

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Project ID: | 10685 |
| Project Name: | Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean |
| Countr(ies): | Regional |
| Implementing Agency: | CI |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW3

A. Description3

B. Ratings and Disbursements3

C. Key Dates3

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES4

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities4

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities5

C. Stakeholder Engagement5

D. Gender Equality6

E. Knowledge Management6

III: MINOR AMENDMENTS8

IV: GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES9

V. ANNEX11

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean

Country

Regional

GEF ID

10685

Implementing Agency

CI

Executing Entity

The MedFund and the MedPAN

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/9/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 2nd PIR

Objective

Strong, effective, and sustainable management of Mediterranean MPAs to address global changes and to provide long-term socio-ecological benefits in the Mediterranean in a post COVID recovery context.

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Moderately Satisfactory

Development Objective

Satisfactory

Overall risk

Moderate Risk

Project Financing

5,450,000.00

Cumulative Disbursement

4,327,134.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

5/27/2022

Agency Approval

9/6/2024

Implementation Start

9/9/2022

First Disbursement

10/5/2022

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Expected MTR 4/1/2025 | Actual MTR |
| Expected Completion 1/31/2028 | Actual Completion |

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

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

The project “Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean” has been implemented since 2022 to provide comprehensive support to marine protected areas in the six eligible countries. The MedFund aims to provide long-term funding to cover recurrent management costs, ensuring efficient and sustainable resource management. The MedPAN coordinates training, knowledge sharing and policy support for Mediterranean MPAs.

The GEF funding was received and capitalized by The MedFund under a sinking fund managed according to a sustainable investment policy.

To support the MPAs, during FY25, and following 2024 call of interest, 2 MPAs were selected as grantees in Albania. The call for interest of 2025 resulted in 11 applications among them 8 from Albania, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco. The selection process for 2025 is still ongoing and will take place in FY26 Q1_Q2. In the 6 GEF eligible countries, 11 agreements are under implementation and 4 are under preparation or pending signature (Ras Rmel in Tunisia is under preparation, Gouraya (Algeria) and AlHoceima and Jebel Moussa (Morocco) are pending signatures). Grantees benefit from technical and financial support for core management activities such as surveillance, governance, scientific monitoring, awareness raising, and small equipment.

Progress is monitored through regular technical meetings, but also through a dedicated tool with annual data collection. MPA managers conduct annual self-assessments and adapt activities as needed using the Management Effectiveness Assessment tool (MEA). Each MPA selects three conservation targets (species or habitats) for focused management and monitoring. A comprehensive dashboard with all collected data informs The MedFund’s decision-making process.

In terms of training for MPA managers, a comprehensive Training Needs Assessment (TNA) has been developed targeting the three main categories of stakeholders considered in the six project countries (MPA management bodies, Organizations co-managing an MPA and Government agencies and local authorities responsible for MPAs). Three trainings have been developed and implemented since the start of the project. A new training is under development and one training will be repeated in 2024. In addition, two Regional experience sharing workshops have been organized, one in Montenegro on MPA management effectiveness in 2022 and one on tourism in MPAs in early 2024 in France. Finally, several outreach materials have been developed and disseminated throughout the MPA community in the Mediterranean and beyond (a toolkit on MPA management, a tool on strong protection and a series of animated videos).

A new web platform has been developed and is operational to better promote the Forum/MPA Roadmap Process and foster voluntary engagements that will strengthen regional and national governance, cooperation, and strategies. This aims to promote MPAs as solutions to address global changes and provide socio-ecological benefits. A Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology has been finalized and is supporting the in-built system of the web platform development. Outreach and communication on these progresses have been done through dedicated events in 2024 (MOW-ODC). In addition, MPA communication and policy tools targeting Mediterranean local stakeholders, including land-based stakeholders, have been developed and disseminated through regional, national and sub-regional networks, to promote benefits and needs of MPAs (One Policy Paper, one institutional and policy video, one new Evaluation Framework for Marine Protected Area Manager Networks).

Regarding Governance and cooperation with other Conservation Trust Funds (CTF), The MedFund has used high-level international events, such as the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) in Monaco and the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC 3) in Nice France in June 2025, to share experience with other regional seas worldwide and meet with decision-makers. These high-level advocacy efforts will continue, as sustained political engagement is crucial for keeping MPAs high on international and national agendas and accelerating administrative procedures.

Risks have been identified and mitigated through strategic measures. The MedFund and MedPAN closely monitor potential changes in national authorities, and ensure close collaboration with the MPA managers.

Regarding the economic and financial risk, the CTF structure helps mitigate risk, the GEF grant has been invested according to a responsible investment policy, with an investment committee overseeing financial performance, ensuring transparency and accountability. Up to June 2025 (FY25), the GEF funds generated cumulatively USD +221K, which will be reinvested to support MPAs.

Funded MPAs are encouraged and trained to develop management skills, business planning and self-funding mechanisms to reduce dependency on the fund. Global climate change poses a risk to MPAs, mitigated by encouraging the sharing of climate change adaptation experiences and incorporating adaptation strategies into MPA management plans.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

Drawing from our joint experience, The MedFund and MedPAN have identified a number of challenges that shaped the effectiveness and sustainability of our work with Mediterranean MPAs. We observed that national MPA authorities often operate with limited budgets and staff. Local NGOs, on the other hand, are operational but need stronger institutional support and legitimacy. This is the reason why the project promotes a co-management approach as a highly effective governance model in the Mediterranean. To effectively establish the co-management model, The MedFund and MedPAN played a critical intermediary role. The MedFund financing agreement served as a key tool to formalize collaboration between authorities and NGOs, who often lack existing partnership frameworks.

We faced one particular challenge with Algeria - a funding agreement has been sent for signing in April 2024 to support Gouraya National Marine Park management and we are still waiting for signing from Algerian authorities. A formal letter has been sent by The Medfund President who is the current Minister of cooperation and foreign affairs from Monaco to the Algerian authorities in this regard early 2025.

Another cross-cutting challenge is the duplication of management effectiveness tools promoted by various Mediterranean and global actors. To ensure a user-friendly, The MedFund Management Effectiveness Assessment tool was developed based on previous existing tools.

We also realized that our role extends beyond financing. Through initiatives such as the Posidonia monitoring programme, we encouraged joint field visits and peer exchanges, helping MPAs learn from one another. However, while data collection is substantial, MPAs lack the capacity to analyze and use it fully, underlining the need for standardized protocols and shared targets. To this point, The MedFund and MedPAN highly encourage collaboration with national research institutes and universities to apply standardized monitoring protocols for the conservation targets evaluation.

On the operational side, we found that a two-step grant process for our annual call of interest —beginning with a simple expression of interest—made our support more accessible and improved the quality of proposals by allowing us to provide tailored guidance. We also keep on working closely with our grantees, offering technical advice, connecting them to experts, and helping improve their financial systems. This trust-based approach built resilience and deepened our understanding of local contexts.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

In each of the six countries national authorities are closely associated with the project activities to foster national-level support and integration of MPA objectives into national policies :

- Albania : 2025 is the first year of The MedFund agreement, second phase (consolidation). A field mission was organized with CI GEF and MedPAN. The mission included meetings with officials of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE), the National

Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA), the Regional Agency of Protected Areas (RAPA). For more details the report of the mission is available.

- Montenegro: Following the regional MedPAN workshop in Montenegro, local stakeholders have been actively involved in project activities. The MedFund now supports 3 of 5 MPAs managers in the country. Two new MPA were created in June 2024: Sopot (3.43 ha) and Dražin vrt (1.34 ha)
- Morocco : In Morocco, the project engages the national authorities along with the national NGOs in two granted MPAs (Al Hoceima and Jebel Moussa). An evaluation mission was conducted in April 2024 to assess project implementation and reinforce governance and stakeholder engagement. As the marine protected areas management authority changed in June 2024, The MedFund transmitted two amendments for signature and is still awaiting feedback to restart the ongoing agreements.
- Tunisia: The national authorities are closely involved in the implementation of the project activities. The APAL (national agency for coastal protection) and local NGOs work closely together in each MPAs forming a co-management model supported by a local management committee (CLAG). This model ensures broad stakeholder participation, including local authorities, NGOs, researchers, fishers, and the tourism sector. MedFund supports MPAs through tripartite agreements involving local NGOs and APAL.

Engagement with civil society, the private sector, scientists, experts, donors, and co-funders is facilitated through our websites and social media, and general communication of the beneficiary MPAs.

D. Gender Equality

All activities anticipated by the Gender Mainstreaming Plan (GMP) were successfully implemented. The MedFund grantees have integrated gender considerations from the application phase and implement concrete activities during the agreement period - such as specific workshops for fisher women, specific recruitment of women rangers, ensure diving training benefits women and men equally etc.

On the policy level, in alignment with the Post 2020 MPA Roadmap Gender recommendation (6.3), 11 gender-sensitive indicators were defined and integrated into the Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology of the Roadmap's implementation. Additionally, a comprehensive Gender Mainstreaming Plan was developed to further guide and monitor the activities of MedPAN and The MedFund. Background notes were prepared and shared during the MedPAN annual workshop in April 2024, fostering exchanges on the necessary gender-sensitive approaches. These workshops led to the co-definition of gender-oriented recommendations with the participants.

Despite the successful implementation, the project encountered challenges, primarily due to the limited knowledge of gender-sensitive approaches in MPA management. Although academic studies and guidelines on gender and fisheries management and gender and climate change actions exist, practical application remains scarce at the Mediterranean level and are not yet developed on gender and marine conservation . To address this gap, new communication tools to promote Mediterranean positive experiences conducted by MedFund grantees have been developed and interviews have been undertaken to better understand how gender-sensitive activities are undertaken in the management of MPAs. Taking advantage of the training workshop on the Fundamentals of MPA management a first round of interviews has been conducted in 2024 and will be reiterated in 2025. A [first video from Tunisia](#) has been shared by MedPAN through its Social network and new videos will soon follow including one from Albania.

As for the event and training, special attention was given to ensure equal access and active participation of women, and parity of representation was particularly emphasized during the selection of participants and speakers for meetings and training workshops.

The project observed several unintended positive outcomes related to gender equality that are challenging to quantify. Notably, women turned out to be very active in decision-making processes in many MPAs, and there was an increased interest and openness among public servants to advance gender outcomes and develop specific activities.

E. Knowledge Management

MPA Knowledge is a core component of the <https://medpan.org/en/strategy> MedPAN strategy, which both feeds into and is fed by the technical, policy and communication pillars of the network's strategy, with the overall aim of supporting the effective management of MPAs for the benefit of marine ecosystems and coastal communities in the region. In line with its science-based, learning, and bottom-up approach, the strategy of the network builds on continuous monitoring, capturing, and sharing of knowledge and experience in relation to Mediterranean MPA challenges. The knowledge baseline on which MedPAN implements its strategy is provided by the regular updating of the Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea and the MAPAMED GIS database (in collaboration with UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC). Data enabling a thorough insight into MPA management are collected directly from the managers and the analyses <https://medpan.org/en/system-mediterranean-mpas-2020> published in the Status Report, which will next be updated during the project in 2025. Data for the upcoming Status were collected in 2023, with additional information gathered on gender and climate adaptation thanks to the GEF project. MedPAN ensures easy access to all public data through the <https://mapamed.org/> MAPAMED database and <https://medpan.org/en/annuaire-des-amp> MedPAN database on management. This knowledge-based approach is to ensure that the actions implemented effectively meet the needs and challenges of the MPAs. This knowledge baseline is systematically deepened by complementary surveys of managers and stakeholders in relation to the topics addressed and is also supported by several expert groups: three Thematic Working Groups (fisheries, financing, mobile species), a Scientific Committee, an Advisory Committee, and ad hoc Steering Committees set up according to projects and activities.

During the project, various knowledge management activities have been undertaken to facilitate knowledge sharing, documentation of best practices, and peer-to-peer learning. These activities included knowledge sharing workshops (Montenegro 2022, France 2024), documentation of best practices (toolkit on MPA management Plan, Communication toolkit on full protection, cooperation framework, series of animated videos, etc.), and peer-to-peer learning (exchange visits in 2023). To support these activities, a range of knowledge management tools and platforms have been utilized. These tools included knowledge repositories (MedPAN resource centre), collaboration platforms (shared folders and documents), and other digital tools that facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration. By implementing these knowledge management processes, we ensure that the knowledge gained during the project is captured and leveraged to improve future outcomes. The project also provided opportunities to share more widely knowledge activities and products thanks to the IW LEARN.

Key lessons learned include:

- need to ensure accessibility of resources by using freely accessible tools and websites;
- need to ensure that everyone who wants to contribute can contribute
- Capacity building

The project has highlighted the critical importance of matching qualified human resources with adequate financial support for the effective implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Through targeted training and capacity building initiatives, the project has equipped MPA managers and practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of sustainable financing and governance.

With financial support provided by MedFund grants, the project provides opportunities for MPA managers to apply their knowledge in practice following the training sessions.

Training sessions are designed to integrate hands-on learning and practical exercises so that MPA managers and practitioners are better prepared to translate theoretical concepts into actionable strategies and management practices.

The synergy and complementarity between MedPAN and MedFund has significantly increased the effectiveness of MPA management efforts. Training is targeted to the most urgent needs, and technical assistance and knowledge sharing are focused on MPAs with the greatest needs.

- Scientific and technological issues

The MedFund and MedPAN encourage information sharing, national skill-building, and harmonization of monitoring protocols to optimize knowledge across the Mediterranean. The MedFund grantees monitor management effectiveness through a dedicated assessment tool, providing insights into the long-term impact of management.

Key lessons learned include:

Easy to implement and harmonized scientific protocols and data collection are crucial : It is crucial to thoroughly train teams and streamline the data collection process, emphasizing the need to develop scientific protocols to evaluate and adapt MPAs management.

Data should guide management practices : Data is reviewed in technical meetings to enable adaptive management with MPA managers, ensuring that the data informs and improves management practices.

Data should be disseminated carefully without compromising quality: Balancing the dissemination of data with maintaining the integrity of self-evaluated data is critical. There's a tendency for self-assessment to be overly optimistic, hence, efforts are needed to ensure accurate and honest data reporting.

These lessons highlight the importance of robust scientific and technological frameworks in enhancing MPA management and ensuring long-term conservation success.

- Factors that improve likelihood of long term sustainability of project impacts

One of the primary factors ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project impacts is the synergistic relationship between MedPAN and The MedFund. This collaboration has facilitated a complementary approach, where small-scale projects supported by MedPAN are bolstered by the long-term financial stability provided by MedFund. This combination ensures that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) receive both immediate and sustained support, enhancing their capacity for effective management and conservation efforts.

With training on fundraising, the project is equipping MPA managers and practitioners with the skills to secure funding independently, and creates opportunities for additional financial support beyond the initial project funding.

Another significant lesson learned is the importance of involving national authorities in the implementation of the project. Engaging these authorities has been key to developing MPAs that benefit from strong national support and have a long-term vision. This involvement ensures that MPAs are not only recognized at the national level but also integrated into broader conservation policies and frameworks. This also allows replication of best practices in terms of marine conservation at the national and regional levels promoting MPA as efficient tools.

Additionally, the project has emphasized the importance of supporting MPAs in developing robust internal processes. This includes building administrative and technical capacities, enhancing internal scientific monitoring skills, fostering local partnerships, and establishing strong governance structures, helping MPAs to become more resilient and capable of sustaining their conservation efforts over the long term.

III: Minor Amendments

| | |
|------------------|--|
| CONTEXT | |
| Result Framework | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Components and Cost | |
| Institutional And Implementation Arrangements | |
| Financial Management | |
| Implementation Schedule | |
| 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 | One MPA granted not pre-identified in CEO Endorsement Phase - Ras Rmel, Tunisia |
| others | |

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| KERKENNAH - TUNISIA | 34.709 | 11.183 | 2,468,247 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|
| PLATAMUNI - MONTENEGO | 42.26933369 | 18.7700380046895 | 3,193,231 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|---------------|----------|-----------|------------|
|---------------|----------|-----------|------------|

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| KATIC - MONTENEGRO | 42.19629628403316 | 18.936195091933236 | 3,198,204 |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| STARI ULCINJ MONTENEGRO | 41.99181086033955 | 19.13942701 | 3,337,797 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|
| Palm Island Lebanon | 34.494987161 | 35.77360116451486 | 279,400 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| GOURAYA ALGERIA | 36.57893803762997 | 1.911162856 | 2,495,921 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| RAS RMEL TUNISIA | 33.90783969431133 | 10.89876241 | 2,467,771 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

| Location Name | Latitude | Longitude | GeoName ID |
|--|----------|-----------|------------|
| Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park - Albania | 40.43891 | 19.30409 | 11,287,745 |

Location Description:

Activity Description:

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category
M and E Document

Title
20250825_FY25 PIR_10685_MedFund2