

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	9671
Project Name:	Effective Management of Wadi El-Rayan and Qarun Protected Areas
Countr(ies):	Egypt
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW	3
A. Description	3
B. Ratings and Disbursements	3
C. Key Dates	3
II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES	4
A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities	4
B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities	14
C. Stakeholder Engagement	14
D. Gender Equality	15
E. Knowledge Management	16
III: MINOR AMENDMENTS	16
IV: GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES	17
V. ANNEX	18

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Effective Management of Wadi El-Rayan and Qarun Protected Areas

Country

Egypt

GEF ID

9671

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

IUCN Regional Office for West Asia

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

MSP

PIR Submission

9/8/2026

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2026 , Final PIR

Objective

To improve the management effectiveness of the Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qarun protected areas through community involvement and capacity building

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Satisfactory

Development Objective

Highly Satisfactory

Overall risk

Low Risk

Project Financing

1,445,250.00

Cumulative Disbursement

1,206,371.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

12/14/2018

Agency Approval

12/14/2018

Implementation Start

6/20/2019

First Disbursement

9/26/2019

Expected MTR 1/31/2024	Actual MTR 10/1/2023
Expected Completion 12/31/2025	Actual Completion 6/30/2026

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

The rating for the progress of project implementation at the outcome level during the reporting period (July 2025 – June 2026) has been assessed as highly satisfactory, given the project's ability to continue implementing several key activities that have resulted in tangible outcomes. Notably, the management effectiveness of Lake Qaroun and Wadi El Rayan Protected Areas (PAs) has improved, as reflected in the latest METT assessment covering implementation up to 2024. The overall scores have increased for both PAs: Wadi El Rayan PA (WRPA) from 72 to 75 points, and Lake Qaroun PA (LQPA) from 62 to 69 points.

The project's comprehensive approach in enhancing operational capacity by providing management tools, capacity building, enhancing participatory approach and supporting science-based monitoring have resulted in the successful re-listing of Wadi El Hitan on the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas.

It should be noted that the initial listing of 2018 was a first iteration with many action plans, conditions and areas for enhancement. While the re-listing process included an extensive assessment that involved comprehensive revision of the management plan and all documentation relate to the Green List criteria, in addition to field assessment conducted by the evaluators from the Expert Assessment Group for The Green List.

It should also be noted that only two sites from the Middle-East West Asia Region have managed to complete the re-listing requirements, among which was Wadi El Hitan.

Below are the key activities that have led to strengthening the Green List dossier for the successful re-listing of Wadi El Hitan, and which are directly attributed to the project:

- The periodic update and alignment of the management plan with the IUCN Green List Criteria; with enhanced mainstreaming of gender and enhanced mainstreaming of the Green List logic in listing natural values, cultural values and ecosystem services.
- Enhancing the participatory approach and local community inclusion with the establishment and operation of the community advisory committee.
- The establishment and operation of the environmental educational centre in Fayoum.
- Strengthening the management capacity through trainings, management tools (patrol plan), patrolling capacity, restoration plan, monitoring equipment, etc.

Overall risk rating

The overall risk rating for project implementation during the reporting period is assessed as Low, based on the following considerations:

- **Delay in project field initiation due to local approval processes:** The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) has issued the necessary clearance for project implementation, enabling progress at both the outcome and output levels. As a result, many previously identified risks have been significantly reduced.
- **Extension to Compensate Delays:** To compensate for the delays mentioned above and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in line with the decisions of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), the project received its first no-cost extension (NCE), extending the technical closure date to 31 December 2024.
- **Addressing Implementation Gaps:** To address a minor gap in implementation caused by the temporary absence of the EEAA project focal point, high-level support was provided by the CEO of EEAA, including the appointment of a new focal point and resolution of related challenges.
- **Second NCE and Implementation Timeline:** Following the PSC meeting held in Cairo, Egypt, the committee members formally requested a further extension of the project technical implementation period till 31st of December 2025. This extension aims to ensure the completion of all remaining activities, including the full operationalisation of the Environmental and Educational Centre and the completion of landscaping works. The second NCE was agreed upon between the Implementing Agency (IA) and Executing Agency (EA), supported by an amended 2025 workplan and budget.

Main Achievements:

Output 1.1.1: PA management frameworks of Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qaroun PAs developed, including participatory approaches.

Revised Activity 1.1.1.1. Develop, update and implement Protected Area Management Plans and conduct a desk review for Nature Based Solutions (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

NbS report developed and submitted for EEAA. The report included a national and site-specific review of initiatives that have NBS standard elements and could develop into a full NBS.

The project developed and updated the following management plans:

- **The management plans were developed and approved by the EEAA team, and the implementation will be on-going until the end of the management planning period.**
- **Lake Qaroun management plan.**

- **Jabal Qatrani management plan.**

- **Wadi Al Hitan management plan.**

Update the management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for the Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protect Areas to reflect the recent progress and activities of the project implementation covering the period till 2023 year. The overall score for both reserves increased as below:

- **WRPA: Increased from 67 points to 72 points.**

- **LQPA: Increased from 53 points to 62 points.**

Update the management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for the Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protect Areas to reflect the recent progress and activities of the project implementation covering the year 2024. The overall score for both reserves increased as below:

- **WRPA: Increased from 72 points to 75 points.**

- **LQPA: Increased from 62 points to 69 points.**

- **Translation of the following documents from English to Arabic language:**

- **A report on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for WRPA and LQPA and Egypt.**

- **A Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan to coordinate the CEPA objectives, target audiences, methods of delivery, costs, and means for assessing effectiveness of CEPA activities.**

Activity 1.1.1.2: Develop Key Biodiversity Area classifications for WRPA and LQPA (Achieved in the current reporting period)

Identification and assessment of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within Qaroun and Wadi El Rayan Protected Areas were conducted in collaboration with Birdlife International – Africa and their Egyptian partner, Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE).

Through this activity, we conducted rapid flora, fauna, and avifauna field surveys to ascertain the current situation within both reserves and perform a gap assessment identifying data required for the KBA assessment. These surveys supported the development of species conservation plan for the two Protected Areas by providing up-to-date records of species presence/absence during the survey period.

Additionally, a national training workshop was organised for biodiversity experts and Egyptian Protected Area managers. Participants were trained on the Global Guidelines for the KBA assessment and KBA proposal forms.

The activity also involved preparing a tentative list for a National Coordination Group (NCG). The NCG will support the KBA assessment for the two protected areas, in addition to national scale assessments. Some workshop participants were nominated to the Technical and Scientific Committee established under Activity 1.1.1.8.

Activity 1.1.1.3: Develop and implement habitat and species conservation plans (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

A species conservation plan for the Fennec Fox and the Dorcas Gazelle in both Wadi El Rayan and Lake Quarun Protected areas were successfully developed.

Activity 1.1.1.4: Develop Lake Qaroun ecosystem restoration master plan (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

An ecosystem restoration plan for Lake Qaroun was developed and submitted for the EEAA. The plan was approved by the EEAA, and it formed a basis for the development of a concept note aiming to restore the lake and ensure the project sustainability.

Activity 1.1.1.5: Establish and implement best practice guidelines and manuals (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- Achieved through the Italian Cooperation project.
- A national training workshop on the Key Biodiversity Areas KBA's Global Standard was conducted. This work was coordinated with BirdLife International – Africa and their partner in Egypt, Nature Conservation Egypt, NCE.

Activity 1.1.1.6: Conduct PA staff and community training to conserve biodiversity (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- EEAA staff, including Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun staff, were given trainings and taken on a study tour on Integrated management of protected areas in Jordan.
- A comprehensive training for EEAA field staff, which included topics such as Microsoft Office, computer software/hardware maintenance, Photoshop cc2022, video editing, social media, and training on the English language, levels one, two, and three, was organized, after which the participants' performance was tested and certified.
- A specialised training on the use of ArcGIS was conducted using the equipment and licenses that were previously provided through this project.
- Two of the Protected Area managers attended a conference on the 24th till the 26th of January 2024 in Jordan. The workshop was organised by IUCN ROWA and the Arab Regional Center for World Heritage

ARC-WH. The workshop was held under the title, “Natural and mixed World Heritage Sites in the Arab States: Listing implications and synergies with the IUCN’s Green List.” The PA managers presented a case study and a presentation of their site at the conference as well.

- The project focal point and representative participated in the Sixth steering committee meeting and first consultative workshop to update the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan NBSAP to represent the project and mainstream project results.
- The project focal point (Dr. Shaimaa Taha) attended the CMS COP14 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to present the country’s progress towards this convention, along with presenting the project work and achievements. This will support establishment of a synergies between the conservation action plan with the international priorities.
- A workshop to update the management plan for Wadi El-Hitan site based on the Green List requirements, along with the enhancing gender mainstreaming and alignment with the Green List Standard, was held between the 20th till the 24th of October 2024.
- Training on the Green List gap assessment tool (IBEX Tool) was conducted for the two protected areas (Wadi El-Rayan & Qaroun) to measure their alignment with the Green List standard. The workshop was held from the 10th till the 13th of November 2024.
- A training workshop to enhance the capacity of the rangers and PA’s staff and the NCS team managing the Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protected Areas (PAs) was held to support the implementation of the Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) plan effectively. (Held from the 3rd till the 4th of December 2024).(Achieved in the current reporting period)
- Conduct a cleanup campaign and awareness session in the two protected areas (Wadi ElRayan and Qaroun PA) over two days to enhance environmental awareness about the importance of protected areas while fostering community engagement by involving local communities, civil society organizations, tourism companies, and other stakeholders in conservation activities.
- On the other hand, introduce and promote a new environmental initiative and best practices, particularly in reducing harmful plastic use and promoting sustainable behaviour.
- 106 participants from local community and PAs were trained.
- Conduct a workshop to celebrate the Initiative to Prepare the Nomination Dossier for Fayoum Protected Areas as a Geopark. 48 participants from experts, PA staff and representatives from the Local Community Advisory Committee, Technical and Scientific Committee attended and provided their input during the working group session. (Dated 13th of July 2025).
- 56 local handicraft producers from local community and the socioeconomic projects owners were trained. The workshop explored the local socio-economic context and equipped participants with a practical, easy-to-use marketing strategy. (Dated: 11th of December 2025.)

Activity 1.1.1.7: Develop Green List nomination dossiers (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- The project has initiated the process of the preparation of the IUCN’s Green List nomination process, by preparing the documents and maps needed for the Green List application.

- Communication was initiated with the EEAA, and a workshop and training were done to prepare the EEAA staff (decision-makers and PA staff) for the Green List application process.
- Based on the previous SC meeting conducted, it was agreed that the project will support in renewing the certificate of Wadi al Hitan-AI Wadi El-Rayan protected area certificate as it expired by the end of 2023.
- Workshop to update the management plan for Wadi El-Hitan site based on the Green List requirements, along with enhancing gender mainstreaming and alignment with the Green List Standard. The workshop took place between the 20th till the 24th of October 2024.
- Training on the Green List gap assessment tool (IBEX Tool) was conducted for the two protected areas (Wadi El-Rayan & Qaroun) to measure their alignments with the Green List standard. The workshop took place from the 10th till the 13th of November 2024. (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- Installation of signage across Wadi El-Rayan Protected Area (including Wadi El Hitan), and Lake Qaroun Protected Area (including Jabal Qatrani), was upgraded and installed.
- The project provided technical support for the EEAA/MoE and PA staff for preparing the full Green List dossier and facilitated the EAGL's site visit to assess and verify the Means of Verification. The site visit took place from 29th December 2025 to 1st January 2026.

Activity 1.1.1.8: Establish and operate a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee

- Establishment of the Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) following the official endorsement letter by the EEAA CEO. This committee supports the project in aspects like; PA management planning and management effectiveness, biological monitoring, compliance monitoring, and enforcement, etc.
- The committee provides the EEAA with recommendations and advice on the listing/delisting and status of species in Al-Fayoum Area.
- The 1st Technical and Scientific Committee meeting was conducted after the official establishment of the committee by the EEAA CEO. The meeting was held to present project achievements and included a discussion of the Terms of Reference. (The meeting was held on the 23rd of October 2024).

(Achieved in the current reporting period)

- Conducted the 3rd Technical and Scientific Committee meeting to present the Species Conservation plan for Fennec Fox and the Dorcas Gazelle in both Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun and the updated version for Wadi ElHitan management plan after its alignment with the Green List Standard. (The meeting was held on the 3rd of November 2025).

Output 1.1.2: Field monitoring programs within Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qaroun PAs to assess the conservation status of key ecosystems and threatened and important species will be developed and implemented

Activity 1.1.2.1: Design and implement monitoring and reporting systems for threats and status of ecosystems and species. (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- Implementing monitoring initiatives through the Italian cooperation.

- Also, based on the recent SC meeting, the EEAA Protected Area managers requested equipment for monitoring, and the procurement of priority equipment to support monitoring. (Achieved in the current reporting period)

- Purchasing three GPS devices to support monitoring activities in the two protected areas.

Activity 1.1.2.2: Develop and implement a compliance monitoring and enforcement system (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- A patrolling and law enforcement plan was developed, comprehensive maintenance of vehicles, boats and cars used for patrolling was conducted, uniforms for patrolling staff to have a unified identity was provided.

Activity 1.1.2.3: Establish and facilitate a PA biodiversity information management unit (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- Hardware and GIS and remote sensing software were secured for the information management unit.

- High accuracy Satellite imagery was purchased to the dynamic parts of the protected area.

- A comprehensive development needs assessment for the information management unit was conducted, including hardware, software and training needs, in addition to developing an organisational structure for the unit.

- The project procured all needed software and hardware that were identified as a priority to establish the unit, and the staff are now being provided with extensive comprehensive GIS training.

- Hardware like High tech computers/workstations, servers and internet infra structure was procured.

- Advanced ESRI GIS licenses and remote sensing software licenses were procured for the unit.

- Organising a specialised training on the use of the computer programs ArcGIS for EEAA field staff, which was done on location using the equipment and licensed programs that were previously provided through this project.

- Along with a Comprehensive GIS training.

Output 2.1.1: Programmes for community participatory planning and involvement in PA management developed and implemented at the targeted PA sites.

Activity 2.1.1.1: Develop and implement a Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) plan (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- A Communication, Education and Public Awareness plan (CEPA) was developed by the project in coordination with CEDARE and with a wide public participation of local communities in AlFayoum area.

- Now the CEPA Plan was developed and approved.

- Prepared several visibility materials for the project to be distributed in the events and official opening for the Educational and Environmental Centre. This includes:

- 3D models for both protected areas.

- 3D pop-up brochures highlighting the important information about the protected areas and their location.
- Desert scarf, water bottle, notebook and pin, tote bags. (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- IUCN and the EEAA celebrated the World Environmental Day in one of the protected areas and launched the initiative of EEAA to start preparing the GeoPark dossier for AlFayoum protected areas.
- Conducted a cleanup campaign in the two protected areas (Wadi ElRayan and Qaroun PA) over two days to enhance environmental awareness about the importance of protected areas while fostering community engagement by involving local communities, civil society organizations, tourism companies, and other stakeholders in conservation activities.
- On the other hand, introduce and promote new environmental initiatives and best practices, particularly in reducing harmful plastic use and promoting sustainable behaviour.

Activity 2.1.1.2: Establish and operate a community environmental education centre (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- An expert assessment of the land adjacent to the management building on Lake Qaroun Protected Area, to solve the soil salinity problem and prepare the land for planting and landscaping work for the space.
- Report was finalised, and recommendations were provided which led to the successful implementation of the land solution to be ready for the establishment of the educational centre.
- The Establishment and furnishing of an environmental educational centre in the land adjacent to the management building in the Lake Qaroun Protected Area in Shakshouk. This centre will be used by the Protected Area (PA) authorities and the local communities to showcase their environmental work and activities. (Related to activities under Activity 2.1.1.3).
- The renovation work and furnishing of the management building for Lake Qaroun Protected Area was completed successfully and handed to the PA Management.
- Now, the management building fully operational and renovated. (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- The additional landscaping works were completed at the Environmental Education Centre site in Shakshouk, Al Fayoum, enhancing the overall appearance and functionality of the area surrounding the centre.
- A ceremony was organized on 21st of December 2025 to celebrate the project's achievements and mark the official opening of the Environmental Education Centre.

Activity 2.1.1.3: Establish and facilitate a Community Advisory Committee (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- Successful establishment of a local community advisory committee – Wadi El Rayan & Qaroun protected area through an official endorsement letter from the EEAA CEO.
- The committee will provide guidance on a wide range of issues affecting PA management and the protection of species and their habitats.

- Conducted the 1st local community advisory committee meeting – Wadi El Rayan & Qaroun protected area following the official endorsement letter from the EEAA CEO.
- The committee will guide on a wide range of issues affecting PA management and the protection of species and their habitats.
- Date of the meeting was the 7th of July 2024.
- Conducted the 2nd local community advisory committee meeting – Wadi El Rayan & Qaroun protected area, in which the NGO's in Fayoum presented their work to the committee members and what they have done in these two reserves so far.
- Date of the meeting was the 8th of August 2024.
- Conducted the 3rd Local Community Advisory Committee meeting to present the recent work on the establishment of the Educational and Awareness Centre and its anticipated role.

Activity 2.1.1.4: Support community-based eco-tourism infrastructure developments, services, product development and product sales (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- The project identified the scope of eco-tourism infrastructure development in Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun.
- A subcontract was awarded to a national NGO to implement the planned activities.
- The project has already installed a 25-kW solar power system to serve the Jabal Qatrani site within Lake Qaroun.
- Protected Areas (PAs) and Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) field staff at Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun were provided with uniforms to enhance their professional image, visibility, and effectiveness in law enforcement, surveillance, and eco-guiding activities (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- The upgrade of the post signs in Wadi ElRayan, Wadi ElHitan site and Qaroun protected areas.

Output 2.1.2: Controls and monitoring programmes to conserve ecosystem services and reduce overharvesting by local communities within Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qaroun PAs developed and implemented.

Activity 2.1.2.1: Develop and implement resource-use protocols and agreements. (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- A desk revision and discussion of the needed best practice guidelines, and manuals, was conducted to identify priority guidelines and manuals to be developed.
- Under the Italian Cooperation project, these manuals are already prepared and could be considered as a deliverable (co-financing).
- This guideline is called “Environmental monitoring guide for Protected Areas in Egypt with an application to both Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun”.

- Establishment of a local community advisory committee for Wadi El Rayan & Qaroun protected area through an official endorsement letter from the EEAA CEO. (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- IUCN prepared a report documenting all the processes within the EEAA regarding the dispute Resolution and Sustainable Resource Use in Wadi El-Rayan and Qaroun Protected Areas.

Activity 2.1.2.2: Establish a resource user permit system (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- The development of the patrolling plan has significantly improved the efficiency and sustainability of resource management within the protected area.
- It has also strengthened the surveillance capacity of field teams, increased public awareness, contributed to a rise in visitor numbers, and supported the monitoring of water quality in Lake Qaroun.
- An information management unit for the protected areas was established through a needs assessment and the procurement of GIS software and datasets to support remote sensing and GIS analyses. (Achieved in the current reporting period)
- IUCN prepared a report documenting all the processes within the EEAA regarding the dispute Resolution and Sustainable Resource Use in Wadi El-Rayan and Qaroun Protected Areas.

Additional Activity 2.1.2.3: Developing best practice demonstration sites. Extended activity: Develop and implement site Management Plan for Qatrani (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- A management plan for Jabal Qatrani were developed and approved by the EEAA.
- Solar panels were installed to support operation at the site.
- EEAA has endorsed and are implementing the plans.

Activity 2.1.2.4: Undertake conflict resolution processes with resource users. (Achieved in the previous reporting period)

- Developing an enforcement plan.
- Enhancing patrolling by maintaining vehicles used in patrolling.
- Establishment of the Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) following the official endorsement letter by the EEAA CEO.
- Conducting a cleanup campaign in the two protected areas (Wadi ElRayan and Qaroun PA) over two days to enhance environmental awareness about the importance of protected areas while fostering community engagement by involving local communities, civil society organizations, tourism companies, and other stakeholders in conservation activities.
- On the other hand, introduce and promote new environmental initiatives and best practices, particularly in reducing harmful plastic use and promoting sustainable behaviour.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

- Local Vendor allocation, and high cost because of the remoteness of the PAs.
- Fluctuation of the currency exchange rate between Egyptian pound and USD, which resulted in a higher price for everything purchased in Egypt.
- Communication; internet and phone coverage in Fayoum area.
- The simplicity of the rural areas surrounding/containing protected areas, resulting in absence of taken-as-default technology.
- Following the Steering Committee meeting, the committee requested an official project extension to extend the project duration for one year (till the end of December 2025, technical implementation). The process for extension took up to three months, and during this time, the majority of these planned activities were shifted.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder participation includes government, NGOs and academic organizations, and communities and businesses. The roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders in project implementation are described as follows:

Government, this includes:

- Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA): responsible for coordination with other line ministries and in developing project activities.
- Nature Conservation Sector (NCS): responsible for designing project activities related to policy and regulatory changes.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Water Resources & Irrigation, Tourism Department: responsible for ensuring activities align with national priorities and investments and to offer best management practices for conservation and pollution prevention.
- Fayoum Governor and Governorate: responsible for approving the protocols and instruments developed under the project and to provide guidance on the development of best management practices, protocols and regulations.
- Water and Environmental Police and Security Department: responsible for providing technical information and experience in compliance enforcement and monitoring.
- NGOs and Academic Organizations, these include:
 - o Academic institutions: to assist in project design and implementation through research.
 - o IUCN ROWA: to implement activities and coordinate with project partners.
 - o UN Environment Programme: to ensure synergies between biodiversity related MEAs and SDGs at both national and PA's levels and to enhance capacity building.
 - o Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE): to support the two PAs in building the capacities of park management in Earth Observation (EO), modelling and in data exploitation.
 - o Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE): to provide advice on approaches to conservation.
 - o Fayoum Environmental Centre: to develop skills of community (women & youth) through training and environmental awareness.
 - o Message (Resala): to engage youth.

- o RAED NGO: To support delivering awareness and educational material, and support developing the environmental educational centre
- o Local communities and resource users, private businesses and secondary stakeholders: These stakeholders are considered important users of natural resources and are considered key partners in finding solutions to issues such as irrigation, runoff, pollution, grazing and others.

However, for the year 2025 till end of June 2026 the project management team was able to engage stakeholders in many important activities, including the following:

- The Technical and Scientific Committee was officially established following the CEO's endorsement. The Committee comprises experts and researchers from a range of institutions, including universities, to provide scientific and technical support for protected area management.
- The Local Community Advisory Committee for Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protected Areas was officially established following the CEO's endorsement. The Committee provides guidance on a wide range of issues related to protected area management and the conservation of species and their habitats.
- A Steering Committee meeting was held in Egypt on 15 December 2024 to review project progress, endorse the workplan, agree on future priorities, and discuss complementary funding opportunities. Particular attention was given to the project's exit strategy, including opportunities to sustain outcomes through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and ecosystem restoration initiatives. All Steering Committee members representing the participating organisations attended the meeting.
- Progress was made towards the official establishment of the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) National Coordination Group (NCG), which will comprise experts from government institutions, research centres, and other stakeholder organisations to support KBA assessments for Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun, as well as other protected areas across Egypt.
- One of the key lessons highlighted by protected area managers was that the establishment of the Local Community Advisory Committee significantly strengthened communication and coordination between government authorities and local communities.
- A two-day clean-up campaign was conducted in Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protected Areas to raise environmental awareness about the importance of protected areas while promoting community engagement through the participation of local communities, civil society organisations, tourism companies, and other stakeholders. The campaign also promoted environmental best practices, particularly reducing plastic pollution and encouraging more sustainable behaviours.
- World Environment Day was celebrated in one of the protected areas through the launch of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) initiative to begin preparing the UNESCO Global Geopark nomination dossier for the Fayoum Protected Areas.
- Signage was upgraded and installed throughout Wadi El Rayan Protected Area (including Wadi El Hitan) and Lake Qaroun Protected Area (including Jabal Qatrani) to improve visitor guidance and site management.
- The project supported the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), the Ministry of Environment (MoE), and protected area staff in preparing for the field evaluation by the Expert Assessment Group for the IUCN Green List (EAGL) to verify the Means of Verification (MoVs). The field visit took place from 29 December 2025 to 1 January 2026.

D. Gender Equality

The project ensured that gender considerations were systematically integrated across all activities, moving beyond quantitative participation toward meaningful inclusion and influence in decision-making processes.

Women held key leadership and decision-making roles throughout project implementation. These included the Project Manager, the Project Assistant (during the first two years), the EEAA GEF Deputy Focal Point, and the EEAA Project Focal Point—both members of the Project Steering Committee—as well as the Chair of the EEAA Engineering Committee overseeing major renovation works. Representation data from project governance structures also reflects strong female participation, including the Local Community Advisory Committee (8 Women, 20 Men) and the Technical and Scientific Committee (6 Women, 17 Men).

Through the Green List application process for Wadi El-Hitan GL site, we conducted a session for both the PA managers and the local community advisory committee on how to mainstream gender aspects in the PA management. Currently, the management plan for Wadi El-Hitan Green List is more gender sensitive and aligned with the GL Standard (Gender criteria).

E. Knowledge Management

Capturing and sharing knowledge and lessons learned will constitute an important element of the project and an essential way to ensure sustainability and replicability of project achievements. The following reports and knowledge products were developed during the reporting period:

- A report on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for WRPA and LQPA and Egypt (translated to Arabic language as well).
- A Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan to coordinate the CEPA objectives, target audiences, methods of delivery, costs, and means for assessing effectiveness of CEPA activities. (translated to Arabic language as well).
- Lake Qaroun PA management plan.
- Jabal Qatrani site management plan.
- Wadi Al-Hitan management plan.
- Lake Qaroun restoration plan.
- Visitor guide for Wadi El Rayan Protected area in both English and Arabic.
- Rapid field surveys report for Fauna, Flora and Avi-Fauna
- Species conservation action plan for the Dorcas gazelle and Fennec fox.
- Assessment was conducted for the two protected areas (Wadi El-Rayan & Qaroun) on the Green List gap assessment tool (IBEX Tool) to measure their alignments with the Green List standard.
- The species conservation planning for the Fennec Fox and the Dorcas Gazelle in both Wadi El Rayan and Lake Qaroun Protected areas.
- Declaring Wadi Al-Hitan as a Green List on the 24th of April 2026 and the certificate was renewed till 2031.
- Finalisation of the KBA package (proposals) for the assessment of the Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qaroun

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	

Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	
Implementation Schedule	Minor amendments - A No cost extension up to 31 Dec 2026 was concluded
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Lake Qarun PA	29.45979	30.59148	

Location Description:

Lake Qarun PA

Activity Description:

PA management effectiveness

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Wadi El Rayan	29.15	30.41667	

Location Description:

Wadi El Rayan

Activity Description:

PA management

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category M and E Document	Title 9671_PIR_UNEP_2026
Document Category M and E Document	Title Wadi Al-Hitan_EGY_IUCN GL Certificate Apr2026
Document Category M and E Document	Title Socioeconomic_training_workshop
Document Category M and E Document	Title Picture1_Project_location_map
Document Category M and E Document	Title Conflict_Resolution_report_Final_14Jan2026
Document Category M and E Document	Title CEPA - WED celebration - Fayoum Geopark_Final
Document Category M and E Document	Title CEPA - Clean-up campaign report