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Coastal protection – Tunisia

Protecting nature and the economy

North Africa is one of the regions most affected by rising sea levels worldwide. This also applies to Tunisia, where the larger cities in particular will be at risk in the future. The higher sea level can harm not only the population but also the local economy and infrastructure. The negative effects can already be felt in the areas of the country directly on the coast, where they hamper economic activity and damage natural areas. KfW Development Bank is therefore supporting Tunisia's efforts to develop effective adaptation strategies in response.

Context

The Tunisian coast, with a total length of more than 100 kilometres, is already affected by severe erosion. Coastal erosion increases the vulnerability of coastal communities and cities to flooding during extreme weather and climate events – there is no natural protection and buffer. At the same time, the increasing influx of seawater poses a threat to the country's very limited freshwater sources: floods cause lasting damage to water sources and fertile land. The salination of the sources threatens the supply of drinking water and adversely affects the availability of usable water resources in agriculture and industry.

Tunisia's coastal areas are home to about two thirds of the population, who in turn account for about 90 % of the country's industrial and tourism activities. Tunisia's coasts are of crucial importance due to their high level of urbanisation and economic potential in tourism, industry, fisheries and agriculture. The intensified use and associated development of the coastline benefits many people. In many places, however, it also disrupts the

natural balance between important deposit processes and natural coastal erosion.

The coastline is shifting further and further inland due to erosion. In places where the sea almost completely washes away beaches, the nearby cities and business hubs, including tourist resorts, are at great risk of the advancing erosion. This is compounded by increasing environmental pollution as a result of intensive human use.

Project name	IWRM coastal protection programme in Tunisia
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Tunisia
Project partners	Tunisian Ministry of the Environment Tunisian Coastal Protection and Planning Agency APAL (Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral)





Urban coastline in Tunisia. Source: KfW photo archive, photographer: photothek.net

Project approach

KfW is supporting Tunisia's coastal protection strategy on behalf of the German Federal Government. The measures are directly aimed at protecting environmentally, economically and culturally important coastal areas and coastal water resources. Depending on the intervention area, the projects focus on different objectives, ranging from the preservation of coastal infrastructure to the protection of biodiversity and the safeguarding of important tourism locations. In order to protect the coastline against erosion, a combination of different infrastructure components is usually financed. These include underwater breakwaters, dyke constructions and platforms, as well as sand fills and dune stabilisation with biological measures. The infrastructure built is adapted to the needs of the local inhabitants and in some cases even creates new opportunities for how the coasts can be used (e.g. riverside promenades, boat moorings and fishing grounds).

In addition, the awareness of municipalities and the local population of the importance of an intact coastline is raised. In cooperation with the local authorities and citizens' committees set up specifically for this purpose, plans for the use of the new beaches are drawn up. The focus is on reconciling the interests of the local population with coastal and environmental concerns.

Impact

KfW Development Bank's project increases the adaptability of the Tunisian coastal landscape to climate change. Coasts are restored, their natural resilience is revived. Residents of coastal towns benefit directly from

the measures because they are better protected against the negative effects of climate change. Also the tourism sector, as one of the country's most important economic sectors and an engine for other sectors, such as crafts, construction, trade and transport, benefits significantly from a sustainably protected coastline that is also attractive for tourism. The extensive construction measures in the programme will also temporarily create new jobs nationwide. Another effect is not insignificant for Tunisia's young democracy: the dialogue between the state coastal protection agency, the municipalities and the population increases the quality of interaction between the government and its population and boosts confidence in the state's ability to act.

However, the project is most beneficial to the environment itself: less land loss and the preservation of the dune landscape prevent the often irreversible disappearance of important ecosystems. In Tunisia, improved protection of the country's already limited freshwater resources is a key argument for the consistent conservation of coastal zones. The impact of the project thus extends far beyond the coastline into the country's interior. Environmental protection and nature conservation are closely linked to the preservation of urban infrastructure and economic opportunities and, not least of all, the project is raising awareness among the local population of the importance and vulnerability of coastal and marine resources.



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