

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Ichkeul watershed - REWI

Region

Africa

GEF Project ID

12253

Country(ies)

Tunisia

Type of Project

MSP

GEF Agency(ies):

IUCN

GEF Agency ID

Executing Partner

The Directorate-General for Forestry (DGF)
Commissariat Régional du Développement Agricole (CRDA)
of Bizerte

Executing Partner Type

Government
Government

GEF Focal Area (s)

Multi Focal Area

Submission Date

12/19/2025

Project Sector (CCM Only)

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Land Degradation, Land Degradation Neutrality, Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Lakes, Biomes, Sustainable Land Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands, Land Cover and Land cover change, Carbon stocks above or below ground, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Local Communities, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Type of Engagement, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Consultation, Participation, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Gender results areas, Participation and leadership, Access to benefits and services, Capacity Development, Awareness Raising, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Enabling Activities, Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Generation, Workshop, Course, Training, Field Visit

Type of Trust Fund

GET

Project Duration (Months)

24

GEF Project Grant: (a)

1,786,492.00

GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)

0.00

Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)

160,784.00

Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)

0.00

Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)

1,947,276.00

Total Co-financing

7,091,000.00

PPG Amount: (e)

50,000.00

PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)

4,500.00

PPG total amount: (e+f)

54,500.00

Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)

2,001,776.00

Project Tags

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No Competitive Window: No

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? (iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B “project description”. (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Located in northeast Tunisia, the Ichkeul watershed encompasses the UNESCO World Heritage Ichkeul National Park—one of the Mediterranean’s last remaining freshwater wetlands and a critical stopover for migratory bird populations. Despite its global ecological significance and socio-economic value, the watershed faces escalating pressures that threaten its biodiversity, degrade ecosystem services, and increase the vulnerability of local communities whose livelihoods depend on natural resources.

The restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Ichkeul watershed (REWI) project’s objective is to restore degraded lands and wetlands, enhance protected area management effectiveness, and strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods through participatory, science-based, and gender-responsive planning. This will be achieved by strengthening institutional and community capacity through training on relevant tools and approaches, including the Restoration Opportunities and Assessment Methodology (ROAM). Building on this, the project will develop a Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul watershed and implement pilot nature-based solutions as “learning laboratories” to test and refine approaches. To support the long-term implementation of the Restoration Plan, the project will enhance knowledge management, partnership building and resource mobilization, while supporting the capitalization of lessons to inform decision-making, policy and potential replication.

The project will generate global environmental benefits by improving management effectiveness across 12,600 ha of terrestrial protected areas within Ichkeul National Park, restoring at least 1,000 ha of degraded natural grasslands and woodlands, and improving biodiversity-friendly management across 1,750 ha of production landscapes. The project is also expected to strengthen the cooperative management of critical freshwater wetland ecosystems within the Ramsar-designated park area and directly benefit approximately 600–800 people through capacity-building and pilot restoration interventions, while indirectly improving ecosystem services for an estimated 5,000–8,000 people in surrounding communities. Responsive approaches will ensure the participation of women and youth in training and capacity-building activities, with targeted support for women-led enterprises and value chains. Collectively, these actions will restore critical habitats, enhance climate resilience, and contribute directly to Tunisia’s international commitments under the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To restore degraded lands and wetlands, enhance protected area management effectiveness, improve natural resource governance, and strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods through participatory, science-based, and gender-responsive ecosystem restoration planning and implementation in the Ichkeul watershed.

Project Components

Enhancing technical and operational capacity of stakeholders with ROAM and establish functional coordination mechanisms

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
340,000.00	1,000,000.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1: Strengthened technical, institutional, and community capacity for coordinated, science-based ecosystem restoration, supported by improved access to tools and monitoring systems.

Output:

Output 1.1.1 – National and local stakeholders trained in ROAM and equipped with enhanced technical skills and awareness for participatory, gender-responsive, and culturally grounded restoration planning and monitoring that contributes to protected area management effectiveness.

Output 1.1.2: Functional coordination mechanisms established and supported with tools, equipment, and software enabling effective collaboration among CRDA, local communities, and relevant authorities for ecosystem restoration.

Elaboration and implementation of the Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,141,630.00	3,500,000.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1: A comprehensive, evidence-based, and participatory Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed is developed and validated as a strategic framework for guiding restoration, effective management, policy, and investment.

Outcome 2.2 Nature-based solutions for ecosystem restoration, which contribute to enhanced management effectiveness, demonstrated in priority sites, with strong local and institutional engagement.

Output:

Output 2.1.1: Spatial prioritization methodology developed and applied to rank intervention zones.

Output 2.1.2: Restoration Plan produced based on baseline assessment and Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM). Plan validated, and adopted as a reference for policy, pilot interventions, and resource mobilization.

Output 2.2.1 Developed a gender inclusive pilot project selection criteria in Ichel watershed through local community inclusive approach and validated a tailor-made restoration guidance handbook for the selected pilot project site;

Output 2.2.2 Gender inclusive pilot restoration interventions and learning laboratories involving local community participation implemented in selected priority zones

Knowledge management, gender-responsive engagement, and partnership-building for resource mobilization and institutional integration

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
125,000.00	1,500,000.00

Outcome:

Outcom 3.1 Enhanced institutional and stakeholder capacity for knowledge management, communication, and partnership-building to support resource mobilization and the design of large-scale restoration initiatives

Outcome 3.2: Policy and institutional integration of restoration and nature-based solutions

Output:

Output 3.1.1: A gender-inclusive knowledge management plan, communication strategy and sustainability plan developed and implemented.

Output 3.1.2 – Multilateral and public–private sector strategic partnerships initiated, with stakeholder capacity enhanced in project development, fundraising, and partnership-building.

Output 3.2.1: Decision-maker-oriented evidence packages produced and disseminated to inform policy and planning

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
30,000.00	500,000.00

Outcome:

Project effectiveness and accountability are enhanced, ensuring the achievement of project outcomes and outputs through continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.

Output:

M&E.1 Project monitoring and evaluation framework developed and implemented, including baselines, methodologies, responsibilities, and targets for all core indicators

M&E.2 Project progress monitoring and evaluation conducted (quarterly reports, annual PIRs, Mid-Term Review, and Terminal Evaluation) to inform adaptive management.

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
Enhancing technical and operational capacity of stakeholders with ROAM and establish functional coordination mechanisms	340,000.00	1,000,000.00
Elaboration and implementation of the Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed	1,141,630.00	3,500,000.00
Knowledge management, gender-responsive engagement, and partnership-building for resource mobilization and institutional integration	125,000.00	1,500,000.00
M&E	30,000.00	500,000.00
Subtotal	1,636,630.00	6,500,000.00
Project Management Cost	149,862.00	591,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	1,786,492.00	7,091,000.00

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

The Ichkeul landscape is located in the north-east of Tunisia within the Governorate of Bizerte. It constitutes the ecosystem considered for this project, at the core of which lies the Ichkeul National Park (see map in Annex C). The area represents a rare combination of mountainous terrain and extensive wetlands made of a shallow lake (about one meter depth on average) with an area of 89 Km² surrounded by extensive marshlands.

The National Park, which is both a UNESCO World Heritage site and a Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB), has a remarkable universal value due to its biodiversity. It is home to a wide range of wild fauna populations, including threatened species^{[1]¹}:

Table 1. List of threatened species recorded in the Ichkeul, National Park

	Species	Common Name	IUCN Status
Bird	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	White-headed Duck	Endangered
	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	Marbled Teal	Vulnerable
	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Common Pochard	Vulnerable
	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Yelkouan Shearwater	Vulnerable
	<i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	Slender-billed Curlew	Critically Endangered
	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Atlantic Puffin	Vulnerable
Mammal	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Eurasian Otter	Near Threatened
	<i>Rhinolophus mehelyi</i>	Mehely's Horseshoe Bat	Vulnerable
	<i>Myotis punicus</i>	Maghrebian Mouse-eared Bat	Vulnerable
Reptile	<i>Testudo graeca</i>	Greek Tortoise	Vulnerable

The Ichkeul Lake and its surrounding marshes have long been considered, along with Doñana in Spain, the Camargue in France and the El Kala Lakes in Algeria, as one of the four main wetlands of the Mediterranean region. The site is one of the very few remaining intact wetlands in north Africa, being the last vestige of a chain of lakes that once extended across the region. It combines diverse habitats, lakes, marshes, surrounding mountains and wetlands, that support high biodiversity including endemic plants, fish, invertebrates, and threatened bird species. It provides a major stop-over and wintering site for large numbers of migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese, storks, pink flamingos) in the Mediterranean region. Indeed, the project area is of particular importance for waterbirds, including globally threatened and migratory species, using it for breeding, feeding and resting.

However, despite being removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2006 and the Ramsar Montreux record in 2016, there has been a dramatic decline in number of migrant and over-wintering waterbirds in the property, as well as fish. The monitoring of waterbirds wintering in the area shows a clear decline in terms of numbers that decreased from 297 617 individuals in January 2008^{[2]²} to 13 602 individuals in January 2023^{[3]³}.

The conservation status of the National Park is facing growing challenges in its watershed, which over the past decades has experienced increasing degradation due to land-use pressure, deforestation, overgrazing, unsustainable use of water resources and farming practices. Furthermore, the forest areas in the mountainous regions north of the Ichkeul watershed have suffered degradation due to forest fires. From 2001 to 2024, Bizerte had the highest rate of tree cover loss due to fires with an average of 440 ha lost per year.^{[4]⁴}

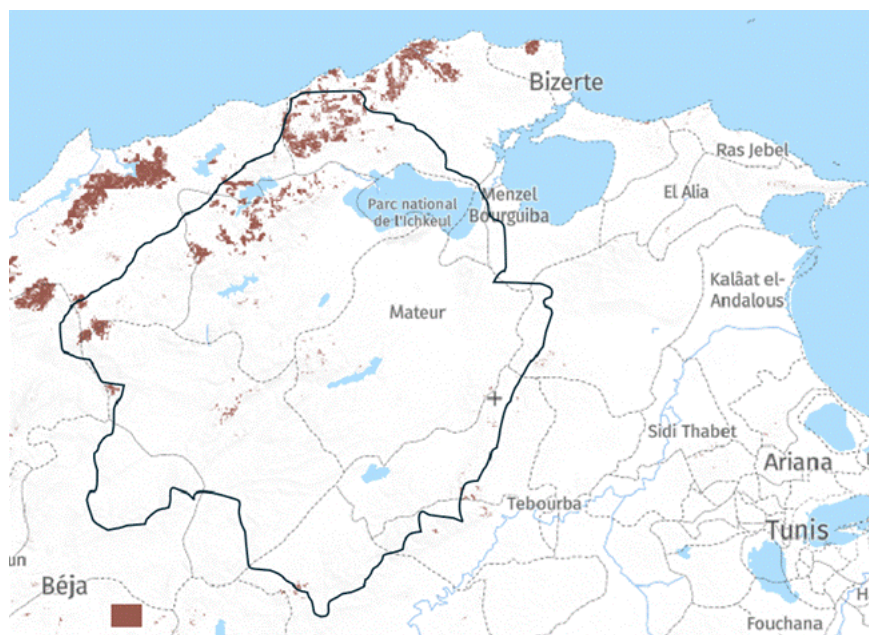


Figure 1. Loss of forest cover due to fires

These threats impact ecological processes, reducing the site's capacity to deliver ecosystem services to the local communities and undermining its ecological value at national and global scales. Besides, climate change is intensifying the threats to the area, exacerbating water scarcity and watershed degradation, shifting rainfall patterns are reducing water inflows from the park's catchment area, which is exacerbating the already declining water supply caused by upstream damming and land degradation. This accelerates the drying of wetlands, disrupts the delicate balance between fresh and saltwater, and undermines vital habitats for migratory bird species.

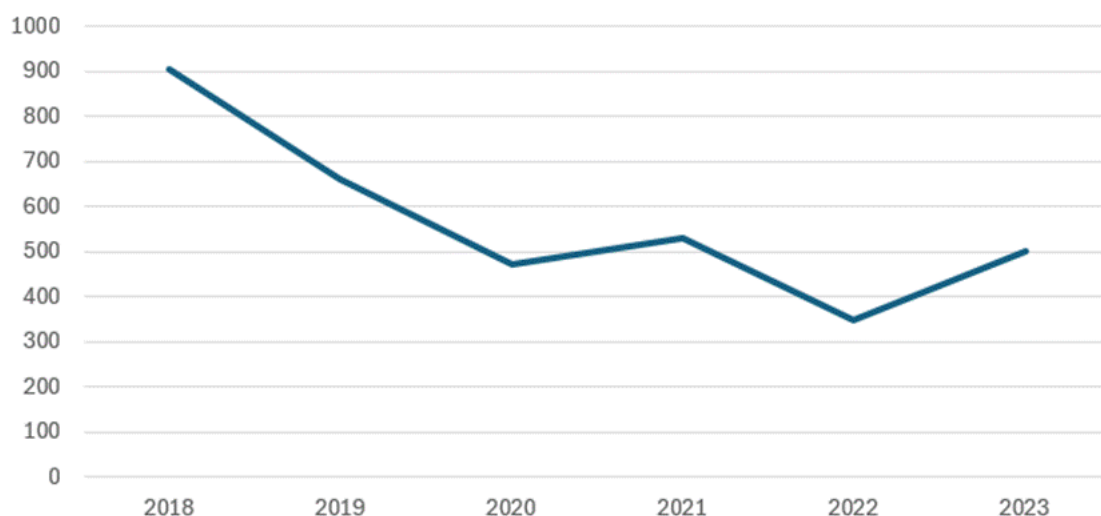


Figure 2. Annual pluviometry (mm) recorded in Bizerte station from 2018 to 2023^[5]

Droughts and more frequent extreme weather events increase soil erosion in the watershed. This reduces its ability to recharge and filter water and leads to sediments and pollutants being transported into the wetland. Increased turbidity due to sedimentation degrades water quality and alters nutrient dynamics, amplifying ecological stress. The available data for Tunisia indicates exacerbation of droughts and increases in the average annual temperature. According to Tunisia's Fourth Declaration^[6] to the UNFCCC, the main expected changes in relation to Climate Change in Tunisia include, in particular, a more frequent occurrence of more intense extreme weather events, namely

- An increase in the average annual temperature across the entire territory ranging from 1.6°C (RCP 4.5) to 1.9°C (RCP 8.5) by 2050, representing an increase of between 8% and 10% compared to the 1981-2010 reference period. This increase is significant for all regions and for the time horizon considered.
- The warming gradient between continental and coastal areas could reach 0.5°C and 0.7°C in 2050 (RCP4.5 and RCP8.5 respectively).
- For RCP 8.5, the warming of coastal regions would be between 1.5 and 2°C and between 2 and 2.5°C for continental regions.
- Precipitation levels show a decrease in annual totals under RCP 4.5 of 5% to 10% in 2050, which would worsen again at the end of the century with a decrease of 5% to 20% in 2100.

The local population's crops in the watershed are largely rain-fed and therefore increasingly affected by the droughts that have plagued the region in recent years. This significantly impacts a large proportion of the local population, whose income primarily depends on agriculture and livestock farming. According to the 2014 general population census^[7], the area had 143,147 inhabitants, with an average population density of around 1,600 people per km², and around 73% of the population lived in rural areas. Data from the 2024 general population census^[8], published in October 2025, indicates a population increase of around 16%, bringing the total population to 165,752 and the population density to around 1,860 per km². A proportion of this local population lives within the National Park's boundaries, directly benefitting from natural resources including firewood, fodder, medicinal plants and services linked to the Hammam^[9]. This population is composed of eight community groups (*farch*) at the foot of the southern slope of Mount Ichkeul. In 2006, the population was estimated at 398 individuals, a notable decrease from 894 in 1983. The local communities in the park come from neighbouring douars including Felta and Echouk, Taref, Salah Bougabrine, Zaarour, Tinja, and South Bizerte, for a total of approximately 190 households estimated in 2017.

Given the ecological and socio-economic challenges faced in the area, there is an urgent need to develop a comprehensive and strategic Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed to guide restoration actions, attract financing, and coordinate multi-stakeholder interventions. The objective of the Restoration Plan is to identify, prioritize, and implement Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) to restore degraded ecosystems within the watershed. Using the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM)—a flexible, practical framework developed by IUCN and the World Resources Institute (WRI) to support countries, regions, and landscapes in assessing forest and landscape restoration (FLR) opportunities—the Plan will be elaborated as a foundational document to guide pilot interventions, inform policy, and scale up restoration initiatives in line with Tunisia's national commitments under the UNCCD, CBD, and UNFCCC. By addressing both ecological integrity and community resilience, the Restoration Plan will directly contribute to climate adaptation, land degradation neutrality, and biodiversity conservation objectives.

One of the main barriers to implement ROAM in Tunisia is the limited capacity in terms of technical skills and frameworks for participatory approaches to restoration planning and interventions. Indeed, the integration of local communities and stakeholders into participatory assessment and planning processes is hindered by gaps in facilitation skills, limited knowledge of inclusive engagement techniques, and weak institutional coordination mechanisms. The application of the ROAM methodology and the subsequent design and implementation of successful NbS in the Ichkeul watershed is also hindered by significant financial constraints, which limit the ability to undertake the necessary capacity-building activities and field surveys. Without sufficient resources, local and national authorities and stakeholders lack the means to strengthen technical skills and fully grasp the methodology's potential for guiding restoration planning. At the same time, the absence of adequate funding restricts the ability to conduct detailed on-the-ground assessments needed to identify degraded areas requiring intervention and to accurately map them. As a result, the process of

prioritizing and planning restoration efforts becomes fragmented and less effective, slowing progress toward sustainable ecosystem recovery in the watershed.

The project aims to overcome these barriers and ensure that restoration initiatives are scientifically robust and socially grounded. It aims to shift from sporadic, isolated interventions to a more comprehensive, programme-based approach that can generate meaningful, lasting impacts on a large scale. To this end, this project will bring together actors from the national and local authorities (DGF, the CRDA and the Governorate of Bizerte), public institutions in charge of rural development (ODNO, ODESYPANO), academic institutions (INGREF, INAT), Professional organizations (URAP of Bizerte, GDAs) and NGOs.

Unlike fragmented restoration projects that target limited actions in specific locations and timeframes, this project aims to ensure that restoration is guided by a broader vision within a coherent and inclusive science-based ecosystem Restoration Plan. It aligns efforts across the watershed and addresses the underlying drivers of degradation. While securing the engagement and commitment of a gender-balanced, and diverse range of stakeholders will be highly challenging; it will offer greater potential to achieve sustainable, tangible ecological and socio-economic benefits. The diversity of its stakeholders constitutes a key strength of this project. The elaboration of the Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul watershed will integrate the views and concerns of both the local population and the public authorities responsible for infrastructure, water resources management, and the conservation of the national park. The role of the local community is fundamental in ecosystem restoration efforts, as most of its components will be required to modify certain practices and will be the key players in the climate change adaptation measures to be included in the Restoration Plan. Therefore, their adherence to restoration measures is essential, and in return, their needs and priorities must be carefully considered in selecting the restoration methods. It should be emphasized that within the Ichkeul watershed area, women hold a particularly significant role in agriculture and other rural activities, and their active participation is therefore essential to ensuring both the success and the long-term sustainability of restoration efforts. Public institutions will act as the most active players in both the preparation of the Restoration Plan and the implementation of pilot actions. In particular, the DGF will serve as the lead executing agency, working alongside CRDA Bizerte and technical partners, to oversee all phases of the project from surveys to identifying priority restoration areas, to the organization of meetings and participatory workshops. Ensuring the effective involvement of this wide range of stakeholders will require both capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, which are central activities of the project.

[1] <http://world-heritage-datasheets.unep-wcmc.org/datasheet/output/site/ichkeul-national-park/>, updated for the most IUCN Red List status

[2] FELTRUP-AZAFZAF, C. et AZAFZAF, H. Avril 2008. Recensement hivernal des oiseaux d'eau en Tunisie – Janvier 2008. 75/2007/RAC/SPA. AAO. 24 pages.

[3] Azafzaf H., Gabous M., Feltrup-Azafzaf C. (2023) – Le dénombrement international d'oiseaux d'eau (DIOE) en Tunisie – Janvier 2023. Rapport de l'Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (AAO/BirdLife en Tunisie)

[4] <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/TUN/?category=fires&lang=en&map=eyJjYW5Cb3VuZCI6dHJlZX0%3D>

[5] Generated using compiled data from the Institut National de la Météorologie (www.meteo.tn)

[6] 4ème Communication nationale de la Tunisie (Décembre 2023)

[7] <https://www.ins.tn/enquetes/recensement-general-de-la-population-et-de-lhabitat-2014>

[8] <https://www.ins.tn/enquetes/recensement-general-de-la-population-et-de-lhabitat-2024>

[9] [valeur_economique_ichkeul_f.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/valeur_economique_ichkeul_f.pdf)
https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/valeur_economique_ichkeul_f.pdf

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Project location

The REWI project will deliver ecosystem restoration through three complementary and institutionally aligned areas of action. First, in the broader Ichkeul watershed (227,000 ha) — encompassing the delegations of Sedjnane, Djoumine, and Ghezala — the project, will apply the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) to map degradation hotspots, implement nature-based solutions (NbS) pilots (soil and water conservation, assisted natural regeneration, reforestation with native species), introduce sustainable grazing management, and establish community-based fire prevention systems. This area includes the Ichkeul National Park (12,600 ha) where the project will strengthen protected area management effectiveness by carefully selecting and implementing restoration interventions that contribute to good governance, effective management and conservation outcomes, using the IUCN Green List Standard as a framework. Third, at the national government level, the project will support the integration of the Ichkeul Watershed Restoration Plan into relevant regulatory and policy frameworks, develop a portfolio of bankable proposals to mobilize funding for its long-term implementation, establish a national knowledge management platform, and prepare a plan for replicating the approach developed through the project, including the use of the IUCN Green List to guide strengthened protected area management, to 5 to 7 additional national parks across Tunisia - building a pipeline to help protected areas improve management, enhance restoration planning, and identify funding opportunities. This three-pronged approach ensures that restoration benefits are delivered on the ground in the watershed, demonstrated within a globally significant protected area, and scaled across Tunisia's national park network, thereby achieving lasting impact beyond the project's duration.

