

Evaluation summary

Natural Resource Management Program in Vulnerable Areas (PACTE)

Country/Countries: Tunisia

Topic: Biodiversity

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Assessment date: **Janvier 2022**

Key FFEM support data

Project name: PACTE

Project number: CTN1200

Amount financed by the FFEM: 2 millions

Project grant date: 28/11/2016

Duration: 9 years

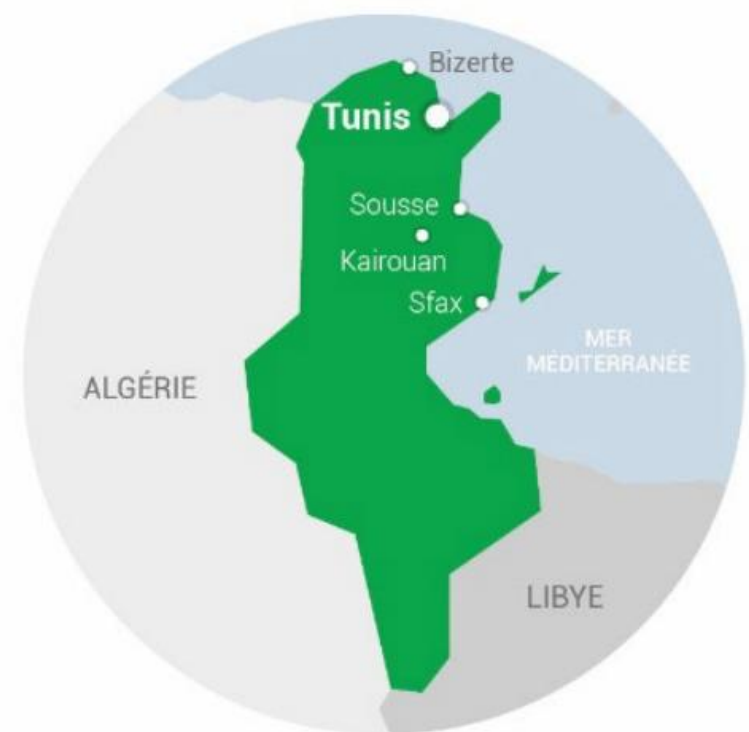
Context

Tunisia faces overexploitation of natural resources, particularly water and soil. Since the 2011 revolution, rural populations have shown a certain distrust toward central administrations. The PACTE program reflects a shift in approach by emphasizing dialogue and territorial engagement with local partners.

The program targets five governorates in inland Tunisia (Bizerte, Le Kef, Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid, and Siliana) and aims to promote territorial rebalancing. It funds activities to combat erosion and forest resource degradation, thereby contributing to climate and water resilience in these areas and supporting climate change adaptation.

Participants and operating methods

Project ownership is managed nationally by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries. From a technical standpoint, monitoring is carried out by a results-based management unit within the General Directorate of Land Planning and Conservation, with support from the General Directorate of Forests. At the regional level, oversight is conducted by the "Reforestation and Soil Protection" division of the CRDA. External NGOs may contribute their expertise during implementation. The project owner must also sign partnership agreements, notably with the Agricultural Land Agency and the Office of Livestock and Pastures.



Objectives

Main objective

The project sets three distinct and complementary objectives:

- To manage natural resources sustainably and rationally
- To contribute to the economic development of rural areas
- To establish mechanisms that promote better governance of territorial development

Specific objectives

Expected outcomes include strengthening dialogue and consultation through increased stakeholder awareness, conducting territorial assessments, and implementing physical investments. These investments cover conservation and soil/water management measures at the watershed or farm level, mobilization and valorization of water resources, forest management in public and private forests, improvement of grazing lands, enhancing territorial accessibility through track sections and crossing structures, and promoting agro-sylvo-pastoral value chains by providing producers and their organizations with production, processing, or marketing equipment and materials.



Performance appraisal

Relevance

The PACTE project demonstrates strong overall alignment with national and local strategies for natural resource governance. It also aligns with the approach promoted by AFD and FFEM regarding integrated rural territorial development. However, activities contributing to climate change adaptation could be made more explicit.

Coherence

The project takes past interventions (AFD, KfW, FAO) into account. The participatory approach is praised by all stakeholders, and the institutional setup is well-suited to the objectives pursued. Nevertheless, the project's implementation period appears too short, particularly to establish a thorough participatory diagnosis. Synergies between donors, especially regarding income-generating activities, could be strengthened.

Effectiveness

In the absence of the "Territorial Integrated Development and Planning Plans (PADITs)," which are 2.5 years delayed, few results are visible at mid-term. Capacity-building activities implemented by CIRAD and France-Agri-Mer are considered satisfactory, though limited by the lack of concrete outputs. COVID-19 slowed the rollout of training. The project demonstrated adaptability, largely thanks to the strong commitment of operational teams, partners, and AFD.

Efficiency

Available financial resources appear to have been used efficiently, although conclusions are difficult in the absence of PADITs. For similar intervention areas within multisectoral local development plans, the average budget is €3.5 million for the DARAL project funded by KfW, compared with €8 million for PACTE. COVID-19 and contractual issues caused significant delays in activity initiation.

Impact

Although confirmation is needed (mid-term evaluation), the participatory approach has helped raise local awareness of integrated territorial development and natural resource management in the context of climate change.

Viability/Sustainability

Territorial and participatory approaches are innovative and promising in Tunisia. However, they need adjustments to be more rapidly and cost-effectively replicable. The project will need to continue leveraging regional partners to ensure long-term sustainability.

Added value of FFEM support

FFEM's financial support mobilized significant resources, doubling the average budget compared to similar projects, and strengthened the project's capacity to implement integrated and participatory approaches. It supported the engagement of partners and operational teams, allowing activities to adapt despite COVID-19 and contractual delays. Finally, this support promoted territorial innovation and raised local awareness of integrated natural resource management in the context of climate change.

Recommendations & learnings

The evaluation highlights the relevance of extending the PACTE project until the end of 2027 to allow the planned activities to be implemented, given the delays experienced. It is advisable to phase the implementation in two stages: first, the participatory approach, and second, the investments, to avoid cash-flow constraints during the initial phase. Income-generating activities, which are strongly requested by beneficiaries, should be designed in synergy with existing projects (DARAL, KfW, ODESYANO, PROFITS, IFAD).

Climate change adaptation should be more explicitly integrated into territorial diagnostics, and the resulting activities should be clearly outlined; including a training module on climate change adaptation for project managers, possibly with external expertise, is recommended. The monitoring and evaluation system should be simplified (fewer indicators) and made operational. Finally, coordination between AFD and FFEM should be maintained or even strengthened.

