty prevents working on other Algerian MPAs in the meantime. In Morocco, further support depends on improved coordination among national authorities following recent legislative changes – though progress was

reportedly underway. In Lebanon, expansion is stalled due to the ongoing conflict. Given these constraints, the project currently relies on applications from Tunisia, Montenegro, and Albania. It may need to wait until conditions improve in other countries to maintain regional balance. Nonetheless, The MedFund remains on track to commit the full GEF allocation to MPA support by the end of the project.

Component 2: Enhanced capacities

MedPAN supports capacity building through training sessions and practical tools that are valued by the MPA community. On average, 75% of trainees were very satisfied, 24% somewhat satisfied and 7% not very satisfied³⁴. Participants particularly appreciated the pedagogical approach, which was participatory and grounded in case studies and field visits. They also highlighted the high level of trainer expertise and the diversity of participants, which fostered rich and meaningful exchanges. One key area for improvement identified was the need to better tailor the content to the institutional specificities of Southern Mediterranean countries, to ensure that the recommendations are truly actionable³⁵.

While training efforts have reached a broad range of participants and topics (see Section 3.1.2), **this wide dispersion makes it challenging to assess their overall impact on capacity building.** Only 6 out of 39 participants attended more than one session. Given limited training opportunities and strong demand, MedPAN aimed for an equitable distribution of access. However, staff turnover, limited internal knowledge transfer, and the absence of a training-of-trainers approach constrain the multiplier effect and sustainability of these capacity building efforts.

Although it is not the lead for Component 2, The MedFund made a significant contribution to strengthening the capacities of MPA managers through tailored support. The MedFund goes beyond its traditional donor role by fostering close, long-term relationships with its grantees, with the overarching goal of building their autonomy. Technical assistance is delivered by two geographic coordinators – one for North Africa and one for the Eastern Mediterranean – who maintain regular contact with grantees and answer their solicitations. Their support includes sharing funding opportunities, reviewing project proposals, facilitating peer exchange, and connecting MPAs with relevant experts or partners. Drawing on its evaluation processes and internal expertise, The MedFund also provides strategic advice. For instance, during the transition of the Karaburun Sazan MPA to its consolidation phase, The MedFund offered recommendations on how to address tourism-related pressures and leverage them as a potential self-financing mechanism. Finally, The MedFund also directly supports capacity building by funding training and external expertise for its grantees.

Component 3: Stronger governance & cooperation

The first half of the project significantly contributed to consolidating existing initiatives and strengthening relationships with key partners in the Mediterranean and beyond. These efforts now need to be leveraged to deliver concrete results. Following MedPAN's strategic review, clear operational targets for collaboration could be defined for 2027.

MedPAN and The MedFund are very well-positioned in the Mediterranean MPA community, which amplifies shared messages. However, operational collaborations could be enhanced. Key institutions – such as the Prince Albert II Foundation, SPA/RAC, Conservatoire du Littoral, IUCN, WWF, CEPF, and the Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative (PIM) – are all members of The MedFund, with most also being active members of MedPAN. SPA/RAC serves as MedPAN's honorary vice president, and both organizations co-lead critical initiatives, including the Post-2020 MPA Roadmap and the Mediterranean MPA Forum. Together, they advocate at regional and global levels, produce strategic tools, share knowledge, and mobilize engagement around joint platforms like the Forum. The next step

³⁴ Calculation based on the four training sessions organized from 2022 to 2024, Statistics MedPAN beneficiaries 2018-2024

³⁵ Based on the results of the online survey disseminated as part of the evaluation

is to assess whether this strong mobilization is translating into tangible progress toward the commitments made under the MPA Roadmap. The mid-term evaluation of the Roadmap is planned for 2026. Operational synergies could also be enhanced – for example, by developing a more coordinated regional training offer or fostering collaboration on MPAs and blue economy, notably sustainable fisheries.

At the international level, the Global Alliance has allowed MedPAN and The MedFund to share their expertise and advocate for greater support to CTFs and MPA manager networks as well as closer collaboration between CTFs and MPA manager networks. Their active participation in major global events (UNFCCC COP, CBD COP, Ocean Decade Conference, UNOC) and promising engagements with RAMPAO and Caribbean actors offer additional momentum. These discussions should now be leveraged to catalyze replication of successful trust fund-network partnerships and promote the creation of such structures in regions where they are still lacking – in line with the Global Alliance's objectives (see section 3.1.3).

Finally, high-level advocacy must be complemented by more grounded efforts that respond to MPA needs at the national level. In addition to their collaboration with international organizations, MedPAN and The MedFund could more actively engage with their member country governments to support improved institutional frameworks and national strategies, based on the needs expressed by those countries. This could include accelerating MPA designation processes and supporting the establishment of national-level financing mechanisms.

3.2.3. EFFICIENCY

Overall, project efficiency is rated as satisfactory. Designed to align closely with the missions of The MedFund and MedPAN, the project effectively leverages existing resources, structures, and partnerships to ensure smooth implementation. A key strength of the project is its strong field orientation, with the majority of funds directed to subgrants, fostering good results on the ground. However, the ambitious scope of components 2 and 3, combined with limited resources, has led to a dispersion of efforts.

Subgrants account for 71% of the total initial budget. Other major expenditures include human resources (17%), travel, meetings, and workshops (6%), and external services supporting core deliverables (4%). This budget distribution aligns with standards. The project also benefits from building on past initiatives, including the previous GEF project that operationalized The MedFund and earlier MedPAN projects that launched the Forum/MPA Roadmap process³⁶, and the Global Alliance³⁷. This allowed the project to save time and share costs with key partners like SPA/RAC. For training activities, it also capitalized on MedPAN's existing training catalogue. These factors maximize efficiency and preserve funds for subgrantees.

As of the end of Q1 2025 (48% of the project duration), The MedFund's expenditure rate – excluding grants – stood at 40%³⁸, with only minor adjustments to the original budget, indicating that overall implementation is on track. Notable adjustments for Component 1 include the recruitment of a North Africa coordinator in 2023 and an 83% increase in travel costs due to inflation and insufficient initial planning. However, interest generated from the sinking fund offset these increases, maintaining the amount available for subgrants.

Regarding grants, 56% of available funds have been committed, which is on track; however, only 8% has been disbursed to date. This low disbursement rate reflects the early stage of most grant agreements. Continued effort is needed to ensure that all GEF funds are fully committed by the end of the project. Encouragingly, the recent results of the 2025 call for proposals suggest positive momentum

³⁶ MedMPA Network project (2016-2019 / EU funding), IMAP-MPA project (2019-2023 / EU funding)

³⁷ Ocean Governance project (2020-2023 / EU funding)

³⁸ Initial budget / ITD expenditures = 185,277 / 466,705 (source: Approved budget ProDoc – Financial reporting FY25 Q1)

(see section 3.1.1). Ongoing close monitoring will be essential to support timely contract finalization, effective activity implementation, and full fund utilization.

Table 6. Committed and disbursed amounts for subgrantees

MPA	Committed	Disbursed (FY25 Q1)
Kerkennah	\$286,200	\$64,008
Katic	\$286,200	\$65,084
Platamuni	\$286,200	\$65,826
Palm Island	\$286,200	\$30,000
Ras Rmel	\$287,000	<i>Pending signature</i>
Gouraya	\$287,000	<i>Pending signature</i>
Stari Ulcinj	\$287,000	\$61,1150
TOTAL	\$2,005,800	\$286,068
% of the total amount available to grantees (\$3,562,903)	56%	8%

On MedPAN’s side (Component 2 and 3), **the expenditure rate was 55%, which remains on track, though HR costs require close monitoring.** Personnel salaries and benefits have reached 64%, while the project is only 48% complete (duration), indicating an overuse of allocated days. This is likely due to staff turnover, which has affected team efficiency. A budget reallocation from travel, meetings, and workshops – currently underutilized at 41% to HR – could be considered, ensuring sufficient resources remain for the final training session, regional workshop, and MPA Forum. Efficiency could also be improved by reducing the dispersion of efforts. To enhance cost-effectiveness, Component 3 should focus on a limited number of actionable activities/outputs. Outreach materials and policy tools should continue to be widely disseminated, with translations into key regional languages (e.g., Arabic) to ensure accessibility. Finally, the training strategy could be more focused so as to reduce thematic and audience fragmentation. A multiplier effect could be pursued through training-of-trainers approaches, linking participants with other ongoing training efforts, and encouraging trainees to transfer knowledge within their teams.

3.2.4. SUSTAINABILITY

Overall, project sustainability is rated as likely. As with efficiency, the alignment of the project’s design with The MedFund and MedPAN’s missions ensures that many activities will continue beyond the project’s end. Both organizations are autonomous, rooted in the Mediterranean region, and not tied to this specific project. However, additional measures are needed to manage political risks, ensure sufficient capitalization of The MedFund, and sustain the benefits of capacity-building efforts. This will also depend on the priorities outlined in MedPAN’s 2026–2030 strategy.

The detailed risk assessment is available in section 4.

Component 1: Sustainable funding

The MedFund was designed to provide long-term support to MPAs by generating interest through its endowment and sinking funds. This enables a phased approach over three five-year stages, with budgets decreasing as MPA autonomy increases and alternative funding sources are developed. Since inception, MedFund coordinators have supported grantees in developing business plans and identifying co-financing and self-financing opportunities. Complementarily, MedPAN organized two fundraising training sessions in 2022 and 2023, which included practical tools for building fundraising strategies.

However, The MedFund has so far capitalized only €9 million of its €30 million endowment target, with an additional €6 million in the sinking fund – including the GEF grant. Undercapitalization remains a major risk. The MedFund strategy estimates that €30 million is necessary to sustainably support 20

MPAs. Yet, donors remain hesitant to invest in endowment funds, making continued advocacy essential to encourage more flexible donor procedures and build confidence in CTF models. With support from another donor, The MedFund plans to recruit a professional fundraiser by the end of 2025.

In parallel, funding opportunities to cover MPAs' recurring operational costs remain scarce. Most regional donors still operate on project-based funding cycles, which rarely cover overheads such as staffing, utilities or governance-related activities. While this complements MedFund support in the short term, it may become problematic if no other donor is willing to take over funding of core operating costs after The MedFund's support ends.

In the southern Mediterranean in particular, national mechanisms and legal frameworks to fund MPAs or enable self-financing options remain underdeveloped. For instance, in Tunisia, SPA/RAC and APAL commissioned a legal and institutional review in 2021 to explore options for sustainable MPA financing. Most recommendations drawn from international best practices require regulatory reform. Targeted advocacy and technical support should be considered to help drive these changes.

Component 2: Enhanced capacities

Maintaining an up-to-date training catalogue and pool of resources is one of MedPAN's core missions. All training programs and outreach materials developed are well aligned with MedPAN's priority themes and the needs of its member network, ensuring their continued use and development. The Training Needs Assessment currently underway through the GEF project will further inform MedPAN's strategic review and help refine future training priorities.

However, due to the dispersion of training efforts across a wide range of topics and participants, the long-lasting effect of these initiatives is expected to remain moderate. Several factors influence the sustainability of training outcomes, including limited post-training follow-up to reinforce and apply knowledge, as well as staff turnover in MPAs. Among others, developing a training-of-trainers approach could help build the sustainability of training efforts.

To maximize the impact of outreach materials, continued efforts are needed to ensure their accessibility, visibility, and long-term dissemination. MedPAN made significant efforts to promote its publications, notably its comprehensive policy paper on the effective management of MPAs in the Mediterranean. MPA managers do not always consult MedPAN's website or past newsletters when seeking information. To enhance visibility and utility, MedPAN should actively engage intermediaries – such as experts, trainers, and partners – to promote and share these tools with MPA practitioners, reduce duplications, and ensure wider dissemination.

Suggestions from training participants on the sustainability of training

In the online survey shared with participants as part of the evaluation, the following initiatives were highlighted as particularly valuable:

- Creating a community of trainees and trainers to maintain ongoing exchanges, through a formal Alumni network or WhatsApp groups
- Providing follow-up support and mentoring to help participants apply what they learned in their local contexts
- Developing an integrated regional training program with diverse formats (in-person, online, peer-to-peer) and progressive levels
- Establishing a network of national training centers to expand access to training content
- Producing additional multilingual training modules
- Encouraging trainees to share their learning with their teams after the training
- Offering small grants to support pilot projects that apply the knowledge gained during training

Interestingly, 74% of participants indicated a willingness to contribute financially to the trainings³⁹. To enhance access and ensure the long-term sustainability of the training model, the option of partial cost-sharing by trainees could be further explored.

Component 3: Stronger governance & cooperation

While fostering stronger governance and support to MPAs is one of MedPAN’s core mandates and will continue beyond the project, its strategic review will likely lead to adjustments in priorities. Activities under Component 3 span a broad spectrum – ranging from regional policy development and support to other networks, to facilitating the Global Alliance – covering both the Mediterranean and international levels. Delivering on all these workstreams requires substantial staffing and resources for travel, coordination, and dialogue. With some major funding sources for MedPAN ending in 2025, new proposals are needed to ensure continuity. In parallel, some international activities may need to be deprioritized, particularly in response to member feedback emphasizing a stronger regional focus within the Mediterranean.

Nevertheless, MedPAN can leverage strong strategic partnerships to sustain key initiatives, especially the Forum/MPA Roadmap process, whose continuation is secured through SPA/RAC’s leadership. The Global Alliance, however, will require renewed support to maintain momentum and broaden its influence.

Furthermore, in light of the current political reluctance to push environmental priorities in several countries, it is essential to continue demonstrating both the ecological and socio-economic benefits of MPAs. To strengthen its relevance and impact, the project would benefit from a clearer integration of blue economy objectives and more systematic socio-economic monitoring.

³⁹ 26% answered yes to the question “Do you think your organization would be willing to pay for training like this?” and 48% answered somewhat (calculation based on the four training sessions organized from 2022 to 2024, Statistics MedPAN beneficiaries 2018-2024).

3.3. OUTCOME FINAL RATING

Table 7 summarizes the ratings for each outcome across the four evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Detailed assessments and justifications for each rating are provided in the corresponding sections above.

Table 7. Outcome final rating

Outcome	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Outcome final rating
1.1 The MedFund generates revenues from investments of an alliance of donors to support sustainable management effectiveness of 432,930 ha of MPAs	HS	S	HS	S	S
2.1 Enhanced capacities of managers and other stakeholders to effectively and sustainably manage 20 Mediterranean MPAs	HS	MS	MS	ML	MS
3.1 Operational regional mechanism supports the implementation of policy commitments towards MPAs in the Mediterranean, in particular the Barcelona Convention	HS	MS	n.a ⁴⁰	L	MS
3.2 Increased regional, sub-regional and national cooperation between MPA actors to jointly promote benefits and needs for effective and sustainable MPAs	HS	S	S	ML	S
3.3 Improved International cooperation between networks of MPA managers and conservation trust funds beyond the Mediterranean	HS	MS	MS	ML	MS

⁴⁰ As of the evaluation date, no report was available on the voluntary commitments collected, since MedPAN waited for the June UNOC event to consolidate the results of both calls. Consequently, it is not yet possible to assess the ratio of mobilized resources to achieved results.

4. OVERALL PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY RISKS

Overall, project sustainability is rated as **moderately likely**. The ProDoc identified six key risks, of which five are still relevant. During the evaluation, an additional risk was identified concerning MedPAN’s implementation capacity.

A key strength of the project lies in its strong alignment with the core missions of The MedFund and MedPAN. This alignment enables meaningful synergies with other initiatives led by these organizations and increases the likelihood of sustaining project activities through future funding. However, continued efforts are needed to support the consolidation of both organizations, which remain relatively young⁴¹ and still in the process of scaling up and strengthening their institutional maturity.

Risk	Rating	Planned and implemented mitigation measures	Assessment
<p>1. Political instability in several countries in the region may result in government changes. This may lead to the reevaluation of government priorities and redirection of funding allocations away from MPAs</p> <p><i>Categorization⁴²: Context – Political and Governance</i></p>	Substantial	<p>The project actively promotes co-management arrangements between national authorities and NGOs, along with the establishment of local management committees that engage all relevant stakeholders in MPA governance.</p> <p>The MedFund also regularly engages in high-level dialogue with national authorities – for example, during UNOC in June 2025 – to share priorities and progress.</p>	<p>Political and administrative hurdles have led to substantial delays in signing agreements, particularly in Algeria and Morocco. The MedFund has responded with adaptive management, exploring various pathways to move forward. Ensuring continued alignment between selected MPAs and national strategies will be essential, along with close monitoring of these evolving contexts⁴³.</p> <p>Moreover, national public funding for MPAs remains extremely limited, especially in the Southern Mediterranean. This structural constraint may require renewed advocacy and support efforts to enhance national financing frameworks.</p>
<p>2. Global economic and financial problems may lead to reduced funding from international donors, and causes consistently lower</p>	Moderate	<p>The MedFund adheres to a responsible investment policy for its endowment fund, while the sinking fund follows a slightly more flexible investment strategy to generate higher returns.</p>	<p>Diversifying funds between the endowment and sinking mechanisms has proven effective,</p>

⁴¹ Both were established in 2015 (The MedFund was formerly known as M2PA)

⁴² GEF Risk Appetite document

⁴³In Morocco, the Fisheries Department was initially reluctant to sign the amendment to the Jbel Moussa agreement, as the site was not considered a strategic priority. Its application had been endorsed in 2020 by the National Agency for Water and Forests (ANEF), which at the time was the only competent authority for MPAs.

<p>returns on the endowment and sinking funds over the long term</p> <p><i>Categorization: Innovation – Financial and Business Model</i></p>		<p>The investment of the GEF grant has produced a satisfactory return.</p>	<p>balancing responsible investment with solid performance.</p> <p>However, sustained fundraising efforts are necessary to ensure medium- and long-term capitalization.</p> <p>Inflationary pressures are also impacting the ability of grantees to fully implement their activities within budgeted limits.</p>
<p>3. Weak management capacities for planning, management, and governance reduce project effectiveness</p> <p><i>Categorization: Execution – Capacity for implementation</i></p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Both MedPAN and The MedFund play complementary roles in building MPA management capacity. MedPAN provides training programs, technical tools, and networking platforms, while The MedFund delivers individualized support – particularly in project development and financial management.</p> <p>Capacity is assessed at the grant award stage and monitored throughout implementation using tools such as the management effectiveness tracking tool.</p>	<p>The MedFund has strong relationships with key regional partners and experts, such as SPA/RAC, who can share information on the actual capacities of MPA managers. The MedFund also established an open and trust-based relationship with its grantees, fostering transparency and shared understanding of challenges.</p> <p>Further synergies have been developed between MedPAN and The MedFund. For example, MedPAN’s Call for Small Projects in 2023 helped MPAs strengthen their planning frameworks.</p> <p>Changing pressures, such as the significant rise in tourism in Albania and Montenegro, call for adaptive planning and context-specific responses.</p>
<p>4. The capital invested in the CTF sinking fund and the revenue generated are diverted from their purpose</p> <p><i>Categorization: Execution – Fiduciary</i></p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>The MedFund has defined clear eligibility criteria. It also includes an initial ethics and anti-fraud training during agreement kick-off.</p> <p>Grantees are required to submit periodic technical and financial reports, as well as annual audits.</p> <p>In higher-risk cases (three MPAs to date), first-year disbursements were reduced to mitigate administrative or operational weaknesses.</p>	<p>Over time, The MedFund’s support has contributed significantly to professionalizing grantees – especially those lacking in-house administrative or financial staff – striking a balance between flexibility and financial rigor that is highly valued by partners.</p> <p>These improved capacities also help grantees better manage cofinancing, which in turn strengthens the confidence of other donors.</p>
<p>5. Global climate change impacts the MPAs negatively</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>In terms of climate monitoring, each funded MPA conducts activities tracking climate change</p>	<p>Given the multiple challenges in the Mediterranean region, expanding activities related to climate</p>

<p><i>Categorization: Context – Climate</i></p>		<p>indicators such as sea temperature, acidification, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and invasive species.</p> <p>Special attention is paid to Posidonia oceanica, a major carbon sink and conservation target in many MPAs..</p>	<p>adaptation would require complementary funding. More structured collaboration with organizations such as WWF or CEPF could help broaden the scope and impact of these efforts.</p>
<p>6. COVID-19 risk</p> <p><i>Categorization: Context – Environmental and social</i></p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>No more significant impact of COVID situations</p> <p>Virtualization of events and training is now easy to implement.</p>	<p>Lessons learned during the pandemic – such as the ability to shift to virtual or hybrid formats – have increased project resilience.</p> <p>Online participation can now be used as an option to reduce barriers related to visas or limited resources, and some trainings are conducted in blended formats, combining online pre-sessions with in-person workshops.</p>
<p>7. MedPAN’s staff turnover and ongoing strategic review delay the completion of certain planned activities.</p> <p><i>Categorization: Execution – Capacity for implementation</i></p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Since early 2024, MedPAN has operated without a director, which has challenged coordination and project leadership.</p> <p>In response, the team prioritized core activities and redistributed responsibilities to maintain progress. Some initiatives were postponed, and a transition plan was developed to manage the interim period.</p>	<p>The arrival of a new director in July 2025, along with the outcomes of the strategic review, will likely inform the reprioritization of project activities to ensure focused and efficient resource use.</p> <p>Due to the absence of some internal staff, particularly in logistics, external service providers must be hired, potentially increasing operational expenditures and requiring careful resource planning.</p>

5. PROGRESS TO IMPACT

The project objective is to promote “strong, effective and sustainable management of Mediterranean MPAs to address global changes and to provide long-term socio-ecological benefits in the Mediterranean in a post COVID recovery context”.

Key expected impacts include: i) improved MPA management effectiveness; ii) improved sustainability of marine fisheries; iii) delivery of key knowledge products; and iv) socio-economic co-benefits.

Intermediate expected outcomes include: i) increased long-term investment from public and private sectors to support MPAs; ii) increased application of MPA best practices and innovative solutions; iii) strengthened enabling environment supporting policy commitments towards MPAs; iv) improved decision-making, partnerships and collaboration.

At its midpoint, the project is already showing strong results, paving the way for scaling up in the Mediterranean and potential replication in other regional seas. Early achievements highlight the project's relevance and effectiveness, with concrete results in governance, capacity building, and sustainable financing.

5.1. PROGRESS TOWARDS INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Increased long-term investment from public and private sectors to support MPAs

The MedFund is designed as a donor alliance platform for MPAs. By offering increased visibility and robust fiduciary processes, it serves as an intermediary, bridging the gap between large institutional donors like GEF or FFEM and small-scale MPA managers on the ground. The \$35M co-financing mobilized through the project highlights its catalytic role in activating the wider Mediterranean funding ecosystem, aligning with major regional actors such as CEPF, SPA/RAC, WWF, IUCN, and leading philanthropic foundations like Prince Albert II Foundation and Pew Bertarelli.

The MedFund and MedPAN are building a community of skilled actors, more likely to attract future public and philanthropic financing. Their support targets newly designated or soon-to-be-designated MPAs, providing critical early-phase financial and organizational reinforcement. Through this, they help transform emerging institutions into credible, grant-ready bodies. Beyond conservation expertise, grantees are trained in financial planning, proposal writing, and governance – skills that boost their long-term credibility and capacity. The MedFund label serves as a quality mark, showing strong governance and staff stability, which builds trust with other donors. In particular, four MPAs in Tunisia and Lebanon – whose management has improved under The MedFund support – are expected to regain their status as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI)⁴⁴ in 2025. This designation is an asset for attracting future funding.

Although still limited, private sector engagement holds strong future potential. In the Eastern Mediterranean, countries like Albania, Montenegro, and Lebanon are advancing exploratory efforts to set up tourism-linked financing mechanisms. However, significant legal and institutional barriers persist in the Southern Mediterranean. For instance, Tunisian regulations heavily restrict NGOs – particularly MPAs – from generating self-financing.

Increased application of MPA best practices and innovative solutions

⁴⁴ The concerned sites include La Galite, Kneiss, and Zembra in Tunisia, as well as Palm Island in Lebanon. Their SPAMI status was suspended in 2019 due to shortcomings in management, such as the absence of formal designation or insufficient on-site monitoring. Following a positive evaluation in mid-2025, they are on track to be officially reinstated at the Barcelona Convention COP in December 2025. The SPAMI list is coordinated by SPA/RAC.

Through training sessions and experience-sharing workshops, MedPAN and The MedFund effectively promoted best practices and innovative methodologies. Significant progress was made in areas such as ecological monitoring, especially for NGOs newly appointed as MPA managers, who often lacked prior experience. By supporting sub-regional and national networks, the project helped standardize monitoring protocols, enabling comparable data collection across MPAs. This standardization was strengthened by the focus on shared conservation targets, notably *Posidonia oceanica*. The NGB NGO (Kuriat MPA, Tunisia) supported the creation of the South Mediterranean Posidonia Network (SMPN), which aims to complement the existing Mediterranean Posidonia Network (MPN), which is insufficiently inclusive of Southern Mediterranean actors. The SMPN seeks to foster experience-sharing, promote standardized monitoring protocols, and strengthen advocacy for the protection of Posidonia seagrass across the region.

Figure 7. Diver monitoring the density of *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass (NGB)



Furthermore, experience-sharing extended beyond the six intervention countries, enriching the MPA community across the Mediterranean and beyond. Several project activities were embedded within MedPAN's broader regional program - such as trainings, workshops, and international events - facilitating exchanges with a wide range of countries. This approach generated a valuable multiplier effect. For instance, one training session in Türkiye and a regional workshop in France brought together participants from various Mediterranean countries and beyond, fostering cross-regional dialogue, including between the northern and southern Mediterranean, and with countries such as Libya and Croatia.

This experience-sharing work was also bolstered by complementary initiatives such as the SPAMI Twinning project led by SPA/RAC, which fosters partnerships between MPAs in the northern and southern Mediterranean.

Despite progress, sustained efforts are needed to achieve more widespread impacts. Closer coordination with other capacity-building initiatives – especially those led by partners from the northern Mediterranean – would strengthen knowledge transfer and improve outreach to the MPA community by pooling resources. Ensuring the inclusion of diverse actors, particularly from the southern Mediterranean, remains essential. This requires addressing persistent challenges such as visa-related constraints and language barriers.

Strengthened enabling environment supporting policy commitments towards MPAs / Improved decision-making, partnerships and collaboration

The project operated at three complementary levels – regional, national and local. It effectively promoted stakeholder engagement to advance policy commitments, though more time and reflection are needed to fully assess long-term impacts.

One of the project's notable impacts is its significant contribution to the consolidation of co-management approaches across the participating countries. It played a particularly key role in advancing this model in Tunisia. Efforts are currently underway to promote this co-management model in Montenegro, where MPA management is still largely centralized under the national public enterprise. This agency faces significant limitations in maintaining a regular on-the-ground presence, operating with only two offices nationwide and a total of eight rangers. While NGOs are contracted to support some field activities, their roles remain limited in scope, with no visibility over the broader management plan.

Support to the consolidation of the co-management model in Tunisia

Tunisia's Law No. 2009-49 provides a legal basis for marine and coastal protected areas (MPAs), but the absence of implementing decrees has delayed the formal designation of key sites like Kuriat, Galite, Kneiss, Zembra, and Kerkennah. Despite the existence of management plans, no MPAs have been officially designated yet in Tunisia.

In response to this regulatory gap, the NGO Notre Grand Bleu (NGB) initiated a co-management model in 2012 at the Kuriat Islands, combining community engagement, participatory governance, and scientific monitoring. The success of this initiative led to broader institutional interest in co-management as a practical solution to Tunisia's centralized and under-resourced MPA governance system.

This model involves collaboration between:

- APAL: The national authority overseeing MPAs, responsible for legal and administrative aspects, and oversight of conservation activities
- Local NGOs: Execute field activities (monitoring, awareness, education) based on management plans

Stakeholder engagement is ensured through Local Support Management Committees (CLAG), which bring together NGOs, local authorities, and other stakeholders such as sectoral representatives from fisheries and tourism.

Support from The MedFund and MedPAN has strengthened this model by financing co-management units, building ecological monitoring skills, and establishing CLAGs. Even in the absence of formal designation, this has positioned Tunisia as a regional leader in participatory MPA management. The momentum created by field success is now accelerating the long-awaited legal designation process, expected to conclude in the coming months.

At the local level, the project supported the creation of governance committees that brought together all key stakeholders, including local authorities. By improving communication about field activities and results, these committees helped foster greater engagement and a more supportive local environment for MPA management.

At the regional level, the project benefited from close collaboration with SPA/RAC, the official body for implementing the Barcelona Convention. Key achievements included support to the Mediterranean MPA Forum and the Post-2020 Roadmap process. The effectiveness of these initiatives will be better assessed following the Roadmap's mid-term evaluation scheduled for next year.

MedPAN and The MedFund also contributed to international advocacy through active participation in major events such as the UNFCCC COP, CBD COP, and UNOC, including within the Global Alliance framework. Their presence helped amplify Mediterranean voices in global ocean protection discussions.

However, engagement with sectoral authorities – such as those in fisheries, tourism, and waste management – has been limited, reducing opportunities to mitigate key pressures through improved policy coherence. Expanding engagement at the national level – such as advocating for national funding

mechanisms, regulatory reforms, or accelerating MPA designation processes – also represents an area for further development.

5.2. PROGRESS TOWARDS LONG-TERM IMPACTS

GEF7 Core indicators

At the mid-term review, the project had already exceeded nearly all of its core indicator targets.

Indicator	Achieved MTR (FY25)	Target (CEO endorsement)
2. Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (ha)	385,284.2	432,930.2
2.1 Marine protected areas newly created (ha)	208,094	213,186
2.2 Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness (ha)	177,190	219,744
7. Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management (number)	1	1
7.4 Level of engagement in IW:LEARN through participation and delivery of key products	3	4
8. Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric tons)	31,980	18,058
11. Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment (number)	11,456	10,000
11.1 Women	5155	5,000
11.2 Men	6300	5,000

Improved MPA management effectiveness

Positive impacts on biodiversity health take several years to materialize and can be undermined by external factors beyond the project’s control, such as climate change, national policies promoting tourism development, or worsening socio-economic conditions. Nevertheless, early signs are encouraging – especially through increased monitoring efforts, which are already leading to more frequent species observations. A more comprehensive assessment of these impacts will be appropriate by the project’s end.

To assess the quality of the conservation measures implemented, The MedFund has developed a tool to track progress in MPA management effectiveness. Each beneficiary selects three conservation targets – species or habitats. For each target, a baseline is established along with a scientific monitoring protocol to assess ecological benefits. In addition, the tool is structured as a spreadsheet that compiles general information about each MPA, changes in pressures on conservation targets, monitoring indicators (e.g., staff numbers, patrol frequency, fish stock status, tourist visits). It also features three aggregated indicators, expressed as a percentage: It also features three aggregated indicators, expressed as a percentage:

Context and structuration	Effectiveness	Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functional management structure governance mode and stakeholder participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> achievement level of management activities surveillance and enforcement fishing management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ecological status of conservation targets status of fish populations status of fishing activity and commercial resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> operational management plan financial resources equipment and installations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management of other activities and pressures local economy awareness-raising activities scientific research monitoring-evaluation management of invasive alien species consideration of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> status of other economic activities and pressures governance appropriation, participation, local perception of MPA and socio-economic benefits
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Preliminary results show progress across all three core indicators, as well as on overall sustainability. The most notable improvements are seen in the "context and structuration" dimension, with an average increase of +26.25 points. This reflects The MedFund's focus on supporting MPAs during their early development stages. The case of Karaburun Sazan – supported by The MedFund since 2020 and now entering its consolidation phase – offers historical data that confirms significant advances across all four indicators, particularly in efficiency. The presence of missing data highlights the need for continued support to help MPAs take full ownership of the monitoring tool and strengthen their capacity to complete it consistently on an annual basis.