Theory of change

The Theory of Change for this project is derived from a comprehensive analysis of the environmental, institutional, and socio-economic drivers of degradation within the Ichkeul watershed—an ecologically significant mountain–plain system feeding the UNESCO-listed Ichkeul National Park. This globally important wetland, a cornerstone of the African–Eurasian migratory flyway, faces escalating pressures. Unsustainable land-use practices, overgrazing, recurrent forest fires, and increasing climate variability have resulted in watershed degradation, declining wetland inflows, habitat loss, and weakened ecosystem services. These ecological challenges are compounded by institutional capacity gaps, insufficient coordination mechanisms, outdated assessment tools, weak community engagement, and inadequate access to long-term restoration financing.

Addressing these complex barriers requires a shift from fragmented, small-scale actions to a coordinated, landscape-wide restoration framework grounded in science, participatory governance, and strengthened institutional capacity. The project's pathway of change is designed to create this transformation through a logical sequence of interconnected interventions.

The project's journey begins by establishing the foundational human and institutional capital required for success. Under **Component 1**, the project invests in building the technical, institutional, and community capacities for ecosystem restoration. Through targeted capacity-building, training on the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM), Nature-based Solutions (NbS), protected area management effectiveness, gender-responsive facilitation skills, and the establishment of functional coordination mechanisms, national and local actors—including CRDA Bizerte, community groups, farmers, herders, and women's organizations—will acquire the skills, tools, and collaborative platforms needed to work together effectively. This initial phase is critical because, without it, any subsequent planning, implementation or monitoring would lack the local ownership and technical rigor necessary for sustainability.

With these enhanced capacities in place, the project moves to the planning phase. **Component 2** applies the newly developed skills and tools to systematically identify and prioritize degraded areas, developing a science-based, inclusive Ichkeul Watershed Restoration Plan that contributes to strengthening the effective management of the protected area and its surroundings. This plan, grounded in ROAM, will integrate ecological, socio-economic, gender, and climate considerations to serve as a strategic framework for long-term restoration efforts. The causal logic here is clear: trained stakeholders equipped with the right tools and coordination platforms are now positioned to generate a high-quality, locally validated plan that reflects both ecological priorities and community needs.

The project then translates planning into tangible practice. The same component implements pilot restoration interventions, designed as "learning laboratories". These pilots test and demonstrate restoration NbS for rangeland, wetland, and watershed recovery. These are not merely demonstration plots; they are mechanisms through which the project's Theory of Change achieves its intended outcomes. By actively participating in these pilots, local communities, CRDA technical staff and DGF officials apply the skills gained in Component 1, validate the strategies outlined in the Restoration Plan, and build practical experience and institutional confidence needed to sustain and scale these efforts. Crucially, where interventions are implemented within the National Park's boundaries, these will be designed to ensure they contribute to strengthening the protected area's management effectiveness, using the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas as the framework to guide and assess this process. This iterative process of learning-by-doing ensures that restoration techniques are socially acceptable, economically viable, and ecologically adapted to the local context.

Recognizing that sustainable restoration requires not only technical knowledge but also strong communication systems, long-term financing, and integration into institutional frameworks, **Component 3** strengthens institutional and stakeholder capacities in knowledge management, communication, partnership-building, and resource mobilization, while identifying key opportunities to inform and strengthen national

policy and regulatory instruments. A dedicated knowledge management and communication strategy will capture lessons from the pilots, disseminate best practices to target audiences (policymakers, technical agencies, and community groups), and integrate traditional knowledge. Critically, this component also establishes the enabling environment for scaling up, and foster public–private and community partnerships. Concurrently, the project will support resource mobilization by developing a portfolio of bankable proposals, training authorities in donor engagement, and initiating strategic partnerships with potential financiers (including bilateral, multilateral, and private sector actors). Through this, the Restoration Plan will become a dynamic framework ready to attract the investments needed for its full, landscape-scale implementation. Finally, a sustainability plan, exit strategy, and policy-oriented evidence packages, will ensure results and lessons from the project are capitalised to inform decision-making, policy and potential replication.

To ensure accountability, learning, and adaptive management throughout this process, **Component 4** implements a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework. This framework, with clear responsibilities, methodologies, and baselines for each core indicator, will track progress, document lessons, and inform adaptive decision-making. The mid-term and terminal evaluations will provide independent validation of the project's causal pathways and outcomes.

These interconnected interventions, supported by the key assumption of a stable socio-political environment enabling collaboration across institutions and communities, will collectively shift current practices toward a coordinated, inclusive, and science-based ecosystem restoration framework for the Ichkeul watershed. By improving technical and institutional capacity, strengthening coordination mechanisms, demonstrating NbS solutions, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and mobilizing future financing, the project creates the enabling conditions required to reverse degradation, restore watershed and wetland ecosystems, and enhance protected area management effectiveness.

In the long term, the project is expected to contribute to restored watershed functions and wetlands, enhanced biodiversity, improved natural resource governance, and strengthened climate-resilient livelihoods, providing a scalable model for ecosystem restoration in other landscapes in Tunisia and beyond.

Project components:

The project is structured into four complementary components, each designed to deliver specific outcomes that collectively contribute to the overall objective.

To ensure a gender-sensitive approach is mainstreamed across all project components, a gender analysis will be undertaken at the PPG stage. The gender analysis will assess gender-specific roles, needs, and challenges regarding restoration governance, planning, implementation and monitoring in the Ichkeul watershed. A Gender Action Plan will be developed, directly building on the gender analysis, outlining strategies for integrating gender considerations within all stages of the project, and identifying opportunities for gender-responsive approaches. This will be validated through consultation with local stakeholders.

Component 1: Enhancing technical and operational effectiveness of stakeholders with ROAM and establish functional coordination mechanisms

Outcome 1.1: Strengthened technical, institutional and community capacity for coordinated, science-based ecosystem restoration, supported by improved access to tools and monitoring systems.

This component establishes the human and institutional foundations for the entire project. Recognizing that effective restoration requires skilled people working together, Component 1 invests in targeted capacity-building and institutional strengthening.

Output 1.1.1: National and local stakeholders trained in ROAM and equipped with enhanced technical skills and awareness for participatory, gender-responsive, and culturally grounded restoration planning and monitoring that contributes to protected area management effectiveness.

To achieve this output, the project will deliver a comprehensive capacity-building package on ROAM, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), ecosystem restoration, and protected area management effectiveness tailored to the ecological and socio-cultural context of the Ichkeul watershed. Training will be delivered through training-of-trainers (ToT) approach to ensure long-term sustainability. Crucially, these sessions will integrate gender-responsive facilitation skills and conflict resolution techniques, equipping stakeholders to engage inclusively and manage potential tensions over resource use. Awareness-raising initiatives will ensure broad community understanding of the ecological, economic and cultural importance of restoration. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 1.1.1.A:** Develop and deliver a comprehensive capacity-building package on ROAM, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and ecosystem restoration, tailored to the ecological and socio-cultural context of the Ichkeul watershed, using a ToT approach. The capacity-building package will ensure ecosystem restoration is linked to protected area effectiveness by framing effective restoration interventions as those that contribute to good governance, management effectiveness and successful conservation outcomes. The IUCN Green List for Protected and Conserved Areas will serve as a framework to monitor the contributions of restoration to protected area performance. This capacity-building package will integrate gender elements to ensure the application of ROAM and ensuing implementation of NbS and ecosystem restoration interventions is gender-responsive, in-line with relevant IUCN guidelines and the Gender Action Plan developed at PPG stage [\[1\]¹⁰](#), [\[2\]¹¹](#). While the capacity-development package will focus on stakeholders within the Ichkeul watershed, relevant trainings will be extended to priority landscapes and protected areas, which will be identified at PPG stage, to support the replication potential of the project.

- **Activity 1.1.1.B:** Design and operationalize participatory, gender-responsive stakeholder engagement frameworks, including facilitation skills and conflict resolution techniques, in line with the Gender Action Plan prepared at PPG stage.
- **Activity 1.1.1.C:** Implement targeted awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing initiatives on restoration benefits for local communities, with specific attention on women and youth. Where relevant, restoration benefits and objectives will be linked to national, sub-national or sectoral policies. The design of these initiatives will also be informed by the Gender Action Plan to ensure gender-responsive capacity building.

Output 1.1.2: Functional coordination mechanisms established and supported with tools, equipment, and software enabling effective collaboration among CRDA Bizerte, local communities, and relevant authorities for ecosystem restoration.

Simultaneously, the project will establish functional coordination mechanisms at watershed and community levels. These platforms will bring together CRDA Bizerte, local communities, civil society, and relevant authorities to jointly plan, monitor, and manage restoration actions. A participatory needs assessment will guide the procurement of essential tools—including GIS software, field survey equipment, computer equipment, and digital knowledge-sharing tools—ensuring stakeholders have the equipment they need to collaborate effectively. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 1.1.2.A:** Design and establish stakeholder coordination platforms at watershed and community levels, ensuring a gender-balanced approach.
- **Activity 1.1.2.B:** Conduct a participatory needs assessment to identify essential tools and equipment (e.g., GIS software, field survey equipment, computer equipment, digital knowledge-sharing tools) and procure them.
- **Activity 1.1.2.C:** Provide training for trainers on the use and maintenance of equipment and software to ensure long-term sustainability and local ownership.

Component 2: Elaboration and implementation of the Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed

Outcome 2.1: A comprehensive, evidence-based, and participatory Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed is developed and validated as a strategic framework for guiding restoration, effective management, policy, and investment.

Building on the enhanced capacities from Component 1, this component develops and implements a science-based participatory Restoration Plan. The process begins with the establishment a multi-stakeholder team and governance structure as well as the collection and review of existing data and information, including the applicable regulatory frameworks. A comprehensive baseline assessment will combine remote sensing, GIS mapping, and participatory socio-economic analysis to characterise land use, land cover and tenure, degradation types, and ecological conditions. Community mapping exercises and focus groups will gather

traditional knowledge and ensure that local perspectives inform the identification of degradation drivers and restoration priorities.

Output 2.1.1: Spatial prioritization methodology developed and applied to rank intervention zones.

A spatial prioritization methodology will be developed to rank potential intervention zones as high, medium, or low priority based on ecological, social, and operational feasibility criteria. This classification will enable strategic resource allocation and inform the selection of sites for pilot interventions. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 2.1.1.A:** Establish a multi-stakeholder team (CRDA, local communities, NGOs, academia, national institutions), define its roles, responsibilities, and governance structures.
- **Activity 2.1.1.B:** Develop GIS maps of Restoration Opportunities based on land use/cover, degradation types, erosion hotspots, deforested areas and restoration potential using existing data and high-resolution satellite imagery (e.g., Sentinel-2).
- **Activity 2.1.1.C:** Develop a scoring and ranking methodology based on ecological, social, and operational feasibility criteria (degree of degradation, potential for natural regeneration, importance for biodiversity corridors, community readiness, institutional capacity, competing interests for land, cost effectiveness, improved local livelihoods etc.), integrating Green List Standard criteria where relevant.

Output 2.1.2: Restoration Plan produced based on baseline assessment and Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM). Plan validated, and adopted as a reference for policy, pilot interventions, and resource mobilization

The Restoration Plan, validated through multi-stakeholder consultations, will serve as a strategic framework guiding policy, investment, and action. It will promote a mix of passive restoration (where natural regeneration is viable) and active restoration (where ecological engineering is required), ensuring that restoration approaches are both cost-effective and ecologically adaptive. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 2.1.2.A:** Conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment of watershed degradation, land use, land cover, tenure, and socio-economic conditions conducted using ROAM, indicators from the Green List Standard where appropriate, and a multi-disciplinary approach.
- **Activity 2.1.2.B:** Conduct field surveys for ground-truthing and collect data on community vulnerability, land tenure, traditional knowledge and dependence on ecosystem services through participatory methods (focus groups, community mapping), and in line with the project's Gender Action Plan. Use this information to categorise and rank Restoration Opportunity areas and appropriate interventions based on the methodology developed under Activity 2.1.1.B.

- **Activity 2.1.2.C:** Produce a proposed Restoration Plan based on Activity 2.1.2.A and Activity 2.1.2.B. Convene multi-stakeholder consultation workshops to review, validate and formally adopt the Restoration Plan.

Outcome 2.2: Nature-based solutions for ecosystem restoration, which contribute to enhanced management effectiveness, demonstrated in priority sites, with strong local and institutional engagement.

Output 2.2.1: Gender-inclusive pilot projects selected through a local community inclusive approach and validated tailor-made restoration guidance handbook prepared for selected pilot project sites.

Pilot restoration interventions will be implemented in selected priority zones, serving as “learning laboratories” to test techniques, verify co-benefits, and refine methods. These pilots will demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of NbS, building stakeholder confidence and providing practical evidence to support the scaling up of restoration efforts. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 2.2.1.A:** Select priority pilot restoration sites from the Restoration Plan (Output 2.1.2) based on criteria co-developed with local communities. Develop Terms of Reference (ToRs) for pilot implementation.
- **Activity 2.2.1.B:** Develop and validate a tailor-made restoration guidance handbook for selected pilot project sites, integrating ecological, social and gender considerations. The handbook will be aligned with standards for protected area management effectiveness, including the IUCN Green List, ensuring that restoration interventions contribute to fair and effective conservation in the Ichkeul National Park.
- **Activity 2.2.1.C:** Facilitate field-based learning events (visits and workshops), supported by tailored communication materials to document and disseminate lessons from the pilots.

Output 2.2.2: Gender-sensitive pilot restoration interventions and learning laboratories involving local community participation implemented in selected priority zones.

Field visits, knowledge-sharing workshops, and documentation of lessons learned will ensure that these pilots contribute to the broader body of restoration practice in Tunisia and beyond. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 2.2.2.A:** Implement passive and active ecosystem restoration measures using NbS to enhance ecosystem resilience and biodiversity recovery (e.g., assisted natural regeneration, reforestation with native species, soil and water conservation structures, invasive species control), while contributing to addressing priority societal challenges for local communities.
- **Activity 2.2.2.B:** Establish ecological baselines and a participatory monitoring framework to track pilot effectiveness, involving local communities in data collection.
- **Activity 2.2.2.C:** Establish learning laboratories and evaluate the financial and socio-economic balance, scalability, and multiple benefits generated (biodiversity, water security, climate resilience,

and livelihoods) for each pilot action, including contributions to effective protected area management where relevant.

Component 3: Knowledge management, gender-responsive engagement, and partnership-building for resource mobilization and institutional integration

This component ensures that knowledge generated by the project is captured, shared and used to inform policy and attract investment.

Outcome 3.1: Enhanced institutional and stakeholder capacity for knowledge management, communication, and partnership-building to support resource mobilization and the design of large-scale restoration initiatives.

Output 3.1.1: A gender-inclusive knowledge management plan, communication strategy and sustainability plan developed and implemented.

A gender-inclusive knowledge management plan and communication strategy will be developed, specifying target audiences (national policymakers, technical agencies, local communities, and development partners), dissemination channels (online platforms, policy briefs, community radio, learning exchanges), and concrete mechanisms for feeding lessons into national policy processes (e.g., presenting the Restoration Plan to relevant ministries, organizing policy dialogues, sharing evidence on NbS cost-effectiveness with planning and finance authorities). Additionally, concrete pathways for capitalisation and replication of the approaches and learnings from the project will be identified. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 3.1.1.A:** Develop and implement a knowledge management plan integrating traditional knowledge and establishing a knowledge-sharing platform accessible to stakeholders.
- **Activity 3.1.1.C:** Design and implement a communication strategy tailored to different target audiences (policymakers, technical agencies, local communities, development partners) with clear dissemination channels (policy briefs, technical guidelines, community radio, online repository, learning exchanges).
- **Activity 3.1.1.B:** Gender responsive sustainability plan and exit strategy developed and integrated in project implementation, including mechanisms to ensure lessons from the project, including pilot restoration interventions and learning laboratories (Output 2.2.2), are capitalised to inform decision-making, policy and potential replication. Specifically, potential replication cases will be identified in other Tunisian national parks at the PPG stage.

Output 3.1.2: Multilateral and public–private sector strategic partnerships initiated, with stakeholder capacity enhanced in project development, fundraising, and partnership-building.

The component also establishes the enabling environment for scaling up by building the capacity of national authorities to mobilize resources. Coaching workshops on donor engagement, project design, and proposal formulation will be delivered. A portfolio of bankable proposals will be prepared to attract investment for the full implementation of the Restoration Plan. Special attention will be paid to gender. Under Component 3, the project will specifically support the development of value chains that offer economic opportunities for women and youth. Based on consultations during the PPG phase, the project will identify promising value chains for

non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as Aleppo pine seeds (Zgougou), honey, aromatic and medicinal plants, and alternative tourism. Targeted capacity-building will be provided to women and youth to develop competitive investment plans for these value chains. Strategic partnerships with bilateral, multilateral, and private sector actors will be initiated, with the project serving as a catalyst for these collaborations. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 3.1.2.A:** Establish a platform to support relevant national authorities in engaging with potential partners from both public and private sectors, including convening roundtable discussions with prospective donors
- **Activity 3.1.2.B:** Provide coaching workshops for key stakeholders specifically supporting the development of value chains that offer economic opportunities for women and youth (e.g., CRDA, ministries, NGOs/CSOs) on donor engagement, project design and proposal formulation.
- **Activity 3.1.2.C:** Develop a guidance manual on identifying and preparing suitable financing instruments and conduct capacity-building activities on project design and proposal formulation through targeted training workshops.
- **Activity 3.1.2.D:** Prepare project portfolio of bankable proposals for the implementation of the Restoration Plan (Output 2.1.2) to attract investment for scaling up.

Outcome 3.2: Policy and institutional integration of restoration and nature-based solutions

By the end of the project, evidence and lessons from REWI will be systematically used to inform and influence key Tunisian policies, institutional mandates, operational procedures, and incentive structures related to land degradation neutrality, watershed and protected area management, climate adaptation/mitigation, and inclusive green livelihoods. In particular, the following legal text will be targeted: the Code Forestier and the Public-private partnerships legislation (PPP Law: Loi n°2015-49 relative aux contrats de partenariat public-privé).

Output 3.2.1 – Decision-maker-oriented evidence packages produced and disseminated to inform policy and planning.

- **Activity 3.2.1.A:** Develop concise, decision-maker-oriented evidence packages (policy briefs, technical notes, guidelines) that translate lessons learned from the project including those related to gender-inclusive restoration, effective management of the park, ROAM-based restoration planning protocols, NbS implementation and gender-responsive support schemes for restoration.

Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation for effective ecosystem restoration and capacity building in the Ichkeul watershed

Outcome 4.1: Project monitoring and evaluation framework developed and implemented, including baselines, methodologies, responsibilities, and targets for all core indicators.

This component provides the project's accountability and learning backbone.

Output 4.1.1: M&E plan is developed and implemented including PIRs, MTR and Technical evaluation

A comprehensive M&E framework will be developed, with clear indicators, data collection methodologies, baselines, targets, and responsibilities. Baselines for core indicators will be established during the PPG phase. For Indicator 1.2 (terrestrial protected areas under improved management), a baseline management effectiveness assessment will be conducted using the IUCN Green List Standard. For Indicators 3 and 4 (land restored and landscapes under improved management), baselines will be established through a combination of high-resolution satellite imagery analysis and ground-truthing field surveys. For Indicator 11 (people benefiting), a baseline socio-economic survey will profile the target population and refine the methodology for counting direct and indirect beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender. Monitoring indicators on governance, traditional and local knowledge, capacity building, ensuring security of land tenure and number of local community beneficiaries will be considered during PPG stage. A designated project M&E Officer will coordinate data collection from field surveys and community-based monitoring, manage the M&E database, and draft progress reports. CRDA Bizerte and DGF will facilitate data collection within their respective areas. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 4.1.1.A:** Elaborate a comprehensive M&E framework with calculation methodologies, clearly clarified indicators, data sources, and targets cross different implementation periods.
- **Activity 4.1.2.B:** Establish baselines for core indicators. This will include (i) the application of the Green List self-assessment methodology to the Ichkeul National Park for Indicator 1.2; (ii) remote sensing analysis and ground-truthing for Indicators 3 and 4; (iii) a socio-economic baseline survey for Indicator 11, disaggregated by gender.
- **Activity 4.1.1.C:** Define clear responsibilities and task allocation for M&E activities, including roles for the M&E Officer, CRDA Bizerte, DGF, and external evaluators.

Output 4.1.2 - Project progress monitoring and evaluation conducted (quarterly reports, annual PIRs, Mid-Term Review, and Terminal Evaluation) to inform adaptive management.

Quarterly and annual progress reports, a mid-term evaluation, and a terminal evaluation will ensure adaptive management and provide a transparent account of the project's achievements. Specific activities under this output include:

- **Activity 4.1.2.A:** Elaborate quarterly and annual progress reports (including PIRs) tracking progress against targets and identifying any implementation challenges.
- **Activity 4.1.2.B:** Conduct a Mid-Term Review (MTR) to assess progress, identify lessons learned, and recommend adjustments to the implementation strategy.
- **Activity 4.1.2.C:** Conduct a Terminal Evaluation (TE) to assess the project's achievement of outcomes, contribution to GEBs, and sustainability, providing recommendations for future initiatives.



Stakeholder involvement and benefits

The Ichkeul watershed is home to rural communities, including pastoralists, forest users, and agricultural households, who have developed, over generations, deep knowledge of local ecosystems, water resources, and sustainable resource management practices. These communities, particularly in the delegations of Sedjnane, Djoumine, and Ghezala, have long-standing relationships with the land and depend directly on the watershed's natural resources for their livelihoods. Recognizing this, the project places local communities at the center of restoration planning and implementation.

In the Tunisian context, where land tenure constraints and rural unemployment are major challenges, ensuring ownership of the restoration approach by stakeholders is particularly needed. Stakeholder engagement in the REWI project will be anchored in inclusive, participatory planning processes that reflect the social, economic, and ecological realities of the Ichkeul watershed. Local communities, women's associations, youth groups, GDAs (Agricultural cooperatives), and civil society organizations will be actively involved in applying ROAM to identify priority restoration areas and co-design NbS

The project will follow participatory processes to ensure that local communities and users of the watershed environment are actively engaged throughout the project cycle and that their concerns and views fully integrated into restoration planning. Stakeholders will be systematically involved in restoration planning through multi-stakeholder platforms, participatory mapping, and community consultations. Special attention

will be given to gender-responsive approaches, ensuring that women, that are key actors in agriculture and household resource management in the project area, benefit equitably from project interventions.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) will be developed during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) stage to outline how key stakeholders will be consulted and involved throughout project implementation. The SEP will build on a detailed stakeholder assessment, with a focus on local communities, and initial consultations, ensuring meaningful, effective and informed participation engagement that is aligned with IUCN's ESMS standards.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) will be systematically integrated into project activities. During the PPG phase, the project will conduct participatory assessments to document and map TEK related to:

- Traditional water harvesting and soil conservation techniques
- Indigenous plant species and their uses
- Sustainable grazing practices and seasonal movement patterns
- Fire management practices
- Indicators of ecosystem health derived from local observation

This knowledge will be incorporated into the Restoration Plan (Output 2.1.2) and will inform the design of pilot restoration interventions (Output 2.2.2). Community elders, women, and traditional knowledge holders will be actively engaged in knowledge-sharing workshops and will be recognized as co-contributors to the project's knowledge products.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

The project recognizes the importance of ensuring that local communities, particularly pastoralists and traditional resource users, are fully informed and provide their consent for activities that may affect their lands, resources, and livelihoods. During the PPG phase, the project will:

- Conduct a detailed mapping of customary governance structures in the intervention zones
- Organize community consultations to explain project activities, potential impacts, and benefits. These consultations will be documented to demonstrate that all relevant stakeholders have been consulted.
- Document community concerns and preferences through participatory processes
- Ensure that no project activities are implemented in areas where community consent has not been secured

Beyond project development, FPIC will be obtained throughout the project's implementation and monitoring. This approach aligns with IUCN's Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) standards and ensures that local communities are not only beneficiaries but active partners in project governance and decision-making.

