

 Early Warning System

WB-P514340

Potable Water Security and Resilience Project



Quick Facts

Countries	Tunisia
Specific Location	Gabes, Médenine, Tataouine, Sfax, Tozeur and Kebili
Financial Institutions	World Bank (WB)
Status	Approved
Bank Risk Rating	A
Voting Date	2026-03-31
Borrower	Government of Tunisia - Ministry of Economy and Planning; SONEDE
Sectors	Law and Government, Water and Sanitation
Investment Type(s)	Loan
Investment Amount (USD)	\$ 208.50 million
Project Cost (USD)	\$ 248.00 million



Project Description

According to the Bank's website, the objective of this project is to improve the quality and resilience of potable water services; and to strengthen the operational performance of the national water utility.

The project aims to improve the quality and resilience of potable water services and to strengthen the operational performance of the national water utility, SONEDE. It will expand the Zarat seawater desalination plant in Gabes from 50,000 to 100,000 cubic meters per day to provide safer, more reliable water to communities in Gabes, Médenine, and Tataouine; deploy 100,000 smart meters and rehabilitate water distribution networks to reduce water losses in Sfax, Tozeur and Kebili; and support organizational modernization.



Early Warning System Project Analysis

The environmental risk rating for the Project is assessed as **Substantial**, reflecting the nature and scale of the planned physical interventions, the sensitivity of the coastal and urban environments in which activities will take place, and the current institutional capacity constraints of the implementing agency. The Project includes multiple categories of physical works with distinct environmental risk profiles. These include: (i) rehabilitation and restructuring of potable water distribution networks in densely populated urban and peri-urban areas; (ii) construction of long-distance adduction and transmission pipelines crossing semi-arid and desert environments; and (iii) Phase 2 expansion of the Zarat seawater desalination plant through the installation of additional electromechanical equipment within the footprint of an existing facility. While the Project does not involve new greenfield development or works in protected areas, several components present technically complex environmental risks that require careful management.

The project's social risks are rated as **substantial** due to several key factors. These include significant potential impacts on local communities' livelihoods and well-being, especially considering the Implementing Agency's limited experience with World Bank social risk management and the absence of social specialists within the Project Management Unit (PMU). The wide-ranging activities, such as equipping the Zarat desalination plant, constructing and rehabilitating water supply and distribution networks, and rolling out electronic smart meters across six southern governorates, further heighten the risk profile. Main social risks identified are: discrimination and social exclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, irregular migrants, and the poor); labor and working conditions risks, including the potential for social friction, unfair labor practices, and increased risks of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment; community health and safety hazards due to construction activities; potential disruption of livelihoods and small-scale land acquisition; possible impacts on cultural heritage, particularly in Sfax; and the risk of ineffective community engagement and grievance mechanisms because of technical and political barriers. Collectively, these factors justify the substantial social risk classification for the project. The project is rated as Substantial risk for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH) due to its wide geographic scope, extensive construction activities, and engagement with vulnerable populations across six governorates. Contributing factors include socioeconomic disparities, limited access to services, and gaps in prevention measures such as codes of conduct, training, and reporting systems.



Investment Description

- World Bank (WB)

Total Project Cost: US\$ 248.00 million

IBRD Commitment: US\$ 208.50 million

National Government: US\$ 39.50 million



Contact Information

CONTACT POINT - World Bank

Task Team Leader: Stephane Dahan

Title: Senior Water Specialist

Email: sdahan@worldbank.org

TTL Contact: Floris Dalemans

Job Title: Water Specialist

Email: fdalemans@worldbank.org

TTL Contact: Habab Taifour

Job Title: Lead Water Specialist

Email: htaifour@worldbank.org

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

To submit an information request for project information, you will have to create an account to access the Access to Information request form. You can learn more about this process at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/access-to-information/request-submission>

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM OF THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank Inspection Panel is the independent complaint mechanism and fact-finding body for people who believe they are likely to be, or have been, adversely affected by a World Bank-financed project. If you submit a complaint to the Inspection Panel, they may investigate to assess whether the World Bank is following its own policies and procedures for preventing harm to people or the environment. You can contact the Inspection Panel or submit a complaint by emailing ipanel@worldbank.org. Information on how to file a complaint and a complaint request form are available at: <https://www.inspectionpanel.org/how-to-file-complaint>



Bank Documents

- [Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary \(ESRS\) - Potable Water Security and Resilience Pro](#)
- [Appraisal Project Information Document \(PID\)](#)
- [Appraisal Project Information Document \(PID\)](#)
- [Climate Finance Assessment \(P514340\)](#)
- [Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary \(ESRS\) - Potable Water Security and Resilience Proje](#)
- [Concept Project Information Document \(PID\)](#)
- [Disclosable Version of the ISR - Potable Water Security and Resilience Project - P514340 - Sequence](#)
- [Environmental and Social Commitment Plan \(ESCP\) - Potable Water Security and Resilience Project - P5](#)
- [Environmental and Social Management Framework \(ESMF\) Potable Water Security and Resilience Project \(](#)
- [Stakeholder Engagement Plan \(SEP\) - Potable Water Security and Resilience Project - P514340](#)
- [Tunisia - Irrigation Water Security, Resilience, and Value-Addition Project](#)

Media

- [Tunisia: Major Push to Strengthen Water Security and Resilience](#)