



1. Project Data

Project ID P130343	Project Name MENA-DELP Regional Project
Country Middle East and North Africa	Practice Area(Lead) Environment & Natural Resources

L/C/TF Number(s) TF-13991	Closing Date (Original) 31-Dec-2017	Total Project Cost (USD) 999,722.07
Bank Approval Date 23-May-2013	Closing Date (Actual) 31-Dec-2017	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00
Revised Commitment	999,722.07	999,722.07
Actual	999,722.07	999,722.07

Prepared by Divya Kapoor	Reviewed by Vibecke Dixon	ICR Review Coordinator Christopher David Nelson	Group IEGSD (Unit 4)
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As per the Grant Agreement (GA) (page 5), "The objective of the Project is to strengthen cooperation among selected organizations of Beneficiaries in areas of sustainable management of desert ecosystems."
In the PAD (page 7), the PDO is the same except that it states "beneficiary countries" instead of "beneficiaries".

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?



No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

The project had three components:

Component 1: Knowledge Management and Sharing (Appraisal Estimate US\$ 800,000, Actual: US\$ 800,000)

The objective of this component was to provide training and study tours, and to procure related goods and consultants services, for establishing and strengthening existing networks between the relevant national institutions in the beneficiary countries. Its aim was to encourage management and sharing of knowledge on key issues related to sustainable desert ecosystem management and their associated livelihoods, by (i) organizing workshops with sectoral or multi-sectoral focus with deserts as a central theme; (ii) organizing study tours to share information on pilot projects or other similar projects; and (iii) establishing web-based networks between sectoral experts on key relevant issues, emerging lessons and related policy implications related to the sustainable use of desert goods and services in the context of a given productive sector.

Component 2: Monitoring and Evaluation (Appraisal Estimate US\$ 100,000, Actual: US\$ 100,000)

The objectives of this component were both to establish a programmatic level monitoring system for the MENA-DELP (Middle East and North Africa Desert Ecosystems and Livelihoods Knowledge Sharing and Coordination Project) program based on aggregating national project level indicators and results; and to establish a specific M&E system for the regional project. The component was to provide goods and consultants' services to the Recipient for: (i) establishing a programmatic level monitoring system for the Project based on aggregating national project level indicators and results; and (ii) establishing a specific M&E system for the regional project that would also incorporate a dedicated information system to: (a) allow for the collection of data and information on desert ecosystems, livelihoods and sustainable management practices; (b) disseminate information through a dedicated website; (c) provide a link and a platform for exchange of information between partners; (d) include a monitoring evaluation with predefined indicators to facilitate analysis, consistency and monitoring of activities; and (e) moderate virtual discussions through existing or new web-based networks.

As seen above, there is overlap of activities (web-based networks) between component 1 and component 2.

Component 3: Project Coordination (Appraisal Estimate US\$ 100,000, Actual: US\$ 100,000)

This component was to support project implementation, through the financing of the Incremental Operating Costs, the travel and meeting-related costs of the Project Steering Committee, including the carrying out of the audits for the Project, and management fees for the Recipient, with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel – OSS) as Executing Agency.



e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Project Cost:

Total Appraisal Estimate: US\$ 1 million

Actual Disbursement: US\$ 1 million

Project Financing:

World Bank GEF contribution: Original Estimate US\$ 1 million; Actual Disbursement US\$ 1 million

Borrower contribution: Original Estimate US\$ 0.49 million; Actual Disbursement US\$ 0.49 million

Key Dates:

Approval: 23 May 2013

Effectiveness: 10 Jun 2013

Project Closing: 31 Dec 2017, as originally planned. The project was closed on time and experienced no delays or extensions.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The project was prepared and implemented in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. While the region made significant progress on key social and economic indicators, the structural problems - inequitable growth and high unemployment rates - causing the uprising, continued. The Middle East North Africa (MENA) region is home to two of the world's largest deserts: the Sahara and the Arabian Desert. These deserts encompass unique and highly adapted ecosystems that continue to provide life-supporting services to the environment and the communities inhabiting them, linked with several productive sectors, including tourism and agriculture. Poverty pockets are prevalent in desert areas, where social and economic development has lagged, even though populations possess valuable know-how and have adopted a range of environmentally-sensitive practices and techniques to adapt to their arid environment. National projects in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia focused on pilot investments to optimize the provision of desert goods and services for enhanced livelihoods. However, there was little coordination or knowledge sharing between the organizations. The rationale for the Bank's involvement was to promote knowledge sharing on opportunities for enhancing desert livelihoods among participating pilot countries. The Regional MENA Desert Ecosystem and Livelihood Knowledge Sharing and Coordination Project covered Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia and was managed by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) located in Tunis. The PDO was well aligned to the objectives of each participating country's partnership strategy with the World Bank (ICR page 9) as follows:

In **Algeria**, the strategic partnership framework has included Reimbursable Advisory Services since FY10, focusing on six sectors including "integrated desert management" as the conservation of desert



ecosystems and the improvement of the livelihoods of their populations are critical to inclusive and sustainable development of desert regions.

In **Egypt**, the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for FY15-FY19 is mainly focused on improving governance, supporting private sector job creation, and improving social inclusion. While not specifically aimed at the desert communities, the project is overall in line with the current CPF by supporting job creation in ecotourism and improving the livelihoods of marginalized desert communities.

In **Jordan**, the CPF for FY17-FY22 promotes economic and social inclusion, including provisions for private-sector-led growth, better management of water and energy resources, support to lagging regions, and activities aimed at mitigating climate change and protecting the environment. The Regional Project supports these objectives by sharing knowledge on best practices to create markets for desert products and assets in a sustainable manner and adapting to climate change impacts.

In **Morocco**, the PDO is consistent with Country Partnership Strategy FY14-FY17 which includes building a green and resilient future, including strengthening management of soil and water resources. This topic has been a part of improving knowledge on the linkages of desert ecosystems and livelihoods, outcome #1 of this Regional Project.

In **Tunisia**, the PDO is aligned with the CPF FY16-FY20, which focuses on landscapes where the poorest populations in the lagging regions are concentrated and creating economic opportunities for these populations (CPF pillar 3). Project activities related to better understanding the opportunities and markets for desert products and value chains support these objectives.

The project is also relevant to the **MENA** Regional strategy 2015 and the Regional Update 2017 which are based on fostering inclusion and shared prosperity by renewing the social contract, supporting economic recovery, resilience to refugee shocks, promoting regional cooperation and regional public goods to help build greater trust and collaboration across MENA countries.

While there is clear alignment between the project's development objectives and the WB regional and country strategies, the project components were pitched at a level that does not adequately reflect a potential solution to a development problem, with most targets at output level, and "strengthened collaboration" in the PDO had limited metrics associated with it. Exogenous factors and unintended effects were not identified.

Rating

Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

Rationale

The stated objective of the project was to strengthen cooperation among selected organizations of beneficiaries countries in areas of sustainable management of desert ecosystems.

The project organized regional and international workshops, study tours, and knowledge products aimed at improving knowledge about desert ecosystems and livelihoods. It also enabled knowledge sharing by building a dedicated Desert Information System, an online platform for accessing knowledge products, sharing M&E updates, and for facilitating virtual meetings. The project's PDO Outcome indicators in the Results



Framework were in fact at the Output level, and the ICR included some Outcome level achievements as noted below:

Outputs:

- 8 workshops organized on issues related to desert ecosystems, exceeding the target of 7 workshops.
- 7 virtual meetings held through the dedicated Desert Information System on desert related issues, not achieving the target of 10 virtual meetings.
- 8 knowledge products related to desert ecosystem issues developed through the project, exceeding the target of 7 knowledge products.

Outcome:

The project's results framework did not provide any indicators at outcome level, which made it challenging for the project to document and report on results at outcome level. However, the ICR (pages 11-12) provides some examples of project achievements beyond output level:

- In Jordan, the visit and training organized at the Marrakech crafts training center prompted the Jordanian participants to request the creation of a similar center in Jordan.
- In Tunisia, experiencing the ecotourism and forest conservation taking place in Jordan was key to stimulate the activities of an ecotourism and biodiversity conservation project.
- In Morocco, the ASIMA project is replicating best practices related to decentralization of procurement activities learned from the Tunisian oasis project, which aims to increase the value of agricultural by-products (compost, livestock feed, etc.) through sustainable practices.
- In Tunisia and Jordan, best practices concerning the plantation of cactus in degraded lands and extraction and processing of cactus oil were applied following a study tour to Morocco.
- Regionally, the discussions of knowledge products and exchange of experiences are leading to collaboration around the development of project proposals for international funding for sustainable management of desert ecosystems and livelihoods.

In the telephone meeting with IEG (September 21, 2018), the task team provided documentation of these instances of collaboration and the value added of the dedicated web-based Desert Information System (DIS) technology platform established as part of the project. These examples provide good indications that the project did produce some results at outcome level.

This review acknowledges the difficult country context where this project took place, as well as the challenges associated with measuring the impact of knowledge sharing activities. However, it also acknowledges that there are some relevant examples of collaboration across countries that serve as good examples of some outcome level results. Accordingly, the overall efficacy rating is Substantial.

Overall Efficacy Rating



Substantial

No information available

5. Efficiency

The PAD noted that the project was not amenable to a quantitative cost-benefit or financial analysis. However, during project design and implementation, the project applied cost-effective measures (ICR page 14) like:

- The organization of different events (such as virtual meetings, study tours and workshops) were combined to reduce organizational costs, particularly so in Amman and Djerba in 2014, Montpellier in 2015, and Marrakech in 2016).
- The costs related to the creation of the DIS was kept to a minimum due to the use of the in-house services of the OSS IT-specialist. Contracting this activity would likely have resulted in higher costs.

The project was completed on time and disbursed the full amount by project closing. The project was efficient in the use of project resources, particularly considering the regional scale and the number of outputs produced, and when comparing this project with other projects in the region which provided knowledge management and capacity building services.

Given that the implementation and administrative efficiency was substantial, the overall rating is maintained as Substantial.

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

An overall outcome rating of Satisfactory as Relevance of Objectives was rated Substantial, Efficacy was Substantial and Efficiency Substantial.



a. Outcome Rating
Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

- The risk related to lack of Government ownership is considered to be low risk. In October 2017, the OSS was accredited as a regional implementing agency of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). This is important to maintain low financial risk as well as minimize risk of dwindling institutional support for the project. The OSS has the reported capacity to directly sustain and develop climate change-related operations benefitting its partners and members.
- Political risk of the countries stopping their collaboration efforts is low, given the potential benefits of cross-border knowledge exchange and spillover effects for desert livelihoods. Having said that, there is potential for other conflicts in the region which might slow down the collaboration efforts.
- Technical risk of the online platform for collaboration to stop functioning is low, given that funding has been set aside for the same.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The preparation of measures for safeguards, fiduciary responsibilities, and procurement were all adequate at entry, as was the overall risk assessment. The Results Framework (RF) was inadequate in that it lacked outcome level indicators. This is a significant shortcoming, in that it did not provide the project an opportunity to document and report on results at outcome level. In terms of strategic relevance and approach, this was a grant technical assistance project and had a simple design.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank provided regular and timely supervision. Six implementation support missions were conducted during the three and a half years of project implementation, in which continued support addressed fiduciary aspects and implementation arrangements. The mid-term evaluation of the Project was timely conducted in 2015 and the related report, prepared by an external evaluator, was discussed during a subsequent steering committee meeting and provided guidance to the project management unit. The MTR recommended a revision of the RF so as to incorporate outcome level indicators. The Bank team chose not



to follow up on this recommendation, which is a significant shortcoming in the Bank’s supervision as it hindered the project in documenting and reporting outcome level achievements.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The PDO formulated for this project “strengthened collaboration”, did not identify any related development outcomes. The theory of change lists higher level outcomes (like adaptation of desert communities to impacts of climate change, sustainable use of natural resources in desert ecosystems, and enhanced livelihoods for sustainable development), with the assumption that the PDO outcome of strengthened institutional cooperation will contribute to the same. Moreover, it is assumed that cooperation is strengthened through knowledge development and sharing. All PDO indicators for this project are at the output level, and there is a lack of indicators that could measure outcomes from the project. This led to difficulties in measuring results at the outcome level. The output-focused indicators related to number of workshops held and number of knowledge products developed could not fully capture the intended strengthened collaboration at an organizational level.

b. M&E Implementation

M&E was implemented at two levels. At the level of the regional project, the PMU was focused on tracking progress against the PDO and intermediate indicators. As the nature of these indicators was largely output-based, data collection for M&E was simple. This may explain why M&E was consistently rated Satisfactory throughout the project implementation period. However, there were discrepancies between the M&E frameworks at various levels. National projects were already under implementation by the time the regional umbrella project got approved. The processes of harmonizing the indicators of the regional project with those of the national projects was laborious. National projects were often unable to provide the regional project with appropriate data, because they did not track progress with the same indicators. Consequently, M&E teams for national projects did not initially utilize the regional M&E system on a consistent basis. According to the ICR (page 19), substantial improvements in the use of the regional M&E system occurred over the last 18 months of implementation.

c. M&E Utilization



M&E data was used to track project performance. The project has laid the foundation for a programmatic evaluation of the MENA-DELP national projects to assess the outputs at the regional level using harmonized indicators that allow for an aggregated analysis of project performance data (ICR page 19-20). The quality of the M&E system is rated Modest. This is due to the design of an output-focused results-framework, which was not revised during implementation and which led to the lack of documenting and reporting on relevant project outcomes. Furthermore, the survey tool used at the end of the project, relied on recall to assess levels of satisfaction, years after the events took place; also the number of respondents was too low for the results to be reliable.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

For environmental and social safeguards purposes, the project was rated "category C" (not required) and was expected to have a global positive impact on sustainable development of desert ecosystems. The project did not trigger any safeguards policies.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management: The project remained in full compliance with fiduciary requirements. Interim Financial Reports were consistently submitted on time and in line with World Bank standards and procedures (ICR page 20). Annual audits were duly conducted, according to international auditing standards. The auditors expressed consistent positive views about the use of the resources. All the planned activities were completed within the planned period and time.

Procurement: A comprehensive review of procurement arrangements at the Mid-Term Review found that all procurement matters were executed to the full satisfaction of World Bank standards. The PMU's capacity for project implement and procurement was deemed globally satisfactory. Consultant contracts were executed in timely manner and payments were generally processed rapidly and efficiently.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

N/A

d. Other



11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	---
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	The results framework was output focused and not revised
Quality of M&E	Modest	Modest	---
Quality of ICR		Substantial	---

12. Lessons

The lessons are taken from the ICR (page 22) with some modification in language:

- **A clearly defined quality assurance mechanism is important to ensure high international standards for knowledge management projects.** It is essential to clearly define the objective and expected impact of each knowledge sharing activity like training, workshop, and study tour. For projects whose main aim is knowledge management and sharing, design elements should include internal and external quality assurance procedures and mechanisms (including appropriate peer reviews) to ensure high international standards. Such an approach should be supported with the appropriate level of financial resources at the design stage.
- **For multi-country projects, having clear parameters on ownership and participation by each beneficiary country, especially in national activities, is important to ensure achievement and sustainability of project outcomes.** Full implementation can be ensured by having detailed tracking mechanisms and parameters in place.
- **In order to assess the impact of knowledge management projects, timely knowledge sharing and documentation of behavior change is necessary.** A clearly defined objective for each knowledge product and an impact assessment mechanism before and after the event (i.e. training, workshop, study tour, document, etc.) will allow the feedback to be used in real time to inform future knowledge management.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR



The ICR is well written and clearly presents the issues that arose with assessing the achievement of results. It provides good context and useful lessons. There were some issues with internal consistency of the document - for instance, the rating for risk to development outcome was rated modest however the narrative indicated low risk. The ICR is results oriented however the quality of evidence to support the achievements reported is weak.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial