

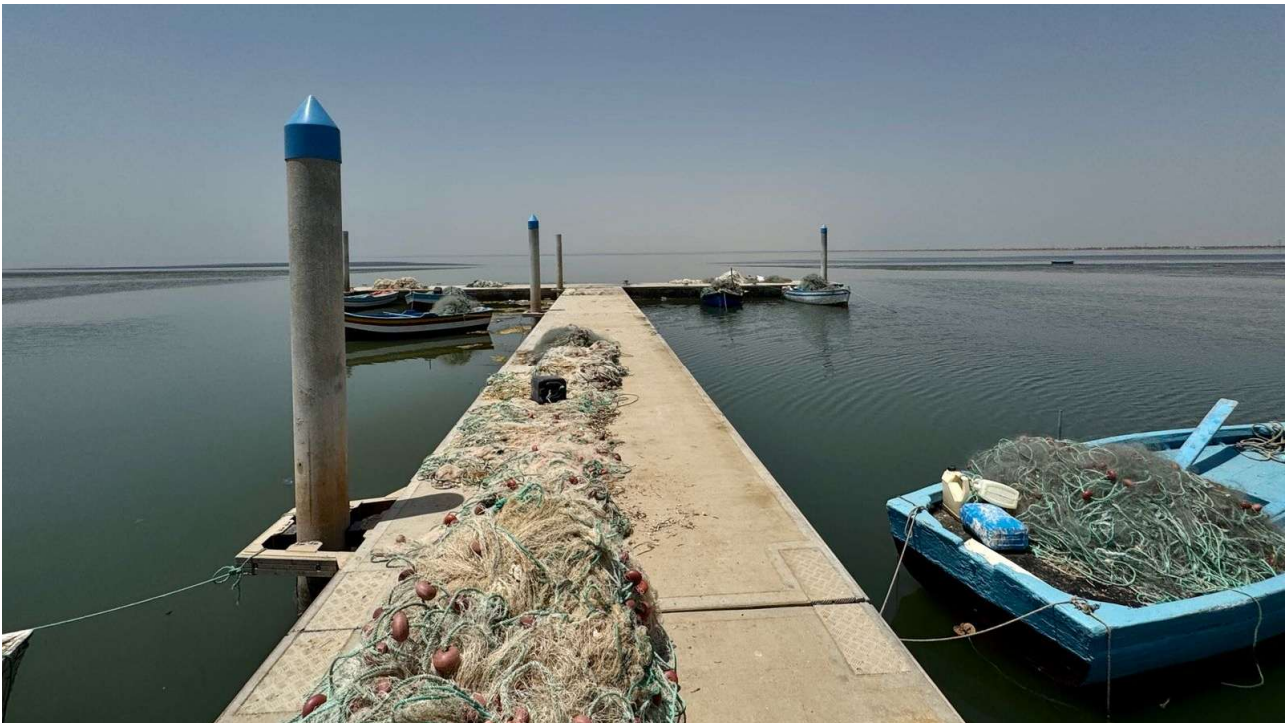


Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

2025 | Synthesis of the evaluation report

Impact Assessment - Tunisia:

“Stabilization and Socioeconomic
Development of Tunisian Coastal Regions -
Nemo Kantara”



AID 11815

This independent evaluation was commissioned by Office III of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to STEM-VCR through a public tender procedure pursuant to Article 50 of the Italian Public Procurement Code (D.lgs n. 36/2023).

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The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the evaluators and do not necessarily coincide with those of the client.

The photo on the front page shows the Guellala Pier (Médenine) built by the NEMO Kantara project.

The author of the photo is Ricardo Wetzler

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

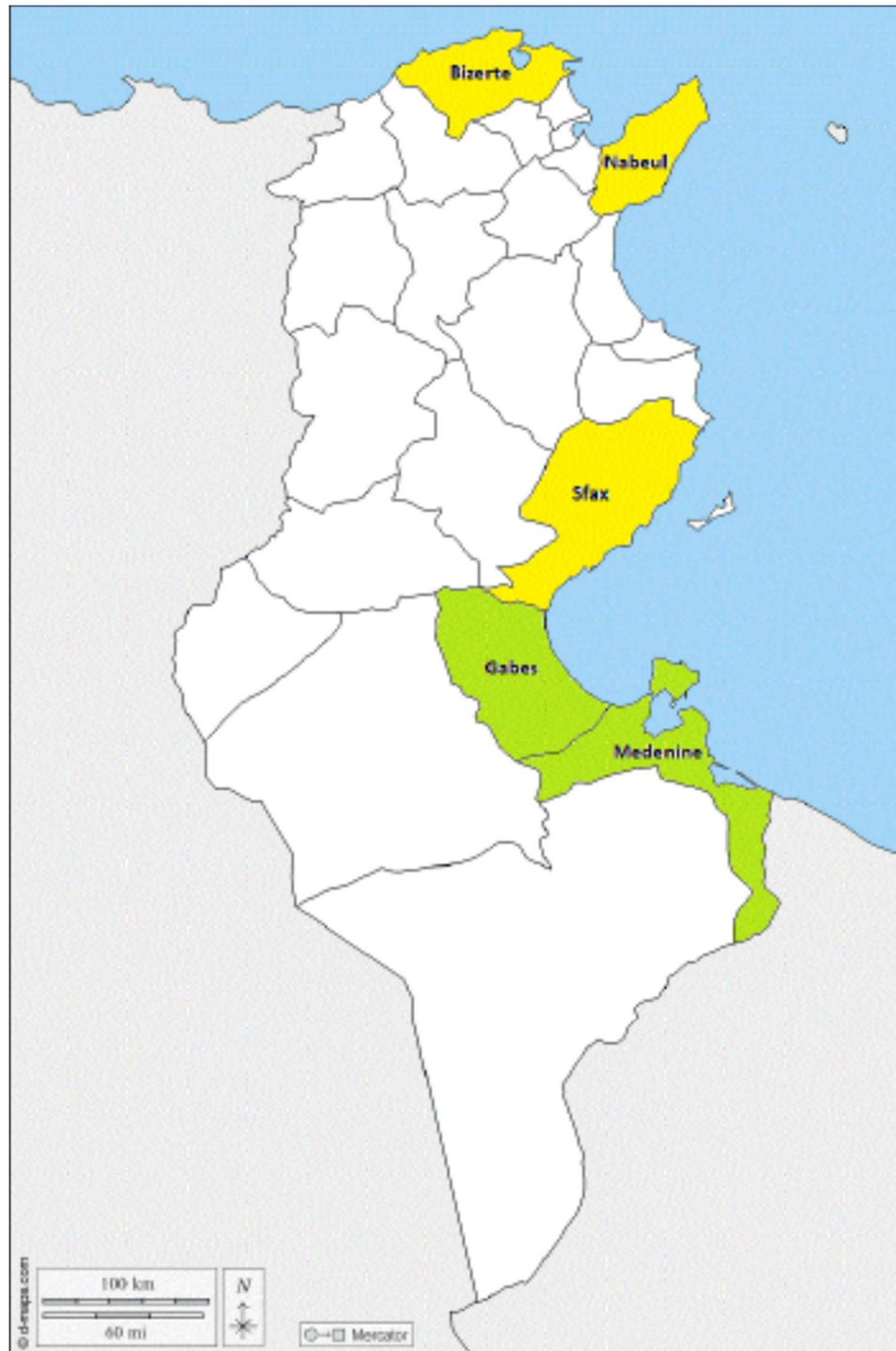
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
ANETI	Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant (National Agency for Employment and Independent Work)
APAL	Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral (Agency for Coastal Protection and Development)
APIA	Agence de Promotion des Investissements Agricoles (Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments)
APII	Agence de Promotion de l'Industrie et de l'Innovation (Agency of Promotion of Industry and Innovation)
APIP	Agence des Ports et des Installations de Pêche (Agency of Ports and Fishing Installations)
AVFA	Agence pour la Vulgarisation et la Formation Agricole (Agency for Agricultural Education and Outreach)
CFPP	Centre de Formation Professionnel pour la Pêche (Professional Training Center for Fishing)
CIHEAM	International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies
CRDA	Commissariat Régional au Développement Agricole (Regional Commission for Agricultural Development)
CTA	Centre Technique de l'Aquaculture (Technical Centre for Aquaculture)
DGPA	Direction Générale de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture (Direction General from the Fisheries and Aquaculture)
DGSV	Direction Générale des Services Vétérinaires (General Directorate of Services Veterinarians)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDAP	Groupe de Développement Agricole et Pêche (Agricultural and Fisheries Development Group)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIPP	Groupe Interprofessionnel des Produits de la Pêche (Interprofessional Group of Fishery Products)
ICZM	National strategy for integrated management of coastal zones (2011-2021) (National Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy)
INSTM	Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies)

IRVT	Institut de la Recherche Vétérinaire de Tunisie (Veterinary Research Institute in Tunisia)
MAECI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MARHP	Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Hydrauliques et de la Pêche (Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries)
MEHAT	Ministère de l'Équipement, de l'Habitat et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (Ministry of Equipment, Housing and Regional Planning)
NOV	Non-Onerous Variant
PRA	Participatory Rural Assessment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMBSP	Société Mutuelle de Base des Services de Pêche (Basic Mutual Society of Fishing Services)
SNTE	Stratégie Nationale de Transition Écologique (National Ecological Transition Strategy)
TND	Tunisian Dinar
UTSS	Union Tunisienne de Solidarité Sociale (Tunisian Solidarity Union Social)

LOCATION OF THE INTERVENTION

The project was implemented in the coastal areas of the governorates of Gabès and Medenine (Zarzis, Djerba), Bizerte (Ghar El Melh), Nabeul (Kelibia, B. Khyar, Slimen), and Sfax (Kerkenah).

Figure 1: Map of Tunisia with the project's targeted governorates highlighted. The governorates affected by SO₂ activities are highlighted in yellow (Source: DdP).



Note on the language used

To ensure clarity and ease of reading, the masculine gender is used generically throughout this report. This editorial choice should not be interpreted as a sign of exclusion. It includes women and men, girls and boys, as well as all those affected by the initiative under consideration. This convention is intended solely for the simplification of wording, in accordance with the principles of equality, equity, and inclusion.

1. Context of the initiative being evaluated

1.1 The fishing situation in Tunisia and the intervention areas

Agriculture and fishing are essential components of the Tunisian economy. These two sectors contribute approximately 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and account for approximately 11% of total exports. They have always been a significant source of income and employment for many families, particularly in rural and coastal communities in the south of the country. National production of fishery and aquaculture products reached 150,000 tons in 2023, worth 1.53 trillion Tunisian dinars (TND). Coastal fishing and trawling account for 52% of production. The number of jobs generated by the fishing sector is estimated at 55,000 direct jobs.

Coastal fishing is a key component of Tunisia's fisheries economy, accounting for approximately 30% of national production, with 43,286 tonnes in 2020 out of a total of 126,526 tonnes. The sector plays a crucial role in the socioeconomic fabric of several regions, including Médenine, Gabès, Sfax, Bizerte, and Nabeul, where it represents both a source of income and stability for thousands of families (GIPP - National Statistics)¹. This subsector directly or indirectly employs over 50,000 people. The coastal regions of Médenine, Gabès, Sfax, Bizerte, and Nabeul illustrate the diversity, strengths, and challenges of this activity, particularly with the emergence of the blue crab as a strategic resource and the crisis in the clam sector. Blue crab has been actively fished in these areas since 2015, representing approximately 30% of the national total (about 500 tonnes/year), with a controversial ecological impact, particularly on natural clam beds.

1.2 Description of the cooperation initiative evaluated

The project "Stabilization and Socioeconomic Development of Coastal Regions" (AID 11815), also known as NEMO Kantara, was implemented between October 19, 2019, and May 19, 2023, for a total duration of 43 months. Initially scheduled to last 36 months, the project was extended by seven months to January 2023.

The project was carried out by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) in Bari, serving both as the promoter and executor, in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MARHP).

The project was implemented in the coastal areas of the governorates of Gabès and Médenine (Zarzis, Djerba), Bizerte (Ghar El Melh), Nabeul (Kelibia, B. Khyar, Slimen), and Sfax (Kerkenah). The total cost of the project was €5,000,000, financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) through the Multilateral Grant Instrument, approved by the Steering Committee Resolution No. 29 of March 29, 2019.

NEMO Kantara aimed to improve the resilience of coastal communities through integrated and sustainable management of natural resources by achieving two objectives:

- a. Improve and diversify the production and income of fisheries operators in the governorates of Gabès and Médenine (Specific Objective SO1);
- b. Strengthen sustainable coastal planning capacities in five pilot regions (Médenine, Gabès, Nabeul, Sfax, Bizerte) (SO2).

¹ In: <https://gipp.tn/fr/statistiques/production-nationale>

The objectives were divided into four outputs, of which the first three were linked to SO1, while Output 4 was linked to SO2.

- **Output 1:** Producer organizations in the fisheries sector and institutional actors in Gabès and Médenine are strengthened and interact in a network for the sustainable management of natural resources;
- **Output 2:** The competitiveness of fisheries operators is strengthened through the improvement of infrastructure and basic services to meet local and international demand;
- **Output 3:** Diversified/improved production activities provide new opportunities for youth and women.
- **Output 4:** The integrated and sustainable development of the areas of Médenine, Gabès, Nabeul, Sfax, and Bizerte is improved through the provision of coastal development plans (Master Plans) to the MARHP.

In terms of **direct beneficiaries**, the initiative targeted the following institutions and individuals, as indicated in the project document:

i. State/semi-state institutions;

- At the central level: i) Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MAPRH); ii) Directorate General of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DGPA); iii) Directorate General of Veterinary Services (DGSV) for a total of 4 people.
- At the regional level (Médenine, Nabeul, Gabès, Sfax, Bizerte): i) Regional Commission for Agricultural Development (CRDA); ii) Agency for Ports and Fishing Facilities (APIP); iii) Interprofessional Group for Fishery Products (GIPP); iv) Agency for Training and Agricultural Extension (AVFA) for a total of 40 people.

ii. Rural coastal communities/Associations/Mutuals/Trade Unions (small-scale fishermen)

- Individual fishermen: for a total of 2,500 people
- Clam fishermen: for a total of 1,200 people
- 21 Agricultural and Fisheries Development Groups (GDAP) between Gabès and Médenine: approximately 1,500 members in total, men and women

iii. Research institutes

- 1 Laboratory of the Tunisian Institute of Veterinary Research (IRVT) in Tunis and 1 in Sfax: 4 Researchers/Technicians
- 1 Laboratory of the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies (INSTM) in Sfax and 1 Laboratory in La Goulette (Tunis): 4 Researchers/Technicians

At the time of the formulation of the NEMO Kantara project, the Italian Cooperation in Tunisia managed a project portfolio totalling **€165.5 million**, divided between **€100 million in soft loans** and **€65.5 million in grants**². Italy also supports Tunisia through the **cross-border cooperation programme Interreg NEXT Italy-Tunisia 2021-2027**, co-financed by the EU, actively contributing to sustainability, social equity and modernization, in line with Tunisian national priorities and in particular in the fisheries sector, the Blue Economy Strategy (2022), the Ecological Transition (2023) and the objectives of the Development Plan 2023-2025.

² Memorandum of Understanding 2021-2023 Italy - Tunisia

2. The evaluation

2.1 Objective and purpose of the evaluation

The main objectives of the evaluation were to: i) assess **the impact on the system of cooperatives and productive associations of fishermen and fisherwomen** (GDAP) in the governorates of Gabès and Médenine; ii) assess the **impact of strengthening the professional fishing schools** of Gabès and Médenine on the fishing industry, on the level of employment and income of those trained, with particular attention to women and young people, and on the living conditions of the latter and their families; iii) **assess the impact** that strengthening the productivity of fishing organizations, through training, improvement of basic infrastructure, and facilitation of access to credit, has had on the quality of fish products, **the competitiveness of the production system, and exports**; iv) verify whether **the success factors** already highlighted in the ex-post evaluation of the two previous initiatives implemented by AICS with the support of CIHEAM persist, and whether the suggestions for addressing the critical issues identified have been incorporated into the implementation of this initiative; v) provide guidance for the implementation of **subsequent initiatives in the same sector** and, more generally, evaluate the initiative's impact on the fishing industry to determine its potential replicability, with possible modifications, in other partner countries with the same economic/geographical and social characteristics.

2.2 Some data on the consultation of direct sources

A total of **112 interviews** were conducted both in person and remotely, **including 38 women and 74 men**. Specifically, 41 interviews were conducted in Médenine, 35 in Gabès, and 13 in Tunis. Twelve CIHEAM members were interviewed, as well as 10 international stakeholders and 3 key informants. The breakdown by type is shown below:

- 7 State/semi-state institutions at the national level
- 6 Research institutions
- 16 public/semi-public institutions, of which 8 in Gabès and 8 in Médenine
- 7 members of the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Group (GDAP) and the Mutual Society for Basic Fisheries Services (SMBSP), of which 6 are in Gabès and 1 in Médenine
- 5 Directors/teachers at the Fishing Schools, 3 of which are in Gabès and 2 in Médenine
- 13 beneficiaries of pilot actions, including 9 in Gabès and 4 in Médenine
- ENDA microcredit beneficiaries in Gabès
- 3 Startups financed, of which 2 in Gabès and 1 in Médenine
- 18 members of CIHEAM, including 3 in Gabès, 3 in Médenine, and 12 between Tunis and Italian experts
- 22 people belonging to rural communities/associations/companies in Médenine (fishermen)
- 10 International Stakeholders
- 3 Other key informants

From the point of view of geographical coverage, the field visits covered 2 governorates most involved in the project (Gabès and Médenine) in addition to the governorate of Tunis where the national offices of the partner are located – the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MARHP) and the main Directorates General involved, CIHEAM, the research institute National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies (INSTM), and the Ministry of

Equipment, Housing and Regional Planning (MEHAT), involved through the Agency for Coastal Protection and Development (APAL).

Furthermore, 27 secondary documentary sources were analysed, in addition to documents relating to the Nemo Kantara project.

3. The outputs of the evaluation

The analysis conducted based on the evaluation criteria led to the following conclusions.

3.1 Relevance

The NEMO Kantara project was based on a deep understanding of the sectoral and territorial context, building on the NEMO I and II projects previously implemented by CIHEAM in Bari. It integrated needs widely identified at the national level, particularly in terms of institutional strengthening, port infrastructure modernization, and community development. The intervention addressed key issues, such as economic diversification—particularly for women clam harvesters affected by the fishing ban—and support for unemployed youth through technical training and integration tools.

The **stakeholder structure mobilized** by the project proved to be generally coherent, involving the main national institutions in the sector (DGPA, INSTM, CRDA, AVFA, APIP) and rooted in community dynamics through the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Groups (GDAP). However, the design was primarily based on central consultation, with limited involvement of local structures and beneficiaries. This lack of local participation may have negatively impacted some needs assessments, as evidenced by the absence of local interest in the brand of artisanal fishery products or the development of Master Plans. Furthermore, several public stakeholders with complementary mandates (the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI), the Agency of Promotion of Industry and Innovation (APII), the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments (APIA), the Technical Centre for Aquaculture (CTA)) were not integrated from the design phase, limiting the cross-sectoral scope of the project and synergy with existing national mechanisms.

New needs have been expressed, both at the regional level (strengthening post-creation support, integration into local value chains) and at the national level (consolidation of the sectoral approach, better coordination between vocational training and employment, digitalization of CFPP equipment, enhanced monitoring of fishery resources, applied research on sustainable aquaculture, nutritional and food security, climate change and carbon footprint).

NEMO Kantara project's formulation and **logical framework** allowed for the definition of ambitious interventions, covering a broad spectrum of actions and stakeholders, with a coherent intervention logic based on a clear cause-and-effect relationship. However, some significant shortcomings limit the clarity and coherence of the results chain, given the absence of activities in the logical framework. Furthermore, the description of Op1.2 combines components related to infrastructure and basic services, excluding the equipment dimension. Meanwhile, Op1.3 includes both the improvement of existing economic activities and diversification into new sectors, without clearly differentiating the respective intervention logics. Similarly, some activities, such as 3.2.4 (creation of an investment fund), represent a significant portion of the budget, without an explicit breakdown by type of investment or beneficiary.

In terms of **monitoring**, the identified system is tailored to needs, and a risk matrix has been developed. However, the structure of the indicators lacks methodological precision: most are purely quantitative and operational, particularly in Op1.2 and Op1.3, lacking baselines and targets, and no breakdown by gender or geographical area. Furthermore, the overall objective is not supported by measurable indicators, which limits the ability to monitor the achievement of the expected outputs.

The project integrated **several key cross-cutting dimensions**, such as human rights protection, gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The focus on the Gabès and Médenine regions was relevant, given their heavy dependence on fisheries, their ecological vulnerability, and the concentration of vulnerable groups. The project encouraged women's involvement in value chains, supported youth entrepreneurship, and promoted resilient and environmentally adapted infrastructure. However, the lack of an in-depth gender analysis limited the transformative impact of this approach. Furthermore, no specific measures were undertaken for people with disabilities. Finally, the periodic ban on clam harvesting in the Gulf of Gabès, although previous to the start of the project, appears to have been insufficiently integrated into the project formulation, limiting the scope of interventions, beyond the retraining of harvesters' work, to only one cluster (2.3) targeted by co-management and certification.

3.2 Coherence

The project's internal coherence appears generally satisfactory concerning national and regional priorities. However, significant limitations were observed in coordination with projects and programs implemented by other actors operating in the same sectors or territories, which limited opportunities for concrete synergies and interinstitutional coordination.

NEMO Kantara is aligned with the objectives of the 2016-2020 and 2023-2025 Development Plans, as well as with several existing sectoral strategies, including the National Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), the Ecological Transition Strategy (SNTE), the Blue Economy Strategy (currently under development), and the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The project also complies with Tunisia's international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU Green Deal for the development of the blue economy, the 2021 National Development Contribution (NDC), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) guidelines for artisanal fisheries. Although several programs led or co-financed by CIHEAM have demonstrated thematic and geographical convergence with NEMO Kantara, no concrete coordination has been documented in the progress reports or the final report. Furthermore, no reference to joint actions, coordinated planning, or formal collaboration mechanisms has been included.

At **the institutional level**, the project promoted functional coordination between the various branches of the MARHP—central directorates, CRDA, and local structures—enabling the initiation of a territorial co-management process consistent with national political orientations. However, in the context of the recentralization that began in 2023, with the suspension of municipal councils and the reconfiguration of responsibilities at the governorate level, the sustainability of the developed mechanisms, particularly those envisaged by Output 4, appears uncertain.

Regarding **external coherence**, although the project document initially identified complementary initiatives, this mapping of projects and stakeholders was not updated during implementation. This shortcoming hindered synergy with other interventions operating in the

same sectors and territories, particularly in the governorates of Gabès and Médenine, during the same period. Many projects, led by public, private, and international stakeholders, were therefore developed in parallel, without any structured coordination with the NEMO Kantara project.

Furthermore, a lack of sectoral coordination among donors was observed, as highlighted in several interviews conducted as part of the evaluation. No consultative or strategic steering body, overseen by the relevant Tunisian authorities, was established or consolidated to promote complementarity, reduce the risk of duplication, or align intervention priorities.

3.3 Effectiveness

The analysis of the project's effectiveness highlights an overall dynamic, albeit heterogeneous, implementation.

The project demonstrated a **high level of implementation in terms of activities**. Of the 35 planned actions, the vast majority were implemented, often after operational or strategic adjustments. However, this quantitative implementation did not always result in the full achievement of the expected outputs. In the absence of results-oriented monitoring, reconstructing the logical framework only partially captured the effects produced, relying on qualitative elements, interviews, and activity data, and effectiveness appears uneven across the various components.

The outputs related to strengthening professional fishing organizations and supporting entrepreneurship (Op1.1 and Op1.3) were satisfactorily achieved, as evidenced by positive engagement indicators: creation of GDAP, loan disbursement, business creation, and diversification of activities, particularly for women and youth. On the other hand, the components related to infrastructure improvement (Op1.2) suffered delays in implementation, while territorial planning (Op2.4) only produced reports, limiting their effective translation into outputs through the adoption and/or financing of the developed Strategic Plans. The analysis also reveals a high level of implementation concentrated at the end of the project, accentuating the difficulties of capitalization and medium-term support, particularly in the implementation of entrepreneurship promotion actions and the consolidation of outputs.

In terms of **adaptation**, the project demonstrated a real ability to adapt its methods to contextual constraints, particularly those related to the pandemic or environmental factors (marine pollution, closure of fishing grounds). Several activities were reformulated, reconfigured, or abandoned for technical reasons. The redefinition of the clam sector, the conversion of funds for the GDAP Ajim, and the adaptation of international training courses into local sessions are significant examples. However, these adjustments were not formalized in a revised logical framework or documented in an adaptation strategy, which hindered their traceability. Furthermore, some reorientations may have undermined the project's strategic coherence, particularly regarding the refocusing on diversification at the expense of strengthening the fishing industry and the clam sector, which several stakeholders perceived as a departure from the initial priorities.

Many **factors influenced implementation**. Facilitating factors included the quality of local engagement through regional coordinators, the commitment of CIHEAM and its partners, the proximity of local facilitators and coordinators, and the relevance of the actions to the needs expressed by beneficiaries. The technical expertise deployed, particularly in the areas of training, workshops, and entrepreneurship, was repeatedly praised. However, the negative effects of COVID-19, administrative delays, the lack of structured monitoring and evaluation,

delays in the delivery of infrastructure and equipment, the complexity of the project, and a management system heavily focused on implementation hindered the full and consolidated achievement of outputs.

The weakness of the logical framework indicators (often descriptive, without target values and baselines), the lack of analysis of results in official reports, and the late concentration of expenditure have reduced the ability to monitor and manage impacts in real time.

3.4 Efficiency

The project's efficiency can be considered **limited**, despite a **clear ability to adapt to contextual constraints**, particularly in the post-COVID period. Although the resources provided were generally sufficient, their **management suffered from several structural limitations**.

The **project got off to a very slow start**, with low consumption during the first two years. This, combined with the delayed establishment of the project operations team in 2021, led to a strong concentration of execution in the final 19 months of the project, with 63% of the budget consumed during this period, reflecting an emergency dynamic that did not favour resource optimization.

The **financial structure proved ill-suited to the complexity of the project**, which included 35 activities divided into 12 clusters. A significant portion of the activities (31%) were grouped among the underfunded outcomes, representing less than 7% of the total budget, requiring disproportionate efforts compared to the available resources.

At the same time, the largely aggregated costs under a single budget line limited the clarity of some components, particularly for **the investment fund creation activity**, where €968,930, equal to 81% of the budget for the Op1.3 output, was not broken down by type of expenditure (credit, donations, infrastructure, co-financing). This presentation of the budget limits the analysis of its effectiveness and related reporting.

Some planned actions, particularly in the clam cluster, could not be fully implemented due to **significant changes, while others were impacted by the pandemic. In both cases, budget reallocations** were made, reflecting the willingness to adapt in the face of constraints.

Overall, **management costs** (human resources, services, current and overhead expenses) amounted to €1,860,453, equal to 37% of the budget (38% after the extension), which is partly explained by the team's commitment until closure. At the end of the project, a modest overrun of €1,441.94 was detected, primarily due to vehicle management and bank charges. Conversely, some planned items, such as the €20,000 allocated for the external evaluation, had not been committed by the date of the ex-post evaluation, highlighting a lack of strategic management.

Finally, although **CIHEAM ensured the timely disbursement of funds, the conditional reporting** mechanism tied to the consumption of 60% of the tranches limited feedback on actual implementation. Two interim reports were submitted, the first of which, **after 25 months** of implementation, covered only **24% of the budget**, reflecting **prolonged under-commitment**. The **seven-month extension** through the Non-Onerous Variant (NOV), approved in March 2023, allowed for the completion of some activities, although it was submitted after the formal closure of the project.

3.5 Sustainability

The actions undertaken by the NEMO Kantara project have generated several lasting effects, particularly through institutional strengthening, local capacity development, and integration into national priorities for integrated coastal zone management. These effects are reflected in the project's gradual integration into existing public structures and the emergence of economic and community dynamics that promote continuity.

The project successfully mobilized key institutional stakeholders—CRDA, AVFA, GDAP, and INSTM— **gradually transferring responsibility** for implementing local actions to them. This approach helped consolidate expertise and strengthen territorial ownership, relying on national and local mechanisms rather than the creation of parallel structures. Similarly, the planning tools developed were widely praised and represent a potential support for local governance, although their effective integration into public mechanisms remains untapped.

On the **economic front**, positive results have been observed, particularly in collective fishing projects, which are showing signs of viability. However, the lack of an integrated sectoral approach and territorial synergies has limited the initiatives' transversal reach. Diversification projects, often individual, have shown some fragility, particularly due to the lack of structured post-creation support and integration into a local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Links with other aspects of the project, such as waste management in ports, AVFA centres, and established recycling companies, have not been fully exploited, thus reducing the potential for long-term economic and environmental transformation. Regarding investment funds, after five years of use of ENDA Tamweel, these will be transferred to INSTM to finance research on sustainable fishing, in coordination with the DGPA.

Some limitations in terms of **equipment and infrastructure** also impact sustainability. Laboratories remain underutilized or have been retrofitted due to a lack of expertise or high maintenance costs. The equipment delivered to the markets, although perfectly functional, did not receive health accreditation. On the other hand, the high quality of the infrastructure is recognized, and a maintenance mechanism has been established through an agreement with APIP. However, the distribution of roles among the institutions involved (APIP, APAL, and MEHAT) remains unclear, and the system's sustainability still depends on future adjustments, particularly at the local level through the management of the GIPPs.

At the sociocultural level, the project's acceptability and the relevance of its actions were highlighted. It contributed to raising awareness and improving some living conditions. However, facilities such as water and energy distribution points, initially well-received, are no longer functioning at the three sites visited. They have not yet been integrated into a sustainable management approach due to the lack of adequate reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

Finally, **signs of autonomy** are emerging, particularly through the INSTM: the project has been able to extend its results through involvement in complementary initiatives, particularly the ARIBIOTEC project, and by obtaining ISO 17025 accreditation for its laboratories in 2024. These initiatives demonstrate the institutional capacity to capitalize on the project's outputs to ensure medium- and long-term continuity.

However, the **lack of a clearly articulated, structured, and planned exit strategy** in the project document partly limited the project's ability to organize the post-intervention transition and sustainably consolidate all the generated effects.

3.6 Impact

The actions carried out within the NEMO Kantara project have triggered transformational dynamics at various levels—production, institutional, environmental, and social—with concrete, albeit partial, results that demonstrate the potential for medium-term structuring.

The intervention led to a **tangible improvement in working conditions on the docks, increased capacity among local institutions, improved access to credit, and the structuring of producer organizations**. The functionality of the docks and fish markets—fully operational and appreciated by fishermen—represented a significant leap in quality, facilitating landings, improving sanitary conditions, and strengthening the supply chain.

The project contributed to a **tangible improvement in incomes and an effective diversification of productive activities**. Collective projects—ice, pots, and recycling units—generated a significant economic and social impact, particularly for women and vulnerable groups. In the fisheries sector, strengthening the cold chain improved product preservation and increased their market value. Financially, 80% of microcredit beneficiaries renewed their loans, with an average increase of 30% in amounts, demonstrating the consolidation momentum despite inflation. These loans primarily supported trade and services (66%) and artisanal production (34%).

However, individual diversification projects appear more fragile: 36% of the initiatives visited are in difficulty or abandoned, while collective projects demonstrate greater solidity thanks to their structure and community roots.

However, this progress was hampered by the lack of formalized mechanisms for knowledge transfer (handover) and institutional capitalization. More than ten public officials (MARHP, CRDA, CFPP, APIP) directly involved in the project had left their positions by the time of the final evaluation. Their successors, generally ill-informed or with limited knowledge of the project, were unable to ensure sufficient continuity, weakening the lasting impact of the methodologies introduced and limiting the long-term effects of the capacity-building initiatives.

The **dynamics of structuring producer organizations have been positive**, with the creation or reactivation of several GDAPs. However, other groups, particularly women's groups, are currently inactive, demonstrating the fragility of these initiatives without sustained support.

Opportunities for change in the coastal environment are emerging, particularly with the exploration of new clam production areas in the Bizerte lagoon and the Boughrara Sea. However, their implementation remains uncertain. The lack of coordination between Tunisian scientific institutions and technical partners, particularly CIHEAM, appears to represent a missed opportunity to sustainably structure the shellfish farming sector.

In terms of **gender relations**, encouraging signs have been observed. Although women remain largely confined to processing and harvesting activities, their presence in positions of responsibility (INSTM, laboratories, ports) has increased. Over 80% of the community facilitators involved were women, which facilitated local mediation sensitive to inclusion issues. However, the gender approach, although present across the board and with positive effects observed in terms of female participation, has remained poorly structured: no gender analysis has been conducted, no dedicated strategy has been formalized, and no national expertise has been mobilized. In the absence of a specific mechanism, the transformative potential of this dimension remains limited.

The project's unintended impacts have been generally positive. The database resulting from the participatory evaluation has enabled other initiatives (the TRACE project, the RSE fund for hydrocarbons in Médenine) to integrate beneficiaries into agricultural or artisanal projects, providing them with long-term monitoring. Access to zero-interest credit has thus been extended to women previously involved in NEMO Kantara. No refusals or negative impacts from stakeholders have been noted. The project enjoys strong recognition, particularly in Djerba, where its visibility is associated with quality infrastructure. The launch of the NEMO HOUT project, led by the DGPA and CIHEAM, capitalizing on the results of NEMO Kantara, represents an important strategic continuity.

In conclusion, the absence of indicators related to the overall objective, particularly community resilience, reflects a lack of strategic direction. Consequently, the project remains **essentially focused on the implementation of activities**, without tangible evidence of having contributed to lasting change or a significant improvement in resilience conditions in the medium or long term.

3.7 Communication and visibility

Kantara project's communication activities were formalized as part of Output Op5, with a budget of €55,994, aimed at increasing the project's national and international visibility, promoting best practices, promoting artisanal fisheries products, and raising awareness among stakeholders. **The communication plan, launched in May 2020, was based on a multi-channel approach** (video, social media, events, publications). A Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/NemoKantara>) was created in March 2021, with 220 publications, 40-50 interactions per month, 2,638 subscribers at the project's closing date, and a lack of post-project outreach. A project factsheet for "NEMO-KANTARA" is available on the institutional websites of CIHEAM and CIHEAM Bari, but it contains inconsistencies regarding the closing date (October 2022 for the former, November 2024 – erroneously – for the latter, instead of May 2023). Furthermore, the information provided is extremely limited and does not contain any project outputs.

The kick-off seminar took place in February 2020, and the closing one in June 2023. Official visits from the AICS and the Italian Embassy increased institutional visibility.

However, communication remained local, without significant national impact and without formal monitoring of its effects (particularly the videos produced). Even institutional websites contain errors or incomplete information about the project.

4. Best practices and lessons learned

4.1 Best Practices

The evaluation identified the following **key best practices**:

- a. **Coherence between planning and implementation as a factor of credibility and appreciation.** The project, in line with the planning documents, delivered visible and tangible interventions, particularly in terms of infrastructure. This alignment between commitments made and results achieved was recognized by public actors as a hallmark of reliability, strengthening the project's perceived usefulness and legitimacy among the stakeholders involved.

- b. The Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) methodology as a strategic tool for territorial diagnosis and planning.** Developed in a structured manner and implemented in collaboration with local stakeholders, the PRA developed under Op1.1 has established itself as an essential methodological tool. Its adoption by the Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity (UTSS) in other regions and sectors (agriculture, crafts) confirms its transferability and value as a tool for prioritization, dialogue, and integrated territorial planning.
- c. Local integration by community facilitators.** The use of field facilitators fostered inclusive and gender-sensitive mediation in the support processes. This approach strengthened both community awareness and the legitimacy of entrepreneurship support initiatives, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.
- d. Structuring collective projects around shared infrastructure.** Collective projects based on functional infrastructure (ice production units, recycling, and pots) have demonstrated greater institutional, economic, and social sustainability. Their structure promotes community ownership, scale effects, and the resilience of local economic models.
- e. Scientific valorisation of the results obtained through ISO 17025 certification.** INSTM was able to transform its technical support for the project into a major institutional breakthrough by obtaining ISO 17025 certification for marine biotoxin analysis. This capitalization demonstrates the ability of a national player to integrate the outputs into a regulatory framework and reduce external dependencies, particularly in the export sector.
- f. Post-project use of beneficiary databases and PRAs to guide access to other mechanisms.** The reuse of data collected during the project, particularly by UTSS and ENDA, allowed beneficiaries to be directed to other opportunities (TRACE project, CSR funds, microcredits, etc.). This ongoing use of data illustrates a best practice of active capitalization, which promotes economic inclusion and sustainable results.
- g. Pragmatic and integrated interinstitutional coordination.** The concerted mobilization of CRDA, AVFA, GDAP, UTSS, and other local stakeholders ensured the territorial coherence of actions, avoiding overlaps and promoting synergies around shared tools (databases, diagnostics, infrastructure). This coordination, while contextual, represents a practice that can be adapted to multi-stakeholder contexts.
- h. Scheduled maintenance of local infrastructure.** Local institutions have planned and are implementing a ten-year maintenance plan for the docks, thanks to a total allocation of €60,000 within the project, thus ensuring the long-term functionality of the completed works. At the same time, the equipment supplied to the Houmt Souk market is regularly maintained by APIP, which has assumed the costs, providing a concrete example of institutional ownership and post-project sustainability.

4.2 Lessons learned

The team documented **the main lessons learned**, which reflect the knowledge gained during the project implementation, namely:

- a. Define a project entry and exit strategy from the design phase.** The absence of a clear exit strategy has limited the sustainability of some outputs. It is essential to integrate a post-project transition plan from the beginning, including institutional handover, equipment maintenance, partner initiation, and impact monitoring.

- b. Avoid purchasing equipment at the end of the project to ensure effective support.** The decision to acquire a significant portion of the equipment in the final months of the project prevented adequate technical and organizational monitoring. An early delivery of the infrastructure and equipment by at least a year would have allowed for system testing, fault correction, capacity building, and effective local ownership.
- c. Plan a consolidation phase.** The implementation model did not include a specific period for capitalization, institutional transition, and strengthening the momentum already established. A final year dedicated to consolidation (rather than new results) would have strengthened the sustainability of the impact.
- d. Develop a clear results chain (logical framework) with strategic indicators at all levels.** The lack of a comprehensive results chain and specific targeted strategic indicators (in addition to operational monitoring) has limited the capacity for cross-functional analysis. It is essential to integrate a solid logical framework from the formulation stage, ensuring regular updates and alignment with project objectives.
- e. Strengthen the link between economic interventions and post-creation support mechanisms.** Several supported economic projects (particularly individual ones) have shown fragile viability due to the lack of structured support. It is essential to combine economic assistance with a sustainable technical and entrepreneurial assistance system, rooted in the existing ecosystem, in collaboration with local public and private stakeholders.
- f. Anchor participatory tools in local systems from the earliest stages.** Although highly valued, participatory methods (such as community assessment) have not always been institutionalized. Their effective adoption requires gradual methodological transfer, ongoing training, and their inclusion in the procedures of relevant public bodies.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on an interdisciplinary analysis of the outputs of the NEMO Kantara project. They go beyond simply addressing the observed limitations and aim to strengthen the strategic, operational, and institutional quality of future interventions, particularly in multi-stakeholder coastal contexts.

The recommendations are intended not only to capitalise on the outputs of the NEMO Kantara project cycle, but also to guide the implementation of the new NEMO HOUT project, currently in the start-up phase.

5.1 General Recommendations

-  **Clearly define the sustainable coastal development framework from the outset of the project.** Co-build, from the early stages of the project, a shared vision of sustainable coastal development with all stakeholders (public institutions, local authorities, economic, scientific, and community actors). This concerted definition of components and priorities will ensure ongoing strategic alignment, facilitate cross-sectoral synergies, and anchor the project's actions in a coherent and sustainable trajectory at the territorial level.
-  **Focus on outputs, not on the accumulation of activities.** Place outputs at the centre of the intervention strategy, considering actions and outputs as tools for change.

- ✚ **Anchor interventions in a framework of contributing to sectoral policies.** Systematically transmit lessons learned and dynamics from the field to institutional levels, to continuously inform public policies and sectoral strategies.
- ✚ **Adapt the project's scope and pace to its complexity.** To avoid project overload at the end of the project, it is essential to limit the number of highly operational activities or, failing that, plan for a duration exceeding 36 months.
- ✚ **Capitalize on lessons learned from previous projects and stakeholders.** Establish a structured process to capitalize on lessons learned and best practices from similar projects, as well as feedback from local, technical, and institutional stakeholders involved, before launching new initiatives.
- ✚ **Align vocational training with local value chains and employment dynamics.** It is recommended to strengthen employment integration as a lever for resilience in coastal communities, as has been done to promote entrepreneurship, fully integrating it into future interventions. To this end, market studies on fisheries value chains will help guide appropriate training offerings, with a more prominent role for CFPPs, influenced by the modernization and digitalization of their equipment. Strengthening applied research can also contribute to this objective.

5.2 Recommendations Related to Evaluation Results

The recommendations have been divided into strategic and operational recommendations. They provide benchmarks for consolidating strategic management, improving operations, strengthening interinstitutional coordination, and fostering even more sustainable local integration.

Therefore, for future projects, the following recommendations related to the results of the evaluation exercise should be considered:

A. Relevance

Strategic Recommendations

- **Broaden consultation** to include local stakeholders and end beneficiaries from the formulation stage;
- **Mobilize public and private institutions** involved in economic diversification (employment, innovation, investment, entrepreneurship)—such as ANETI, APIA, APII, and specialized CSOs;
- **Integrate a transformative gender approach into the Logical Framework** itself, through appropriate tools, as well as a focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Develop a specific technical strategy to address structural environmental constraints, when present in the design.

Operational Recommendation

- **Develop a comprehensive logical framework**, covering all levels, with consistent indicators, including target values and baselines, and disaggregated by gender, area, and specific vulnerabilities.

B. Coherence

Strategic Recommendations

- **Establish a thematic sectoral coordination table**, bringing together technical and financial partners, Tunisian sectoral authorities, and other stakeholders.
- **Establish a structured mechanism for sharing knowledge, data, and results produced by the various projects**, while respecting the principles of confidentiality and protection of sensitive data.

Operational Recommendation

- **Update the mapping regularly of external interventions** in the sector concerned, in order to strengthen synergies and complementarities between sectoral initiatives.

C. Effectiveness

Strategic Recommendation

- **Plan and implement intermediate and final evaluations conducted by external experts. Integrate a monitoring and evaluation system oriented towards results and impact**, in addition to the monitoring of activities.

Operational Recommendations

- Include a **specific monitoring system for actions carried out in the education sector**, if the project provides for it, including indicators that allow the evaluation of the skills acquired.
- **Plan a realistic implementation timeline**, in order to ensure adequate post-delivery follow-up of outputs during project implementation.

D. Efficiency

Operational Recommendations

- **Plan an accelerated operational launch**, ensuring the mobilisation of the teams involved from the beginning.
- **Adapt the budget structure to the complexity of the project** by breaking down significant budget lines in more detail and by type of expense.
- **Allocate resources more evenly** based on the actual costs of activities, avoiding overloading underfunded components or, failing that, reducing or adjusting energy-intensive but underfunded activities.
- **Implement a more regular and proactive financial (and narrative) reporting, anticipating its submission to the VNOs**, as soon as delays in execution are noticed.

E. Sustainability

Strategic Recommendations

- **Define and formalize the institutional framework for the management of delivered equipment**, particularly among public laboratories (INSTM, IRVT, CTA).
- **Establish an interinstitutional coordination body**, bringing together stakeholders involved in the management of coastal infrastructure (APIP, APAL, MEHAT), including GIPPs.

- **Develop an exit strategy right from the planning stage**, differentiated by output and/or type of intervention.

Operational Recommendation

- **Plan the delivery of equipment far enough in advance to allow for monitoring for at least one year after installation**, integrating the costs of maintenance, user training, and post-delivery technical support into the planning phase.

F. Impact

Strategic Recommendations

- **Formalize knowledge and practice transfer mechanisms** with project stakeholders to systematically capitalize on results, best practices, and lessons learned from previous projects when launching new, related projects.
- **Strengthen sectoral value chains** for the sustainable management of coastal resources through targeted strategies.
- **Integrate diversification projects into broader complementary and synergistic networks and multi-actor territorial ecosystems of technical support**, local economic networks and institutional and private partners (MEFP, ANETI, APIA, etc.).
- **Promote coordination between research institutions and specialized technical centres** in the fisheries sector.

G. Communication and visibility

Strategic Recommendation

- **Develop a structured and scalable communications strategy from the start**, operating at the local and national level, using up-to-date interactive channels and delivering targeted messages to diverse audiences, updating it periodically and incorporating appropriate performance indicators.