To ensure meaningful participation, local communities will be represented in project governance structures, including:

- The **Steering Committee**, with representation from community-elected representatives
- **Community coordination platforms** established under Output 1.1.2, where community members will have equal voice with technical services
- **Participatory monitoring groups**, involving community members in data collection and evaluation of restoration outcomes

In terms of benefits to local communities, the restoration of the watershed will secure ecosystem services such as water regulation, soil fertility, and biodiversity conservation, which underpin both local livelihoods and global environmental priorities. Communities will benefit from enhanced resilience to climate change, diversified income opportunities through sustainable agriculture and nature-based enterprises, and improved food and water security.

Knowledge Management and Learning

The project's approach to knowledge management is designed to ensure that lessons are not only documented but actively used. The Knowledge Management Plan will integrate traditional knowledge and establish a knowledge-sharing platform accessible to all stakeholders. Pilot interventions will serve as 'living learning laboratories,' generating evidence on the effectiveness of restoration techniques. Multi-stakeholder platforms will facilitate knowledge exchange among government agencies, civil society, local communities, and academic partners. Digital tools, including online repository, webinars, and social media outreach, will ensure broad dissemination of lessons and practices at national and regional scales. Crucially, the project will proactively feed lessons into national policy processes, ensuring that the tools and methodologies developed become embedded in Tunisia's institutional frameworks.

Transformativeness, Innovativeness and Scalability

The project has strong transformative potential as it aims to shift restoration effort in the Ichkeul watershed from isolated interventions to a comprehensive, programmatic, and participatory approach. By applying ROAM at the watershed scale, the project moves beyond ad hoc actions to an integrated strategy that addresses ecological, social, and economic priorities simultaneously. This shift will fundamentally change the way restoration is planned and implemented in Tunisia, embedding it within institutional frameworks, community practices, and national policy commitments.

The integration of spatial mapping, GIS-based prioritization, and ROAM represents a novel application of advanced tools for ecosystem restoration in Tunisia. The emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement and gender-responsive planning ensures that restoration is not only technically sound but also socially inclusive. By coupling science-based methodologies with participatory governance, the project will demonstrate new pathways for restoring ecosystems in ways that maximize co-benefits for people and nature.

Scalability is embedded in the project's design. By preparing bankable proposals, building donor partnerships, and strengthening resource mobilization capacities, the project enables Tunisian institutions to leverage larger

investments for landscape-scale restoration. The Ichkeul Restoration Plan will serve as a replicable model for other watersheds and protected areas facing similar degradation pressures in Tunisia and the wider North African region.

Assumptions and impact drivers

The successful implementation of this project is predicated on several key assumptions. Firstly, it assumes the continued commitment and willingness of national and local stakeholders, including the CRDA, local communities, and relevant authorities, to actively engage in capacity-building initiatives and collaborative restoration efforts. It presumes that the necessary institutional support and policy frameworks are in place to facilitate participatory approaches and inclusive governance mechanisms. Furthermore, the project relies on the assumption that adequate financial resources and technical expertise will be available to conduct comprehensive baseline assessments and apply the ROAM effectively. Lastly, it assumes a stable socio-political environment that supports long-term ecosystem restoration initiatives and promotes stakeholder collaboration across sectors.

Several impact drivers are anticipated to facilitate the project's success and sustainability. The provision of targeted training in ROAM, participatory assessment, and other key areas is expected to significantly enhance the technical and institutional capacity of stakeholders, enabling them to design and implement effective restoration strategies. The establishment of functional coordination mechanisms will be crucial in fostering collaboration and alignment among diverse stakeholders, thereby ensuring cohesive and integrated restoration efforts. Additionally, equipping stakeholders with the necessary tools, equipment, and software will facilitate efficient planning and monitoring processes. The project's emphasis on gender-inclusive and community-engaged pilot interventions is anticipated to enhance local ownership and support, driving broader acceptance and replication of successful restoration practices. Finally, the development of strategic partnerships with bilateral, multilateral, and private sector donors is expected to secure additional resources and expertise, which will be instrumental in scaling up restoration initiatives and ensuring their long-term impact.

Gender Context in Tunisia and the Ichkeul Watershed

In Tunisia, the Gender Development Index (GDI) is 0.904, compared to 0.958 for high human development countries and 0.856 on average for Arab States. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is 0.289, placing Tunisia in 58th position out of 159 countries, close to the average of countries with high human development (0.291) and significantly ahead of the Arab States average of 0.535. For the gender index in the Sustainable Development Goals (for the 11 years preceding 2020), Tunisia is ranked 67 out of 129 countries with a score of 66/100.

Despite these positive national-level indicators, the Ichkeul watershed presents specific gender challenges. In the project intervention zone, women represent approximately 49% of the 165,752 inhabitants. Women are actively engaged in small-scale livestock rearing, collection of non-timber forest products, water management for household and agricultural use, and subsistence agriculture. However, they face significant barriers to full participation and equitable benefit-sharing, including limited access to land tenure, underrepresentation in decision-making bodies (such as Agricultural Development Groups and community natural resource management committees), unequal access to training and extension services, and limited access to

finance. These constraints, if unaddressed, risk perpetuating inequalities and undermining the long-term sustainability of restoration efforts.

Gender Action Plan Development during PPG Phase

During the PPG phase, the project will develop a comprehensive **Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan (GAP)** with concrete, budgeted activities and empowerment indicators. The GAP will be developed through a participatory process involving relevant stakeholders such as:

- A national gender expert familiar with the socio-cultural context of the Ichkeul watershed
- Consultations with women's groups, including the women-led Agricultural Development Groups (GDAs) in the project area
- Input from the Ministry of Agriculture's Bureau d'Appui à la Femme Rurale (BARF) and the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors
- Guidance from IUCN's Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) team to ensure alignment with GEF policy requirements

The GAP will identify the main gender related targets, translate them into specific activities and identify suitable SMART indicators with allocated budgets. These targets, activities and indicators will be integrated into the project's results framework. By embedding gender-responsive approaches across all components and committing to a detailed GAP, the project will ensure that women are not only beneficiaries but active agents in the restoration of the Ichkeul watershed.

Gender Integration Across Project Components

The project integrates gender-responsive approaches across all components. The following specific activities and gender indicators embedded in the results framework are proposed and will be further refined at PPG as part of the GAP:

Component 1 – Capacity Building and Coordination

- **Gender Indicator:** At least 50% of participants in training and capacity-building activities are women and young people.
- **Activities:** Gender-responsive facilitation skills will be integrated into all training programs. Training will be scheduled at times and locations accessible to women, and where necessary, separate sessions will be organized to ensure women's full participation. The training-of-trainers (ToT) approach will specifically include women as trainers to create role models and ensure long-term sustainability.

Component 2 – Restoration Planning and Implementation

- **Gender Indicator:** Number of women and/or youth involved in project activities, including pilot restoration interventions.
- **Gender Indicator:** Number of updated procedure guides that include the gender dimension.
- **Activities:** The spatial prioritization and site selection for pilot restoration interventions will include gender-disaggregated socio-economic criteria, ensuring that women's priorities and needs are considered. The project will specifically target women for participation in pilot restoration activities, including paid workdays, community monitoring roles, and decision-making on site selection and restoration techniques. Participatory planning processes will be reviewed to ensure gender dimensions are integrated, and procedural guides will be updated accordingly.

Component 3 – Knowledge Management and Resource Mobilization

- **Gender Indicator:** Number of women and/or youth involved in new or strengthened value chains.

- **Gender Indicator:** Number of microenterprises of women and/or young people trained (in the fields of NTFPs, local products, alternative tourism, etc.).
- **Gender Indicator:** Number of microfinances obtained or under preparation by women and/or young people.
- **Gender Indicator:** Number of women and/or young people with access to vocational training or work placements alternating between public and private institutions.
- **Gender Indicator:** Number of GDAs, SMSAs, and women's Farmer-Based Organizations (FBOs) that have established a natural resource co-management protocol with responsible technical services.
- **Activities:** Capacity-building on value chain development and micro-enterprise will prioritize women's participation, with a target of at least 50% women beneficiaries. The project will facilitate access to micro-finance opportunities for women and youth and will support the establishment of co-management protocols between women's organizations and technical services.

Component 4 – Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Gender Indicator:** All monitoring and evaluation activities will collect sex-disaggregated data where feasible. Indicators will track women's participation, leadership, and access to benefits across all project activities.

[1] IUCN (2017). Gender-responsive restoration guidelines: A closer look at gender in the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

[2] Poe, K., Pokhrel, P., Kumar, C., Simpson, M. (2025). (2025). A gender-forward forest landscape restoration (FLR) incubation and acceleration protocol for use in community managed forest landscapes. IUCN.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

Implementing arrangement

IUCN will be the GEF implementing agency responsible for project oversight, supervision and the provision of technical guidance. The Directorate-General for Forestry (DGF) and the Commissariat Régional du Développement Agricole (CRDA) of Bizerte, will act as co-executing partners on behalf of the Government of Tunisia.

IUCN will be responsible for the efficient and effective use of project resources and the achievement of project goal, objectives and outcomes according to the approved work plan and budget

Day-to-day operational oversight will be ensured by the DGF and CRDA of Bizerte. CSOs, GDAs/producer groups, local authorities and local communities will be acting as technical partners of the EAs during project implementation. A more comprehensive institutional and implementation framework will be formulated at PPG.

Complementarity and synergy with past or ongoing projects

In order to maximize the effectiveness and sustainability of the proposed project, a strategic approach to coordination and cooperation with past and ongoing initiatives is essential. Leveraging on lessons learned and best practices from existing and past projects will enhance resource efficiency, promote knowledge sharing, and foster collaboration by the proposed project. This approach will not only address the complexities of rangeland degradation but also empower local communities through inclusive practices. The table below outlines various relevant projects and their specific contributions to the proposed project, highlighting how each will enrich the overall project framework and support the achievement of restoration goals.

Past or Ongoing Project	Collaboration/Coordination focus with Proposed Project
Stratégie, nationale des zones humides de Tunisie 2025-2035	The proposed project will contribute to the implementation of the county's national strategy for wetlands 2025-2035, in particular the Objective 4 of the strategy which aims at stopping the decline of wetlands through balanced approaches of passive and active restauration.
New national strategy for the sustainable development of forests and rangelands (SNDDFP 2026-2050)	This newly developed strategy builds on the results of the evaluation and the lessons learned from the implementation of the National Forest Strategy 2015–2024. Its main programmes include the “Programme for Landscape Restoration and Conservation.” The SNDDFP 2026–2050 is fully aligned with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2018–2030), whose Priority 5 aims “to protect and restore biodiversity, improve the resilience of ecosystems, and maintain and strengthen their ecosystem services. In this context, forest biodiversity will be restored and better protected, and steppe and desert areas will be managed sustainably to improve the conservation status of rare and threatened species”. The proposed REWI project will contribute to the implementation of the SNDDFP 2026–2050 by building capacity for forest restoration using NbS and by providing inputs to improve Tunisian policies, institutional mandates, operational procedures, and incentive structures related to land degradation neutrality, watershed and protected area management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and inclusive green livelihoods.
GEF Project: Bizerte Lake environmental project lagoon and marine depollution	GEF Project ID: 5787, Implementing Agency: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Status: Ongoing Medium Size Project, Expected Completion Date: 31 March 2027 Information source: 9th Project Implementation Report (December 2025) The project’s goals are to restore the natural functions and ecosystem services of the Bizerte Lagoon by reducing land-based pollution from wastewater and solid waste. Although Bizerte Lake is hydrologically connected to the Ichkeul Lagoon, the project does not directly interfere with the proposed REWI Project. The GEF Bizerte Lake Project focuses on improving wastewater treatment and management systems, as well as promoting stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and environmental education. The two projects also involve quite different sets of stakeholders.
GEF Project: Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change,	GEF Project ID: 11389, GEF Agency: FAO, Executing Partner: Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing GEF Focal Area: Land degradation, Status: Project Approved for Implementation (July 2025)

conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security	Information source: Project PIF (November 2025) The project aims to restore and sustainably manage the Aleppo pine (<i>Pinus halepensis</i> Mill.) natural forest ecosystem of Kasserine (west-central Tunisia), which is severely threatened by climate change and suffers from the absence of informed, adaptive management. Recent episodes of drought and recurrent fires, combined with inadequate resource management, have weakened the ecosystem and led to the rapid, large-scale spread of bark beetles. These pests have caused severe dieback of Aleppo pine, sharply reducing the ecosystem goods and services provided at the ecological level (biodiversity conservation, soil and water protection, safeguarding agricultural areas against desertification and siltation), at the environmental level (carbon sequestration), and at the socio-economic level (sources of income and food security) in one of the country's poorest regions. The project will be implemented in an area whose bioclimatic characteristics differ markedly from those of the proposed REWI Project area. However, the two projects share many similarities in their approaches, as both promote NbS and stakeholder participation in decision-making and management. Exchanges between the two projects will be mutually beneficial, particularly because their implementation periods will overlap.
GCF project: National Adaptation Plan: Advancing risk-informed development and land-use planning in Tunisia	The objective of this project is to integrate climate change adaptation into two dimensions of development planning in Tunisia: socio-economic planning and land-use planning, both at the national and local levels. Outcome 1: A National Adaptation Framework is developed and adopted. Outcome 2: National Economic and Social Development Plan and Master Land-Use Plan are informed by major climate-related risks; and Outcome 3: Climate change risks and adaptation needs are integrated in local development and land-use plans in two municipalities. Once approved, the proposed REWI project will ensure complementarity with the development of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), particularly by providing supporting documents and data to inform the preparation of the Master Land-Use Plan.
Projet de Développement Agricole Intégré de Ghézala, Joumine Sejnene	This project funded by the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) covers three of the delegations of the Governorate of Bizerte, most of them include large portion of the Ichkeul Watershed. It provides support to rural development (rural roads, support to small farmers, forestry, rangeland management, etc.). Project cost: 104 million TND The project is implemented by the CRDA of Bizerte. It commenced in December 2018 and its duration has been extended until 31 December 2028. It will therefore be in its final stages when the REWI project begins.
Projet de Promotion de l'Agroforesterie et Restauration des Paysages Forestiers dégradés (PARFD) Régions de Béja, Siliana et Bizerte	The project is financed by the African Development Bank. The total project cost is 70 million TND, 20 million are allocated to the Governorate of Bizerte. Project duration: June 2024-May 2029. Project cost: 70 million TND

	The project will assist local population in (i) processing of agricultural, silvicultural and pastoral products, (ii) accessing agricultural inputs (seedlings, organic fertiliser, materials and equipment, etc.); (iii) developing partnerships with market operators. The project will support basic infrastructure (service roads, water points, etc.) and capacity building activities. Since the PAEFD project's objectives also include the restoration of state-owned forest landscapes and the development of agroforestry on private land, close collaboration between PAEFD and the proposed REWI Project is essential. This will allow the REWI Project to capitalise on the results and experience generated by PAEFD since its launch in 2024 and, where possible, to help steer its restoration approach towards NbS.
Programme d'adaptation au changement climatique des territoires vulnérables de Tunisie – PACTE 2018-2027	The "Programme d'adaptation au changement climatique des territoires vulnérables de Tunisie-PACTE", financed by the French Development Agency (AFD), focuses on strengthening the resilience of climate-exposed regions in five governorates of Tunisia (Bizerte, Kairouan, Le Kef, Sidi Bouzid and Siliana), through a combination of planning, investment and capacity-building activities. The programme supports the integration of climate risks into territorial and sectoral planning, the preparation of local adaptation plans, and the improvement of climate-risk information (such as vulnerability assessments and climate data). It finances concrete adaptation measures in key sectors and vulnerable areas, for example improvements in water resource management, soil and ecosystem protection, climate-resilient agriculture, and the protection of coastal and urban zones against extreme events. Alongside these investments, the programme provides technical assistance and training to national and local institutions, helping them to design, implement and monitor adaptation actions, while also promoting stakeholder participation and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making on climate resilience. The proposed REWI Project could build on many of the achievements of PACTE in the Governorate of Bizerte, in particular the information on the main actors and the local population in the project area through the PACTE's network of multi-stakeholder platforms for the production and sharing of knowledge about the territory, citizen debate on development issues, collaborative planning and monitoring and evaluation of investments.

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
12600	0	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
12600	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDP A ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
national parks of Tunisia	4322	National Park	12,600.00						

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1000	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Woodlands	1,000.00			

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1750	0	0	0

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

1,750.00

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	81,219			
Male	84,533			
Total	165,752	0	0	0

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The targets indicated in the above table were defined following a spatially ecosystem-based approach that link the indicators to the clearly delineated boundaries of the Ichkeul landscape. For the terrestrial protected areas under improved management, the proposed target is based on the official surface area of Ichkeul National Park, ensuring that the entirety of this globally significant site will benefit improved management thanks to the watershed restoration interventions. Similarly, for the freshwater ecosystems under improved cooperative management, the targets derive from the combined surface area of the lake and marshes that constitute the wetland component of the park, recognized as a Ramsar and World Heritage site. By linking targets directly to the park's legally recognized and internationally designated boundaries, the methodology ensures clarity, transparency, and alignment with both national conservation priorities and global environmental commitments.

For indicators that extend beyond the park, such as area of restored land, landscapes under improved management, and beneficiaries, the targets are linked to the estimated surface of the Ichkeul watershed as a reference unit. Restoration opportunities and sustainable land management interventions are prioritized within this broader catchment area through ROAM

assessments, GIS mapping, and stakeholder consultations. The proportion of the watershed targeted for intervention is determined by balancing ecological significance (e.g., erosion-prone slopes, degraded agricultural plots), feasibility within project resources, and potential for social co-benefits. This approach ensures that targets are both measurable and justified: they are grounded in real, mapped biophysical units while also reflecting the project's capacity to deliver transformational but realistic changes over a 48-month timeframe.

- **Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness (12,600 ha):** This indicator is derived from the official total area of the Ichkeul National Park as reported on the World Database on Protected and Conserved Areas (WDPCA) (site ID 4322). The project will contribute to improved management across the park by ensuring that the Restoration Plan for the Ichkeul Watershed (Output 2.1.2, Output 1.1.1) and ensuing pilot restoration interventions (Output 2.2.2) contribute to strengthening management effectiveness. The design of pilot interventions and their impact on the broader management effectiveness of the Ichkeul National Park will be measured using the IUCN Green List Standard. The baseline for the indicator will be established through an initial self-assessment against the IUCN Green List Standard for Protected and Conserved Areas, which includes 17 criteria and 50 indicators measuring protected area governance, management and outcomes. This assessment will be repeated annually to track progress and improvements in management. As part of its exit strategy, the project will also envisage the replication of this approach across other priority national parks, allowing for the identification of restoration opportunities for enhanced protected area management across Tunisia's protected area network.
- **Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodlands under restoration (1,000 ha):** The total restoration target of the Ichkeul watershed (227,000 ha) is based on the discussions with CRDA Bizerte and DGF. During the PPG phase, this total will be disaggregated into specific ecosystem types: degraded agricultural lands (3.1), forest and forest land (3.2), natural grass and woodland (3.3), and wetlands (3.4). This disaggregation will be further defined as part of the spatial prioritization methodology (Output 2.1.1), informed by high-resolution satellite imagery analysis, ground-truthing field surveys, and the ROAM-based baseline assessment.

Indicator

- **Indicator 4.1 Areas of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (1,750 ha):** This target represents the area of production landscapes where biodiversity-friendly practices will be introduced. The PPG phase will further disaggregate this total into: landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (4.1) and landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems (4.3). These figures will be refined through the spatial prioritization exercise, ensuring that targets are both measurable and grounded in real, mapped biophysical units.
- **Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments – People benefitting from GEF-financed investments can be categorised into four Tiers:**

Tier 1 – Direct beneficiaries of capacity building (target: 450–600 people): This includes individuals who actively participate in ROAM training workshops, gender-responsive facilitation sessions, equipment use and maintenance courses, value chain development coaching, and pilot restoration implementation training. Direct beneficiaries will be enumerated through training attendance registers disaggregated by sex, age, and institutional affiliation. The target is derived from the project's planned training events (approximately 15–20 events over 24 months) with an average of 25–30 participants per event, accounting for repeat participation. A minimum of 40% women participation will be tracked as a gender indicator.

Tier 2 – Direct beneficiaries of pilot interventions (target: 150–200 people): This includes local community members (from the eight farch groups and adjacent douars) who are engaged in paid workdays, participatory monitoring, site selection, and co-management committees for the NbS pilot projects implemented under Output 2.2.2. Each of the 3–5 pilot sites will mobilize 30–50 community members, with preference given to women and youth.

Tier 3 – Indirect beneficiaries during project lifespan (target: 5,000–8,000 people): This includes family members of direct beneficiaries (using a household multiplier of 5–6 people per household) and residents of adjacent communities who benefit from improved ecosystem services during the project period, such as reduced sedimentation, enhanced water quality, or early fire warning systems. This tier will be estimated using household surveys and spatial analysis of intervention zones.

Tier 4 – Potential long-term beneficiaries (165,752 people – the total population of the Ichkeul watershed): This figure represents the potential population that could benefit from the full, landscape-scale implementation of the Ichkeul Watershed Restoration Plan over a 10–15 year horizon, contingent on successful resource mobilization and scaling up (see Component 3). This number is clearly distinguished from direct project beneficiaries and is included to illustrate the transformative potential of the Restoration Plan, not as a direct GEF Indicator 11 target.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	In the territory under consideration, the expected changes in climate in the near (2030) and distant (2050 and 2100) future are worrying (they are the result of climate modelling with downscaling carried out at the national level in 2021). As an example - the cumulative rainfall in mm/year will increase from 600mm (historical) to 460mm/year (horizon 2100), a decrease of 140mm/year about a quarter of the cumulative rainfall, - the maximum temperature in ° C will increase from 22.5° C (historical) to 26.5° C (horizon 2100) or + 4° C. - the number of consecutive dry days will increase from 60 days/year to 80 days/year without rain, an increase of 20 days/year. Mitigation measures - Prioritizing drought tolerant native species with climate-smart seed sourcing; seedlings will be supported during establishment with harvested-water irrigation and shading. - Reduce additional stress by grazing management, fire prevention, and invasive species control - Community-based water-use planning - Early warning and drought contingency measures to allow adaptive management
Environmental and Social	Moderate	Climate disruptions will have an impact on the availability of water resources, the emergence of conflicts of interest and the decline in agricultural production, which may increase the vulnerability of rural communities in the territory concerned. Mitigation measures: -To couple ecosystem-based restoration with integrated water resources management and livelihood support. -Develop participatory and gender-responsive water allocation plans, including appropriate consideration to environmental-flow. -Promote Climate-smart agriculture and diversification

Political and Governance	Moderate	The project depends on the Tunisian government to act and decisions within a set timeframe. The project responds to this risk by providing firm deadlines for the completion of activities and strong collaboration between sectors. The project will report on progress against these deadlines throughout the implementation period. DGEQV, ODESYANO, CRDA, ANPE and private sector and civil society partners will mobilize their staff on site to facilitate the advancement of all activities and support conflict resolution. If the project opts for the creation of a Management Unit, then the collaborative work, which is highly recommended in the case of this project, will be facilitated and the actors in the field will be better supervised and in fact more effective. Mitigation measures: -Establish a Project Management Unit supported by a Steering Committee involving the key stakeholders, including representatives of the local communities and authorities as well as representatives of the relevant national authorities. -The Project Management Unit should include skilled staff sufficiently familiar with legal procurement rules applicable to public projects. -A procurement plan shall be elaborated for the project and updated on annual basis
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INNOVATION

Institutional and Policy	Moderate	Project partners have already been collaborating for decades on other natural resource management and local development projects. Mitigation measures: The project could opt for the creation of a Management Unit that will ensure collaboration between the actors.
Technological	Low	The project was designed to complement the country's priorities in terms of biodiversity conservation, restoration of degraded ecosystems and adaptation to the effects of climate change on nature, societies and the economy, in short, its development. Mitigation measures: The project objectives are aligned with national targets and strategies (SPANB, PANLCD 2018-2030, CDN 2030, SNBRC 2050, PAN 2100) and other projects implemented in the region (ECOPACT of the Ministry of Environment, DINAMO of ODESYANO and other integrated rural development projects-CRDA).
Financial and Business Model	Moderate	In the current economically unstable context of the country, financial management policies can be slow and delay the implementation of activities. It might be difficult to get services on schedule. The project will mitigate this issue by including a procurement list to meet deadlines. Mitigation measures: - The Project Management Unit should include skilled staff sufficiently familiar with legal procurement rules applicable to public projects - A procurement plan shall be elaborated for the project and updated on annual basis

EXECUTION

Capacity	Moderate	Project partners have already been collaborating for decades on other natural resource management and local development projects. Mitigation measures: The project could opt for the creation of a Management Unit that will ensure collaboration between the actors.
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Fiduciary	Moderate	In the current economically unstable context of the country, financial management policies can be slow and delay the implementation of activities. It might be difficult to get services on schedule. The project will mitigate this issue by including a procurement list to meet deadlines. Mitigation measures: - The Project Management Unit should include skilled staff sufficiently familiar with legal procurement rules applicable to public projects - A procurement plan shall be elaborated for the project and updated on annual basis
Stakeholder	Low	The interest and engagement of local communities will be ensured through the establishment of incentives such as capacity building, opportunities for knowledge sharing and concrete demonstrations of project initiatives. The project will foster cohesion and dialogue between sectors at community level and promote positive social opportunities. Mitigation measures: The interest and engagement of local communities should be ensured through: (i) strong communication and transparency about the objectives of the project, (ii) fully talking onto account the concerns of the local population, (iii) adapting the restoration approaches to the local context with full consideration of their impact on the local population
Other	Low	After the revolution and the COVID-19, pandemic, Tunisia is experiencing an economically unstable period that is not very favourable for development, with social tensions related to a lack of financial means, the rising unemployment rate, migratory flows, regional imbalance, impoverishment and desertification of rural areas, and illegal immigration. However, these macroeconomic trends are not expected to influence the project implementation.
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	While some risks are moderate, such as those related to climate change, the risks to this project can be mitigated if the measures recommended in this table are implemented in a timely manner. Therefore, the overall risk is moderate. The key element remains the governance structure that will be put in place, particularly the qualifications of the staff assigned to the Project Management Unit and the proper representation of stakeholders on the project steering committee.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The “Restoration of Degraded Ecosystems in the Ichkeul Watershed (REWI)” project is strongly aligned with the GEF-8 Programming Strategies, particularly those that emphasize integrated approaches to land, water, and biodiversity management

The project will deliver global environmental benefits aligned with the GEF-8 focal areas, in particular Biodiversity and Land Degradation. It aligns also with Targets 1, 2 and 11 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

In relation to GEF Biodiversity focal area, the project will contribute to safeguarding globally significant species and habitats within the Ichkeul watershed and its UNESCO World Heritage wetland, a critical site on the African–Eurasian flyway. It will also strengthen protected area management in the Ichkeul National Park (12,600 ha) through enhanced ranger capacity, participatory governance and modern monitoring tools, with measurable improvements to be tracked via the IUCN Green List for Protected and Conserved Areas standard. In addition, capacity building will be extended to park management staff in other priority national parks, which will be selected at the PPG stage. By applying spatial prioritisation and community-endorsed restoration planning, the project addresses direct drivers of biodiversity loss (overgrazing, forest fires and unsustainable practices to reduce pressures such as sedimentation and turbidity affecting waterbird ecosystems. These actions contribute to the GBF implementation and help Tunisia fulfil its CBD commitments by expanding effective area-based conservation, restoring degraded ecosystems, and integrating biodiversity considerations in landscape planning and local decision-making.

Under the GEF Land Degradation focal area, the project will deliver tangible results towards Land Degradation Neutrality through a watershed-wide, ROAM-based restoration programme that aims at rehabilitating 1,000 ha of degraded lands. It will introduce biodiversity-friendly and sustainable land management to address the root causes of degradation with cost-effective NbS: managed natural regeneration, native reforestation and soil stabilisation. By reducing erosion and sediment delivery to Lake Ichkeul, the project will support the rehabilitation of the wetland.

While mainly designed for outcomes in relation to Biodiversity and Land Degradation, the project will also deliver climate change co-benefits aligned with UNFCCC priorities through mitigation and adaptation. Besides promoting Carbon sequestration from restoration and improved management the project will contribute to the reduction of fire-related emissions. Adaptation benefits include improved water regulation and baseflow stability and more climate-resilient livelihoods in a rain-fed landscape.

The project's integrated approach combines capacity building with inclusive, gender-responsive governance, as well as a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This ensures cross-focal synergies that are central to GEF-8 strategies, Tunisia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and national adaptation priorities.

National frameworks

The national frameworks of relevance for the project are:

- National Biodiversity Strategy^{[1]¹²}
- The Forest National Strategy^{[2]¹³}

- The Forest Law (Code Forestier)[\[3\]](#)¹⁴
- The National Wetland Strategy^[4]¹⁵
- Commitments towards the World Heritage framework of UNESCO
- The National Determined Contribution submitted to the UNFCCC[\[5\]](#)¹⁶

The REWI project is directly aligned with Tunisia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2018–2030, which prioritises the integration of biodiversity values into national and societal policies through a landscape approach that protects both ecological integrity and agricultural-economic viability. Through its ROAM-based approach, the project identifies and restores degraded ecosystems whilst integrating natural habitats into managed landscapes, directly supporting NBSAP commitments to reduce pressures on biodiversity, conserve threatened species (particularly migratory waterbirds dependent on Ichkeul's wetlands).

The project is closely aligned with Tunisia's forest strategy since it promotes the shifting from fragmented actions to a programme-based, watershed approach that restores degraded forest and rangeland mosaics, reduces wildfire risk. It also strengthens the operational capacity of relevant institutions, in particular by providing tools for GIS, ecological monitoring, and field survey, as well as building the skills of rangers and technical staff.

The project interventions will support the implementation of Tunisia's national forest law (Code Forestier) and related regulations by reinforcing core functions mandated by the administration (DGF/CRDA) for forest protection, restoration, and sustainable use. It contributes to legal objectives on preventing illegal clearing and overgrazing, mitigating wildfire risk, and rehabilitating degraded forest and wetland ecosystems with native species. The improved management effectiveness across the country's protected areas is fully in line with Chapter III of the Code Forestier.

Furthermore, given the Ichkeul's status as a UNESCO World Heritage site and a globally significant wetland for migratory birds, the project is well aligned with Tunisia's wetland strategy and Ramsar-oriented commitments to conservation and wise use.

The project advances Tunisia's NDC, in particular its adaptation priority sectors:

- Water: demand management, efficiency, non-conventional resources, service resilience.
- Agriculture/food: climate-resilient, profitable systems; support for small/medium farmers.

- Health: control of climate-related risks; strengthened health services and surveillance.
- Ecosystems & biodiversity: improved governance; restoration and resilience of natural resources.
- Infrastructure and human settlements: climate-resilient planning and investments.
- Poverty/vulnerable groups: low-carbon regional development; diversified employment.
- Cultural heritage: protection of climate-sensitive cultural assets.
- Inclusivity: Gender-responsive and socially equitable adaptation focused on the most vulnerable.

[1] https://climate-laws.org/documents/national-strategy-and-action-plan-for-biodiversity-2018-2030_a435?id=tunisian-national-strategy-and-action-plan-for-biodiversity-2018-2030_a1d7

[2] https://www.foret-mediterrannee.org/upload/biblio/foret_med_2015_2_235-240.pdf New national strategy for the sustainable development of forests and rangelands (SNDDFP 2026-2050)

[3] https://www.jurisitetunisie.com/download_textes_pdf.php?f=cforestier_fr.pdf

[4] <https://onagri.home.blog/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/strategie-nationale-des-zones-humodes-de-tunisie-2025-2035.pdf>

[5] <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-08/CDN%20-%20Updated%20-%20english%20version.pdf>

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector:

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

In preparation for this request, several working meetings, field survey visits and planning workshops have been conducted since the acceptance of the concept note by the GEF National Committee in January 2023.

Two development meetings were held between the DGEQV team, the IUCN and the consultant in charge of drafting the BIP. These meetings resulted in the official designation of a team to monitor the drafting of the BIP and a work plan that was implemented and respected especially in terms of output and deadlines.

At the end of these two preparatory meetings, we achieved the following results:

- a. Identification of the priorities of the DGEQV and its technical partners (including IUCN) in terms of biodiversity conservation in the territory of choice, the need to restore degraded ecosystems, the limitation of pollution of Lake Ichkeul through Lake Bizerte,
- b. Identifying key partners and initiating discussions on who does what
- c. Identification of project components and activities in a general way
- d. Establishment of the list of projects already in progress and assess the alignment of the project with national objectives and strategies.

A project preparation workshop took place on the 13th July 2023 and was attended by representatives of the Directorate General of Forests (DGF), the Ministry of Environment and the relevant services of the CRDA of Bizerte. During this workshop, participants discussed about the project's objectives and components, the geographical scope of the intervention area, and the mechanisms for coordination and cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects. They also discussed the main technical approaches to be adopted (including ROAM and Nature-based Solutions), available data, potential co-financing, baseline indicators, and alignment with GEF-8 programming strategies as well as national and regional priorities. Cross-cutting themes, such as gender equality, the empowerment of women and young people, stakeholder engagement and private sector involvement, were also addressed. The workshop brought together

Following the workshop consultations continued with a broader range of stakeholders. In this context, a meeting was organised at the headquarters of ODESYANO (a key stakeholder) which brought together ODESYANO representatives including the Director General, vocational training, civil society organisations and other regional and local technical services (forest services, OEP (Livestock and Pasture national office), Ministry of Planning and economic development, ...).

The consultation process targeted Specifically a community group made up of families living inside the park and others residing in neighbouring areas, particularly in the western part. These are disadvantaged households who settled in the park zone at the time when a mine was still operating. Since the mine's closure, these families, originating from several nearby localities, have relied mainly on agricultural and livestock-raising activities in areas adjacent to the park. Some of them are occasionally employed on a temporary basis by the forestry services to carry out short-term work within the park, such as forestry operations and guarding. Their perspectives, needs and traditional practices were taken into account during the consultations to ensure that the proposed project is both socially acceptable and responsive to local livelihoods.

The third meeting of the PIF Drafting Committee in the presence of a representative of the IUCN Accredited Entity was devoted to critical reading of the PIF Draft before sharing it with all partners for review and comment.

Recent consultations/information workshops, partner involvement and planning:

Name of the organisation	Focal point
July and September 2023	
Ministry of Environment	Hedi Chebili Managing Director - DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Mohamed Ali Ben Temessek DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Hatem B. Belgacem DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Issaoui Hakim DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Mohamed Ali Dridi DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Hammami Abdessalam DGEQV
Ministry of Environment	Ms DHRKRA Gharbi - ECPOACT Lake Bizerte project manager
Ministry of Environment	Abdeljelil Azzouz Min. Env. Regional Director Bizerte
Ministry of Agriculture	Habib Mrabet Managing Director CRDA Bizerte
Ministry of Agriculture	Jamel Ferchichi Divisional Forests/CES CRDA Bizerte
Ministry of Agriculture	Abdessattar Belkhoja Managing Director -Forests
Ministry of Agriculture	Rjeb Borni Managing Director -Forests - Conservator PN Ichkeul
Ministry of Agriculture	Hichem Khmiri - Managing Director ODESYPANO
Ministry of Agriculture	Essid Safia - OEP Bizerte
Ministry of Agriculture	Mansouri Mustapha - ODESYPANO Sedjnen Regional Directorate
Ministry of Agriculture	Talbi HoucinODESYPANO
Ministry of Agriculture	Saidani Mohamed - Vocational Training Centre -AVFA
Ministry of Economy and Planning	Slah Bjaoui - DDR Bizerte
Sustainable Development and Wildlife Conservation Association	Ridha Tabboubi
Sylvo-Pastoral Institute of Tabarka	Kamel Tounsi
INAT – Tunis	Oumayma Hammami - PhD Student
IUCN MED	Maher Mahjoub
IUCN MED	Carla Danelutti

A national consultation meeting was held with DGF on the 10th of April to review, discuss and validate the changes to the PIF being proposed to address GEF Secretariat Review comments. All Agency responses have therefore been elaborated with the inputs and endorsement of the Executing Agency (DGF). See attached annex titled “*National Consultation PIF GEF-8- Restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Ichkeul watershed*” for detail records.

Only limited contacts with civil society organisations and the private sector were made during the PIF preparation; full consultations will be carried out and substantially developed during the PPG phase.

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	1,784,460.00	160,601.00	1,945,061.00
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	2,032.00	183.00	2,215.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						1,786,492.00	160,784.00	1,947,276.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount (\$)

50000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

4500

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	49,943.00	4,495.00	54,438.00
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	57.00	5.00	62.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)						50,000.00	4,500.00	54,500.00

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	1,999,499.00
IUCN	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	2,277.00
Total GEF Resources					2,001,776.00

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
LD-2	GET	2,032.00	4000000
BD-1-1	GET	1,784,460.00	3091000
Total Project Cost		1,786,492.00	7,091,000.00

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
GEF Agency	IUCN	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1000000
Others	IFAD	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500000
Recipient Country Government	National Fiscal Investment Programme on Agriculture and Environment; Training Programme on Education; and Vocational Training and Women's Empowerment Projects	In-kind	Investment mobilized	4091000
Others	AFD Funding	In-kind	Investment mobilized	1000000
Others	Saudi funding through PDAI Ghzela/joumine/sejnen	Equity	Investment mobilized	500000
Total Co-financing				7,091,000.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

The Directorate-General for Forestry will mobilize resources from ongoing relevant projects and programmes in the region to complement the proposed GEF project. Co-financing letter will be prepared and shared for GEF SEC review before CEO endorsement.

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	IUCN	12/14/2025	Janie Rioux		janie.rioux@iucn.org
Project Coordinator	IUCN	12/19/2025	Hui Ren	962799036629	hui.ren@iucn.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Ms. Sabria Bnoui Ben Ammar	Director-General of External Relations	Ministry of Environment	12/18/2025

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place

See project map A. Area of Project Interventions and B Map of land degradation levels in Tunisia, both attached as annexes to the PIF separately

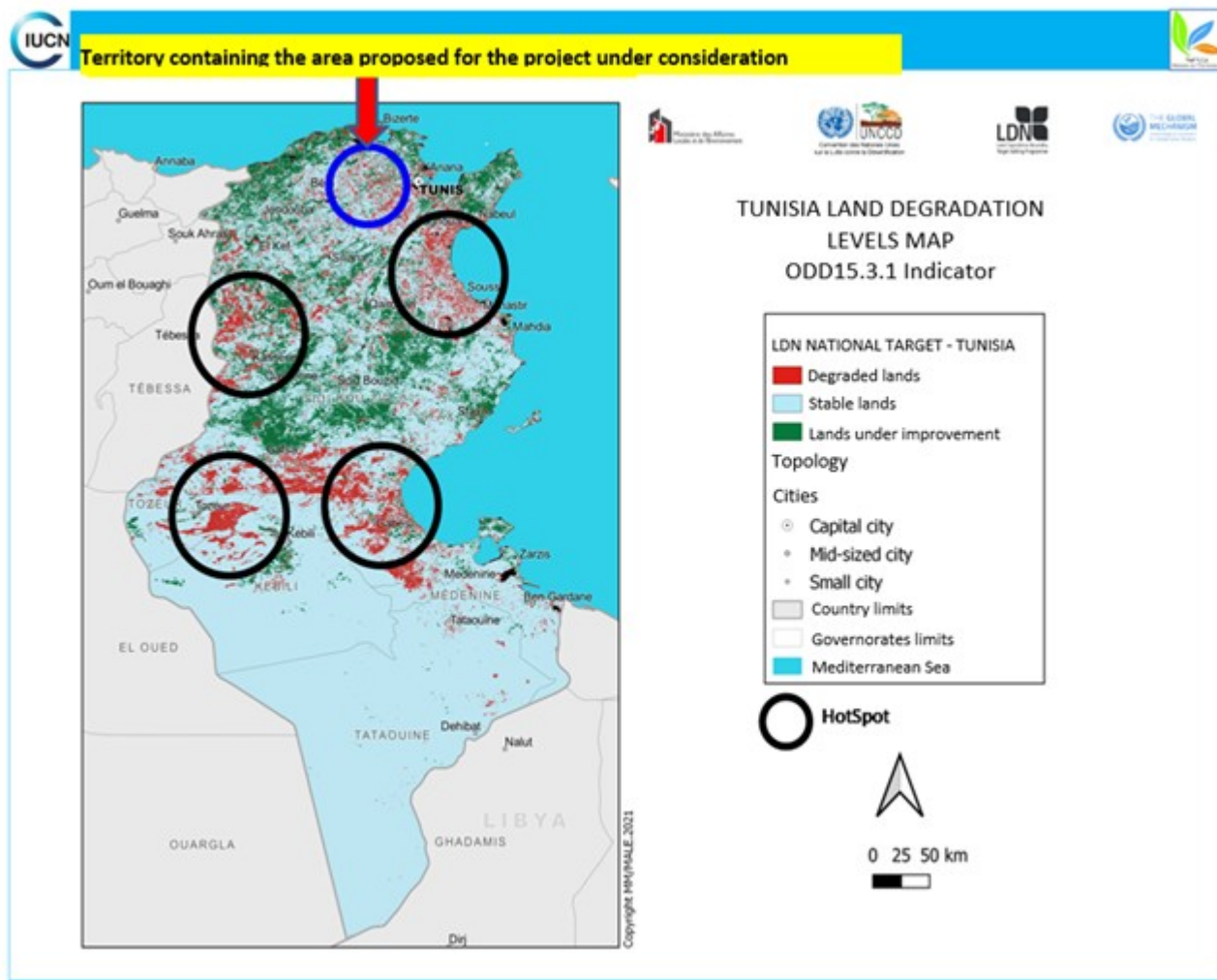


Map A. Area of Project Interventions

Here are the GPS coordinates of some landmarks in the project area. These coordinates are provided in WGS84/UTM Nord 32, positionable on Google Earth.

Reference points	Coordinates in Degrees, Minutes, Seconds	
Lake Ichkeul	N	37°09'45"
	E	9°39'49"
Jbel Ichkeul	N	37°07'17"
	E	9°38'59"
RAMSAR site	N	37°05'39"
	E	9°15'46"
City of Bizerte/County town	N	37°17'11"
	E	9°51'26"

In this territory, the interventions will be located in the micro-zones that will be chosen following a detailed diagnosis and where the chances of success of the actions and activities envisaged are the best.



Annex B. Map of land degradation levels in Tunisia (source: The arrow in red indicates the territory of the project, which is part of the national land degradation hotspots)

source: LDN National Target Definition Report - Ministry of Environment 2021.

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title

Preliminary ESMS Screening

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
No Contribution 0	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

☒ Influencing models			
	☒ Transform policy and regulatory environments		
	☒ Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making		
	☒ Convene multi-stakeholder alliances		
	☒ Demonstrate innovative approaches		
	Deploy innovative financial instruments		
☒ Stakeholders			
	Indigenous Peoples		
	Private Sector		
		Capital providers	
		Financial intermediaries and market facilitators	
		Large corporations	
		SMEs	
		Individuals/Entrepreneurs	
		Non-Grant Pilot	
		Project Reflow	
	☒ Beneficiaries		
	☒ Local Communities		
	☒ Civil Society		
		☒ Community Based Organization	☒
		☒ Non-Governmental Organization	
		Academia	
		Trade Unions and Workers Unions	☒
	☒ Type of Engagement		
		☒ Information Dissemination	
		☒ Partnership	
		☒ Consultation	
		☒ Participation	☒
	☒ Communications		

		☒ Awareness Raising	
		☒ Education	
		Public Campaigns	

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