Table 8. Results of the management effectiveness assessment tool

MPA	Baseline year	Latest reported year	Context and structuration (%)		Effectiveness (%)		Efficiency (%)		Sustainability (%)	
			Baseline	Latest value	Baseline	Latest value	Baseline	Latest value	Baseline	Latest value
Karaburun Sazan	2019	2024	50	77	53	75	13	50	68	74
Katic	2022	2024	35	49	23	33	0		12	20
Platamuni	2022	2023	35		23				12	
Stari Ulcinj	ongoing									
Palm Island	2023	2024	10	44	7	44	0		12	40
Gouraya	pending signature									
Kerkennah	2022	2023	14	44	50	50	0		8	30
Ras Rmel	ongoing									

Improved sustainability of marine fisheries

Many local-level activities are initiated by MPA managers, particularly due to the central role of fishers in most MPAs. Fishing is often both a primary livelihood and a key pressure on marine ecosystems. Small-scale fishers, however, are generally open to engaging in conservation and sustainable resource management. Their ecological knowledge – on habitats like nursery areas or Posidonia meadows – makes them valuable allies in monitoring, offering both insight and logistical support. By equipping MPA managers to deliver ecological results, the project can increase stakeholder buy-in, including for spatial or seasonal fishing restrictions.

The project has taken some steps toward addressing sustainable fisheries. MedPAN developed a training module on how to characterize fishing activities within MPAs and previously facilitated efforts through the small-scale fisheries working group.

Nevertheless, direct project support to sustainable fisheries remains limited. As a result, it is currently difficult to evaluate whether the project has helped shift overexploited fisheries toward more sustainable levels. Demonstrating such change would require long-term, evidence-based scientific monitoring, including baseline and trend data.

This presents a key opportunity for partnership with specialized initiatives, such as FishEBM MED⁴⁵ and the World Bank's Blue Economy (BE) Program-for-Results Project for Morocco⁴⁶. Once MedPAN's strategic review is complete and working groups are re-engaged, the programming of these activities could be scaled up. Additional insights may also emerge from pilot studies already underway, such as one led in Lebanon by IndyAct.

Assessing the impacts of no-take zones on commercial fish stocks recovery

Thanks to MedPAN's small grant program and funding from The MedFund, IndyAct has launched an ambitious five-year study in collaboration with the University of Balamand, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture (also in charge of fisheries), the fishermen's syndicate and cooperative in Mina, the Navy (to strengthen enforcement), and the municipality of Mina.

The study, focused on the Palm Islands Nature Reserve, aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of no-take zones as a fisheries management tool. Key planned activities include expanding the reserve, transitioning it to a no-take zone, combating illegal fishing, monitoring dusky grouper populations, assessing fishing effort, and conducting both a public awareness campaign and policy advocacy.

Delivery of key knowledge products

The project has generated a range of knowledge products on key topics including management plans, fully protected areas, fisheries, and international policy frameworks (see Section 9.2). The GEF project played a role in amplifying the reach of these resources, that were also supported by other donors – extending their impact even beyond the six beneficiary countries. These outputs enrich MedPAN's widely recognized knowledge base. However, their impact remains difficult to assess at this stage. Continued dissemination efforts are needed to ensure these products reach the appropriate audiences who can put them to use.

Looking ahead, the work on gender approaches and the upcoming evaluation of the Post-2020 Roadmap offer potential to generate more strategic impact. The project's work on integrating gender perspectives into marine conservation aims to lay a conceptual foundation through stakeholder interviews and the collection of practical examples. These efforts could inform broader regional programming on gender and conservation. Similarly, the upcoming mid-term evaluation of the Post-2020 MPA Roadmap presents an important opportunity to assess overall coherence, measure progress against key targets, and catalyze deeper collaboration among regional partners.

Socio-economic co-benefits

Many field activities led by NGOs integrate socio-economic components to build community support for MPAs. Most MPA (co)managers are local NGOs, deeply rooted in the communities they serve and familiar with local livelihoods and challenges. For instance, this is particularly evident in the Kerkennah MPA in Tunisia – which is an inhabited island. With general support from The MedFund and

⁴⁵ The Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean project (FishEBM MED), funded by the GEF and running from 2023 to 2026, is implemented jointly by SPA/RAC and the GFCM. Its objective is to combat overfishing by promoting ecosystem-based management approaches that integrate sustainable fisheries, marine biodiversity conservation, and blue economy ([source](#))

⁴⁶ The Blue Economy (BE) Program-for-Results Project in Morocco (2022–2027) is supported by a \$315 million loan from the World Bank to the Moroccan government. The project aims to strengthen the blue economy sector to foster inclusive job creation and climate-resilient economic growth ([source](#))

funding from other donors⁴⁷, local NGOs are raising awareness about the importance of sustainable resource management, particularly regarding fisheries and coastal harvesting. They are also offering training programs aimed at diversifying income sources for local communities.

Collaborating with small-scale fishing communities: Examples of Kraten and ACG NGOs in Tunisia

Kraten (Kerkennah MPA) and ACG (Kneiss MPA) have implemented targeted activities to address income losses resulting from conservation measures, such as seasonal fishing bans.

In Kerkennah, Kraten has worked closely with fishermen to manage the closure of the octopus fishing season – a measure initially met with resistance but eventually accepted through effective communication and community engagement. To compensate for lost income, the NGO is experimenting with pescatourism (tourist participation in fishing excursions), which offers alternative revenue streams during the summer months. Kraten also trains fishermen’s wives to weave traditional palm traps instead of using plastic ones. They also sell derivative products to local residents and tourists to promote traditional know-how, diversify income sources, and promote gender equality.

Figure 8. Wall paintings at Kraten harbor illustrating traditional fishing techniques (left) and warning against the harmful impacts of trawling (right).



In Kneiss, ACG supports women clam collectors by organizing awareness campaigns and promoting alternative activities, such as harvesting other species like razor clams during the clam season closure (currently closed for four years due to a significant stock decline). The NGO also supports women in producing artisanal goods for sale (e.g., woven baskets, fabrics, candles), and promotes culinary heritage through catering services, with support from a GIZ project.

Collaborating with tourism operators: Example of NGB NGO in Tunisia

NGB operates in the Kuriat Islands, located in Monastir Bay – a popular destination for excursions on sea turtle nesting sites and beach tourism.

Since 2018, NGB has been negotiating a code of conduct with tourism operators and boatmen to manage the island’s protection and regulate its previously unstructured use. The code includes

⁴⁷ While The MedFund’s support typically does not cover all activity costs, it indirectly helps finance the majority of staff salaries and essential organizational expenses such as rent, utilities, and basic equipment.

measures such as proper waste management, removal of beach equipment at night, anchoring only at designated pontoons to protect Posidonia seagrass beds, and limits on the number of daily visitors.

To encourage widespread adoption, NGB launched a strong communication campaign with the support of local tourism authorities. They also invested in basic infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience – volunteer guides, explanatory panels, and marked trails on land and undersea.

Six years into implementation, the results reflect a win-win approach: ticket prices have increased significantly (by 50%), driven by improved visitor experience, while reduced beach disturbance has led to a record level in sea turtle nests.

NGB is also piloting pescatourism initiatives with local fishers under a MAVA/ACCOBAMS project. However, scale-up remains limited due to the absence of a formal legal framework for this activity.

Figure 9. Volunteers presenting sea turtle conservation activities to tourists



6. PROJECT GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND M&E SYSTEMS

Overall, project governance, management and M&E are rated as **satisfactory**. The design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation tools fostered transparency, accountability, and adaptive management. There were no major issues, and the system successfully supported strategic oversight and timely decision-making. All required reporting was completed, and lessons learned were integrated throughout the project.

M&E design

M&E design is rated as **satisfactory**.

M&E was designed as a dedicated component to ensure resources and accountability. Component 4 of the project focused exclusively on monitoring and evaluation, with The MedFund designated as the lead agency. It covered key functions such as the inception workshop and report, quarterly and annual progress reports, lessons learned documentation, and support for external evaluations. MedPAN contributed by providing data for components 2 and 3, ensuring consolidated project-level reporting.

The M&E plan built on experience from the previous GEF project. The earlier project that established The MedFund provided valuable lessons that informed the design of outcomes, outputs, indicators, data collection methodologies, and baseline values. This learning ensured that the M&E plan was relevant.

Monitoring operates at two complementary levels, including project level and field level. The MedFund and MedPAN report to CI-GEF, ensuring accountability at the project level. Grantees submit annual technical and financial reports to The MedFund and complete the management effectiveness assessment tool. In cases of implementation challenges or ahead of grant renewal decisions, The MedFund also conducts targeted field evaluations to assess MPA performance and identify support needs.

M&E implementation

M&E implementation is rated as **satisfactory**.

Some adaptations were required during implementation. Reporting templates were adjusted to align with the specific operations of CTFs. Financial reporting experienced some delays due to turnover at MedPAN, especially during the absence of the administrative and financial manager, though these delays were subsequently resolved. In addition, M&E costs increased significantly – mainly due to the recruitment of a North Africa coordinator and underestimated travel costs – but were mostly covered by interest from capitalized funds.

Despite internal staffing challenges, collaboration between MedPAN and The MedFund remained strong. The MedFund assumed part of the coordination responsibilities of the MedPAN team to help ensure continued monitoring of activities and timely reporting during the transition period. Both organizations maintained smooth cooperation and delivered complete reports on time. Their coordination was supported by effective use of shared online tools and clearly defined responsibilities.

Grantee monitoring allowed for responsive and informed support. The MedFund, supported by its geographic coordinators, maintained close relationships with MPA managers. This direct contact enabled early detection of implementation issues and timely corrective action.

The Steering Committee provided valuable oversight. It gathers key regional partners, including GEF, SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, Prince Albert II Foundation and the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB).

Regular meetings offered strategic guidance and validated annual workplans. However, the committee's effectiveness could be further enhanced by ensuring more consistent participation from SPA/RAC, to better coordinate capacity-building activities across the Mediterranean.

7. ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

7.1. QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

The quality of implementation is rated as **highly satisfactory**. Throughout the project cycle, CI demonstrated flexibility, responsiveness, and consistent support.

During the preliminary phase – including project identification, concept preparation, and appraisal – progress was smooth, due to the lessons learned from the previous GEF project that established The MedFund. The strong history of collaboration between CI and The MedFund further facilitated an efficient start. The project's design – built on a strategic partnership between a conservation trust fund and a regional MPA manager network – proved highly relevant, increasing its appeal for GEF funding due to its strong potential for impact and replication.

Regarding project oversight, both The MedFund and MedPAN expressed satisfaction with CI's support and flexibility. Communication remained open and constructive, enabling the teams to raise challenges early and secure timely adjustments to workplans and budgets. CI adapted its processes to manage two executing partners and accommodate the specific constraints of conservation trust funds, particularly the requirement to disburse full grant amounts upfront for investment. Reporting processes were efficient and purposeful. CI helped partners familiarize themselves with reporting templates, which were appreciated for being quite streamlined. As a result, the reporting workload was manageable and aligned with project management needs. Field-level engagement further strengthened project oversight. The field mission to Tunisia was particularly valuable, allowing CI to gain a better understanding of local context and meet directly with key regional actors. Finally, CI played a helpful role in the management of some grievances.

7.2. QUALITY OF EXECUTION

The quality of execution is rated as **satisfactory**. The expertise of The MedFund and MedPAN is widely recognized in the Mediterranean, and both organizations demonstrated adaptive management to address challenges and leverage opportunities throughout the project.

Funds were used in line with GEF requirements, including procurement and contracting, and were managed through annual workplans and budgets. Financial oversight was consistent, and activities were implemented in accordance with the approved budgets.

The MedFund's staffing was well-suited to the project's needs. Its team – comprising a director, two geographic coordinators, and a financial executive assistant – proved complementary in managing technical and financial aspects while ensuring effective stakeholder engagement across regional, national, and local levels. The addition of a second geographic coordinator, though not originally planned, strengthened the close monitoring of grantees.

MedPAN, however, experienced notable staff turnover, which might affect its capacity to deliver all activities on schedule. Despite these disruptions, the team maintained transparent communication with CI and The MedFund and successfully reorganized responsibilities to ensure continuity. MedPAN also succeeded in internalizing some gender-related activities that were initially intended to be carried out by an external consultant, whose contribution did not fully meet expectations. While this shift allowed the team to catch up on delays and even implement additional activities, it also led to an increased workload for the staff. The organization remains in a period of transition, placing additional pressure on staff. The arrival of a new director and the ongoing strategic review require close oversight from CI-GEF to ensure smooth delivery of activities by the end of the project.

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

8.1. OVERVIEW

Overall, the environmental and social safeguards are rated as **moderately satisfactory**.

During the project design phase, the project was classified as **Category C**, indicating minimal or no adverse environmental and social impacts. This screening was conducted using the CI-GEF Safeguards Screening Form, completed jointly by The MedFund and MedPAN.

Safeguard plans were developed for **Gender Mainstreaming (GMP)**, **Grievance Mechanism (AGM)**, and **Stakeholder Engagement (SEP)**. The SEP and GMP were enriched throughout project implementation.

However, **detailed E&S screening is needed at subgrantees level (MPAs)**. This analysis could not be conducted at design stage, given that specific MPA locations were not yet defined. It was anticipated that this analysis would be reinforced during project implementation, as highlighted in the Project Implementation Report (PIR): *“The project needs to document how ESMF requirements are applied at the MPA level, in a more systematic way, to ensure compliance and alignment with GEF and CI Environmental and Social Safeguards.”* This underscores the importance of documenting the identification of E&S risks during sub-granting, along with the systems and processes in place.

Key E&S risks include potential access restrictions and adverse social impacts, particularly affecting fishing communities. Most MPAs in the Mediterranean region suffer from limited surveillance and weak enforcement capacity, an area that The MedFund aims to strengthen. Grantees are encouraged to include enforcement-related activities in their project proposals and monitor them using the MEA tool. As such, restrictions on access and resource use, a common element of effective protected area management, must be carefully considered within the ESMF framework, assessing risks and potential impacts on livelihoods and proposing mitigation measures. This issue is particularly relevant to fishing activities, as illegal fishing remains widespread across many MPAs. It is therefore critical to identify the users of these fishing grounds and understand who may be affected by enhanced enforcement measures in each supported MPA.

To mitigate these risks, MPAs should have at least a basic E&S safeguard strategy in place, which – despite persistent challenges – is not yet explicitly required by The MedFund. While The MedFund’s current calls for proposals require information on gender and stakeholder engagement, they do not include E&S screening. Furthermore, The MedFund’s MEA tool helps assess progress on several relevant E&S dimensions, including: i) Women’s participation in MPA governance; ii) stakeholder engagement and perceptions; iii) evolution of the participation and involvement of stakeholders. In most cases, these indicators are rated as “insufficient,” highlighting the need for targeted action plans and ongoing monitoring. While this is part of broader MPA management strategies (and not solely the responsibility of this project), the project can play a supporting role in developing E&S assessments and promoting the integration of safeguard principles into MPA operations across the Mediterranean.

Other Relevant Safeguard Considerations include:

- **Cultural Heritage:** There is potential for project-supported MPAs to restrict access to tangible or intangible cultural resources (e.g., sacred sites, traditional practices), which could impact the rights of local communities. For example, in the Kerkennah MPA (Tunisia), the beneficiary NGO promotes charfia fishing—a traditional and sustainable technique that uses palm leaves to trap fish passively. It was Inscribed in 2020 on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Charfia fishing in the Kerkennah Islands



- **Human Rights and Law Enforcement:** Strengthening enforcement carries risks of human rights violations, such as abuse of power by rangers or discriminatory enforcement practices. This must be assessed in accordance with the CI-GEF ESMF Standard 8 – Community Health, Safety and Security.
- **Ensuring Equity in Benefit Distribution:** There is a risk of unjust or preferential distribution of benefits that must be carefully considered and assessed. This should be done in line with the CI-GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework, specifically ESS 1 – Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, and related policies such as Policy 4 – Accountability and Grievance Mechanism.

Ideally, a full set of safeguard instruments should be developed and implemented at the MPA level. These instruments ensure that investment or policy-related actions are guided by a precautionary, evidence-based, and human rights-based approach that promotes stakeholder engagement, public participation, and the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion.

The Blue Action Fund: Examples of comprehensive safeguards at MPA level

The Blue Action Fund is a foundation working with non-governmental organizations to designate and manage protected areas and support sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. It was created in 2016, and it is based in Germany.

Environmental and Social Safeguards are a key element of Blue Action Fund operations. Robust guidelines were developed at this level, particularly on access restriction. There is currently little guidance on access restrictions in the marine context, despite a well-established link between rights-based and inclusive approaches and positive biodiversity outcomes through increased local support. Blue Action Fund has also committed to equitable marine conservation and promoting rights-based engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities.

More than 15 documents were developed⁴⁸, including [Access Restriction Guidance Note](#) and [ESMS Principles and Requirements](#).

Figure 11. ESMS screening and monitoring process



⁴⁸ <https://www.blueactionfund.org/documents-esms/>

Regarding The MedFund's investments, its investment policy strictly follows the environmental and social procedures established by the GEF, as well as the exclusion list set by the AFD. Any activities found to be non-compliant with these frameworks are deemed ineligible for funding.

8.2. GENDER

The project is being implemented in a complex context, marked by diverse social and cultural dynamics across the various Mediterranean countries involved. This diversity poses a significant challenge to the development of cross-cutting social safeguard tools.

The project developed a Gender Mainstreaming Plan as a key instrument to generate evidence on the role of women in achieving conservation outcomes in the Mediterranean region. The plan aims to address critical information gaps regarding the complementary roles of women and men in coastal and marine ecosystems, as well as in related economic sectors such as fisheries and tourism. It also seeks to create meaningful opportunities for women's empowerment while enhancing the effectiveness of conservation measures in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The document includes a gender analysis at the MPA level and assesses potential project impacts on gender dynamics and the role of women in MPA management. Under component 1 (MPA financing), the GMP sets requirements for applicant MPAs regarding gender mainstreaming. Under component 2 (capacity building), it includes gender-focused training needs assessments, the delivery of training sessions tailored to the needs of both women and men, and the publication of outreach materials. Component 3 (regional cooperation) supports the integration of gender considerations into the activities of national and sub-regional networks, as well as the development of communication and policy tools that highlight the importance of gender in MPA management and offer guidance on how to operationalize it.

The Gender Action Plan outlines the following indicators, to be collected and monitored annually through PIR:

1. Number of men and women participating in project activities (e.g., workshops, trainings, consultations)
2. Number of events (e.g., workshops, forums, training sessions) and tools (e.g., outreach materials, policy tools, roadmap monitoring mechanisms) that incorporate gender considerations
3. Gender composition of the 20 MPA management committees
4. Gender composition of NGO Boards of Directors involved in MPA co-management
5. Gender distribution among MPA staff
6. Number of MPAs supporting activities that involve women in fisheries and allied sectors (e.g., fish processing, net repair, fish sales)
7. Number of MPAs supporting women's involvement in tourism and sustainable local businesses

Gender-related indicators are also required in grant applications are monitored in the MEA tool, which includes metrics such as the number of men and women in MPA management staff.

During project implementation, an analysis was carried out to strengthen the GMP. This effort aimed to detail how gender-responsive activities are distributed across project components and to reinforce the gender perspective throughout the initiative. A set of gender-sensitive interventions and indicators were developed for each component. However, the evaluation process noted a lack of clarity on how these additional indicators are being systematically monitored and lead to corrective actions.

Both The MedFund and MedPAN have demonstrated a strong commitment to gender equity, recognizing the vital role of women in marine conservation and fisheries. In addition to efforts to empower women and address their underrepresentation in MPA governance, the project and its executing partners have engaged in robust advocacy efforts. These include publications and outreach initiatives that celebrate women's contributions to conservation and promote gender-responsive

approaches to marine resource management, including an ongoing work on gender approaches in Med MPAs led by MedPAN.

The field visit to Tunisia provided valuable insights into gender inclusion in MPA management. Most MPA management units were found to include women, including in roles such as ecoguards. Local institutions also noted that a majority of students in marine conservation are now women, and they do not perceive the inclusion of women in management as a significant challenge. ACG has a strong focus in its activities on women clam collectors, to support the diversification of their incomes and coping for the temporary ban on clam collection.

However, despite these positive developments, there are currently no explicit gender targets or activities included in MPA management plans, and no national guidelines exist on gender integration from SPA/RAC or other national authorities. Overall, the field visit confirmed that while stakeholders are generally aware of gender-sensitive approaches and apply them when relevant, there remains a need for more structured and formalized integration of gender considerations into MPA planning and governance frameworks. This is coherent with the latest PIR when mentioning that: *“despite the successful implementation, the project encountered challenges, primarily due to the limited knowledge of gender-sensitive approaches in MPA management”*.

8.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The executing agencies and subgrantees have demonstrated strong capacity in engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, and there is widespread satisfaction with both the project's approach and its outcomes. Given its implementation across multiple countries—Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Albania, Montenegro, and Lebanon—the project engages a wide array of stakeholders through both its MPA financing and capacity-building/advocacy components.

Capacity-building activities implemented by MedPAN extend beyond MPA management bodies, actively promoting participation in experience-sharing workshops and training sessions for national and local authorities, other NGOs, experts, international organizations, donors, and more.

In parallel, The MedFund is promoting participatory governance at MPA level. It supported the establishment of local management committees in MPAs. During the field visit to Tunisia, it was observed that, thanks to MedFund support, all MPAs had established CLAGs (Local Management Support Committees). These committees bring together key stakeholders – such as fishers, tourism operators, and local authorities – once or twice per year. Additionally, some NGOs have started producing annual reports, which have proven effective in generating greater stakeholder interest and involvement in MPA management. However, engagement from public authorities, such as municipalities and governorates, remains uneven across sites.

At the regional level, the Project Steering Committee fosters cooperation among key partners. It comprises GEF Operational Focal Points, SPA/RAC, IUCN-Med, FPA II and OFB, MedFund, MedPAN, and CI-GEF. Annual meeting aim to review progress, share updates, and validate the following year's work plan and budget.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is regularly monitored and updated, tracking the number and types of institutions and groups engaged across the different project activities.

8.4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRIEVANCE MECHANISM (AGM)

The project has an Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM) in place, which is publicly available on [MedPAN website](#) and available in The MedFund subagreements Recognizing that the previous GEF project received an unsatisfactory rating for this component, the executing agencies have made efforts to improve and promote the mechanism in the current project. Additionally, **The MedFund has established a Code of Ethics,** which is disseminated as part of its funding and investment policy. It is embedded in grant agreements and agreement kick-off training.

To date, only a very small number of grievances have been submitted, all related to the MedFund's call for proposals, and all have been marked as resolved by the project team. This low number could reflect either an absence of significant issues or, more likely, a limited awareness or understanding of how to access and use the mechanism. Given the nature of project activities, a high number of grievances is not expected; however, one would still anticipate some level of engagement, including suggestions or recommendations, even if not formal complaints.

Importantly, grievance mechanisms should be adapted to local socio-cultural contexts. In many of the project countries, communities traditionally resolve conflicts through face-to-face dialogue or collective meetings, rather than through online platforms or grievance boxes. Therefore, the mechanism must be designed to reflect local practices and communication channels. While it may fall outside the direct control of The MedFund, it is critical to establish a grievance mechanism in each supported MPA. This can be encouraged through funding requirements and guidance. The field visit to Tunisia highlighted that the concept of an AGM is still poorly understood by many NGOs. Most grievances are communicated informally (in person or over the phone) and are not consistently documented. MPA managers, often local NGOs composed of community members, maintain strong relationships with local populations, who feel comfortable raising concerns directly. While this is a strength, it also underscores the need to formalize these informal systems to ensure transparency, accountability, and the ability to monitor trends over time. From the visit, it was observed that while most NGOs have a general email address and/or contact form on their websites, these are not actively promoted as channels for submitting grievances. This suggests the need for improved communication and awareness-raising to ensure that stakeholders understand their rights and how to access the mechanism.

9. OTHER ASSESSMENTS

9.1. NEED FOR FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up needs are reported in the recommendations section.

9.2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is central to MedPAN’s mission and was well integrated into project activities. It was embedded across Components 2 and 3, with specific budgets allocated for producing outreach materials. Most of these outputs were finalized and published in 2023. Key project deliverables include:

Table 9. List of knowledge products delivered

Title	Type	Year
Toolkit to support the development of management plans for Mediterranean MPAs	Toolkit	2023
Customisable presentation for full protection in your MPA	Communication tool	2023
“MPAs are here for us”	Video series	2023
Effective Management of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean for an Inclusive, Resilient & Coherent Network of MPAs	Policy brief	2023
How fisheries can contribute to more effective protection and restoration of marine biodiversity?	Policy brief	2023
Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions	Policy brief	2023
Report from the interviews – Gender approaches in Med MPAs	Internal report	2024

In addition, MedPAN actively contributed to key GEF events to share project insights. Participation in forums such as LME23 and the International Waters Conference offered valuable opportunities to present lessons learned, particularly on the innovative partnership model CTF/MPA network.

9.3. MATERIALIZATION OF CO-FINANCING

By June 2024⁴⁹, the project had mobilized 43% of the planned co-financing, reflecting satisfactory progress. The current co-financing reflects both in-kind and financial commitments from partners, underscoring their ownership and alignment with project goals.

⁴⁹ At the time of evaluation, data for FY25 were not available.

Table 10. List of mobilized co-financing (FY24)

Sources of co-financing	Name of co-financier	Type of co-financing	Investment mobilized/ Recurrent expenditures	Amount (\$) at CEO	Actual (\$) FY24	%
Civil Society Organization	Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco	Grant	Investment Mobilized	7,090,000	3,007,000	42%
Recipient country Government	Government of Morocco	In-kind	Recurrent Expenditures	2,225,000	445,000	20%
Civil Society Organization	Hans Wilsdorf foundation	Grant	Investment Mobilized	n/a	221,169	n/a
Multilateral Agency	IUCN Med	Grant	Investment Mobilized	465,550	465,550	100%
Civil Society Organization	Sigrid Rausing Trust	Grant	Investment Mobilized	n/a	2,410,000	n/a
Government	French office for biodiversity	In-kind	Recurrent Expenditures	11,617,000	3,939,395	34%
Civil Society Organization	The MedFund	Grant	Investment Mobilized	7,140,000	2,589,819	36%
Civil Society Organization	MAVA Foundation	Grant	Investment Mobilized	2,167,713	713,434	33%
Civil Society Organization	MedPAN	Grant	Investment Mobilized	100,000	326,871	327%
Recipient country Government	Government of Montenegro	In-kind	Recurrent Expenditures	1,690,022	664,486	39%
Recipient country Government	Government of Albania	In-kind	Recurrent Expenditures	360,000	144,000	40%
Recipient country Government	Government of Tunisia	In-kind	Recurrent Expenditures	1,083,436	224,187	21%
Civil Society Organization	Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy	Grant	Investment Mobilized	n/a	2,251,000	n/a
Civil Society Organization	Mediterranean biodiversity consortium	Grant	Investment Mobilized	6,447,816	166,142	3%
Grand total				40,386,537	17,568,052	43%

10. LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Strategic partnerships between conservation trust funds and MPA networks are highly relevant *(Project Design, Appraisal and Planning / Demonstration)*

The collaboration between The MedFund and MedPAN has proven mutually reinforcing, especially at the local and regional levels. Their formal partnership allowed for focused funding and capacity-building efforts in a targeted number of MPAs, increasing impact. MedPAN offered a strong platform for training and experience-sharing, while The MedFund provided tailored support to individual MPAs (see Lesson 8). Other activities outside the project, such as MedPAN's development of scientific monitoring protocols and call for small projects⁵⁰, reinforced complementarities.

These synergies were strengthened by institutional links – MedPAN serves on The MedFund's Board and Grant Committee, and The MedFund is a partner of MedPAN. This model offers strong replication potential in other regional seas, particularly through the Global Alliance.

Lesson 2: Co-management is a highly effective governance model in the Mediterranean *(Political/institutional challenges / Knowledge, Collaboration and Learning)*

National MPA authorities often lack sufficient field resources due to limited public budgets and constrained access to international funding. Moreover, state-led approaches can face challenges in community engagement, particularly among small-scale fishers. Local NGOs, by contrast, are grounded in their communities and can more easily access diversified funding, enabling consistent on-the-ground presence.

To effectively establish the co-management model, The MedFund and MedPAN played a critical intermediary role. The financing agreement served as a key tool to formalize collaboration between authorities and NGOs, who often lack existing partnership frameworks. Strengthening the capacities of local NGOs in core MPA management functions – such as developing management plans, conducting scientific monitoring, and facilitating local governance committees – was essential to enhance their legitimacy and operational role.

Lesson 3: Diversified funding strategies – combining endowment and sinking funds – are effective *(Non-Grant Instruments/Innovative Financial Mechanisms)*

While capitalizing the endowment fund remains essential for long-term sustainability, the use of a sinking fund has helped increase medium-term resources and maintain momentum. This dual strategy has also yielded higher financial returns, helping absorb cost increases throughout project implementation without reducing MPA grants.

Lesson 4: MPAs need support in diversifying funding to cover both initial and recurrent costs *(Local Context/Project Site Challenges / Sustainability)*

The MedFund's support strategy is structured around three consecutive five-year phases with gradually decreasing budgets, based on the assumption that MPAs will have made initial investments – such as infrastructure, equipment, and basic training – and will progressively diversify their funding sources.

In practice, however, this transition proves challenging. MPA management plans are ambitious and require sustained, substantial funding. National budgets are often insufficient, while international funding is highly competitive, and often short-term and misaligned with management plans or ineligible for organizational costs.

⁵⁰ In 2023, MedPAN launched a call for small projects aimed at supporting the development or revision of MPA management plans. Having an up-to-date management plan is indeed one of the key eligibility criteria for accessing MedFund support.

MPAs also struggle to secure financing for items not covered by MedFund grants, such as boats, offices, or basecamps. As a result, some convert these fixed investments into recurring expenses – like renting boats or office space. Yet many of these purchases, which could be amortized in under five years, are postponed, creating operational strain during the consolidation phase when funding is reduced. This challenge is even more acute for MPAs with complex logistical contexts, such as Kerkennah (large geographic area) or La Galite (remote offshore site).

Lesson 5: Shared conservation targets enable network-wide data and peer learning

(Innovation/Science/Research and Development (R&D))

The Posidonia monitoring initiative has encouraged MPAs to engage in joint field visits and peer support. However, while MPAs collect substantial data, these are underutilized due to limited internal capacity and lack of scientific oversight. Standardized protocols and shared targets enable more robust analysis and comparative monitoring across MPAs, strengthening collective impact.

Lesson 6: Embedding blue economy components – especially fisheries – into the design of marine conservation projects is essential

(Project design, appraisal and planning)

Marine conservation and local livelihoods are deeply interlinked, as access restrictions to resources may affect them. Projects that integrate fisheries and other blue economy aspects from the outset are more likely to gain community support and ensure equitable resource use. **While The MedFund and MedPAN have engaged with fisheries-focused partners like GFCM, the absence of a pre-planned collaboration has limited integration due to each project’s constraints and priorities.**

Lesson 7: A two-stage grant process increases access and proposal quality to CTFs

(Project Management, including financial and human resources issues)

Adopting a two-step application – starting with a simple expression of interest – has significantly increased engagement from NGOs and authorities. The second stage includes tailored support to improve proposal quality (e.g., aligning budgets and activities with management plans). A coordinated regional call further streamlined outreach and resource use.

Lesson 8: CTFs can provide valuable targeted technical assistance in addition to funding

(Project Design, Appraisal and Planning / Integrated approaches)

The MedFund has developed a strong, trust-based relationship with its grantees, extending well beyond the traditional role of a donor. Through regular follow-up meetings and on-site evaluations, it has gained a deep understanding of each MPA’s strengths, challenges, and local context. Based on these insights, geographic coordinators provide tailored support – reviewing project proposals, sharing funding opportunities, and connecting grantees with relevant experts or peers facing similar issues. In addition, The MedFund has assisted MPA managers in enhancing their financial management systems to align with international standards.

Lesson 9: Aligning project design with the core mission of Executing agencies is key to efficiency and sustainability, but is dependent on potential internal challenges, thus requiring strong communication processes to ensure transparency

(Project Management, including financial and human resources issues)

Aligning the project components with the core missions and geographic focus of both The MedFund and MedPAN allowed the initiative to fully leverage their expertise, visibility, established partnerships, and ongoing projects across the Mediterranean. This strategic coherence contributed to strong operational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

However, through implementation, MedPAN underwent an internal reorganization that led to delays in certain activities and placed additional pressure on staff. Maintaining open and transparent communication proved essential to enable timely adjustments and develop effective coping strategies.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations are grouped into two categories: strategic and operational. Strategic recommendations address overarching project directions and long-term priorities, while operational recommendations focus on internal processes.

N°	Key recommendations	Details
Strategic recommendations		
SR1	<p>Review the approach on training activities to ensure a multiplier effect of efforts</p> <p><i>Sustainability / Scaleup</i></p>	<p>The project's training component has been broad in scope, engaging diverse audiences across topics and levels of expertise, which has quite scattered efforts. Moving forward, improving the sustainability and scalability of capacity-building initiatives is critical. Strategies could include a “training-of-trainers” model, designing regular courses through MedPAN training centers, implementing follow-up mechanisms (“contracts”) to track knowledge application and knowledge transfer within MPA manager teams, and organizing sequenced training for homogeneous participant groups. Greater alignment with other training opportunities is also needed to avoid duplication and improve effectiveness (see R4).</p>
SR2	<p>Strengthen technical collaboration with SPA/RAC and other regional partners, particularly in the area of capacity-building activities</p> <p><i>Communications and Outreach / Sustainability</i></p>	<p>Institutional links and collaboration between The MedFund, MedPAN, and SPA/RAC are already well established. However, there is potential to strengthen operational collaboration.</p> <p>Preliminary efforts to establish a common capacity-building platform with partners like SPA/RAC and IUCN should be actively pursued. This platform could consolidate training offers, tools, and methodologies – boosting visibility and complementarity among regional initiatives.</p> <p>In parallel, broader collaboration opportunities with SPA/RAC should be leveraged, particularly in policy advancement, training, and support to management plans, where SPA/RAC already plays a central role.</p>
SR3	<p>Build synergies with small grants programmes to help MPAs cover preparatory actions and critical initial costs</p> <p><i>Co-financing</i></p>	<p>Addressing upfront investment challenges in newly designated MPAs is another priority. The MedFund grants do not cover critical initial costs like boats, basecamps, offices, or preparatory studies. However, experience from the 2023 MedPAN small grants call on management basics showed that joint support mechanisms can fill this gap. Such synergies could be replicated and systematized, and could include partnerships with other actors such as CEPF or the GEF's small grants programmes to fund preparatory work like baseline studies and management plans.</p>
SR4	<p>Develop a strategy to better integrate sustainable fisheries and the broader blue economy into project design and implementation</p>	<p>Given that IUU fishing is a key pressure in MPAs, the project would benefit from an explicit and coherent strategy on livelihoods, sustainable fisheries and income diversification. While numerous activities have been implemented both within the project framework and on the ground, these efforts have often been fragmented and lack tools to effectively scale up. A targeted strategy would help streamline support, ensure scalability, and</p>

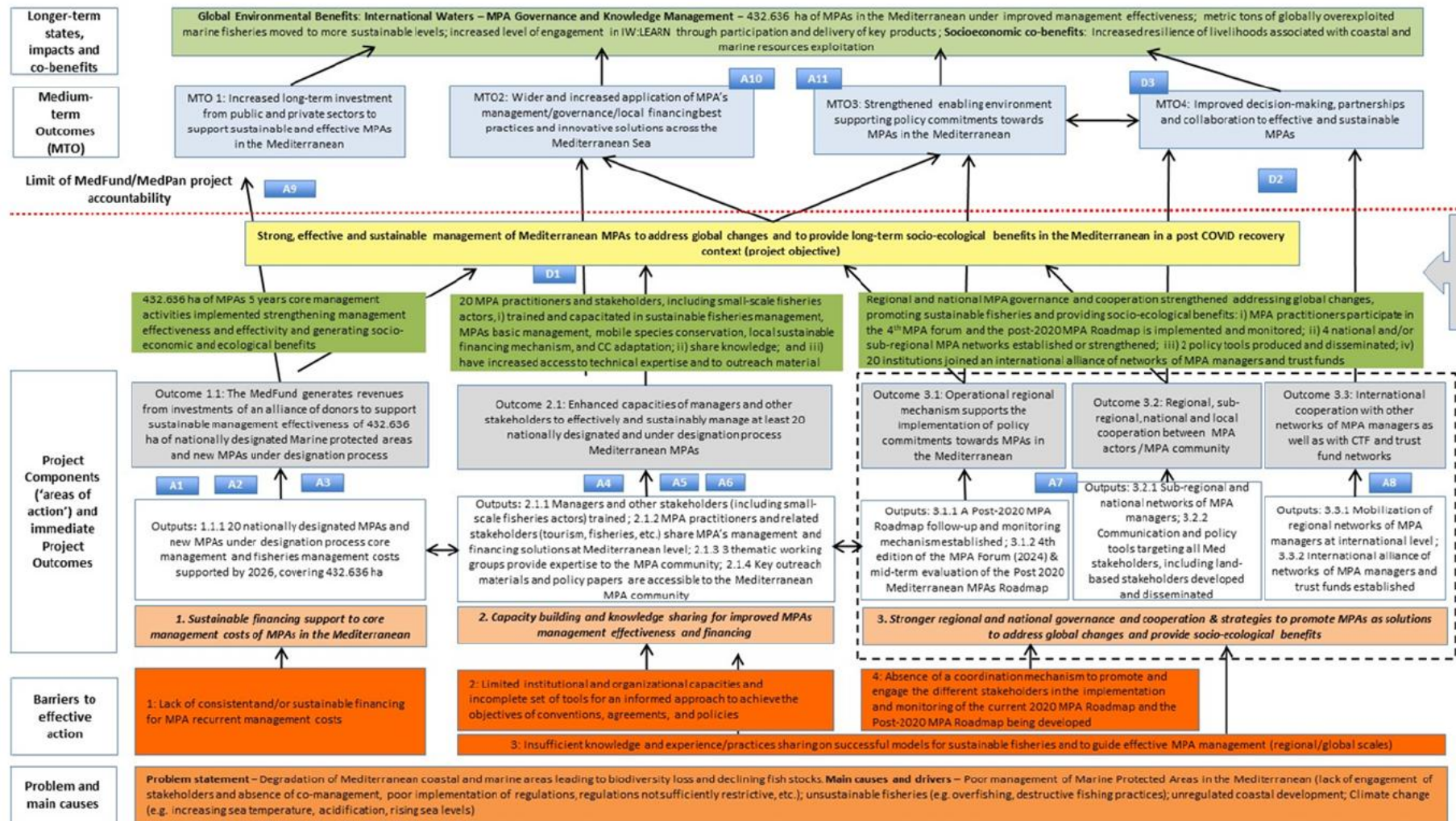
	<i>Project Design, Appraisal and Planning</i>	better inform MedPAN's toolbox based on concrete field experiences.
SR5	<p>Improve coherence and compatibility across different MPA management assessment tools</p> <p><i>Knowledge, Collaboration and Learning</i></p>	Another cross-cutting challenge is the duplication of management effectiveness tools promoted by various Mediterranean and global actors. These tools often demand substantial time from MPA managers but offer limited return when data are not adequately analyzed or used. Promoting harmonization and cross-compatibility among tools – especially with MedPAN's MPA status tool and IUCN's Green List – would improve efficiency and allow MPAs to better leverage their data for advocacy and funding.
Operational recommendations		
OR1	<p>Continue close monitoring of MedPAN's strategic review process, and revise the workplan and role definitions as needed, pending the appointment of a new MedPAN Director</p> <p><i>Project Management, including financial and human resources issues</i></p>	Dialogue with MedPAN's new leadership is essential to reassess the current workplan and adjust activities based on updated staff availability, institutional capacity, and evolving strategic priorities. This reassessment should identify critical activities that may require temporary reallocation of resources or additional external support to maintain project momentum and continuity.
OR2	<p>Maintain engagement with high-level State representatives to align with national strategies and secure timely agreement signings</p> <p><i>Political/Institutional Challenges – Risk Management</i></p>	At mid-project, delays in agreement signatures are consistently linked to slow approval by national authorities. The MedFund has used high-level international events, such as the UNOC in June 2025, to meet with decision-makers and help advance these processes. These advocacy efforts must continue, as sustained political engagement is crucial for keeping MPAs high on national agendas and accelerating administrative procedures.
OR3	<p>Integrate Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening of MPAs into The MedFund's processes and ensure related training is provided early in the process</p> <p><i>Risk Management</i></p>	<p>A basic E&S screening process could be introduced either in the application process or in the grant agreement or management effectiveness tracking tools. It could be done by including a short questionnaire that covers key safeguards such as access restrictions, risk analysis and mitigation measures, cultural heritage, and social impacts. Sub-grantee contracts could also be updated to include a screening of triggered standards and define clear E&S monitoring requirements. Key safeguards to screen at MPA level include protection of natural habitats and biodiversity conservation (ESS2), resettlement and physical and economic displacement (ESS3), indigenous people (ESS4), cultural heritage (ESS6), labour and working conditions (ESS7), climate risk and related disasters (ESS9)⁵¹.</p> <p>Moreover, a dedicated training course on environmental and social safeguards could be delivered at agreement kick-off to build the capacity of MPA managers and co-managers in identifying,</p>

⁵¹ Based on CI-GEF ESMF policy

		<p>managing, and monitoring potential E&S risks in their activities. Training could also include specialized training on human rights related to law enforcement in MPAs and assist MPAs in drafting and adopting a code of conduct to guide rangers and enforcement personnel in their interactions with local communities and resource users. MPAs could finally be supported in embedding mitigation measures in their management plan.</p>
<p>OR4</p>	<p>Streamline and strengthen the use of gender-sensitive indicators</p> <p><i>Gender Equality</i></p>	<p>The current list of gender indicators in the enriched Gender Management Plan should be reviewed and streamlined to focus on a smaller set of strategic, high-impact metrics. Ensure these are monitored regularly to allow for clearer, more meaningful assessments of progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in MPA management.</p>

12. ANNEXES

12.1. THEORY OF CHANGE (ProDoc)



12.2. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

12.2.1. ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Country	Site	Type	Organization	Name	First name	Position
Albania	Karaburun Sazan	National authority	National Agency of Protected Area (NAPA)	Selmani	Jula	Head of Project Delivery
		NGO	Flag Pine	Sadikllari	Laureta	Project officer
		National authority	Ministry of Environment	Samaha	Lara	Head of Department of Conservation of Nature Wealth
		NGO	IndyACT	Homeidan	Wael	President
Montenegro	Katic / Platamuni / Stari Ulcinj	National authority	Public enterprise for coastal zone management of Montenegro (Morsko Dobro)	Dosljak	Dijana	Head of the department for nature development
				Raicevic	Milena	Independent associate for international cooperation
				Malovrazic	Nemanja	Coordinator for nature protection and sustainable development
		NGO	Green Home	Mihailovic	Nina	Project officer
Morocco	National/All MPAs	National authority	Fisheries department	Zahra Hassouni	Fatima	Head of the Division for Sustainability and Marine Resource Planning
				Elmonfaloti	Najat	Head of the Mobile and Protected Species Unit
				Haoujar	Bouchra	Head of the Planning and Management Plans Unit
	Al Hoceima	NGO	AGIR	Houssine	Nibani	President

	Technical partners	IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN MED)	Danelutti	Carla	Regional programme coordinator
		SPA/RAC	Derouiche	Emna	Project officer – FishEBM Med
			Kheriji	Asma	Project officer – SPAMI Twinning
	MedPAN trainers	Oceanogami	Marti Puig	Patricia	Trainer – Fundamentals of MPA management
		/	Walton	Anne	Trainer - Governance
MedPAN consultant	Stenella Consulting	Strebnac	Ana	Consultant	
Project team	Executing agencies	The MedFund	Renoux	Romain	Executive Director
			Halimi	Emna	Coordinator – East Mediterranean
			Abiadh	Awatef	Coordinator – North Africa
			Marrucchelli	Laura	Administrative and Financial Executive Assistant
		MedPAN	Martinez	Carole	Policy Manager
			Perey	Valérie	Administrative and financial support officer
			Gallon	Susan	Scientific Manager
			Bouichet	Orane	Project officer – Cal for Small Projects
	Implementing agency	CI-GEF	De Koning	Free	Vice-President, Project Development and Impact
			Mast	Elisabeth	Grant Manager
			Kissoon	Ian	Safeguards Manager

12.2.2. IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS IN TUNISIA

All stakeholders in Tunisia were met in person, except AJEM members (Ras Rmel), who were interviewed online.

MPA	Name	Organization	Role
Kraten	Ahmed Souissi	AKCDDL	President
	Malek Soussi		Coordinator
	Hamed Mallat		Ecoguard
	Ons Benzarti		Ecoguard
	Ines Chakroun		Ecoguard
	Radhia Souissi		Administrative and financial assistant
	Neji Hdidder	Local communities	Fisherman
	Sarra Souissi		Female fisher
	Mohamed Amine Souissi		Fisherman
	Omar Kcharem		Plastic recycling project coordinator
Kneiss	Sabrina Keskes	ACG	Coordinator
	Salma Mhini		Ecoguard
	Habib Dlensi		Bird expert, steering committee member
	Sana Taktak		President
	Loubeba Ajroud	National tourism office	Tourism officer
	Nahed ben Magtouf	Regional tourism office	Civil servant
	Wlfek Ketat,	APAL (Maritime Public Domain department)	Civil servant
	Rabaa Maaloula	Local communities	Clam collector
	Sassia Ben Mahmoud		Clam collector
Kneiss et Kerkennah	Mohamed Chalghaf	Fisheries and Aquaculture Department - Sfax	Head of department
	Jawhara Chahbani		Head of district
	Ahmed Ben Ghorbel		Engineer
	Mariem		Engineer
Kuriat	Olfa Chaieb	National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies (INSTM)	Research assistant
	Latifa Ben Achiba	Fisheries and aquaculture regional office (arrondissement) - Monastir	Head of district
	Faouez Ben HALIMA	Regional tourism office - Monastir	Commissioner
	Mahfoudh Hadded		Boat operator
	Mohamed Ali Dghim	Nautical Activities Club of Monastir (CANM)	Diving instructor
	Mehdi Aissi	Nautical Activities Club of Monastir (CANM)	Diving instructor
	Sadok Dabbebi	NGB	President
	Amjed Kheireddine		Coordinator
	Rihab Mabrouk		Administrative and financial officer
Habib Jaafar	Member		

	Membre		Member
	Bénévole		Volunteer
	Ecogarde		Ecoguard
La Galite	Neji Ben Aissa	MAN	President
	Moez Shaiek		Coordinator
	Walid Ben Belgacem		Administrative and financial officer
	Sahbi Dorai		Ecoguard
	Sabri Jaziri		Steering committee member
Ras Rmel	Faycel	Jilij (AJEM)	President
	Member		Member
	Member		Member
	Treasurer		Treasurer
	Maroua Douma		APAL (Coastal ecosystems department)
Tunis	Ilyes Mahmoud Hamza	SPA/RAC	Director
	Saba Guellouz	WWF-NA	Conservation director
	Samia Boufares	APAL (Coastal ecosystems department)	Director
	Mohamed Salah Romdhane	National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia (INAT)	Professor
APAL ⁵²	Ahmed Ben Hamida	APAL (Coastal ecosystems department)	Head of department (Center and South)
	Ahmed Zaddem		Assistant engineer (Center and South)
	Hassan Zaghdoudi		Head of department (North)
	Walid Abbassi		Assistant engineer (North)
	Marwa Douma		Engineer

12.3. LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

Lead author	Date	Title
CI-GEF	2022	GEF Project document (ProDoc)
CI-GEF	2022	Final approved budget ProDoc
The MedFund	2022	Inception workshop agenda
The MedFund	2022	Inception workshop report
MedPAN	2022	Gender Management Plan
MedPAN		Analysis and proposals to enrich the Gender Mainstreaming plan of the GEF project
MedPAN	2024	Report from the interviews – Gender approaches in Med MPAs
CI-GEF	2022	Accountability & Grievance Mechanism (AGM)
The MedFund	2025	Grievance mechanism monitoring

⁵² APAL agents participated in interviews and field visits within the MPAs under their responsibility. Specifically, APAL representatives from the Center and South regions were present during site visits to Kerkennah, Kneiss, and Monastir.

The MedFund	2024	Complaint on the Non-Conformity of the MedFund – APAL – AKDDCL
The MedFund	2024	Grievance mechanism – Final response
The MedFund	2023	Investment policy
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2022	Stakeholder engagement plan
The MedFund	2025	Stakeholder engagement plan monitoring
MedPAN	2024	Statistics MedPAN beneficiaries 2018-2024
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2023	Trip report Tunisia
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2023	Tunisian field trip agenda
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2025	FY26 Workplan
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2024	Progress Implementation Report FY24
The MedFund	2024	Updated budget 2025-2027
The MedFund	2025	Quarterly reporting FY25 Q1
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2022- 2025	Project management meetings - minutes
The MedFund/ MedPAN	2022- 2025	Project Steering Committees – minutes
MedPAN	2022	Post-2020 Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Roadmap
MedPAN	2023	Policy Paper - Effective management of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean for an inclusive, resilient & coherent network of MPAs
MedPAN	2022	Workshop proceedings – Marine protected areas management effectiveness
MedPAN	2024	Workshop proceedings – Managing tourism in Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean
MedPAN	2024	Workshop and training participant list
The MedFund	2022	Call for interest – Information notice
The MedFund	2023	Call for interest – Information notice
The MedFund	2024	Call for interest – Information notice
The MedFund	2025	Call for interest – Information notice
The MedFund	2022	Application review summary
The MedFund	2023	Application review summary
The MedFund	2023	Grant award committee minutes
The MedFund	2024	Grant award committee minutes
The MedFund	2025	Grant making process
The MedFund	2023	Grant agreement Gouraya
The MedFund	2023	Grant agreement APAL Kraten
The MedFund	2025	Grant agreement Karaburun Sazan
The MedFund	2023	Grant agreement Katic
The MedFund	2023	Grant agreement Palm Island
The MedFund	2023	Grant agreement Platamuni
The MedFund	2024	Grant agreement Ras Rmel
The MedFund	2024	Grant agreement Stari Ulcinj
The MedFund	2025	Amendment Al Hoceima

The MedFund	2025	Amendment Jbel Moussa
The MedFund	2023	Potential synergies - GEF Projects Fish EBM & Build back a blue & stronger Med – working document
The MedFund	2024	Granted MPAs and baseline MEA
The MedFund	2024	MEA – Kerkennah
The MedFund	2024	MEA – Platamuni
The MedFund	2024	MEA – Katic
The MedFund	2024	MEA – Palm Island
The MedFund	2024	MEA – Karaburun Sazan
The MedFund	2024	Annual report
The MedFund	2025	Map beneficiaries
The MedFund	2025	List beneficiaries
The MedFund	2025	GEF7 Core indicators
The MedFund	2021	Long-term financial mechanism to enhance Mediterranean MPA management effectiveness – Final PIR
SETIN Srl	2021	Long-term financial mechanism to enhance Mediterranean MPA management effectiveness – Final evaluation
SPA/RAC – APAL	2021	Legal and institutional review for the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms for CMPAs management in Tunisia

12.4. CI-GEF RATINGS (EXTRACT FROM THE TORs)

The main dimensions of project performance on which ratings are first provided in Mid-Term Review are: outcomes, sustainability, quality of monitoring and evaluation, quality of implementation, and quality of execution. The CI-GEF Agency also includes ratings for environmental and social safeguards.

Outcome Ratings

The overall ratings on the outcomes of the project will be based on performance on the Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability.

In terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of an outcome, project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings.
- Satisfactory (S): Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory (U): Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

In terms of sustainability of an outcome, project outcomes are rated based on risks related to financial, sociopolitical, institutional, and environmental sustainability. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability will be assessed using a four-point scale.

- Likely (L): There is little or no risk to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML): There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU): There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U): There are severe risks to sustainability.
- Unable to Assess (UA): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

In terms of an outcome’s final and overall project outcomes rating, the calculation will consider all the four criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The rating on relevance will determine whether the overall outcome rating will be in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is in the unsatisfactory range, then the overall outcome will be in the unsatisfactory range as well. However, where the relevance rating is in the satisfactory range (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency, and where applicable – sustainability rating, be either in the satisfactory range or in the unsatisfactory range.

The second constraint applied is that the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than the effectiveness rating. During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is considered and despite achievement of results as per the revised results framework, where appropriate, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given.

The ratings can be summarized as follows:

OUTCOME	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Outcome Final Rating	Comment
Outcome 1.1						
Outcome 1.2						
...						
Outcome x.x						
OVERALL RATING						

Overall Project Sustainability and Key Risks Rating

Summarize risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned (at the CEO Endorsement or Approval stage) or already undertaken to address these. The risk rating should reflect the residual risk to achieving outcomes after considering the implementation of mitigation measures. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low. See the GEF Risk Appetite document (GEF/C.66/13) for more information and its Annex B for a description of each risk category. Note that the rating for the “Environment and Social” category should be based on the Environment and Social Safeguards section.

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Environment and Social	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Political and Governance	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
INNOVATION		
Institutional Policy and	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Technological	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Financial and Business Model	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
EXECUTION		
Capacity Implementation for	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Fiduciary	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Stakeholder	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Other	< Select rating >	< Insert text >
Overall Risk Rating	< Select rating >	< Insert text >

The overall project sustainability will be assessed on a six-point scale:

- Highly Likely (HL): There is no risk to sustainability
- Likely (L): There is little or no risk to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML): There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU): There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U): There are severe risks to sustainability.
- Highly Unlikely (HU): The project will not be sustained.
- Unable to Assess (UA): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Project M&E Rating

Quality of project M&E will be assessed in terms of:

- Design
- Implementation

Quality of M&E on these two dimensions will be assessed on a six-point scale:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations.

- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design/implementation.

Implementation and Execution Rating

Quality of implementation and of execution will be rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. The performance will be rated on a six-point scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/execution met expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation

Environmental and Social Safeguards Rating

The approved environmental and social safeguard plans will be rated according to the following scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution