

Restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Ichkeul watershed - REWI

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID
12253
Countries
Tunisia
Project Name
Restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Ichkeul watershed - REWI
Agencies
IUCN
Date received by PM
1/6/2026
Review completed by PM

Program Manager
Alla Ljungman
Focal Area
Multi Focal Area
Project Type
MSP

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

- a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding?
- b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Cleared. The changes are noted.

February 17, 2026

a) Not fully.

(1) The project's outcomes and outputs ? particularly the proposed pilot activities ? are strongly aligned with the Land Degradation (LD) focal area, especially LD-2: Reverse land degradation through landscape restoration. We therefore recommend realigning GEF financing to fully support the LD-2-related outputs, applying full flexibility irrespective of the specific source of funds. Please refer to the screenshot below for further clarification.

(2) We note that activities under Output 2.2.2 include the planting of Eucalyptus trees. This activity cannot be supported with GEF financing, nor within projects that include any share of GEF funding, due to significant environmental, ecological, and biodiversity concerns. Tunisia is located in a water-scarce zone, and Eucalyptus species are widely recognized as highly water-intensive, potentially exacerbating existing water stress. As outlined in the project rationale, the conservation status of the National Park is already under increasing pressure within its watershed. Over past decades, the area has experienced progressive degradation driven by land-use pressure, deforestation, overgrazing, unsustainable water use, and unsustainable agricultural practices. In addition, forest areas in the mountainous regions north of the lake watershed have been further degraded by recurrent forest fires. Introducing highly flammable species such as Eucalyptus in or around this unique National Park ecosystem would increase fire risk and could further undermine ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation objectives. Such an intervention would therefore be inconsistent with GEF environmental safeguards and the project's stated restoration and conservation goals.

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: Conduct training and participatory monitoring for 34 park rangers and management staff of all national parks of Tunisia (17 national parks, 541,105 ha) to improve their skills and knowledge in participatory management of Protected Areas (outcome 1.1). In addition, engage local communities in conservation activities in buffer zone, such as awareness programs, training and participatory monitoring; Provide specialized training for park rangers and management staff to improve on management effectiveness score. The training will cover a range of protected area-related topics, including ecosystem restoration. • Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodlands under restoration: Implement restoration activities over 1000 hectares of degraded rangelands sites that are located within the 227 000ha zone. The interventions (output 2.2.2) will include passive restoration such as protection and active restoration such as planting of native species (stone pine (*Pinus pinea*) or combination of Eucalyptus and stone pine, etc.), establishment of seed banks of native grasses, shrubs, and other plants, and clearance of invasive plants. The 1000 hectares have the potential to be restored and return to their productivity and ensure the sustainable provisioning of ecosystem services and livelihoods. Indicator 4.1 Areas of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity: Implement activities in over 1750 hectares sustainable land management practices (output 2.2.2) that benefit the biodiversity such as enhancement of habitats, water harvesting and protection. • Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments – based on the communities directly adjacent to and living within the project areas has been initially put at 165,752 (about 49% of women and 51% men). Detailed numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries at the activity level will be further identified at the PPG stage. These indicators could evolve and will be specified during the pre-feasibility study that will be undertaken at PPG phase.

b) Please add Agency ID number.

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:	

Agency's Comments

a. (1) Thank you for the comment. Considering the project will contribute on Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness; Indicator 4.1 and 4.3 with biodiversity-friendly practices which will be introduced under component 1 &2, the BD focal area has been identified as one of the focal areas. Please kindly review the updated paragraphs under section B elaborating the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators. IUCN as IA stay open or a further revision upon your kind review and confirmation/comment.

a. (2) Thank you for flagging this important issue referring to the planting of Eucalyptus trees. It has been removed from the restoration interventions proposed under Outcome 2.2.

With full respects on the fact that there are significant risks associated with monoculture Eucalyptus plantations, in terms of water stress, soil degradation fire hazard etc, the project will ensure the selection of appropriate and relevant restoration interventions for each priority area a part of a thorough prioritisation process including local experts and stakeholders, in line with the ROAM methodology. The indicated PIF sub-section on Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodlands under restoration has been revised accordingly.

b) IUCN project ID has been added. Thanks.

2. Project Summary

Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?

Secretariat's Comments

May 13, 2026

Cleared.

May 11, 2026

The project summary reads good. Could you please add the projected amount of GEBs to be generated, please.

February 17, 2026

While the Project Summary presents the core problems (including land degradation, forest fires, deforestation, invasive species, overgrazing, unsustainable agricultural practices, and climate-induced hydrological shifts), the project objective (restoration of degraded lands and wetlands and enhanced effectiveness of protected area management in the Ichkeul watershed), the main strategies to achieve results, and the expected GEBs, the section should be streamlined and reduced to a maximum of 250 words. Detailed information on the ROAM approach, as well as

additional explanations and justifications, would be more appropriately placed in Section B, ?Project Description.?

Agency's Comments

Thanks for the good suggestion. Please see the updated Project Summary section in the revised PIF. The following narrative has been integrated: 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.

[response to comment received on **May 11, 2026**]

Thank you for the comment. Please find the revised Project Summary within the word limit. (response to comment received on **February 17, 2026**)

3 Indicative Project Overview

3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?

b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

February 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 10, 2026

a) Yes

b) No. There are currently no clearly articulated outcomes, outputs, or causal pathways demonstrating how the project will generate the GEBs reflected under sub-indicator 1.2 - 541,105 hectares of terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness. Strengthening the results framework to clearly link proposed interventions with measurable improvements in protected area management effectiveness would be necessary to justify this target.

Agency's Comments

a) Thank you.

b) Thank you for this relevant comment. Kindly see revised (i) Indicative Project Overview (ii) Theory of Change and (iii) elaboration against Sub-indicator 1.2 where the target has been revised accordingly to focus on Ichkeul National Park (12,600 ha) as this is the main location of the project's actions within the timeframe of the project. Section B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION has been strengthened to clearly link expected results (outcomes and outputs) to improvements in protected area management. The identification of restoration opportunities and interventions that contribute to protected area management (component 2), as well as strengthened stakeholder capacities regarding protected area management effectiveness (component 1) will lead to on-the-ground action that will directly improve the governance, management and outcomes of the park. Furthermore, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system will be strengthened by integrating the IUCN Green List Standard to enhance management effectiveness of protected areas (component 4). However, the approach and learnings of the project will be integrated into policy frameworks to enable further replication and strengthened protected area management through systemic restoration beyond the Ickkeul National Park (component 3).

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Cleared.

February 10, 2026

It is noted that the PIF provides gender-responsive framing, KM and M&E frame frameworks, however, the PIF is requested to specify

(1) for KM: target audiences for knowledge products, dissemination channels, and concrete mechanisms to feed lessons into national policy and replication (e.g., integration into national restoration programs) (see more detailed comment in 5.3, d)).

(2) on Gender: envisage detailed Gender Analysis and Action Plan development.

(3) on M&E: confirm baselines, data collection responsibilities, and methodologies for each core indicator; clarify any remote-sensing/field survey approaches to be utilized.

Agency's Comments

(1) Kindly see revised narrative of Output 3.1.1 under section B, where the identification of target audiences, dissemination channels and mechanisms for informing decision-making have been integrated as actions. The integration into institutional frameworks has also been highlighted (i) under the section 'Knowledge Management and Learning' within the project description, theory of change section; (ii) in Outcome 3.2 - Policy and institutional integration of restoration and nature-based solutions.

(2) Many thanks. A detailed gender analysis is now envisaged as part of PPG phase to ensure that stakeholder gender-specific roles, challenges and needs regarding restoration in the Ichkeul watershed are identified and understood. Based on the gender analysis, Activity 1.1.1.B also envisages the creation of a Gender Action Plan (GAP) outlining strategies to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all relevant stages of the project and that

potential opportunities for gender-responsive approaches are identified, measured and budgeted.

3) Thank you for raising this important point. Please find the revised narrative for Output 4.1.1: "M&E plan is developed and implemented, including PIRs, MTR, and Technical evaluation?, where the establishment of baselines, methodologies, data collection responsibilities, and targets for each core indicator have been integrated, including the approaches envisaged to collect the necessary information.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?

b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Addressed. Cleared.

February 10, 2026

a) Yes, as they are presented now (see comments above).

b) GEF resources allocated to PMC represents 9.1% while co-financing resources allocated to PMC only represents 7.6%. For a co-financing amount of \$6,500,000, 9.1% will be \$591,000. Please amend.

	Sub Total (\$)	1,636,630.00	6,500,000.00
Project Management Cost (PMC)			
	GET	149,862.00	500,000.00
	Sub Total(\$)	149,862.00	500,000.00
	Total Project Cost(\$)	1,786,492.00	7,000,000.00

Agency's Comments

a) Thank you.

b) Please see the revised Indicative Project Overview table, where the co-financing for PMC has been increased to USD 591,000. The total co-financing amount has been adjusted accordingly.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

4 Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?

b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Cleared.

February 10, 2026

a) Yes

b) Yes

Agency's Comments

Thank you.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?

b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?

c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Addressed. Cleared.

February 17, 2026

a) Yes

b) It is not clear how the project ensures resilience to future changes in the drivers of land degradation. While individual capacity-building is proposed, training alone is unlikely to generate lasting impact without corresponding changes in policies, institutional mandates, operational procedures, and incentive structures. Trained individuals may be unable to apply their knowledge if systemic constraints persist, and staff turnover or shifting priorities could further undermine sustainability. The project should clarify how capacity development is embedded within institutional frameworks, budgets, and incentives to ensure continuity, ownership, and durable outcomes beyond individual-level interventions.

c) There are other relevant projects in the Bizerte lagoon and Ichkeul lake that are GEF or partners financed. Please include information.

d) Stakeholder Engagement and their roles:

(1) We noted that stakeholders consulted include ministries, CRDA Bizerte, CSOs, academia; participatory processes embedded; and Component 1 builds engagement capacity. Make sure that the SEP specifies the operational roles of CSOs, GDAs/producer groups, CRDA Bizerte, local authorities and local communities in implementation and monitoring; include capacity-building plans.

(2) While the PIF suggests that public-private strategic partnerships and strengthened capacity to engage donors are envisaged to mobilize financing for Restoration Plan implementation, the approach remains insufficiently specified. It would be helpful to clarify which categories of private actors are being targeted (e.g., processors, buyers, financial institutions, or impact investors) and the partnership models envisaged (such as value-chain agreements, payment for ecosystem services schemes, or blended finance mechanisms). In addition, the proposal should indicate whether there are any existing letters of interest, preliminary agreements, or indicative commitments from potential partners to demonstrate feasibility and readiness for implementation.

Agency's Comments

a) Thanks.

b) Many thanks for this point:

The project will strengthen resilience to future land degradation by embedding its lessons into Tunisia's policies and institutions. A new outcome (Outcome 3.2 - Policy and institutional integration of restoration and nature-based solutions) has been added to properly address this comment. Evidence from REWI will be distilled into concise, decision-maker-oriented products (policy briefs, technical notes, guidelines) on gender-inclusive park management, ROAM-based restoration planning, and gender-responsive support schemes. These will inform revisions to the Code Forestier and the Public-Private Partnership Law (Loi n°2015-49), as well as related mandates, procedures, and incentives for land degradation neutrality, watershed and protected area management, climate action, and green livelihoods. Institutionalizing these adaptive, evidence-based approaches will enable Tunisian authorities to respond to evolving pressures on land and ecosystems and enhance long-term resilience.

c) In total, six relevant projects were identified and included in the PIF section
? Complementarity and synergy with past or ongoing project? with a description of their objectives and the possible links with the proposed REWI project:

- ? GEF Project: Bizerte Lake environmental project lagoon and marine depollution GEF Project: Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security
- ? GEF Project: Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security
- ? GCF project: National Adaptation Plan: Advancing risk-informed development and land-use planning in Tunisia
- ? Projet de Développement Agricole Intégral de Ghazala, Joumine Sejnene (Financed by the Saudi Development Fund)

- ? Projet de Promotion de l'Agroforesterie et Restauration des Paysages Forestiers d'grad's (PARFD) R'gions de B'ja, Siliana et Bizerte (Financed by the African Development Bank Project)
- ? Programme d'adaptation au changement climatique des territoires vuln'rables de Tunisie ? PACTE (Financed by French Development Agency)

d)

(1).Outputs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 are specifically devoted to capacity building, including local communities and CSOs. The stakeholder involvement and benefit section has been updated to specify that at PPG stage, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be developed to outline how key stakeholders will be involved, including their operational roles throughout project implementation, and capacity building to support these roles.

(2). The targeted categories of private sector actors are:

- i. Small agribusiness enterprises, farmers, and sustainable tourism operators, who could contribute to restoration efforts, adopt the Nature-based Solutions promoted by the project and support the rehabilitation of buffer zones protecting the Ichkeul National Park, including beyond the project's duration; and
- ii. medium-sized and large private companies, which will be encouraged to finance and implement the restoration of forest areas degraded by recurrent fires as part of their carbon offsetting and corporate climate strategies.

Further explanations are provided in the PIF section 'Stakeholder involvement and benefits'.

These two categories will be further engaged during the PPG phase.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5 B. Project Description

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

May 11, 2026

Addressed. Cleared.

February 17, 2026

a)-b) There are no clearly articulated outcomes or activities that would credibly generate results under indicator 1.2 or indicator 11. The current design does not demonstrate a logical pathway linking proposed interventions to measurable improvements reflected in these indicators. As presented, the results chain lacks clarity on how outputs translate into outcomes and ultimately into the targeted GEBs. The Theory of Change should therefore be revisited at

the PIF stage to clearly define causal pathways, assumptions, and enabling conditions, ensuring that proposed activities are explicitly aligned with and capable of delivering results under the relevant indicators.

Agency's Comments

a) b) Thank you for this helpful comments. The outputs and outcomes in the Theory of Change section have been carefully revised to provide greater clarity on how outputs will lead to outcomes and, ultimately, to GEBs. The updated outcomes and outputs have strengthened the causal pathways that will lead to indicators 1.2 and 11. Regarding Indicator 1.2, the target number has been updated, and the narrative of the Theory of Change now includes a coherent logic linking restoration action to enhanced protected area management within the Ichkeul National Park. Component 1 focuses on building capacities on protected area management so that stakeholders are equipped with the necessary knowledge to identify key restoration opportunities for enhancing protected area effectiveness using the IUCN Green List Standard as a framework. In addition, component 2 now includes the use of the IUCN Green List Standards to identify and design interventions that contribute towards good governance, effective management and successful outcomes within the National Park. Finally, component 4 envisages the use of the IUCN Green List indicators to evaluate progress.

Kindly see revised elaboration of **indicator 11** with below updates: (i) The project will deliver direct benefits to individuals, including the park managers and technicians of the Ichkeul national park, as well as local communities and CSOs, receiving capacity building in science based and participatory restoration planning, implementation and funding that contributes to protected area management effectiveness (e.g, Outcome 1.1, Output 2.1.1, Activity 2.2.1C, Activity 3.1.2.B). This number is estimated to be from 450-600 people. As clarified in the PIF section: "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." In addition, the project will also bring direct benefits to around 150 - 200 people that are engaged in paid workdays, participatory monitoring, site selection, and co-management committees for the NbS pilot projects implemented under Output 2.2.2. This brings the target number of direct beneficiaries at the PIF stage to 600 - 800 people.

Beyond this, the project will bring indirect benefits to a number of stakeholders including family members of direct beneficiaries, which are calculated to be around 5,000 - 8,000 people based on a household multiplier of 5-6 people per household and residents of adjacent communities who benefit from improved ecosystem services during the project period. Finally, the project will also deliver indirect benefits in the longer term to the total population of the Ichkeul watershed (165,752 people). As now stated in the PIF section: "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." Detailed numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries will be provided at PPG stage based on a baseline socio-economic survey to profile the target population and a refined methodology for evaluating the impact of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the projects disaggregated by gender. This will build on relevant ongoing projects such as the *Projet de Promotion de l'Agroforesterie et Restauration des Paysages Forestiers d'grad's (PARFD) R'gions de B'ja, Siliana et Bizerte*.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat's Comments

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments

Thank you.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?

b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).

c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area

d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

a) The description of the Implementation Arrangements currently leads to confusion. The Implementing Agency is expected to perform an oversight and supervisory role, in accordance with GEF policy, rather than undertake direct project execution. The capacities of the identified executing partners must be formally assessed to determine whether they meet the required standards to serve as executing entities during PPG phase. If they are found not to meet these standards, the Implementing Agency should identify and engage an alternative executing partner with the necessary technical, fiduciary, and operational capacity. It should also be noted that there are no exceptional circumstances in Tunisia that would justify granting the Implementing Agency a waiver to directly execute the project. The current context does not meet the criteria under which such an arrangement would be considered. Please refer to Annex 7 of the Guidelines of the Project and Program Cycle Policy for further clarification on roles, responsibilities, and the conditions under which exceptions may be granted. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2025-10/GEF_C.70_Inf.18_Guidelines_Project_Program_Cycle_Policy_1_0.pdf

d) KM and scaling: The PIF provided an approach for KM: plan development, integration of traditional knowledge, knowledge-sharing platforms, pilots as living labs. Please, clearly identify target audiences for knowledge products, dissemination channels, and concrete mechanisms to feed lessons into national policy and replication (e.g., integration into national restoration programs)

Agency's Comments

a) After consultation with OFP, the narrative of the implementation arrangement has been updated in the PIF for kind review. IUCN will serve as GEF Agency to perform an oversight and supervisory role. DGF has confirmed its capacity to act as the lead executing agency for the project execution, providing the main project coordination at national level. CRDA Bizerte will be the co-executing agency, responsible for conducting direct execution. CSOs, GDAs/producer groups, local authorities and local communities will be acting as technical partners /service providers during project implementation.

d) Kindly see the revised narrative of Output 3.1.1 under section B, where the identification of target audiences, dissemination channels, and mechanisms for informing decision-making have been integrated as actions. The integration into institutional frameworks has also been highlighted (i) under the section 'Knowledge Management and Learning' within the project description, theory of change section; (ii) in Outcome 3.2 - Policy and institutional integration of restoration and nature-based solutions.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

a) - b) - not fully. Please see the GEB related comments above.

Agency's Comments

Thank you. Please see IA's response to the above comment on Section 5.1 Theory of Change.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's CommentsWell noted with thanks.

5.6 RISKS

a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category?

b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?

c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately screened and rated at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

a)-c) Cleared.

The identification of indigenous population groups residing within the park are noted. Also it is noted that the FPIC will be ensured with the identified groups during PPG phase.

February 17, 2026

a) - c)

We note that IUCN attached Preliminary ESMS Screening, and an overall ESS risk is classified as Moderate. To effective implementation of the park management particularly on Component 1, and 2, it is critical to have strong engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities including local pastoralists living in or using natural resources in the project areas, in northeast Tunisia, the Ichkeul watershed encompasses the UNESCO World Heritage Ichkeul National Park.

1. Please provide further detailed information about Indigenous Peoples around the project areas including literature reviews and interviews to local Indigenous Peoples experts and/or indigenous peoples groups. Preliminary ESMS Screening said that ?there are some reports of indigenous populations residing within the park? (page 2). The information of Indigenous Peoples and local communities around the project areas is critically important to ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) during PPG if Indigenous Peoples are living in or using natural resources in the project areas (there won't be enough time to obtain FPIC if even basic information is not available).
2. Please also clarify whether consultations with Indigenous Peoples and local communities including pastoralist living in or using natural resources around the project areas were conducted during the project concept (PIF) preparation stage, particularly Component 1, and 2. How the results of consultations were integrated into the project concept (PIF)?
3. Please ensure obtaining FPIC from Indigenous Peoples about project design during PPG and throughout the project implementation including monitoring.
4. Please ensure recognizing Indigenous Peoples and local communities not only as beneficiaries, but also as partners of the project governance including the project steering committee.
5. Please consider integrating Indigenous Peoples and local communities? governance, traditional and local knowledge, capacity building and ensuring security of land tenure as a part of project activities, particularly in Component 1, and 2 (not just survey of land tenure).
6. Please also consider including integration of 1) Indigenous Peoples and local communities 1-1. governance, 1-2. traditional and local knowledge, 1-3. capacity building, and 1-4. ensuring security of land tenure and 2) number of Indigenous Peoples beneficiaries as monitoring indicators during PPG.

7. Preliminary ESMS Screening said that environmental and social risk as Moderate. Please make the environmental and social risk in the Key Risk Table consistent with Preliminary ESMS Screening (page 28). (The rating under the Environmental and Social risk category (currently low) should be the same as the rating under the key risk table, Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk, as per the GEF risk appetite GEF/C.66/13).

Agency's Comments

1. Thanks for your comment. Further information on local communities has been added to Section A. Project Rationale as follows: *"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. 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."* (ii) and the narrative has been integrated under section B. Project Description section as follows: *"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"*. Also, kindly see the revised paragraphs under the Section *Stakeholder involvement and benefits*. Further consultation and interviews with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken at the PPG stage as a supplement and also as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Based on conducted national consultations and a literature review, while no indigenous peoples are formally recognised in Tunisia, the Ichkeul watershed is home to a range of local communities that benefit from the rich natural resources in the area. The IA will provide a detailed ESS Screening Report at PPG stage.

2. Details about the consultation with key stakeholders are inserted in the PIF section *"Stakeholder involvement and benefits"*. Note of the main consultation meetings organised are attached as Annex for kind review.

Consultation with local communities in the project design stage (PIF level): The consultation covered 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. Consultation with Stakeholders during the PIF preparation:

3. Kindly see the revised PIF section *"Stakeholder involvement and benefits"*. The PIF envisages the obtention of FPIC at the project design phase during PPG, as well as throughout the project implementation including monitoring.

4. 1. Kindly see revised TOC narrative where clearly states that local communities are not only seen as beneficiaries, but also as partners of the project governance and decision-making. Under the section on *"stakeholder involvement and benefits"* the participation of local

communities is envisaged in project governance structures including the project steering committee, community coordination platforms and participatory monitoring groups.

5. The integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into project activities is now included under the section on stakeholder engagement and benefits. 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). Kindly see revised narrative of Output 2.1.2 and 2.2.2

6. Kindly see revised narrative of output 4.1.1. where monitoring indicators on governance, TEK, capacity building, security and land tenure and local community beneficiaries has been added accordingly. Also, we confirm at PPG stage, further integration will be achieved via proper consultations with identified specific activities and sub activities: integration of 1) Indigenous Peoples and local communities 1-1. governance, 1-2. traditional and local knowledge, 1-3. capacity building, and 1-4. ensuring security of land tenure and 2) number of Indigenous Peoples beneficiaries as monitoring indicators.

7. Please see the updated Risks to project preparation and implementation Table from the revised PIF

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

5.7 Qualitative assessment

a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?

b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?

c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

a) Need to be clarified.

b) ROAM application has potential to be replicated in other parts of Tunisia and globally.

c) No.

Agency's Comments

a) Kindly see revised Section B (*Project description and Theory of Change*) and the subsection on *Transformativeness, Innovativeness and Scalability*.

1. Integrated design: The project adopts a landscape?wide, multi?component approach that links capacity building (Component 1), participatory restoration planning (Component 2), knowledge management and resource mobilization (Component 3), and monitoring & evaluation (Component 4). This ensures that technical, institutional, social, and financial dimensions are addressed simultaneously rather than in isolation. As stated in the PIF: *?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.? (Project*

Rationale). Integration also spans sectors and stakeholders: DGF, CRDA Bizerte, ODESYPANO, GDAs, women's groups, and academic institutions (INAT, INRGREF) are all embedded in project governance and implementation.

2. Durable design: Durability is embedded through multiple mechanisms:

- Capacity building using a Training of Trainers (ToT) approach (Output 1.1.1) to ensure local skills outlast the project.
- A validated Restoration Plan (Output 2.1.2) that serves as a long-term strategic framework for policy and investment.
- Sustainability and exit strategy (Output 3.1.1) that includes capitalization of lessons and replication planning.
- Bankable proposals and partnership building (Output 3.1.2) to attract post-project financing.

3. Transformative ambition

The project shifts from sporadic, isolated interventions to a comprehensive, programme-based approach grounded in ROAM and NbS. It also scales restoration principles beyond Ichkeul:

The project will support the integration of the Ichkeul Watershed Restoration Plan into relevant regulatory and policy frameworks, develop a portfolio of bankable proposals and prepare a plan for replicating the approach to 5 to 7 additional national parks across Tunisia. (Project location section)

This is reinforced in the *Transformativeness* subsection:

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.

b) Thank you. Well noted.

c) Please see revised Section C (*Alignment with GEF's programming strategies and national/regional priorities*) and adjusted narrative under **Outcome 3.2** in Component 3.

The project directly supports and aligns with at least seven national policy frameworks:

1. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2018-2030 ? Priority 5 (?protect and restore biodiversity?).
2. New national strategy for the sustainable development of forests and rangelands (SNDDFP 2026-2050) ? fully aligned with its ?Programme for Landscape Restoration and Conservation.?
3. National Wetland Strategy 2025-2035 ? specifically Objective 4 (balanced passive/active restoration).
4. Forest Law (Code Forestier) ? reinforces functions of DGF/CRDA for forest protection, restoration, and wildfire mitigation.
5. Tunisia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC ? advances adaptation priorities in water, agriculture, ecosystems, and vulnerable groups.
6. UNESCO World Heritage and Ramsar commitments ? improves management effectiveness of Ichkeul National Park.
7. Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets ? through ROAM-based restoration of 1,000 ha.

Regarding active policy integration mechanism (Outcome 3.2): The PIF includes a dedicated outcome for policy integration as follows,

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 PPP law (Loi n°2015-49).

Output 3.2.1 delivers decision-maker-oriented evidence packages (policy briefs, technical notes, guidelines) that translate lessons from ROAM, NbS, gender-inclusive restoration, and protected area management into actionable policy recommendations.

Regarding coordination with ongoing initiatives: The PIF also maps synergies with major ongoing projects (e.g., PACTE, PARFD, GCF NAP, PDAI), ensuring that REWI complements rather than duplicates national efforts and that its restoration approaches are fed into the Master Land Use Plan and National Adaptation Plan processes.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

The project is not sufficiently aligned with LD FA, particularly LD-2.

Agency's Comments

Thanks you for the kind comment. Please see prepared response to above GEF comment on 1. General Project Information / Eligibility- (a) from which IA been suggested ?(1) The project's outcomes and outputs ? particularly the proposed pilot activities ? are strongly aligned with the Land Degradation (LD) focal area, especially LD-2: Reverse land degradation through landscape restoration. We therefore recommend realigning GEF financing to fully support the LD-2-related outputs, applying full flexibility irrespective of the specific source of funds.?. With further guidance, IA stand ready to make adjustment if needed.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

The discussion of the country/region policies, strategies and plans need to be discussed.

Agency's Comments

Thank you. Please see narrative and analysis under the subtitle "National Frameworks" from Section C.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes, the KMGBF targets have been identified.

Agency's Comments Well noted with thanks.

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes

Agency's Comments Well noted with thanks.

7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared. It is noted that extensive consultations and FPIC with the identified indigenous people groups will happen during the PPG stage.

February 17, 2026

Stakeholder Engagement: Agency should better describe the role of different stakeholder related to project objective and components, including the role of civil society and local community-based organizations and groups. In addition, agency should clarify which Indigenous Peoples, local communities and Civil Society Organizations have been consulted in project design stage and plans to engage and consult these in project development to inform the development of project components and activities

Agency's Comments

Thank you for the comment. Further details on the project partners and key stakeholders are inserted in the PIF Section "Stakeholder engagement", including:

- Direction G n rale des For ts (DGF)
- Commissariat R gional au D veloppement Agricole de Bizerte (CRDA-Bizerte)
- Direction G n rale de l'Am nagement et de la Conservation des Terres Agricoles (DGAETA)
- Direction G n rale de la P che et de l'aquaculture (DGPA)
- Office de D veloppement Sylvo-Pastoral du Nord-Ouest (ODESYPARO)
- Office de l' levage et des P turages (OEP)
- Direction G n rale de l'Environnement et de la Qualit  de la Vie (DGEQV)
- Agence Nationale pour la Protection de l'Environnement (ANPE)
- Groupements de D veloppement Agricole (GDAs)

For information on the local communities and CSOs involved in PIF development, please refer to IA's response to the comment above on Risk (point 2).

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments Well noted with Thanks

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments Yes.

Agency's CommentsThank you.

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's CommentsThank you.

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's CommentsThanks

SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Commentsthanks

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Commentsthanks

8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's CommentsWell noted with Thanks

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared for PPG phase.

February 17, 2026

It is noted that the project lists total co-financing US\$7M from Government (US\$4M in-kind), IUCN (US\$1M in-kind), IFAD (US\$0.5M in-kind), AFD (US\$1M in-kind), Saudi funding (US\$0.5M equity). Please note that the co-financing letters to be provided/updated at CEO approval. Make sure co-financing letters indicate any conditions or timelines associated with each source.

Agency's Comments

Well noted with thanks. The final co-financing amount will be further confirmed with key stakeholders at the PPG stage, using issued co-financing letters.

(responses to comments received on **February 17, 2026**)

Annex B: Endorsements

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country? (ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments Thank you.

Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's Comments Thank you.

Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's CommentsThank you

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's CommentsThank you

Annex C: Project Location

8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's CommentsThank you

Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 17, 2026

Yes.

Agency's CommentsThank you

Annex E: Rio Markers

8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

March 2, 2026

Please explain why the Rio Marker for Mitigation is 1 (it was not possible to understand the reasoning for this after reading the project, neither the project is targeting CCM nor indicator 6 has any value).

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS ⓘ

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Significant Objective 1	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

Agency's Comments

Thank you for flagging this out. Corrections have been made.

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

May 12, 2026

Cleared.

February 10, 2026

YES.

Agency's Comments thank you

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments thank you

9 GEFSEC Decision

9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

May 13, 2026

All comments have been addressed. The project is recommended to be cleared for PPG phase.

May 12, 2026

Please see the comment in Section 2: "The project summary reads good. Could you please add the projected amount of GEBs to be generated, please."

February 17, 2026

Not yet.

Agency's Comments Well noted.

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval

Secretariat's Comments

February 17, 2026

(1) The project list total co-financing US\$7M from Government (US\$4M in-kind), IUCN (US\$1M in-kind), IFAD (US\$0.5M in-kind), AFD (US\$1M in-kind), Saudi funding (US\$0.5M equity). Will co-financing letters to be provided/updated at CEO endorsement? Provide co-financing letters and indicate any conditions or timelines associated with each source.

(2) Please develop a detailed Gender Analysis and Action Plan with concrete, budgeted activities and empowerment indicators (e.g., targets for women's leadership in governance

bodies, access to restoration-related finance/market opportunities, training curricula tailored to women's roles) during the PPG phase

(3) It is critical to have strong engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities including local pastoralists living in or using natural resources in the project areas, in northeast Tunisia, the Ichkeul watershed encompasses the UNESCO World Heritage Ichkeul National Park.

- Please provide further detailed information about Indigenous Peoples around the project areas including literature reviews and interviews to local Indigenous Peoples experts and/or indigenous peoples groups. Preliminary ESMS Screening said that "there are some reports of indigenous populations residing within the park" (page 2). The information of Indigenous Peoples and local communities around the project areas is critically important to ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) during PPG if Indigenous Peoples are living in or using natural resources in the project areas (there won't be enough time to obtain FPIC if even basic information is not available).

- Please ensure obtaining FPIC from Indigenous Peoples about project design during PPG and throughout the project implementation including monitoring. Please ensure recognizing Indigenous Peoples and local communities not only as beneficiaries, but also as partners of the project governance including the project steering committee.

Agency's Comments Thank you. All five comments will be fully considered and addressed at PPG stage and properly reflected in the CEO EA package.

Review Dates

First Review

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

PIF Review

3/4/2026

5/12/2026

Agency Response