AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
ALLO SVILUPPO

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

AICS TUNIS

Table of Contents

Foreword

“Celebrating the first ten years of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) means honoring a commitment rooted in a long-standing history of solidarity and shared vision that began in Tunisia in the late 1980s. The work carried out by the Tunis Office has built on and enhanced the legacy of the Local Technical Unit (UTL), established in 1991, transforming decades of continuous presence into a model of strategic and enduring partnership.

Throughout this journey, Italy has remained alongside Tunisia, supporting the private sector and strengthening public investment, and has consistently contributed to agriculture, education, and vocational training. This partnership is particularly evident in the southern and desert regions, where Italian cooperation has been working for nearly forty years to transform challenging territories into centers of resilience and opportunity.

Over the past decade, the Tunis Office has also succeeded in extending this wealth of expertise to neighboring countries — Libya, Algeria, and Morocco — demonstrating remarkable adaptability and the ability to operate effectively in diverse and fragile contexts.

Today, this legacy calls upon us to respond to defining challenges of our time: from climate change to the energy transition, from water security to regional stability. Yet every challenge can also become an opportunity. AICS Tunis will therefore continue its work across the countries under its mandate, contributing to the development of an economy that promotes fair wealth distribution and dignified employment, supported by strategic public investment and a dynamic private sector.

In this context, women and younger generations across the region stand out as the true drivers of change. Investing in them means investing in human talent — the most valuable and inexhaustible resource these countries possess to drive innovation and shape the future. This forward-looking vision also guides our approach to sustainability, seen not as a constraint, but as a genuine frontier for development. From this perspective, the responsible management of vital resources such as water and energy can foster new employment sectors and technological advancement, laying the foundations for a prosperous, resilient, and sustainable future.

Our commitment continues within the framework of the Mattei Plan for Africa, promoting strong and lasting partnerships with several key countries of Italian cooperation, while engaging institutions, civil society, the private sector, and the most vulnerable communities, so that no one is left behind.”

Isabella Lucaferri
Head of Office

AICS Tunis: 10 Years at a Glance

The AICS Regional Office in Tunis was established in January 2016 following the adoption of Law 125/2014, which reformed Italy's development cooperation system. The office operates in full historical and operational continuity with the Local Technical Unit (UTL), which had been active within the Italian Embassy since 1991.

Initially responsible solely for Tunisia, the Tunis Office gradually **expanded its mandate to coordinate Italian cooperation programs in Libya, Morocco, and Algeria**, further consolidating Italy's role as a strategic partner in North Africa.

Over the past decade, the activities of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Tunisia have been guided by strategic priorities that combine territorial resilience with sustainable economic growth. Our priorities include supporting the private sector and integrated rural development—two pillars for addressing socio-economic disparities and creating employment opportunities.

In the field of **rural development**, Italy's commitment has helped transform vulnerable regions through participatory models for the managing of natural resources. Flagship initiatives such as the *Integrated Rural development program in the delegations of Hazoua and Tamerza (Tozeur)*, together with the long-standing program in Rjim Maatoug — now extended to the El Mahdeth area — have enabled the rehabilitation and enhancement of thousands of hectares of desert land, creating new communities and opportunities for thousands of people.

Over the years, particular emphasis has also been placed on the sustainable management of natural resources and on supporting the transition towards more sustainable development models through initiatives in agriculture, renewable energy, and climate change adaptation. Within this framework, numerous programs have sought to strengthen the resilience of local production systems, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and encourage the responsible management of water and environmental resources.

The commitment of Italian Cooperation has extended beyond inland territories to embrace the maritime dimension as a key driver of prosperity and regional stability. In this context, the various phases of the NEMO program, implemented by CIHEAM Bari, have served as an important model for **safeguarding coastal ecosystems and promoting a sustainable blue economy**.

Over the past decade, strengthening **economic development** and employment has been a cornerstone of Italy's strategy in Tunisia. What initially began as targeted support gradually evolved into a more systemic approach, centred on promoting youth entrepreneurship and reinforcing the structural capacity of the private sector.

Through the introduction of innovative financial inclusion programs and targeted instruments designed to support productive investment, Italian Cooperation has accompanied small and medium-sized enterprises in their transition towards greater competitiveness. This process has helped embed new models of local development, while recognizing the social and solidarity economy as a key driver of social cohesion and inclusive growth across the country.

Through nationwide initiatives such as PRASOC — the *Program for supporting the private sector and financial inclusion in the sectors of agriculture and the social and solidarity economy* — more than 400 investment operations were financed between 2020 and 2025, contributing to the consolidation of over 4,000 jobs in strategic sectors such as agriculture and the social and solidarity economy.

Within this broader framework, the nexus between **migration and development** has also emerged as a major area of intervention.

Between 2017 and 2026, the Mobi-TRE project — implemented in partnership with IOM — successfully mobilized the Tunisian diaspora as a source of productive investment in their regions of origin. Across its two phases, the project supported 56 Tunisian small enterprises located in areas with high migration potential, while leveraging investments from diaspora communities based in Italy, France, Germany, and Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, it assisted Tunisian authorities in designing effective diaspora engagement strategies to be integrated into national development plans.

Throughout this process, **vocational training** has established itself as a strategic lever for employment, evolving in close alignment with the real needs of the Tunisian labor market.

Italian action has focused on promoting sectors with strong growth potential — ranging from textiles and mechanical engineering to renewable energy and agri-business — while placing particular emphasis on crafts and tourism. These sectors have been supported through the integrated value chain approach of the "Creative Tunisia 2" program, implemented by UNIDO and co-financed by the European Union and Italian cooperation.

Over the course of this decade, the "Sistema Italia*" approach has continued to strengthen, with close coordination among civil society organizations, businesses, and research institutions helping to bridge the gap between skills and employment, while laying the foundations for more equitable and sustainable economic growth.

AICS has also supported Tunisia's path **towards institutional** strengthening and democratic transition by promoting initiatives to improve essential public services, enhance administrative capacities, and support public investment in strategic sectors, including healthcare and **social infrastructure**.

Over the years, Italian Cooperation has also promoted initiatives to safeguard and enhance both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, while supporting the crafts sector and the cultural and creative industries. These sectors have increasingly been recognized as strategic drivers for local development, job creation, and the promotion of the country's cultural identity.

In **Libya**, AICS's work over the past decade has taken place in a context marked by uncertainty and instability following years of conflict. Within this framework, Italian intervention initially focused on **strengthening basic services** for the most vulnerable segments of the population, adopting a predominantly humanitarian approach in sectors such as healthcare and the protection of disadvantaged groups.

Since 2016, AICS has provided technical assistance, program management, and monitoring for initiatives financed by Italian Cooperation, with the aiming to ensure an effective response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the protracted conflict in Libyaand to coordinate with the various local and international actors involved in the country's stabilization process.

*"Sistema Italia" : The collective of Italian institutions contributing to the country's development.

Over the course of this decade, Italy has established itself as one of the most active donors in Libya. Following the end of the war in June 2020 and the country's gradual return to greater stability, Libya experienced a significant reduction in urgent humanitarian needs. Alongside humanitarian aid initiatives aligned with United Nations response plans, development programs progressively gained prominence.

In this context, the AICS Regional Office in Tunis has worked to supported Libya's medium- and long-term transition, contributing to the country's **stabilization, national reconciliation**, and reconstruction efforts. Guided by the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, Italian Cooperation initiatives in Libya have supported administrative decentralization, strengthened local governance capacities, enhanced the management capabilities of local authorities, and improved the delivery of essential services across six key sectors: **health and protection; water and agriculture; education and economic development; cultural heritage; renewable energy; and decentralization/local development**.

In the **health sector**, several initiatives have been implemented over the years, particularly to improve access to and the sustainability of primary healthcare services, and pediatric care. These efforts have been carried out in partnership with specialized institutions such as the Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital in Rome and the Global Health Center (CSG) of the Meyer Children's Hospital in Florence, a recognised European centre of excellence in maternal and child health.

In the **water** and **agriculture** sector, AICS has primarily operated in the southern Fezzan region through partnerships with international organizations such as FAO, UNICEF, and CIHEAM Bari, as well as with Italian and international civil society organizations, supporting agricultural production and local communities.

In the field of **education** and economic development, AICS has worked through international organizations such as IOM and UNOPS, together with Italian and international civil society organizations, to strengthen the vocational training sector and promote closer alignment between acquired skills and the needs of the private sector.

In the area of **cultural heritage**, AICS — in collaboration with technical partners such as the Italian Central Institute for Restoration (ICR) and "Roma Tre" University — has promoted initiatives aimed to preserve archaeological sites of major historical significance while strengthening local expertise in restoration and cultural heritage management. These initiatives have adopted an integrated approach combining heritage conservation and enhancement, community participation, and economic sustainability, while encouraging more accessible, innovative, and inclusive ways of engaging with cultural heritage.

Regarding the energy sector, AICS has managed initiatives designed to strengthen renewable energy production to support essential public services, particularly in health and education, working through civil society organizations and international partners such as UNDP.

Lastly, another major area of intervention over the past decade has focused on supporting **local development**, with particular emphasis on strengthening municipalities capacity to deliverof basic services. Through partnerships with international organizations such as UNOPS, UNDP, and UNICEF, Italian public institutions such as ANCI, and international civil society organizations, AICS has operated at the national level to support Libyan municipalities and enhance their capacity to provide essential services to vulnerable populations.

Within this framework, particular mention should be made of the three phases of the EU-funded project *Baladiyati* (“My Municipality”), which has been implemented continuously since 2018, with the third phase currently underway. The program has progressively strengthened local governance in Libya by improving administrative capacities and municipal planning systems. The successive phases of the project have promoted more efficient and inclusive public services through concrete local-level interventions and active community engagement. Together, the three phases have consolidated an integrated and sustainable approach to local development, reinforcing the role of municipalities in Libya’s stabilization process.

Italian cooperation has supported **Algeria** since the 1970s through development initiatives spanning a wide range of sectors, including public infrastructure, industrial and agricultural development, as well as the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage. Given Algeria's substantial domestic resources for advancing national development, Italian Cooperation interventions have historically focused on qualitative dimensions such as training, technology transfer, and capacity building. Over the years, particular attention has been devoted to environmental protection, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the agricultural and livestock sectors, notably through debt conversion programs.

In addition, Italy continues to rank among the leading contributors to the international response to the **Sahrawi crisis**, standing as the third-largest donor to refugee populations living in camps in south-western Algeria. Within this framework, Italian cooperation — through the financing of United nations agencies and civil society organizations — has consistently supported humanitarian assistance programs and the strengthening of basic services, contributing to improved access to essential services and better living conditions for refugee communities.

Italy's intervention has been developed through a multisectoral approach aligned with the priorities identified in the *Sahrawi Refugee Response* Plan, promoting initiatives in the areas of Food Security, Education, and WASH, while placing increasing emphasis on strengthening livelihoods and protecting the most vulnerable groups.

Within this context, particular importance has been given to **capacity building**, improving access to **essential services**, and promoting opportunities for **socio-economic inclusion**, with a special focus on women and young people. Italian cooperation has therefore contributed to the consolidation of an increasingly integrated response to the Sahrawi crisis, which, due to its protracted nature, requires interventions that combine humanitarian assistance with actions to improve **basic services,** strengthen education and training, and support sustainable livelihood opportunities.

From this perspective, the nexus between access to essential services, human capital development, and livelihoods represents a key element in strengthening the resilience of refugee communities.

Italian cooperation has maintained a long-standing operational presence in **Morocco** since the late 2000s, following the signing of the bilateral cooperation framework agreement and the launch of bilateral programs in 2009. Over the past decade, numerous initiatives have been implemented across several sectors that are strategic to the country's socio-economic development, insupport of Morocco's key national priorities.

In particular, within the framework of national **water policy**, the Agency supported "Program for the Supply of Drinking Water to Rural Populations" (PAGER), implementing activities aimed **to improve access to drinking water and sanitation services in rural areas**. These interventions included the construction of sanitation infrastructure in primary schools and awareness-raising activities targeting local communities.

In addition, Italian cooperation launched **several poverty-reduction** initiatives through its support for the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), a flagship program introduced in 2005 under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, to reduce poverty, social exclusion, and territorial inequalities, and to support the microcredit sector. Over time, numerous infrastructure interventions were also carried out, particularly in the development of roads and communication systems across the national railway network.

Concerning civil society initiatives, particular attention has been devoted to promoting and **protecting the social**, economic, and human rights of vulnerable single mothers, children without family protection, and children with disabilities. More recently, interventions have increasingly focused on the right to education for all and on fostering the inclusion of children with disabilities within primary schools. Furthermore, as the impact of the devastating 2023 earthquake remains deeply felt, Italian cooperation has continued to support initiatives that promote decent and sustainable employment, strengthen the capacities of actors in the Social and solidarity economy, and encourage vocational training pathways and opportunities for business creation.

Finally, Italian Cooperation has succeeded in developing a distinctive niche of intervention centered on the promotion and **enhancement of cultural heritage** — a sector in which fewer international actors are engaged. Through this targeted approach, Italy has supported projects aimed at preserving historic monuments, artisanal traditions, and archaeological sites, while integrating heritage conservation with the socio-economic development of local communities. Such interventions have not only contributed to safeguarding the country's historical and artistic heritage, but have also generated employment opportunities, promoted sustainable tourism, and strengthened social cohesion, with the broader objective of transforming cultural heritage into a genuine driver of local development.

Following the completion of the EU accreditation process in 2018, the AICS Regional Office in Tunis assumed direct management responsibility for **EU-funded programs, further strengthening Italy's role as a reliable partner inimplementing European Union-funded initiatives.**

Among the multiannual programmes managed by the Office are ADAPT — *Support for Sustainable Development in Agriculture and Artisanal Fisheries in Tunisia* — aimed at promoting the agroecological transition and supporting the development of agriculture and artisanal fisheries, as well as the Baladiyati program in Libya, currently in its third phase, which over the years has supported municipalities in the delivery of essential public services in key sectors such as healthcare and water resource management, while also fostering socio-economic development.

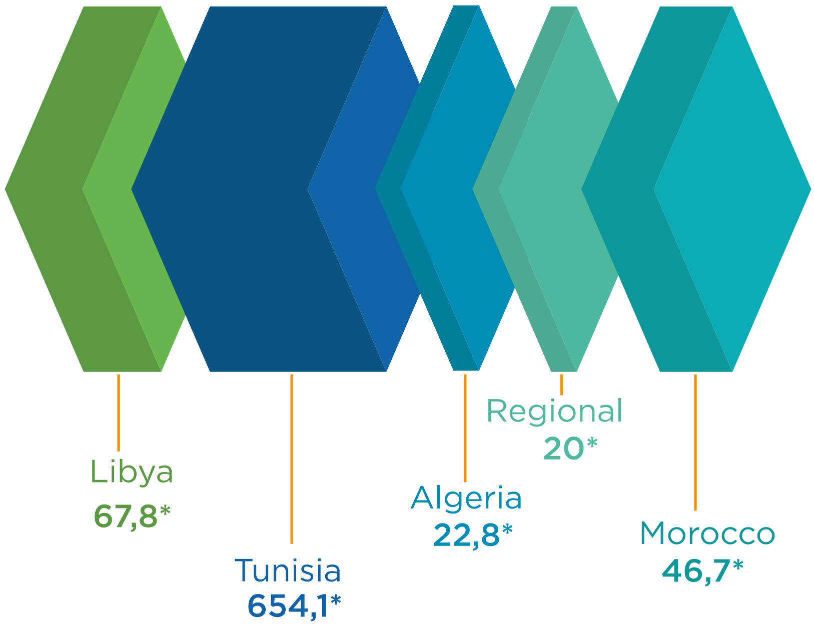
The portfolio is further complemented by initiatives dedicated to water resource management and the enhancement of Libyan cultural heritage, implemented in partnership with European institutions and United Nations agencies.

Taken as a whole, this commitment highlights the capacity of the AICS Tunis Office not only to manage European resources effectively, but also to transform them into structured, high-impact, and sustainability-oriented programs, thereby further consolidating the role of Italy and AICS as key actors in international cooperation.

AICS Tunis in 2025

Budget 2025

Total : 811,4*



* millions of euros

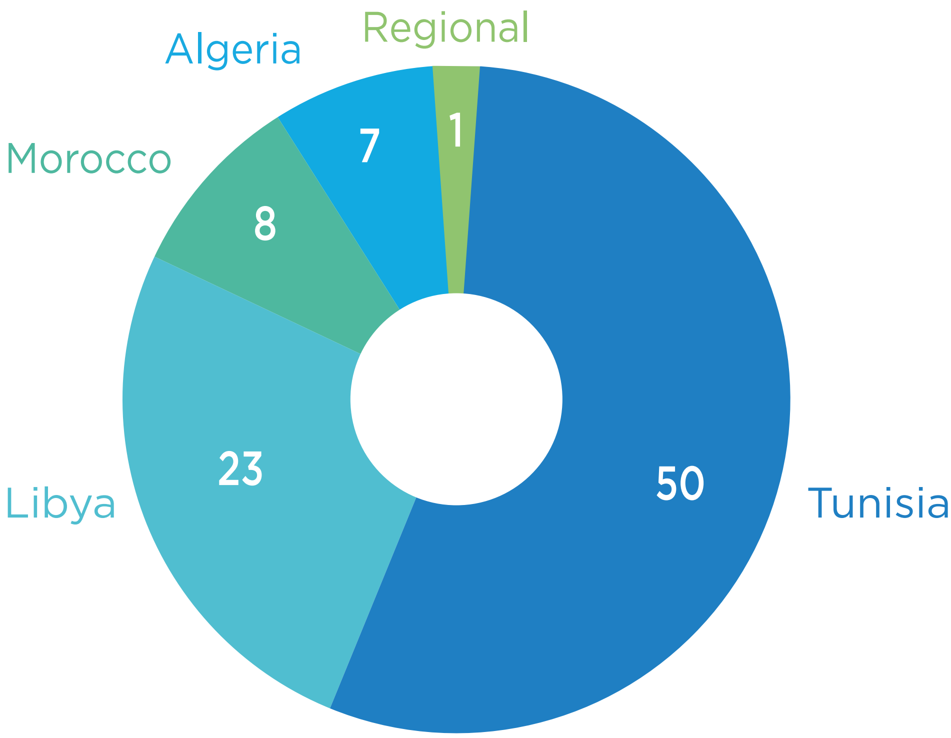
The AICS Regional Office in Tunis

Regular programming[1]	Emergency	EU-funded programmes	CSOs[2]
692,7*	25,4*	93,3*	45,6*

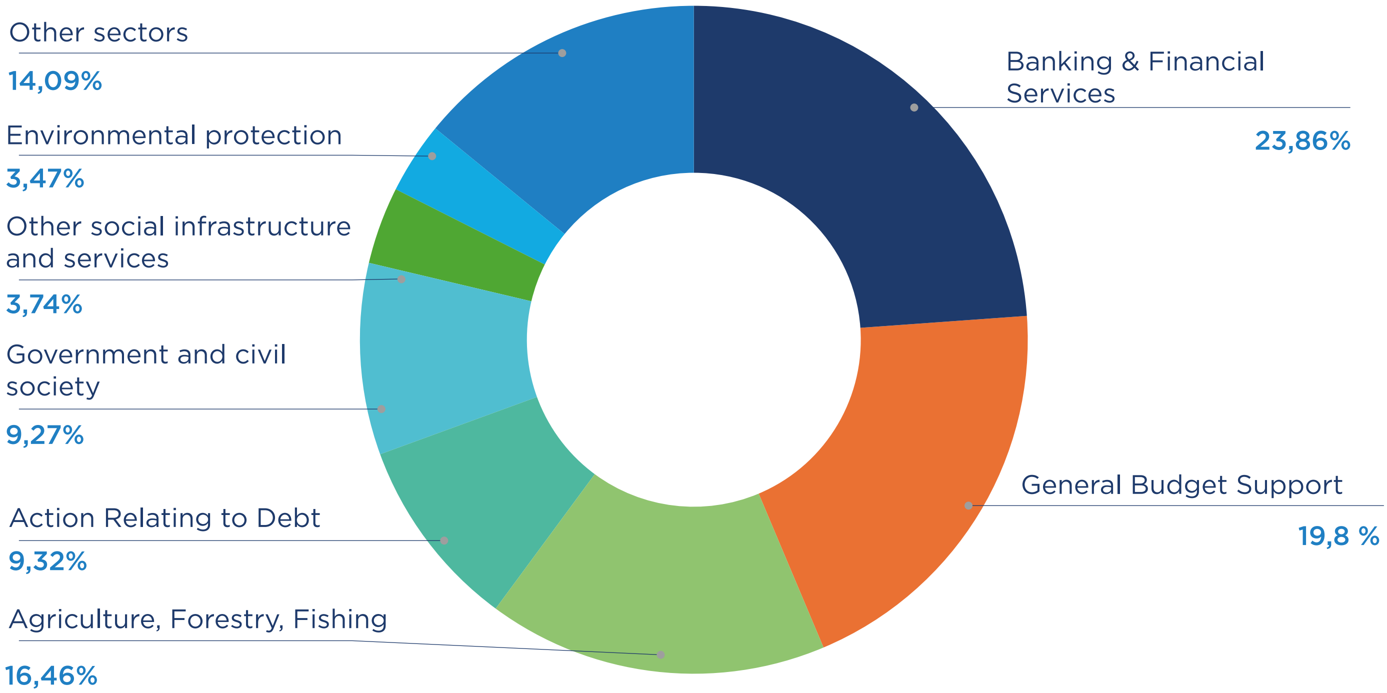
[1] The total budget for the four countries covered by the Office under the regular programming includes grant initiatives, credit lines, debt swap and support to the state budget.

[2] The total CSOs figure represents a portion of the regular programming and emergency funds and includes AICS directly-managed initiatives, grants to CSOs and "promossi" projects.

Number of initiatives



OECD Sectors



Countries of Intervention

TUNISIA

General Context

With a population of approximately **12 million people** and a surface area of 163,610 km^2, Tunisia is the smallest country in the Maghreb region. In 2025, the country ranked 105th out of 193 countries in the **Human development**[1] Index, placing it among countries with a "high level of human development." Despite this, Tunisia continues to face a profound and multidimensional transition, in which political and economic dynamics intersect within a complex and delicate balance.

On the **economic** front, the country remains in a challenging phase. Growth has continued at a moderate pace, insufficient to fully absorb youth unemployment, while the management of public debt continues to constrain fiscal space for productive investment significantly. This financial fragility is closely linked to a **political landscape** that has undergone major transformations in recent years. The consolidation of a new institutional framework has sought to prioritize internal stability and overcome the fragmentation of previous years; however, it must now demonstrate the effectiveness of this centralized approach in delivering tangible economic results.

The 2025 financial year marked a further consolidation of Tunisia's recovery trajectory, with growth indicators exceeding the projections established in the previous two-year planning cycle. Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) increased **by 2.5% on an annual basis**, reflecting a significant acceleration compared to the 1.4% growth recorded in 2024[2]. The main driver of this positive performance was the recovery of the **agri-food** sector, which benefited from more favorable climatic conditions, resulting in increased domestic production. This, in turn, supported a strong revival in export activity, particularly in the olive oil sector, while improved cereal harvests also contributed to an overall strengthening of the trade balance.

Tourism likewise confirmed its role as a cornerstone of the national economy, generating essential foreign currency inflows that helped preserve the stability of foreign reserves and finance of external needs.

The year 2025 was also marked by a gradual stabilization of inflation, which fell to **5.3%, compared to 7% in 2024**[3]. This downward trend, significantly lower than the peaks recorded in previous years, allowed the Central Bank to adopt a less restrictive monetary policy stance, gradually easing pressure on interest rates and supporting access to credit for businesses.

[1] Human Development Report 2025
[2] Tunisian National Institute of Statistics (INS)
[3] Ibid

The results achieved in 2025 point to a degree of structural resilience. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of growth remains closely dependent on the continuation of the reform agenda and the preservation of macro-financial stability.

Structural reforms continue to represent a critical challenge. Many of the changes anticipated since the 2011 Revolution — including the modernization of public administration, the liberalization of key sectors, and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures — continue to progress slowly, limiting the country's full economic potential.

Moreover, the macroeconomic momentum observed in 2025 has not yet to address the country's most pressing social challenge: unemployment. Despite the economic recovery, the unemployment rate has remained above 16% and exceeds **37% among young university graduates. This disconnect between economic growth and the creation of quality employment** opportunities represents one of the most significant challenges to the country's social stability, further fuelling migration pressures that the government has sought to address through increasingly restrictive border management policies.

The country also continues to face chronic **energy dependency**, which today constitutes one of the principal constraints on Tunisia's long-term economic outlook. More than half of the country's energy needs — **approximately 65%** of national demand — are covered through imports, while both the industrial and civil sectors remain heavily reliant on **fossil fuels.** This situation exposes Tunisia to fluctuations in international oil and gas prices, with immediate and significant repercussions for public finances. In this context, the energy transition has become a strategic priority, both to reduce **macroeconomic vulnerability** and to support a more sustainable model of economic growth.

Overall, Tunisia's situation in 2025 reflects a degree of **macroeconomic resilience**, while also revealing persistent **structural vulnerabilities**. Growth remains moderate and insufficiently inclusive, and the improvement in macroeconomic indicators has not yet translated into a significant strengthening of the productive fabric or employment levels. The Tunisian authorities have reaffirmed their full awareness of the need to address the country's **structural imbalances**, with a focus on restoring economic dynamism by supporting investment and strengthening export capacity. A central pillar of this strategy is the strict control of the budget deficit, an objective already pursued through the **2025 Finance Law**, which further reinforced the social role of the State and well as the security of food and water supplies.

From a strategic planning perspective, the country is currently undergoing a critical transition phase. In 2025, the government began preparing the new **2026–2030 Development Plan**. This document, currently in its finalization stage, seeks to move beyond a short-term emergency approach and establish a long-term development vision. The process builds upon the foundations laid by the national strategy "Vision Tunisia 2035", presented in 2023, which outlines the country's long-term economic and social transformation priorities.

At the heart of the new agenda are the **energy transition** to reduce the structural deficit, the **digitalization of public administration**, and the creation of a more enabling environment for **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**. The stated objective for the coming five years is to translate these strategic orientations into concrete reforms capable of unlocking the country's productive potential and fostering more inclusive growth that is less dependent on fluctuations in external markets.

Italian Cooperation Intervention

Tunisia's strategic importance for Italy is the natural result of a proximity that is not only geographical, but also historical and social, placing the country at the heart of Mediterranean dynamics. **Italian cooperation** has maintained a **longstanding presence** in Tunisia since the 1980s, continuing uninterrupted even throughout the critical phases that followed the 2011 Revolution. Following the period of the "Arab Spring," the intervention strategy evolved towards increasingly close technical cooperation, aimed at supporting Tunisian institutions in implementing structural reforms and advancing the transition towards new models of sustainable growth.

The latest three-year programming framework for the period 2025–2027 was agreed upon through the signing of a **joint declaration** in January 2025, allocating resources amounting to EUR 400 million, including EUR 320 million in concessional loans and EUR 80 million in grants.

This agreement confirms the strengthening of development cooperation for the 2025–2027 period and further consolidates Tunisia's role as a priority partner implementing the **Mattei Plan** for Africa.

Within this framework, Italy's commitment is focused on supporting an **inclusive and resilient growth model** based on the sustainable management of natural resources and environmental sustainability. The strategy for the 2025–2027 period is structured around three **fundamental pillars**, developed through close coordination with local institutions.

First, the commitment focuses on **environmental and food sustainability**, with particular emphasis on protecting of water resources and biodiversity in order to address climate change. At the same time, efforts aim to stimulate economic growth and social inclusion by improving the competitiveness of the national economy. Finally, a central pillar of the strategy is the energy transition, aimed at promoting energy efficiency and increasing the integration of renewable sources within the national energy mix.

In 2025, the Joint Committee approved grant-funded initiatives **totaling to EUR 35.92 million**.

Two EU-funded initiatives are also currently underway in Tunisia, both closely interconnected and representing a combined budget of EUR 69.2 million. The first is the ADAPT program — *Support for Sustainable Development in Agriculture and Artisanal Fisheries in Tunisia* — implemented by AICS with the contribution of the World Food Program (WFP). The program aims to support the development of sustainable production systems in the agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture sectors.

The second initiative is the ADAPT Cereals program, which seeks to strengthen food security and food sovereignty in Tunisia by both responding immediately to the risk of cereal shortages and developing and supporting sustainable, inclusive, and resilient cereal production systems.

In 2025, the overall portfolio of ongoing **Italian cooperation initiatives in Tunisia amounted to approximately EUR 654 million**.

These resources correspond to 50 initiatives distributed as follows:

- **41 grants under the regular programming (€149.6 million)**
- **6 credit lines (€385.3 million)**
- **2 EU-funded programs (EUR 69.2 million)**[4]
- **1 debt swap initiative (€50 million)**

[4] The ADAPT program(AID 012304) and ADAPT Cereals (AID 012769) are two separate EU-funded agreements which, due to the coherence of their objectives and management modalities, are operationally considered by the Office as a single program.

50 initiatives

- **41** Grants — **149,6 millions of euros**
- **6** Credit lines — **385,3 millions of euros**
- **2** EU-funded programmes [1] — **69,2 millions of euros**
- **1** Debt swap — **50 millions of euros**

[1] The ADAPT (AID 012304) and ADAPT Cereali (AID 012769) programs are two separate EU-funded contracts which, due to the coherence of their content and management arrangements, are considered, in operational terms for this Office, as a single program.

Focus – Our Stakeholders

Rjim Maatoug: A Green Belt Born of Strong, Transparent, and Concrete Tunisian-Italian Cooperation

Looking back at the first stages of the **Rjim Maatoug** development project in the early 1990s now feels almost dreamlike. At the time, imagining this land in its current state seemed nothing short of utopian.

The project was launched in 1989, based on a study jointly conducted by two consulting firms, one Tunisian and one Italian. The ambition was to transform what was then a deserted, uninhabited area by creating **2,500 hectares of palm groves**, while simultaneously developing all the civil and social infrastructure necessary to encourage the permanent settlement of nomadic populations and improve their living conditions and way of life.

This initiative received renewed momentum beginning in 2015 through Italian Cooperation funding for the project **Complementary Actions in Rjim Maatoug,** and later, from 2021 onwards, through participation in financing the **El Mahdeth** Development Project, which represents an enhanced version of the Rjim Maatoug development model across an area of 1,040 hectares.

Beyond its contribution to the preparation of project studies, Italy's commitment materialized in support for to the Tunisian counterpart both financially and through the provision of continuous and targeted technical assistance. This support made it possible to identify technical solutions adapted to the challenges encountered during implementation and to facilitate procedural coordination between all parties involved.

Coordination with the Tunisian counterpart — and in particular with the Rjim Maatoug Development Office (**Office de Développement de Rjim Maatoug - ODRM**), acting as the project's implementing agency — was further strengthened from 2016 onwards through the direct involvement of the **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)** in the governance of projects managed by ODRM and co-financed by Italian Cooperation. These include, in particular, the Creation and Rehabilitation of Date Palm Groves in Rjim Maatoug project (1990–2026), **Complementary Actions in Rjim Maatoug** (2015–2026), and the **El Mahdeth Development** Project, launched in 2021.

The continuous operational dialogue developed over the years through field missions, technical meetings, and ongoing exchanges between the parties — particularly through the close synergy between **ODRM** and **AICS** — has helped build a strong foundation of mutual trust. This relational capital has proven decisive in ensuring timely and effective project management, laying the groundwork for equally efficient and fruitful cooperation on future Italian-Tunisian cooperation initiatives.

Today, **the results of this cooperation are tangible** and a source of genuine pride. What was once an **isolated desert area lacking essential services** — from education and healthcare to communications and cultural infrastructure — has been transformed into a dynamic urban center. The area, now elevated to the administrative status of a "Delegation" and home to approximately 10,000 inhabitants, comprises six villages equipped with all the services and infrastructure available in neighboring districts, with the added advantage of significantly higher per capita incomes. At the same time, the region now benefits from a **25 km by 4 km green belt serving** as a strategic environmental barrier against the advance of the Grand Erg Oriental in the south of the country.

Thanks to the shared commitment and the **strong relationship** of trust built between the Tunisian and Italian partners, the **El Mahdeth** Development Project — still in its early stages — will undoubtedly achieve its objectives.

With Decree No. 247/2025 of 8 May 2025, the Rjim Maatoug Development Office (ODRM) was renamed the Rjim Maatoug Office for the Development of the Sahara and the South (*Office de Rjim Maatoug pour le Développement du Sahara et du Sud –* **ORMDSS**). This institutional evolution considerably broadens the Office's scope of action. On the one hand, its geographical mandate has been extended to encompass the entire Tunisian South and Sahara region; on the other, its field of intervention now covers the implementation of development projects across multiple sectors in southern Tunisia. These include agriculture, alternative and renewable energy, Saharan tourism, and industries based on local resources. In addition, the new mandate includes commercial activities linked to local products, biodiversity conservation, and the protection of endangered wildlife species. This expansion of both the geographical scope and operational competencies of the Office represents an important **opportunity to strengthen and diversify the Tunisian-Italian partnership in general, and the collaboration between ORMDSS and AICS** in particular, through joint engagement in implementing of new projects falling within ORMDSS's expanded mandate.

Charef Ahmed
Director of Planning, Monitoring and Cooperation
ORMDSS

Biography

Since 2004, **Ahmed Charef** *has served as Director of Planning, Monitoring and Cooperation at the Office de Rjim Maatoug pour le Développement du Sud et du Sahara, where he also acts as Interim Director General. He has been responsible for the studies and monitoring of the Rehabilitation and Creation of Date Palm Groves in Rjim Maatoug project (1990–2026) and the Complementary Actions in Rjim Maatoug project (2015–2026), in coordination with Italian Cooperation.*

The Rjim Maatoug project, financed at 45% by Italian Cooperation, allocated 2,500 hectares to date palm cultivation, benefiting more than 1,300 families and enabling the establishment of six villages, 1,300 housing units, six primary schools, one secondary school, one health center, two mosques, and additional public services.

In 2025, date production reached approximately 20,000 tonnes, achieving 100% of the target established by the project studies and accounting for around 5% of national production.

LIBYA

Photo credits : OIM Libya

General Context

Libya is **the fourth-largest country in Africa by geographical area**, with a population of approximately 7.5 million inhabitants[5], and currently ranks 115th on **the Human development index**[6]. Following the end of Colonel Gaddafi's government in 2011 and the years of conflict that ensued, the country[7] has faced a complex process of rebuilding infrastructure, restoring basic services, and recovering pre-conflict levels of GDP per capita, which nevertheless remains **among the highest in Africa** despite the destabilization caused by years of conflict.

The Libyan economy remains heavily dependent on the hydrocarbons sector: oil and gas account for **approximately 97% of exports, more than 90% of fiscal revenues, and over 60% of national GDP**, highlighting the country's limited economic diversification. Despite ongoing efforts to reduce Libya's heavy reliance on oil revenues, economic diversification continues to remains a major **challenge**.

Although Libya is classified as an upper-middle-income country, years of conflict and political instability have significantly hindered public **investment in infrastructure and essential services**. The country continues to face deep institutional fragmentation and persistent weaknesses in public financial management. In particular, there remains a pressing need to strengthen financial oversight systems and fiscal institutions to ensure more sustainable, transparent, and efficient management of public resources. Libya also remains highly dependent on food imports, while the population continues to face limited access to **quality healthcare, education, and social services**[8].

The failure to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in December **2021** further entrenched **institutional and political divisions**, increasing tensions between rival political actors and armed factions. Despite continued volatility and concerns regarding a possible resurgence of hostilities, **the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement (CCFA) signed in October 2020** remains in effect, allowing progress to continue towards addressing the issue of internally displaced persons. In particular, the agreement has facilitated the return of many displaced people to their homes, while others continue to live in precarious conditions.

The transition towards a **recovery and reconstruction** phase is being supported through an integrated approach that combines humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding efforts. In 2025, Libya also held **new municipal elections**, organized by the High national elections commission in order to renew local councils across several municipalities in the country.

[5] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2025
[6] Human Development Report, UNDP 2025
[7] African Economic Outlook 2025 : « Making Africa's Capital Work Better for Africa's Development », Banque africaine de développement, 2025
[8] Libya Economic Monitor, World Bank , 2025

These elections represent an important step towards strengthening local governance and supporting the political stabilization process following years of conflict.

The country also remains highly vulnerable to **environmental disasters**. Cyclone Daniel was a **catastrophic event** that deeply affected Libya, particularly the Cyrenaica region. In September 2023, the cyclone struck the eastern coastal area, causing the collapse of two dams and devastating floods in the city of Derna. The disaster had tragic consequences, both in terms of **human losses** and the destruction of **infrastructure** and livelihoods.

For this reason, **Italian cooperation continues to support local communities and authorities** in reconstruction and recovery efforts to restore affected areas and essential services, while also promoting measures to prevent and reduce the risk of future damage from extreme weather events.

With regard to **migration**, the weakness of the rule of law and the absence of a robust governance system continue to expose migrants to significant protection challenges and risks, particularly in urban settings and detention centers. This situation is largely linked to their irregular status within the country and the **resulting vulnerability, including heightened exposure to violence, exploitation, arbitrary detention, precarious living conditions, and abuse** by traffickers and smugglers.

As of December 2025, Libya hosted approximately 939,638 migrants across 100 municipalities, originating from 44 different countries. The largest migrant communities come from Sudan, Egypt, Niger, and Chad[9]. The majority continue to live in precarious socio-economic conditions, with around 74% unemployed, while the geographical distribution of migrants shows a marked concentration in the western part of the country.

These figures highlight the persistent migratory pressure faced by Libya as both a transit and destination country, as well as the high protection risks confronting migrant populations.

Within this context, particular attention should be given to the commitment of Italian Cooperation in supporting the humanitarian response to the Sudanese refugee crisis in Libya. According to the **Sudan regional refugee response plan 2025**, coordinated by UNHCR, Libya has become one of the principal host countries for refugees fleeing Sudan following the outbreak of conflict in 2023.

According to the report, approximately 446,000 Sudanese refugees and members of host communities in Libya required humanitarian assistance in 2025, particularly through interventions in the areas of protection, healthcare, food security, education, and basic services.

[9]*Migrant Report Round* 60, IOM Libya, November–December 2025

Photo credits : IOM Libya

Photo credits: IOM Libya

Italian Cooperation Intervention

In line with the priorities identified in the "Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document 2024–2026", which recognizes Libya as one of the **priority countries** for Italian cooperation, the AICS Regional Office in Tunis works to support the country's medium and long-term transition process, intending to promote stabilization, strengthen institutional capacities, advance national reconciliation, and contribute to the reconstruction of the country. Within a **humanitarian-development-peace** nexus approach, Italian cooperation initiatives in Libya promote sustainable and inclusive development, provide **humanitarian assistance** and protection, support administrative decentralization and the localization of aid, strengthen **governance capacities at the local level**, and **enhance the technical and management capacities** of national and local authorities to improve the delivery of basic services.

Italian Cooperation in Libya operates within a coordination mechanism led by the United Nations system, whose activities are framed within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2025, published in 2023 and agreed upon with the Libyan Government. The framework defines cooperation priorities in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and identifies four strategic areas of intervention: i) peace and security; ii) sustainable economic development; iii) social and human development; iv) climate change, environment, and water.

Within this framework, **Italy** has established itself as one of the key actors in the cooperation system promoted and coordinated by the European Union[10], as well as one of **the most active donors operating** in the country.

Italy's intervention in Libya is implemented through the financing of programs supporting both the population and local institutions, along two main lines of action: i) emergency initiatives aimed at providing humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable groups of the population; ii) development initiatives designed to support the country's stabilisation, stabilization, and reconstruction processes.

Through an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, and in partnership with a network of specialized implementing partners, Italian cooperation operates across a wide range of sectors, including healthcare, water resource management, food security and rural development, technical and vocational training, environmental protection and energy, cultural heritage, emergency response, and migration.

[10] Due to the instability of the political situation in Libya, since 2017 the European Union has structured its cooperation through annual "Special Measures" rather than through a multiannual programming process, thereby allowing for a more flexible and responsive approach to the rapidly evolving context.

Furthermore, following the signing in October 2024 of the "Memorandum of Understanding on Development Cooperation between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the State of Libya", the institutional, legal, and financial framework governing the activities of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in the country was formally defined, enabling the full resumption of AICS operations in Libya.

Within the framework of EU-funded, a particular note should be made of the completion of the program entitled Recovery, Stability and Socio-Economic Development in Libya – ***Baladiyati*** ("My Municipality"), Phase II. Adopting an integrated and multi-sectoral approach, the program provided support to 21 municipalities in the southern part of the country across the sectors of education, water and sanitation, renewable energy, agriculture, and local governance. Interventions focused on several distinct components, including: (i) strengthening basic services in the fields of education, water and sanitation, renewable energy, and community infrastructure and services; (ii) improving income-generating activities within the agri-food value chain; and (iii) reinforcing the capacities of Libyan institutions.

Field activities were implemented through international civil society organizations and the intergovernmental organizatios CIHEAM Bari, working in consortium with local organizations, alongside a capacity-building component delivered by AICS in cooperation with local service providers.

In line with European Union priorities, **two additional initiatives** financed under the 2023 Special Measures for Libya were launched in February 2025: a program dedicated to improving **water resource management,** entitled **Water Resources Management at Municipal Level in Libya***,* implemented in partnership with the Autonomous Province of Trento; and an intervention focused on the enhancement of cultural heritage, entitled **Protection of Cultural Heritage***,* aimed at strengthening local capacities in the conservation of cultural assets and developing a roadmap for the establishment of Libya's first Restoration School, in partnership with the Italian Central Institute for Restoration (ICR).

Furthermore, in December 2025, Italian Cooperation launched the **third phase of the *Baladiyati* program**, targeting both national and decentralized institutions, specifically 15 municipalities located in the western, eastern, and southern regions of the country.

Building upon the achievements of the previous two phases, the program aims to support stabilization, post-conflict reconstruction, institutional strengthening, and sustainable development through an integrated and systemic approach that addresses water resources, healthcare services, economic development, and cultural heritage.

In 2025, **the overall portfolio** of ongoing Italian Cooperation initiatives in Libya amounted to approximately EUR 68 million. These resources correspond to 23 initiatives distributed as follows:

- **14 initiatives under the regular programming (€27.29 million)**
- **6 under the emergency funds (€16.42 million)**
- **3 EU-funded programs (€24.1 million)**

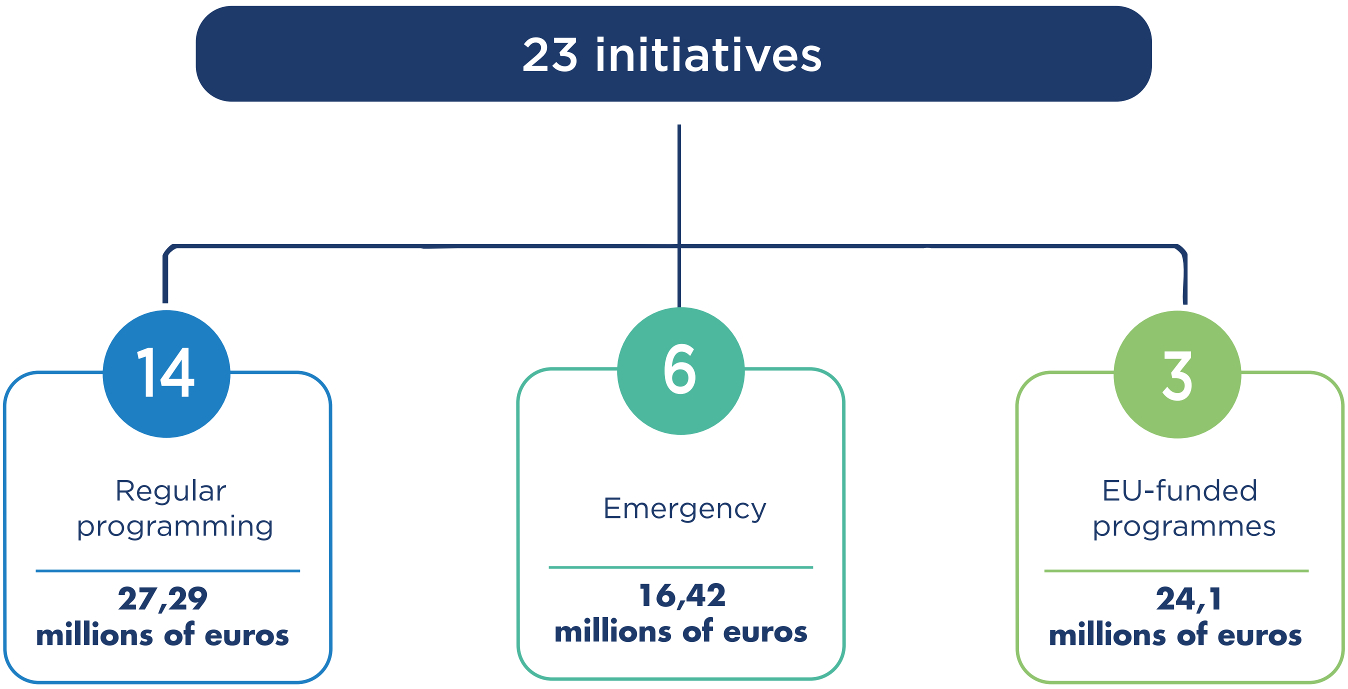


Photo credits : WFP Libya

Focus – Our Stakeholders

Strengthening Health Security and Coordination in Libya's Health System: the Partnership between Italian Cooperation and WHO

The collaboration between the **World Health Organization (WHO) Libya and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)** aims to strengthen health security and public health preparedness in Libya, with a particular focus on the prevention and control of zoonotic and vector-borne diseases. By combining AICS's the financial support of the Italian Cooperation with WHO's technical leadership and operational presence, the partnership has enabled the implementation of a program grounded in the One Health approach, recognizing the interconnected nature of human, animal and environmental health.

The initiative is implemented in close collaboration with Libyan national institutions, including the Ministry of Health, the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC), the National Center for Animal Health (NCAH), the Ministry of environment and other key government stakeholders. WHO plays a critical convening role, fostering collaboration among institutions that have traditionally operated in a fragmented manner and enabling more coordinated planning, information sharing and implementation.

Key achievements include the establishment of a multisectoral **One Health Task Force, bringing together** experts from health, veterinary, environmental and regulatory sectors to strengthen coordination and develop a national governance mechanism. WHO has also led national consultations and a bridging workshop to jointly define a roadmap for advancing the One Health approach in Libya, laying the foundation for longer-term strategic planning, strengthened preparedness, and more integrated surveillance and response systems.

The program further supported the development of a Training Needs Assessment and tailored training modules for epidemiologists and laboratory professionals.

Photo credits : WHO Libya

strengthening national capacities for surveillance, outbreak detection and response. Additional efforts focused on reinforcing laboratory diagnostic capacity and advancing the integration of zoonotic diseases into national surveillance systems, ensuring earlier detection and more effective response to public health threats.

Overall, the WHO–AICS collaboration between WHO and the Italian Cooperation has enhanced coordination among national stakeholders, strengthened technical capacities for disease detection and response, and established key institutional foundations for implementing the One Health approach in Libya. These efforts contribute to building a more resilient health system capable of addressing emerging and re-emerging health threats.

More broadly, WHO continues to play a central role in strengthening Libya's health sector by supporting national authorities in improving coordination, preparedness and equitable access to essential health services, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Within these partnerships, WHO and AICS have also supported the reactivation of the Health Sector Coordination Mechanism, improving alignment, information sharing and collaboration among national authorities, UN agencies, donors and implementing partners, and ultimately contributing to more coherent, efficient and impactful health interventions across Libya.

Dott. Ahmed Zouiten
WHO Representative in Libya

Photo credits : WHO Libya

Biography

Dr. Ahmed Zouiten *is a medical doctor and public health professional from Fez, Morocco.*

He joined the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006 and held several positions the country level and headquarters, , focusing on HIV in humanitarian settings and later, on health emergencies. He led the Global Health Cluster and coordinated responses to major crises in Haiti, Somalia, Syria, Mali, Iraq and Yemen.

Dr. Zouiten served as WHO Representative in Djibouti (2018), Iraq (2021) and Libya (2023), while also acting as WHO Representative for Sudan and Tunisia and as Regional Director for Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

ALGERIA

General Context

With a population of approximately **47.3 million people**[11], **Algeria** is the largest country in Africa by land area. Its territory stretches from the Mediterranean coastline — where the majority of the population is concentrated — southwards into the heart of the Sahara Desert, which accounts for **more than four-fifths of the country's total area**.

The Algerian **economy** is heavily dominated by the **hydrocarbons** sector, particularly oil and **natural gas, which account for the vast majority of government revenues and exports**. This strong dependence on hydrocarbons leaves Algeria highly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices and changes in international market conditions. Meanwhile, the manufacturing, agriculture, and service sectors remain relatively underdeveloped and are not yet capable of generating sufficient employment opportunities to meet the needs of a young and rapidly growing population. Within this socio-economic context, Algeria currently ranks **96th on the Human Development Index**[12]. The country's GDP is estimated at approximately USD 288 billion, while per capita income stands at around USD 6,000.

In addition, Algeria is home to one of the world's most protracted and often overlooked refugee crises. For more than fifty years, the country has hosted approximately **173,600**[13] **Sahrawi refugees** living across five refugee camps located in a desert area of around 10,000 km^2 near Tindouf. Living conditions in the camps are shaped by extremely harsh environmental conditions, including high temperatures and limited natural resources, factors that make the refugee population particularly vulnerable and highly dependent on international humanitarian assistance.

The Algerian authorities have provided the refugee population with significant resources and services, including access to water drawn from national aquifers, energy supply, infrastructure, and education and healthcare services, demonstrating a strong commitment to solidarity and humanitarian support. Nevertheless, the reality within the camps remains characterized by an almost total dependence on humanitarian aid, with very limited opportunities for self-reliance.

Addressing this crisis requires sustained and coordinated humanitarian interventions, implemented in cooperation with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations active on the ground, in order to ensure dignified and sustainable living conditions while also strengthening the capacities and resilience of local communities.

[11] *National Population Policy: Commencement of work*, UNFPA
[12] *Algeria's Human Development Index*, UNDP
[13] *Sahrawi Refugee Response Plan* (SRRP), United Nations Algeria

Italian Cooperation Intervention

With the beginning of the new millennium, **Italian Cooperation** focused primarily on the conclusion of **Debt Conversion Agreements** with the Algerian Government. The first agreement, signed in **2002**, enabled the allocation of **EUR 82 million** of debt resources to the implementation of **34 development projects**. A second agreement, worth EUR 10 million and signed in 2011, provided for the establishment of an Italian-Algerian Counterpart Fund (FIA) by converting these funds into local currency on behalf of the Ministry of Finance.

This agreement, recently extended until 31 December 2026, also stipulates that the processes for the final approval and implementation of projects are to be managed by a Joint Management Committee composed of Italian and Algerian representatives. The Committee convened for the first time in March 2024, launching 17 projects identified by five line ministries.

In 2025, Italian Cooperation reaffirmed its commitment to supporting **the Sahrawi refugee population**, continuing to operate through both multilateral and bilateral channels.

Through the multilateral channel, since 2018 Italy has provided annual support **for the World Food Program (WFP)'s activities in food security and nutrition,** with an overall contribution of EUR 8.5 million. At the same time, UNICEF programs in the education and socio-health sectors received a total of EUR 4 million in funding, while UNHCR implemented a EUR 1 million intervention to strengthen the capacity and coverage of water supply **networks in refugee camps.**

On the bilateral channel, in October 2025, activities were launched under the second initiative implemented with the participation of CSOs: "Multi-sector Emergency Intervention in Support of the Sahrawi Population" .

The initiative is being carried out by two consortia selected through a Call for Proposals, with AICS funding amounting to EUR 2.8 million. These interventions have made it possible to provide immediate assistance while strengthening local capacities, responding concretely to the needs of the Sahrawi population and further confirming Italy's role as **the third-largest donor by funding volume for the Tindouf refugee camps**.

In addition, **the Mattei Plan for Africa**, launched by the Italian Government in 2023, identifies training, sustainable agriculture, and food security among its strategic pillars and recognizes **Algeria as one of its priority partner countries**. Within this framework, a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Algeria was signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries in July 2025, formalizing the establishment of the **Enrico Mattei Centre for Training, Research and Innovation in Sidi Bel Abbès**.

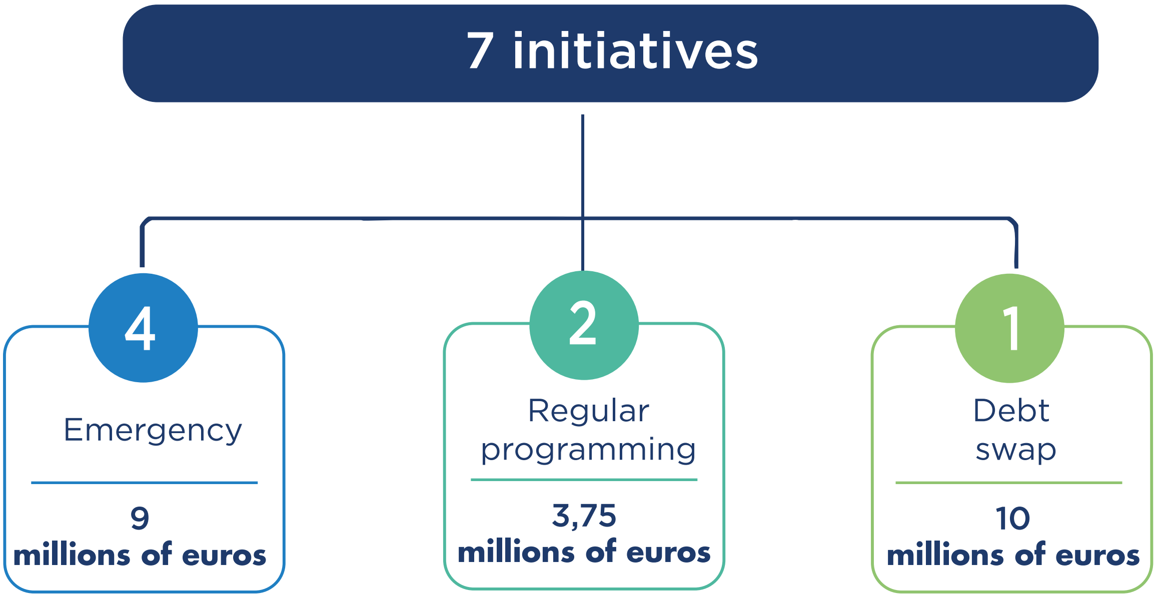
To launch the initial activities for the creation of this pan-African center of excellence, **EUR 2.5 million in funding** was approved in October 2025 for the University of Tuscia, which will implement the project activities in partnership with CIHEAM Bari.

Finally, in December 2025, following AICS Tunis's yearlong formulation process, the financing agreement was signed with the European Union Delegation in Algiers for the implementation of the EU-funded initiative **PASA+** — Support Program for the Agricultural Sector in Algeria — with an allocation of approximately EUR 15 million.

The program aims to contribute to job creation within **Small and Medium-sized Enterprises** (SMEs) and small and medium-sized industries operating within a green, circular, and digital economy framework. The intervention strategy proposed by AICS combines a **territorial approach** — through the mobilization of endogenous resources, with the promotion of participatory governance models involving institutions, communities, and economic actors. It also adopts a value-chain approach to strengthen the organization and competitiveness of priority agricultural and agri-food value chains, improve product quality and certification, facilitate market access, and enhance the valorization of by-products from a sustainability and circular-economy perspective.

In 2025, the **overall portfolio** of ongoing Italian Cooperation initiatives in Algeria amounted to approximately **EUR 23 million**, corresponding to seven initiatives distributed as follows:

- **4 initiatives under the emergency funds (€9 million)**
- **2 grants under the regular programming (€3,75 million)**
- **1 debt swap initiative (€10 million)**



Focus – Our Stakeholders

Rebuilding Hope for Quality Education in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps

The collaboration between the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and the Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) in humanitarian assistance to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria hastrengthened steadily over the years.

This partnership gained particular momentum following a donor mission to the camps in 2022, which helped deepen understanding — both in Italy and on the ground — of the scale and complexity of this protracted crisis.

CISP staff operating in the camps have demonstrated strong operational capacity, built through more than forty years of engagement, and continue to play a leading role within the network of NGOs active in the refugee camps. Building on this experience, CISP launched the implementation of two major AICS-funded projects in partnership with the NGO Movimento Africa '70 (MA70): «Inclusive Education, Hygiene and Food Security for Vulnerable Populations in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps in 2024, and Multisectoral Intervention in Support of Inclusive Education, Health and Food Security for the Sahrawi Refugee Population» in 2025.

Among the project's key achievements are improved access for children to quality and inclusive education, strengthened educational systems, and enhanced food security for the refugee population. In partnership with MA70, support was also provided for the production of eggs and broiler chickens linked to school feeding programs. In a context marked by persistent needs and limited resources, these interventions have helped strengthen community resilience, improve the continuity of essential services, and foster local ownership of the initiatives.

The substantial and continuous financial commitment of AICS has enabled the implementation of genuinely integrated initiatives, including the strengthening of local production capacities, thereby contributing to improved nutritional intake for schoolchildren.

These actions restore dignity and respect to the beneficiary children and their families, who together represent nearly the entire Sahrawi refugee population of approximately 173,600 people. The overall decline in humanitarian funding currently represents one of the principal challenges facing the Sahrawi camps. In this context, the continued commitment of Italian cooperation is particularly significant. In this regard, CISP regularly recalls the words of representatives of the Sahrawi community and partner institutions, who emphasize that the ongoing presence of AICS's is perceived as an essential point of reference — a tangible sign of respect and trust. This support has not only made it possible to maintain essential services for the refugee population, bbut also helped preserve the feeling of not being forgotten by the international community. The prospects for this partnership rest on strengthening integrated, sustainable approaches that can respond to the persistent challenges posed by protracted crises. By building on CISP's central role within local coordination systems and the strategic commitment of Italian Cooperation, this collaboration will continue to contribute to more coherent, resilient, and needs-based responses for Sahrawi refugees.

Samir Zemouchi,
CISP Representative in Algeria and the Sahrawi Camps

Biografia

Since 2018, **Samir Zemouchi** *has served as Country Representative of CISP (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli) in Algeria and the Sahrawi refugee camps. In this role, he coordinates the organization's humanitarian operations and oversees a portfolio of projects supported by various international donors. He has developed extensive experience in international cooperation and humanitarian action, particularly within the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf.*

Between 2012 and 2018, he held positions of responsibility within several United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP, contributing to the management and implementation of humanitarian programs in protracted crisis contexts.

In his current role, he works to develop and coordinate initiatives to strengthen access to essential services and improve the living conditions of Sahrawi refugee populations.

MOROCCO

General Context

With a population of nearly **38 million inhabitants, Morocco ranks 120th globally.** The country is the second most populous country in the Maghreb region. According to the Human development index, **Morocco reflects the progress achieved by the Kingdom of Morocco in key areas such as education, healthcare, and economic development14.**

Morocco's institutional system underwent a profound transformation following the **2011 constitutional** reform introduced by King Mohammed VI in response to the demands for change that emerged during the "Arab Spring" movements. The reform formally redefined certain balances between institutions and laid the groundwork for a broader modernization process. In recent years, the Moroccan Government has launched an ambitious reform agenda to support a private-sector-led growth model capable of generating employment opportunities. Among its main objectives are the strengthening of human capital through **the universalizationof access to healthcare and social protection and improving in the quality of education.** The successful implementation of these reforms remains essential to placing Morocco on a path towards more robust and inclusive economic and social growth.

In addition, under the guidance of the Sovereign, the reform process of the *Moudawana* — the Moroccan **Family Code** — is ongoing, to adapt legislation to the profound social transformations that have taken place within Moroccan society. Following the previous reform in 2004, and in light of the principles established by the 2011 Constitution, the Kingdom is now confronted with complex issues linked to overcoming gender inequalities and strengthening the protection of children's rights.

Among the principal reforms under discussion is **the abolition of legal child marriage**, a practice that remains widespread despite legislation establishing the legal age for marriage. The proposed revision of the Family Code also addresses inheritance rights, one of the most sensitive and debated aspects of gender equality in the country. In addition, the reforms aim to introduce a standardized judicial process for divorce that would ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities and assets, promote joint custody arrangements, and guarantee equal guardianship rights for mothers and fathers. The reform package also seeks to provide legal recognition and protection for single mothers.

According to the Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP) — the national institution responsible for official statistics, economic planning, and development — **the Moroccan economy** maintained **a resilient growth trajectory throughout 2025** despite external constraints, with growth stabilizing at **around 4%** in the fourth quarter of the year.

The persistent weakness in external demand affecting industrial sectors was partially offset by the strong performance of service exports, also supported by the positive economic spillovers generated from the the Africa Cup of Nations held at the end of the year. **As a result, the volume of goods and services exports increased by 5.3%.** At the same time, import moderation helped reduce the negative contribution of **foreign trade to –3.2 percentage points, down from –4.3 percentage points** in the previous quarter. Domestic demand remained the principal driver of economic activity.

Investment continued to grow, supported by favorable financing conditions and sustained public expenditure, At the same time, household consumption increased moderately amid of continued measures to preserve purchasing power and ease inflationary pressures. Inflation continued its downward trajectory for the third consecutive quarter, reaching **–0.1% in the fourth quarter of 2025**, down from to **2% recorded at the beginning of the year**. This development was mainly driven by declining food prices, combined with rising **prices for non-food products**.

The stability of the central bank's benchmark interest rate at **2.25%**, together with declining rate trend in on money and bond markets and increased lending to the economy, continued to support both **investment and consumption**, In contrast, **the stock market** maintained an overall positive trend[15] .

The 2025 Finance Law introduced several fiscal and economic measures to support growth, reduce the tax burden on households, and strengthen the State's social role. Nevertheless, as in previous years, Morocco continues to experience significant income disparities between the urban elite and rural populations. Various forms of poverty persist throughout the country, many of which are closely linked to migration dynamics.

In 2025, the unemployment rate stood at 13%, primarily affecting rural areas due to recurring drought conditions, which have become a severe structural challenge compounded by the adverse effects of climate change. Beyond its environmental and economic consequences, one of the most significant side effects of drought has been increased rural migration, not only to major urban centers but also abroad. Faced with major crop losses, limited access to water, and insufficient support services, farming families are increasingly compelled to seek alternative livelihoods, making migration one of the few available options.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the southern and inland regions of the country, where drought has significantly reduced agricultural productivity and

[14] *Human Development Report 2025,* United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
[15] High Commission for Planning *(HCP) 2025*

accelerated desertification processes. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the number of returning Moroccan migrants who, affected by the European economic crisis, have chosen to return to Morocco.

At the same time, Morocco has increasingly become a destination country for migration due to a combination of factors including its strategic geographical location, improving economic conditions, and the tightening of European migration policies. Today, the Kingdom hosts a diverse migrant population that includes regular migrants — among them many students — asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants. According to the results of the 2024 General Population and Housing Census, the number of foreign residents in the Kingdom increased by 61,946 between 2014 and 2024, corresponding to an annual growth rate of 5.6%. The migrant population is primarily concentrated in the regions of Casablanca-Settat and Rabat-Salé-Kénitra[16].

The country is also implementing a range of initiatives aimed **to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration.** Interest in Italy continues to grow, both among Moroccan workers seeking employment opportunities and among students pursuing higher education. The **number of students** traveling to Italy to continue their studies has quadrupled over the **past four years**. In line with Article 23 of the Italian Consolidated Immigration Act, which concerns extra-quota entry schemes for foreign nationals trained abroad, these initiatives aim to improve the skills, qualifications, and competencies of prospective migrant workers, aligning them with the needs of national and European labor markets.

Finally, it should be noted that Morocco is among the pilot countries of the **Mattei Plan for Africa**, within which projects are planned in the fields of **renewable energy** and **telemedicine**.

[16]Médias24 (Morocco)

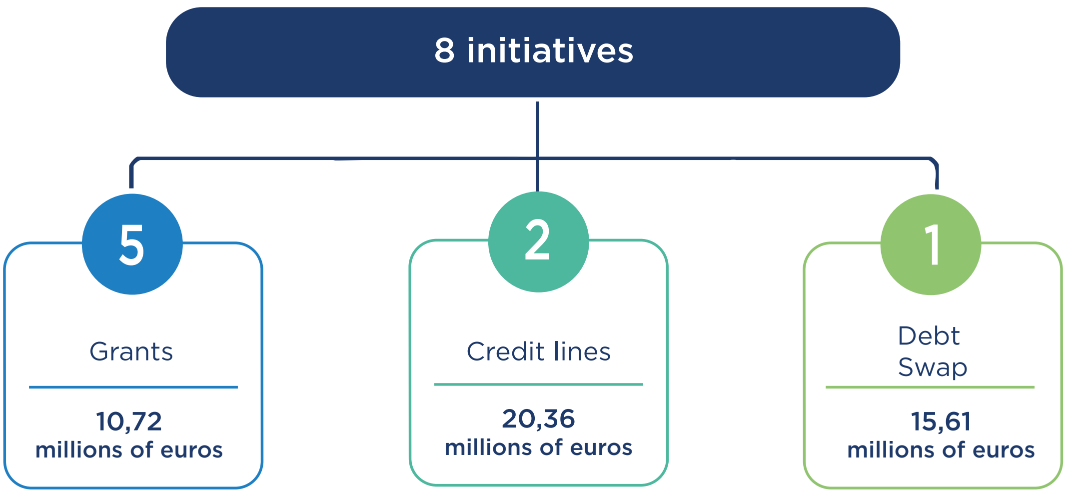
Italian Cooperation Intervention

The priorities of Italian Cooperation in Morocco are set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Italy and Morocco in 2009. The agreement identifies the strategic sectors of **intervention**, including **drinking water** supply and environmental sanitation, education, **microfinance** and **job creation**, railway infrastructure, and **the preservation and enhancement of Morocco's archaeological** heritage.

The **total residual Italian** commitments under the above-mentioned MoU currently amount to approximately **EUR 13 million**. This figure is complemented by an additional **EUR 28 million** related to **programs currently under implementation and linked** to agreements signed outside the framework of the MoU, in particular the 2013 Debt Conversion Agreement and a project implemented in partnership with ONCF (Office National des Chemins de Fer). Three promoted projects are also currently underway in the country. One focuses on school inclusion and is implemented by the Italian civil society organization OVCI – La Nostra Famiglia, targeting girls and boys with disabilities within primary schools. The other two projects focus on economic development, decent work, and youth entrepreneurship, with particular attention to areas affected by the 2023 earthquake, and are implemented respectively by OXFAM Italy and CEFA.

In 2025, the overall portfolio of ongoing Italian Cooperation initiatives in Morocco amounted to approximately EUR 46.7 million. These resources correspond to 8 initiatives distributed as follows:

- **5 grants under regular programming (€10.72 million)**
- **2 credit lines (€20.36 million)**
- **1 debt swap initiative (€15.61 million)**




Lundi
Mardi
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Dimanche
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bétail paille écureuil portefeuille poignée coquillage
travail bataille treuil araignée béquilles
éventail médaille fauteuil mignon lentilles

Focus – Our Stakeholders

Building Technical and Scientific Partnerships for the Preservation of Morocco's Archaeological Heritage

As Director of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication of the Kingdom of Morocco, I can affirm that our collaboration with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) has developed within the framework of an especially fruitful cultural and technical partnerships. This experience stems from a shared commitment to strengthening the protection, enhancement, and transmission of Morocco's cultural heritage through continuous institutional dialogue and the exchange of complementary expertise.

This strategic partnership gained decisive momentum within the framework of the Debt Conversion Program, which launched nto public investment launched in 2013 — an innovative mechanism enabled the channeling of financial resources towards the objective of transforming archaeological heritage into a driver of sustainable development, cultural diplomacy, and national capacity building.

The exchanges established with AICS made it possible to identify several priority areas of intervention, including the conservation of tangible heritage, the strengthening of professional skills, and public awareness-raising. This commitment took shape through an integrated approach combining scientific research, operational interventions, and knowledge transfer, based on close collaboration between Moroccan and Italian experts, particularly archaeologists from the University of Siena and restorers from the Central Institute for Restoration in Rome.

The impact of this cooperation has been clearly visible at emblematic sites such as Chellah, Volubilis, and Lixus. These joint interventions enabled extensive archaeological assessments and the restoration of major monuments, including the Marinid madrasa in Chellah and the Palace of Gordian in Volubilis. In Lixus, infrastructure was developed to strengthen capacities for conservation, research, and scientific reception. One of the most significant achievements was the establishment of the first archaeological artifact restoration laboratory at the site of Volubilis. In addition, the creation of visitor pathways, conference facilities, and dedicated infrastructure has improved public access to the sites and reinforced their role as spaces for knowledge transmission and cultural dissemination.

At the same time, several specialized training cycles were organized for Moroccan architects, conservators, and technical professionals, encouraging the exchange of best practices and the adoption of international standards in heritage conservation.

This cooperation has therefore helped shape a heritage governance model grounded in scientific rigor and sustainability, while also promoting a participatory vision in which local communities play a central role.

The prospects for further strengthening this partnership are particularly promising. A new tranche of financing will notably support the restoration of the mosaics of the House of Venus in Volubilis, as well as additional interventions at Chellah and Lixus. Plans also include developing innovative initiatives in the fields of intangible heritage, digitalization, and three-dimensional modeling, paving the way for more preventive and sustainable long-term heritage management.

The collaboration with AICS therefore represents a concrete example of a partnership founded on trust, scientific complementarity, and the shared conviction that cultural heritage constitutes an essential driver of development and mutual understanding between peoples.

Mustapha Jlok,
Director of Cultural Heritage
Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication
Kingdom of Morocco

Biography

A graduate of the Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine in Rabat and the Université Internationale Senghor in Alexandria, Egypt, **Mustapha Jlok** *first served as coordinator and later as director of the Research Center for Anthropological and Sociological Studies at the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe). He subsequently worked as adviser and special mission officer within the Presidency of the National Human Rights Council (Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme), where he focused on issues related to cultural diversity and cultural rights.*

He currently serves as Director of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication of the Kingdom of Morocco and acts as the national focal point for the 1970 and 2003 UNESCO Conventions.

THE 5 PILLARS

The Tunis Office of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) manages a broad portfolio of projects across **multiple sectors** through a **multidisciplinary approach** that reflects AICS's commitment to supporting **sustainable development** in its countries of competence. Through AICS, Italy supports projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals within the framework of the five Pillars — or the 5Ps — defined by **the 2030 Agenda**: *People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership*.

Within this framework, and in line with AICS's Theory of Change, the Tunis Office's action aims to support inclusive, sustainable, and partnership-based transformation processes. From this perspective, interventions progressively contribute to achieving development objectives, in coherence with national priorities and the 2030 Agenda.

In accordance with the priorities outlined in the Three-Year *Programming and Policy Planning Document 2024–2026*, the cooperation initiatives managed by the Tunis Office focus primarily, in the case of **Tunisia**, on sectors in which Italy has traditionally maintained a strong commitment, including economic development and job creation, local development, decentralization, social development, education, migration, and rural development.

In **Libya**, Italian action has instead focused on humanitarian assistance and interventions aimed at resilience, stabilization, and reconstruction. Through an integrated and cross-sectoral approach supported by a strong network of specialized partners, Italian Cooperation operates in multiple sectors including healthcare, water resource management, food security and rural development, technical and vocational training, environmental protection and energy, the promotion of cultural heritage, as well as emergency response and migration-related interventions.

In **Algeria**, Italian Cooperation supports development initiatives through the Debt Conversion Program in sectors ranging from public infrastructure development to support for industry and agriculture, as well as the restoration and protection of cultural heritage. In addition, Italy remains committed to addressing needs linked to the protracted humanitarian crisis in the south of the country and to strengthening the Algerian system of higher education, applied research, and technology transfer through the Enrico Mattei Center.

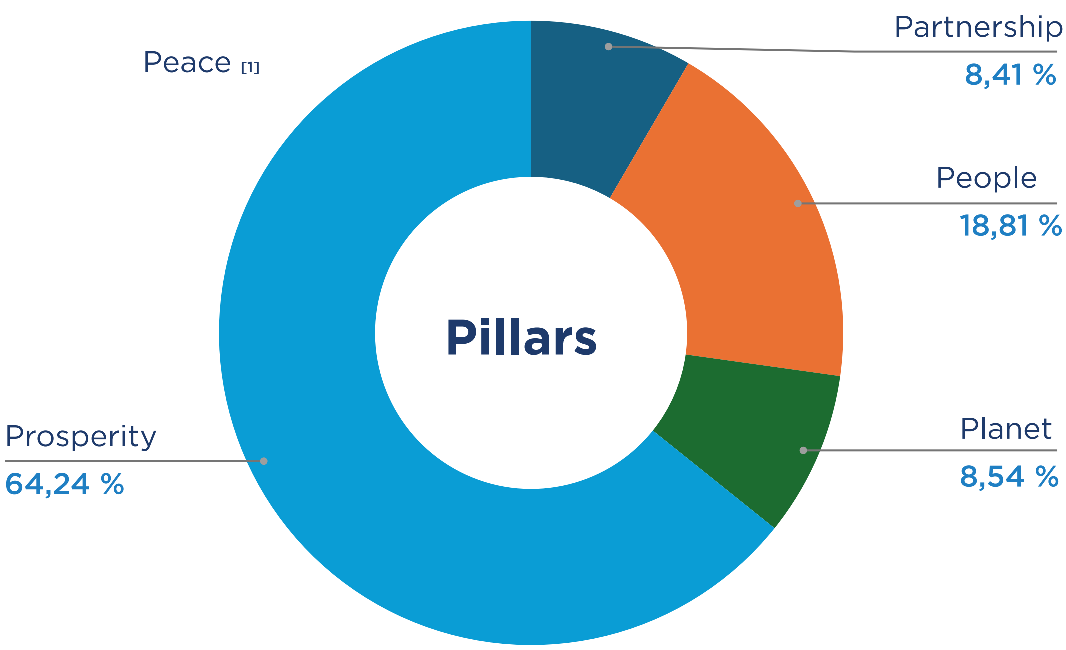
In **Morocco**, significant initiatives are being implemented to support poverty reduction through the Debt Conversion Program and the development of microfinance. Activities are also ongoing in the areas of archaeological heritage enhancement, water supply, infrastructure and transport, school inclusion for children with disabilities, and economic development, particularly regarding decent work and youth entrepreneurship.

Throughout 2025, the AICS Tunis Office operated through a broad and far-reaching approach, concentrating its activities around the five pillars: **Partnership, People, Planet, Prosperity, and Peace**.

The classification of projects under these pillars is based on their direct linkage to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), structured around the five dimensions of the 2030[17] Agenda. In the case of initiatives generating impacts across multiple areas, a single predominant pillar was identified by considering, first and foremost, the project's primary objective, followed by the indicator most representative of the expected results and, where necessary, the component with the highest concentration of activities or resources.

This methodology provides a clear and coherent interpretation of the portfolio while recognizing the cross-cutting nature of many initiatives. The distribution of this Office's portfolio of initiatives by pillar is presented below:

% initiatives by pillar

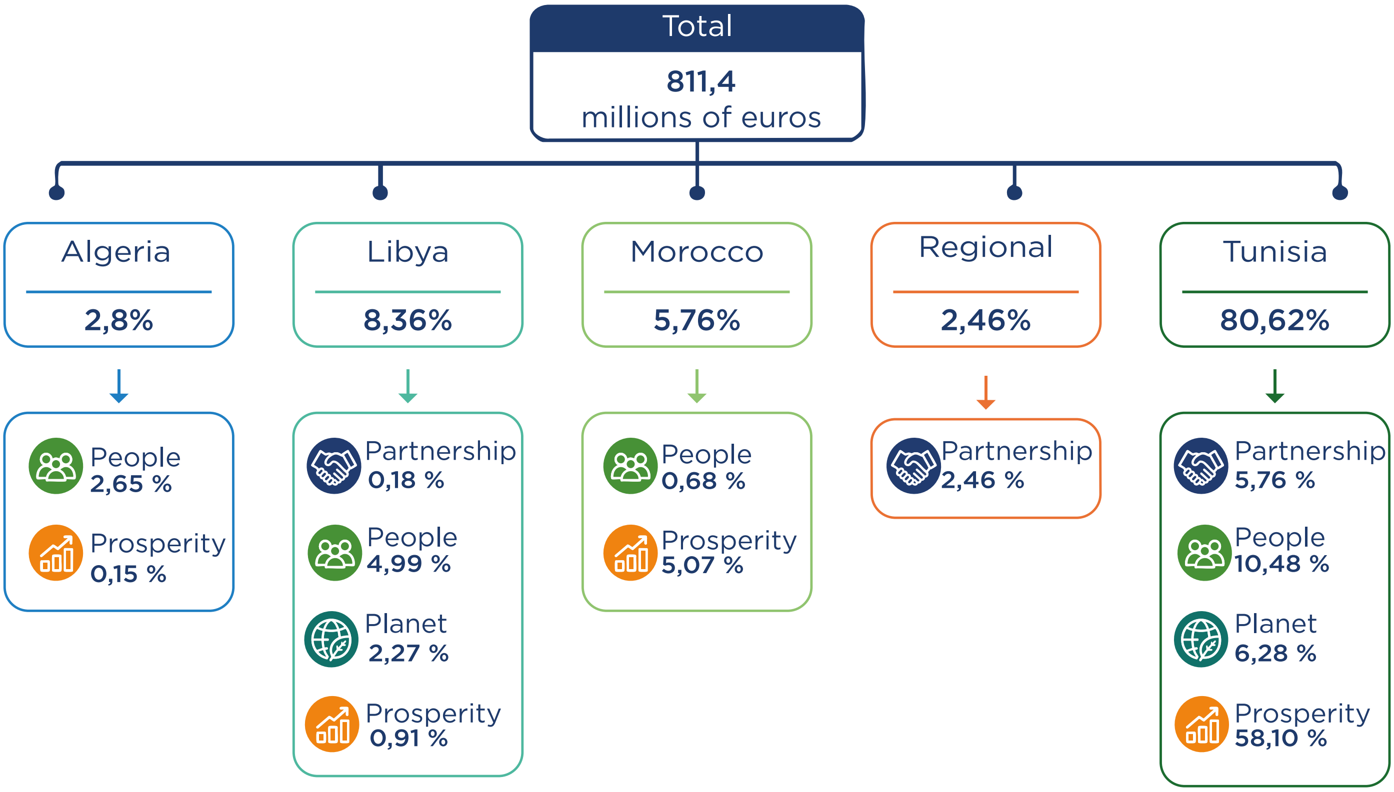


[1] According to the classification carried out, there are no initiatives under the Peace pillar, as SDG 16 is not included as a primary objective

[17] People (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), Planet (SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14, 15), Prosperity (SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), Peace (SDG 16) e Partnerships (SDG 17).

The activities of the AICS Tunis Office are structured around the pillars of sustainable development, with an overall commitment exceeding EUR 811 million. Tunisia remains the primary country of intervention, accounting for approximately EUR 654 million — representing 80% of the total portfolio — while activities also extend to Libya, Morocco, and Algeria, confirming an integrated regional approach.

% of pillars by country



01
PROSPERITY

Promoting Economic Growth, Innovation, and Inclusive Development

With approximately EUR 521 million, the *Prosperity* pillar represents the **main area of intervention** within the portfolio managed by the AICS Tunis Office. Tunisia accounts for the largest share of these resources — approximately EUR 471 million — **allocated to supporting economic growth, the development of local enterprises, and innovation**.

In particular, EUR 194 million was invested in banking and financial services to improve access to credit. At the same time, EUR 107 million was allocated to the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors to promote productivity and modernization. An additional EUR 145 million was allocated to general budget support, contributing to macroeconomic stability.

The initiatives implemented under this pillar included programs supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agricultural value chains, and the blue economy, as well as interventions aimed at employment generation and vocational training, including programs specifically targeting young people.

Significant interventions were also implemented in other countries in the region: in **Morocco**, with approximately EUR 47 million allocated to local economic development, and in **Libya**, through programs supporting employment and economic recovery.

Overall, the initiatives under this pillar have contributed to job creation, the strengthening of entrepreneurship, and the establishment of solid foundations for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Within this pillar, AICS action is implemented through the following initiatives:

Education and Vocational Training

In Tunisia, **AICS promotes access to and the quality of the education system** through interventions that target school infrastructure, educational services, and measures to reduce school dropout rates, with particular attention to the most vulnerable segments of the population. The Agency also supports vocational training to enhance youth employability, foster innovation, and contribute to the development of local economies.

A concrete example is the program **"Support to the Training and Employment of Tunisian Youth"**, implemented in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training and partners from the "Sistema Italia" network. The initiative combines short-term specialized training pathways with professional integration mechanisms such as scholarships, internships, and apprenticeship contracts. The program focuses on four priority sectors: agri-food industries, mechanics and renewable energy, textiles, and tourism. At the same time, it strengthens local vocational training systems by promoting technical and institutional partnerships and aligning young people's skills with the concrete needs of the labor market.

Support to Public Health and the Environment

The Balance of Payments Support Program helped sustain Tunisian public investment by providing a EUR 145 million concessional loan package, allocated to the procurement of Italian goods and services through national tenders. This intervention strengthened strategic sectors while encouraging economic cooperation via Italy and Tunisia.

Particular importance was given to the healthcare sector, where EUR 21.1 million were allocated to seven initiatives aimed at strengthening hospitals, medical equipment, and healthcare services, with a special focus on rural areas. In parallel, approximately EUR 20.1 million were directed towards the environmental sector in support of the Ministry of Environment.

More specifically, the Office National de l'Assainissement (ONAS) received funding to strengthen maintenance equipment for drainage systems. In contrast, the Agence Nationale de Gestion des Déchets (ANGED) received equipment to improve plastic waste collection systems. These interventions contribute to improving quality of life, environmental sustainability, and the resilience of local communities.

Economic Development and Vocational Training

In **Libya**, AICS operates in line with the Three-Year *Programming and Policy Planning Document 2024–2026*, which identifies the country as a priority for interventions in North Africa. **The main strategic priorities concern education**, vocational training, and decent work, with particular attention to young people, women, and vulnerable groups. At the same time, interventions promote **cultural heritage as a source of income generation and economic development, as well as sustainable infrastructure development, building upon the achievements of previous phases of the Baladiyati project (Phase II)** and capitalizing on sectors in which Italy has well-established expertise.

The Agency supports the strengthening of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems in order to reduce the skills mismatch between labor market demand and supply in Libya. Among the flagship initiatives is the project **"Promoting Youth Employment in Southern and Eastern Libya"**, implemented by IOM with funding amounting to EUR 2.5 million (2023–2026). The project aims to improve young people's professional skills and access to livelihood opportunities.

The initiative strengthens TVET centers and Youth Employment One Stop Shops, promotes self-employment and entrepreneurship through training courses and start-up kits, and expands its activities to Benghazi, Sebha, Tarhuna, Tamina, and Hun, including support for centers that assist Sudanese migrants. Rehabilitation works and equipment upgrades are also planned for the TVET center in Zwara.

Economic Inclusion and Microfinance

The **microfinance sector in Morocco** represents a key pillar of financial inclusion policies and a fundamental instrument for combating poverty and promoting rural and informal entrepreneurship. Established in the 1990s, the microfinance system supports the creation of income-generating activities, with particular attention to **women and young people**.

AICS promotes the economic inclusion of vulnerable groups through technical and financial support to local operators, financial literacy initiatives, and innovation in service delivery. The project is structured around two main components: financial assistance through the JAIDA fund to all Microcredit Associations (MCAs), and technical assistance to smaller MCAs.

The objective is to support rural micro-entrepreneurs excluded from the formal financial system, strengthen MCAs' capacities, and promote the sustainable development of the sector, in line with the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH).

Agriculture, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development

The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector plays a **central role in the Tunisian economy**, contributing significantly to food security and employment. However, **climate change and water scarcity** require the adoption of innovative and sustainable development models.

In 2024, Italian Cooperation strengthened its commitment through an **integrated approach** linking rural development, food security, and natural resource management. . Interventions supported **economic diversification and the valorization of natural, human, and cultural resources**, with particular attention to the country's most disadvantaged southern regions. Projects strengthened agricultural and fisheries value chains, improved natural resource management, and promoted more effective local governance, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among the flagship initiatives is the launch of **"Bleue Tunisie"**, which aims to promote a sustainable **blue economy** by developing efficient, competitive coastal areas. Actions include the modernization of artisanal fishing ports and the socio-economic strengthening of coastal communities, improving living conditions while preserving marine ecosystems.

The fisheries sector accounts for approximately 8% of primary sector and provides around 54,000 jobs. In 2024, agriculture and fisheries contributed approximately 10% to Tunisia's GDP. Within this framework, the **NEMO HOUT** project aims t**o strengthen the fisheries value chain** in the governorates of Nabeul, Sfax, and Médenine by integrating local ports into the socio-economic fabric and supporting artisanal fishing activities.

The initiative promotes employment, combats illegal fishing practices, and increases the value of fishery products without intensifying pressure on marine resources, thereby fostering sustainable and inclusive coastal development.

Food Security

Crediti foto: CIHEAM Bari

The **"Cultivating Health"** project was launched to improve dietary quality and food security among the Sahrawi refugee population living in camps in southern Algeria. By supporting local production systems, the initiative promotes the **establishment of community gardens and the diversification of crops**, ensuring more balanced access to fruit, vegetables, and legumes — essential components of a healthy diet.

The project combines training and technical assistance to equip beneficiaries with sustainable agricultural practices and efficient water management techniques, thereby increasing productivity while reducing environmental impact. Beyond its nutritional dimension, "Cultivating Health" also strengthens community resilience by fostering self-reliance, cooperation, and a shared sense of collective responsibility.

Through this integrated combination of technical support, education, and the promotion of local production, the project contributes not only to improving the health of refugee populations, but also to building long-term capacities and concretely enhancing living conditions within Sahrawi communities.

> The Prosperity Pillar stands out for its ability to integrate economic, employment-related, and social interventions into a sustainable approach. Through programs focused on vocational training, microfinance, agricultural and fisheries development, and support to SMEs, the pillar has strengthened local entrepreneurship, created employment opportunities, and consolidated the foundations for inclusive growth.
> These interventions have promoted innovation, economic governance, and community resilience, contributing to lasting benefits across the region and supporting sustainable and equitable socio-economic development.

02 PEOPLE

Improving Living Conditions and Promoting Social Inclusion

In 2025, more than EUR 152 million was allocated to the People pillar, supporting interventions aimed at improving living conditions and promoting social inclusion. Resources financed initiatives in areas including education (approximately EUR 9 million), healthcare and social infrastructure (EUR 24 million), humanitarian interventions in emergency contexts (EUR 22 million), debt conversion programes (approximately EUR 60 million), and governance and civil society strengthening initiatives (EUR 26 million).

Activities focused on training, social inclusion, access to essential services, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Among the most significant examples are healthcare programs in Libya, educational reintegration initiatives for young people in Tunisia, and school inclusion projects in Morocco.

In crisis contexts, such as the Sahrawi refugee camps in southern Algeria, interventions ensured access to education and healthcare services for refugee populations. This pillar reflects a strong commitment to **human development**, with **particular attention given to young people, women, and vulnerable communities**.

Within this pillar, AICS interventions are implemented through the following initiatives:

Youth Training and Inclusion

A significant example is the "Une Deuxième Chance project, promoted by UNICEF in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, and Employment. The initiative targets NEET adolescents (Not in Education, Employment or Training) aged 12 to 18, providing tailored support to foster their socio-economic integration.

The program is structured around three main pillars:

(i) strengthening governance mechanisms and national policies related to the Deuxième Chance approach; (ii) expanding the program's geographical and digital coverage through the establishment of new centers and the development of an online platform; and (iii) enhancing the range of services and content designed to facilitate the transition towards employment.

The initiative helps equip vulnerable young people with practical skills and concrete opportunities for integration into the labor market, thereby supporting their social and economic inclusion.

School Inclusion

Photo credits: UNICEF Tunisia

In **Morocco**, despite legislative progress in the field of **disability rights**, approximately 5% of the population continues to experience social exclusion, with limited access to education, employment, and healthcare services. The "École Ouverte'" project, implemented under the National Inclusive Education Program, promotes the integration of girls and boys with disabilities into primary schools.

The initiative includes the training of teaching and support staff, the establishment of resource classrooms, and assistance to families through volunteers and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Activities also include individualized educational pathways, community awareness-raising campaigns, and anti-bullying prevention measures to eliminate stigma and discrimination.

The project operates across five main regions, fostering collaboration between schools, CSOs, and local institutions, while ensuring genuine inclusion and supporting the social participation and empowerment of children with disabilities.

Italian cooperation is also actively engaged in Algeria's education sector, with particular attention to vulnerable areas and Sahrawi refugee camps. Within the framework of the second Debt Conversion Agreement, the Ministry of Education proposed eight infrastructure projects to strengthen schools and educational services. At the same time, the Ministry of Youth and Sports presented initiatives focused on developing sports education in country's peripheral areas.

In the Sahrawi camps, the educational situation remains particularly critical. Communities continue to face shortages of teachers, insufficient educational materials, inadequate school infrastructure, and an almost complete lack of recreational spaces. Within this fragile context, AICS supports the Sahrawi education system through both multilateral channels — in cooperation with United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and WFP — and bilateral channels through Civil Society Organizations operating on the ground.

The initiative **"Inclusive Education, Hygiene and Food Security for Vulnerable Populations in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps of South-West Algeria"**, implemented by CISP and Movimento Africa 70, seeks to mitigate the impact of emergency conditions, promote resilience, and improve the quality of education.

Its main objectives include ensuring access to a safe and inclusive environment for children, improving the management of the education system and the availability of teaching materials, and supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities within specialized centers through family-based integration approaches.

Public Health and Innovation

Although Tunisia's healthcare system is universal, it continues to face significant challenges related to **infrastructure modernization** and regional inequalities in access to healthcare services. Italian cooperation supports initiatives aimed at strengthening the public health system through hospital rehabilitation interventions and the procurement of medical equipment, particularly in rural areas.

One innovative example is the **MEDNET 4OH** project, implemented by the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale" (IZS-Teramo). The initiative adopts the One Health approach, **integrating human, animal, and environmental health dimensions**.

MEDNET 4OH aims to strengthen genomic surveillance capacities for infectious diseases, develop digital platforms for data analysis, reinforce expertise in molecular biology and bioinformatics, and promote innovative preventive practices, with particular attention to priority pathogens such as tuberculosis. The project also fosters regional cooperation and helps strengthen the resilience of Tunisia's healthcare system.

> The People Pillar stands out for its ability to combine educational, social, and healthcare interventions through an inclusive approach centered on young people, women, and vulnerable groups. Through targeted programs, improved infrastructure, and inclusive policies, the pillar contributes to strengthening human development, social cohesion, and community resilience across partner countries.
> The interventions implemented have ensured more equitable access to essential services, supported pathways towards autonomy, and improved the quality of life of thousands of citizens.

03 PLANET

Promoting Environmental Sustainability and Resilience in the Mediterranean

In 2025, the *Planet* pillar benefited from approximately EUR 69 million allocated to environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources. These resources were distributed across the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries (EUR 19 million), sustainable energy (EUR 18 million), environmental protection (EUR 23 million), and water and sanitation services (EUR 9 million).

The projects implemented under this pillar promoted **climate resilience and the adoption of sustainable** practices through interventions in energy, water and waste management, and sustainable agricultural development.

In Tunisia, particular emphasis was placed on programs supporting **energy efficiency**, integrated **natural resource management**, and improving of **waste** collection and disposal systems.

In **Libya**, initiatives focused on sustainable water resource management and the strengthening of recycling systems.

In **Morocco**, a dedicated initiative to improve access to water **resources and sanitation services was also implemented**.

Overall, the pillar helps foster a balanced approach between development objectives and environmental protection.

Within this pillar, AICS implements the following initiatives:

Energy Efficiency, Natural Resource Management, and Environmental Protection

In Tunisia, the initiatives supported under the *Planet* Pillar have generated significant impact at multiple levels, ranging from local governance to the participation of civil society and local communities.

Particularly noteworthy is the **Environmental Protection Program**, launched in 2010 with funding amounting to EUR 3 million. Implemented through three technical cooperation actions, the program supported Tunisian institutions in **strengthening environmental protection efforts**.

The first component reinforced the National Gene Bank (NGB)'s capacity to preserve plant genetic resources within their natural and cultural environments. The second component addressed coastal erosion through a pilot project that installed and maintained fixed buoys in Sousse, Monastir, and Bizerte, while also strengthening staff capacity at the Agence de Protection et d'Aménagement du Littoral (APAL). The third component enhanced the Agence Nationale de Protection de l'Environnement (ANPE)'s capacity for waste management, thereby contributing to the consolidation of national environmental governance.

The **PRESTo** project represented a further step towards **climate resilience** by strengthening the adaptive capacities of Tunisian communities in response to climate change.

The intervention focused on the role of **civil society** and agricultural organizations in the governorates of Nabeul, Bizerte, Mahdia, and Jendouba, promoting sustainable practices in natural resource management, biodiversity protection, and soil degradation mitigation.

PRESTo combined technical and financial support for local advocacy initiatives, encouraging more responsible and informed environmental management practices.

In the rural sector, the “Integrated Rural Development Project” (PDRI) operated in the delegations of Hezoua and Tamerza within the framework of a national strategy aimed at combating desertification, soil erosion, and the overexploitation of grazing land. The initiative promoted the protection of agro-sylvo-pastoral ecosystems and the sustainable management of natural resources, while improving living conditions in rural and border areas.

Particular attention was devoted to reforestation, environmental protection, and the efficient use of water resources. The project also supported the diversification of productive activities and income-generating opportunities by strengthening agricultural and livestock value chains and promoting local entrepreneurship, **to increase resilience and sustainability.**

Water Resource Management and Sanitation Services

Morocco, characterized by an arid climate and scarce, unevenly distributed water resources, faces growing challenges linked to demographic growth, agricultural expansion, and urbanization. Within this context, the **PAGER II** project contributed to improving access to **drinking water and sanitation services in the province of Settat**, a rural area also affected by migration flows towards Italy.

The intervention included the construction of water infrastructure in 146 schools, 30 healthcare dispensaries, and 17 water towers, some of which are powered by solar panels. In the remote centers of M'Garto and Ouled Mhamed, autonomous drinking water systems were installed to ensure sustainable access to safe water supplies.

At the same time, awareness-raising activities engaged students, teachers, and families, promoting sustainable, informed behaviors in managing water resources. This integrated approach contributed to strengthening local capacities and community resilience, while improving public health, food security, and overall quality of life.

Circular Economy and Waste Management

In Libya, the project *"Strengthening Plastic Waste Recycling Capacity in the Greater Tripoli Area",* implemented by UNOPS, has promoted the sustainable management of urban and environmental waste while supporting the transition towards a circular economy model.

The initiative's main objectives include reducing the production and uncontrolled disposal of plastic waste, enhancing the economic value of recyclable materials, and **developing an inclusive entrepreneurial model that involves local communities, private-sector actors, and local authorities.**

The project generates environmental, social, and economic benefits by stimulating local employment, promoting sustainability, and improving the quality of life in urban areas across Greater Tripoli.

> The initiatives implemented under the Planet Pillar have generated significant impact across four main sectors: agriculture, forestry and fisheries, sustainable energy, environmental protection, and water and sanitation services. This pillar represents an effective model of cooperation that combines development objectives, environmental protection, and climate resilience. From urban energy efficiency to the sustainable management of natural resources and waste, as well as improved access to water and sanitation services, the initiatives implemented contribute to building more resilient communities, better-protected ecosystems, and more sustainable local economies.
>
> The multi-actor and multi-level approach, grounded in the participation of institutions, experts, local authorities, and civil society, ensures the long-term sustainability of the interventions while fostering the creation of networks of expertise and strengthening local governance capacities. The experiences implemented in Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya demonstrate how international cooperation can provide concrete responses to the environmental, climate, and social challenges facing the Mediterranean region, while promoting a lasting balance between economic development and the protection of natural heritage.

04 PARTNERSHIP

Strengthening Cooperation Networks and Local Governance

Approximately EUR 68 million was allocated to the *Partnerships* Pillar to strengthen **cooperation networks and strategic** partnerships. The interventions involved local institutions, international organizations, and civil society actors, promoting a coordinated and multilateral approach to development.

A significant share of the activities focused on **regional projects** jointly implemented across Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya (approximately EUR 20 million), encouraging the **exchange of expertise** and the establishment of long-term cooperation networks. Collaboration with international partners enabled the implementation of complex, integrated programs while strengthening institutional capacities and strategic planning processes in the countries concerned.

AICS promotes initiatives to strengthen public investment and provide technical assistance in formulating strategic policies. In a context characterized by political transitions and economic challenges, Italian Cooperation supports the Tunisian government in improving the effectiveness of public policies, the management of structural reforms, and the quality of services provided to citizens. Particular attention is devoted to strengthening public sector capacities and fostering the participation of civil society and local communities.

Within this framework, Italy collaborates with international organizations to support Tunisia's administrative modernization processes, with a specific focus on social inclusion and equitable access to public services. Interventions also concentrate on local development and the creation of economic opportunities, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of the population, while reinforcing governance mechanisms and the capacities of Tunisian institutions to promote the socio-economic development of local communities.

Within this pillar, AICS interventions are implemented through the following initiatives:

Governance and Civil Society: The PRODEC Program

The **PRODEC** program has been one of the main implementation tools under the Partnership Pillar in Tunisia, aimed at **improving basic services** in **31 newly established** municipalities created between 2015 and 2016 across ten governorates.

The initiative financed investments identified within Municipal Development Plans, focusing primarily on infrastructure and equipment necessary to guarantee essential public services for citizens.

PRODEC forms part of a multi-donor strategy involving partners such as the European Union, KfW Development Bank, and the Agence Française de Développement, to progressively support all newly established municipalities across the country.

The program is structured around four main components. First, it provides technical assistance and training to municipal staff, strengthening capacities in planning, investment management, and the supervision of public works. Second, it supports the construction of municipal offices and infrastructure and the provision of essential equipment for public service delivery. A third component concerns the implementation of public works such as roads, lighting systems, and drainage infrastructure. At the same time, the fourth component promotes socio-collective projects including markets, sports facilities, and cultural spaces.

Together, these activities concretely improve the quality of life for local communities while strengthening municipal capacities to respond effectively to citizens' needs.

Support to Strategic Planning:
UNOPS and the 2026–2030 Development Plan

At the same time, the project "Support to the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) for the Development of the 2026–2030 Development Plan, implemented by UNOPS, aimed to strengthen the Tunisian government's capacities in monitoring and evaluating three-year development plans, particularly within the "Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP).

The initiative provided methodological tools and operational support to ensure more **effective strategic planning** and improved implementation of public policies.

Expected results included strengthening the MEP's capacities in evaluation and monitoring through the adoption of a structured methodology comprising guidelines, practical tools, and key performance indicators. Simultaneously, the project reinforced the internal structure dedicated to monitoring and evaluation by promoting more transparent, systematic, and evidence-based processes grounded in reliable data.

These actions enabled the Tunisian government to enhance its ability to plan, measure, and assess the impact of development programs, thereby encouraging evidence-based decision-making and more effective management of public resources.

The Partnership Pillar has therefore played a fundamental role in strengthening institutional networks, regional cooperation, and local capacities. The initiatives implemented have promoted both local development and the modernization of public institutions, with particular attention to social inclusion and to creating economic opportunities for vulnerable groups.

The regional projects shared between Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya have encouraged the exchange of expertise and the establishment of long-lasting networks among the different countries, consolidating a coordinated and multilateral approach to development. In particular, collaboration with international partners has enabled the implementation of complex and integrated interventions while strengthening governance systems and strategic planning capacities.

Overall, the Partnership Pillar contributes to building more resilient communities, more efficient institutions, and more transparent and evidence-based decision-making processes. The integrated approach — combining infrastructure investments, staff training, technical support, and civil society engagement — represents an effective model of international cooperation capable of generating tangible impact at both local and regional levels.

05 PEACE

Security, Stability, and Governance

The *Peace* Pillar aims to promote security, stability, and democracy, with a specific focus on peace consolidation, conflict prevention and resolution, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. The initiatives developed under this pillar target complex contexts such as Libya, characterized by political instability and institutional fragility, where international support remains essential to protecting human rights and improving governance systems.

At the same time, through AICS, Italian Cooperation promotes actions in Tunisia to strengthen public investment and technical assistance for the formulation of strategic policies. In a context marked by political transitions and economic challenges, Italy supports the Tunisian government in **improving the effectiveness of public policies, the management of structural reforms, and the quality of services provided to citizens**. Particular attention is devoted to strengthening public sector capacities, with a strong emphasis on the active involvement of civil society and local communities.

The interventions also seek to foster local development and create economic opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable groups of the population, promoting a more inclusive and sustainable governance model. The objective is to **strengthen Tunisian institutions in driving long-term, equitable, and rights-based socio-economic** development while integrating administrative modernization tools with social inclusion policies.

Within this pillar, AICS action is implemented through the following initiatives:

Governance and Civil Society: Technical Assistance to the Delivery Unit

A significant example under the *Peace* Pillar is the Italian contribution to the World Bank's multi-donor trust fund supporting the **TERI 2.0** program, which provides technical assistance to the Delivery Unit within the Presidency of the Tunisian Government. The initiative aims to facilitate the implementation of political and structural reforms in line with the priorities identified in Tunisia–Italy agreements, including economic development, renewable energy, social inclusion, sustainable agriculture, and employment.

The project strengthens reform governance through a stable structure that identifies priorities, coordinates implementation, and monitors progress while ensuring transparency and inclusiveness. Activities are organized around five key functions: organization of the *Delivery Unit*; definition of reforms; coordination; monitoring and communication.

The governance structure includes a Steering Committee (COPIL), chaired by the Head of Government, and Technical Committees (COTECH) divided into thematic areas such as the economy, public administration, social inclusion, and ecological transition. This approach promotes effective interministerial coordination and supports the implementation grounded in data-driven processes and shared priorities.

Modernization of the Tunisian Statistical System

The **modernization of the statistical system** represents another strategic component for strengthening governance. Initiated in 2016 through a twinning project financed by the European Union and implemented in collaboration with the national statistical institutes of France (INSEE) and Italy (ISTAT), helped improve the quality of Tunisia's statistical production and align it with international standards.

The new project aims further to strengthen the efficiency and relevance of statistical systems while improving national coordination mechanisms. Supported by the World Bank, the intervention focuses on enhancing the processes of data collection, processing, integration, and dissemination within the National Institute of Statistics.

Activities are concentrated in three main areas: developing partnerships on strategic themes, creating an integrated digital statistical system, and using innovative technologies for data dissemination. Expected results include improved quality, accessibility, and efficiency of statistical information, supported by advanced tools such as Big Data and organizational reforms.

Ecological Transition and Innovation

The Peace Pillar also stands out for its **focus on ecological transition initiatives** in Tunisia. The project, implemented in partnership with the Polytechnic University of Milan (lead partner), Fondazione Politecnico, the Municipality of Milan, Fondazione AVSI, and CITET, builds on collaboration between the Milan territorial system and the areas of Tunis, Gabès, and Sfax.

The intervention **promotes multi-level and multi-actor governance** processes through territorial hubs dedicated to to co-designing of pilot interventions, strengthens training opportunities and institutional capacities, and supports the development of green jobs.

In addition, the project includes studies and feasibility analyses to test at testing innovative models for the sustainable management of natural and energy resources. It also promotes technology transfer, stronger linkages between research institutions and private enterprises, and the emergence of sustainability-oriented start-ups.

Overall, the actions of the AICS Tunis Office are characterized by an integrated and multidimensional approach that combines economic development, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and partnership strengthening. The initiatives implemented under the Peace Pillar have generated tangible and lasting impacts by improving citizens' quality of life, supporting public institutions, and promoting sustainable long-term growth.

Strengthening institutional capacities, modernizing statistical systems, supporting reform governance, and promoting sustainable environmental practices constitute key elements for the stability and resilience of partner countries, particularly Tunisia and Libya. Through coordinated and multidimensional interventions, the Peace Pillar aims to create safer, more inclusive, and more democratic contexts, fostering balanced and sustainable development across the Mediterranean region.

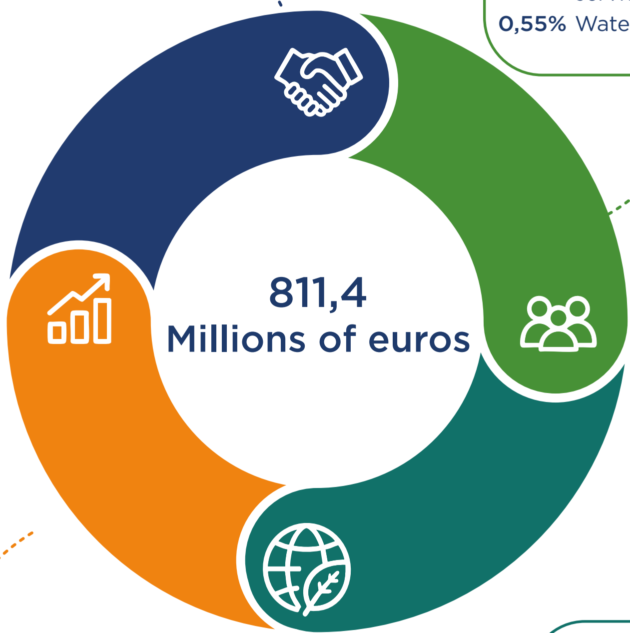
% of OECD sectors by pillar

8,41 % Partnership

Other sectors	0,42%
General budget support	1,92%
Government and civil society	6,07%

People **7,39 %**

7,39%	Debt-related measures
0,90%	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
1,08%	Education
2,70%	Emergency response
3,20%	Government and civil society
0,88%	Health
2,08%	Other social infrastructure and services
0,55%	Water supply and sanitation



64,24 % Prosperity

Debt-related measures	1,92 %
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	13,22 %
Banking and financial services	23,86 %
Business services and other services	1,51 %
Education	1,79 %
General budget support	17,87 %
General environmental protection	0,62 %
Health	0,20 %
Other infrastructure and social services	1,66 %
Transport and storage	1,60 %

Planet **8,54 %**

2,35%	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
2,22%	Energy
2,86%	General environmental protection
1,12%	Water supply and sanitation

Sector Focus

Debt Conversion

Italy continues to demonstrate strong leadership in supporting vulnerable countries through an **integrated strategy** combining **financial assistance and external debt management**, in line with international agreements under the G20 and the Paris Club. The main legal framework remains Law 209/2000, originally introduced to implement the HIPC[18] Initiative and subsequently adapted to address emerging debt crises in a manner consistent with instruments such as the Common Framework.

This approach enables partner countries to secure greater fiscal space for investments in sustainable development and climate resilience. In June 2025, Italy also launched a bilateral debt-conversion initiative for African countries, covering the period 2026–2035. Programs are currently active in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, enabling the conversion of debt into resources for local development projects. Debt cancellation mechanisms are implemented through technical monitoring and joint supervision by the two countries involved, ensuring transparency and effectiveness in program implementation.

In **Tunisia**, the 2016 Debt Conversion Agreement and its subsequent 2019 amendment mobilized EUR 50 million for projects with high social impact. By converting debt into investments that support healthcare, infrastructure, and local development, Italian Cooperation helps improve living conditions and create employment opportunities in the country's most vulnerable regions. In 2025, under the terms of the Debt Conversion Agreement, approximately EUR 25 million of Tunisia's debt towards Italy was canceled.

In **Morocco**, the Debt Conversion Agreement was signed on 9 April 2013 for EUR 15 million, subsequently increased by the equivalent of the residual amount — EUR 613,311 — remaining from the previous 2009 agreement. The program includes a component supporting the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), responsible for government poverty reduction programs, amounting to EUR 12.6 million and finalized in 2020, as well as the Project for the Preservation of Morocco's Archaeological Heritage, with a budget of EUR 3 million.

In **Algeria**, the second Debt Conversion Agreement signed in 2011 mobilized EUR 10 million for environmental **protection and waste management**, **healthcare, education, crafts, and sports**.

[18] The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative is a framework established in 1996 by the IMF and the World Bank to ensure that poor countries are not burdened by unsustainable debt.

Sector Focus

Emergency Response

In line with developments observed at both the international and European levels, Italian Cooperation has also recognized the need, in contexts of fragility, instability, and protracted crises, to **respond to the immediate needs of civilian populations** while simultaneously addressing the structural causes of conflict through coordinated and **complementary interventions in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies**.

This integrated approach is implemented through bilateral, multi-bilateral, and multilateral channels, thereby strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of Italy's external action.

In **Algeria**, Italian Cooperation stands out as one of the few donors that has maintained a continuous **presence in the Sahrawi refugee camps** over the years through contributions directed towards major United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. AICS has adopted an integrated approach to address the most urgent needs of refugee populations by intervening in **key sectors, including food security, access to safe drinking water, psychosocial well-being, and the promotion of education for Sahrawi children and youth.**

At the same time, these interventions seek to strengthen local capacities by supporting empowerment processes and promoting long-term ownership, enabling communities to become active actors in their own development.

Despite growing challenges linked to the progressive reduction in international funding, the joint interventions have helped improve living conditions in the camps and ensured essential support for the most vulnerable populations. AICS specifically supports bilateral grant-funded projects entrusted to civil society organizations, **focusing on promoting inclusive education, strengthening food security, and providing safe and accessible water, sanitation, and hygiene services.**

These actions are complemented by multi-bilateral initiatives implemented by United Nations agencies such as WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR in the sectors of **food security, education, and WASH**.

In **Libya**, the emergency response sector continues to be heavily affected by persistent political instability and the protracted nature of armed conflict. Institutional fragmentation and the absence of a centralized system make the **management of humanitarian crises particularly complex**.

Within this context, Italian Cooperation funding focuses on interventions addressing the Sudanese refugee crisis in the country, as well as demining activities implemented through UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service). These interventions aim to strengthen Libyan institutional capacities for managing landmines and unexploded ordnance, thereby contributing to improved safety and stability.

At the same time, AICS supports interventions implemented by the World Food Program (WFP) to address the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable populations through food distributions, e-voucher systems, and activities to prevent maternal and child malnutrition.

Photo credits : WFP Libya

Sector Focus

Water

AICS operates in the water sector across **Algeria, Tunisia, Libya**, and Morocco through an **integrated approach** that links access to essential services, sustainable water resource management, food security, and climate change adaptation. Italian cooperation's action is characterized by **interventions tailored to the specific contexts** of each country, combining infrastructure development, technological innovation, institutional strengthening, and community participation.

In **Algeria**, particularly in the Sahrawi refugee camps, interventions focus on the **WASH** sector to ensure equitable access to safe **drinking water and sanitation services**. Activities include the rehabilitation and expansion of water supply networks, the strengthening of water service management systems, and the promotion of safe practices throughout the entire water supply chain, within a context marked by high vulnerability and severe infrastructural constraints.

In **Tunisia**, AICS supports the sustainable management of water resources as a key driver of environmental protection and food security. Interventions focus on improving **water-use efficiency in agriculture**, modernizing hydraulic infrastructure, promoting the **reuse of treated wastewater**, supporting innovation in irrigation systems, and fostering **agroecological transition**, with particular attention to arid areas and territories most exposed to water stress.

In **Libya**, interventions aim to strengthen the **sustainable use of water for domestic and productive purposes**, with emphasis on the rehabilitation of community water infrastructure, the improvement of local governance in the sector, and support for more resilient agricultural systems, particularly in vulnerable regions such as Fezzan.

In **Morocco**, an ongoing project seeks to **improve water supply systems and access to sanitation services in public facilities** located in rural areas of the Province of Settat, while also strengthening local capacities in the management and maintenance of water points.

At the regional level, AICS therefore promotes an **integrated approach** to water management that is climate-resilient, innovative, territorial, and sustainable, in line with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sector Focus

Cultural Heritage

Italian Cooperation in the cultural sector represents a strategic instrument for the **protection and enhancement of cultural heritage**, understood not only as a historical legacy but also as a driver of **socio-economic development, social cohesion, and innovation**. Through projects financed by Italy and the European Union and implemented in collaboration with local and international institutions, integrated interventions are **promoted that combine conservation, local** capacity building, urban regeneration, and the creation of community spaces for social interaction.

The active involvement of civil society and local institutions is considered essential to ensuring the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of these initiatives, and to fostering participatory and inclusive management models.

In **Tunisia**, AICS is supporting the establishment of a **Mediterranean Center for Applied Arts** in the heart of Tunis's Medina, within the historic premises of the Santa Croce complex, which was previously restored through Italian Cooperation programs. The initiative promotes local community involvement and the development of partnerships with the ''Sistema Italia'' network, **to transform cultural heritage into a driver of innovation and development.**

Implemented in collaboration with the Municipality of Tunis, the project aims to create a multifunctional center with a dual vocation: a space dedicated to innovation and the development of creative industries, and a hub for socio-cultural activities within the fabric of the Medina. This intervention seeks to enhance historical architecture as a catalyst for economic growth and opportunities for local communities.

In **Libya**, AICS, together with qualified partners such as the Central Institute for Restoration (ICR) and "Roma Tre" University, supports projects **to conserve archaeological sites of major historical** value, including Leptis Magna. These initiatives aim to protect cultural heritage, strengthen local capacities in restoration and heritage management, and generate educational and economic opportunities for local communities.

Italian Cooperation also coordinates with international initiatives, creating synergies that enhance the impact and sustainability of interventions over time, including through EU-funded mechanisms.

In **Morocco**, cultural heritage reflects the convergence of Berber, Arab, Andalusian, and European influences, visible in the historic medinas of Fez, Marrakech, Meknes, and Tetouan, all recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. AICS operates within a framework that **promotes the restoration of historical sites and supports communities safeguarding traditional practices**, while also enhancing intangible cultural heritage such as music, crafts, gastronomy, and spiritual traditions.

At the same time, significant challenges remain regarding the sustainable management of cultural assets, the transmission of traditional knowledge, and the inclusion of local communities in decision-making processes.

Overall, Italian Cooperation demonstrates how cultural heritage protection can become a concrete **instrument for sustainable development, innovation, and the strengthening of local communities**.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Operating in the field of international cooperation means constantly navigating an evolving environment. For the Agency, monitoring challenges and identifying appropriate solutions are essential for maximizing project impact and strengthening institutional know-how.

Cooperation initiatives are heavily affected by the **unpredictability of political contexts** and by global emergencies, both of which represent major obstacles to the continuity and stability of interventions. These challenges require continuous adaptation of activities and put the robustness of programming frameworks to the test. A first key lesson learned is therefore the **importance of embedding flexibility and adaptive capacity into project planning processes**, and the to make timely, targeted revisions.

In Tunisia, an additional challenge stems from the **complexity of the administrative system**, characterized by cumbersome procedures and uncertain timelines. This requires continuous and structured dialogue with local institutions. A second important lesson **learned is therefore the need to invest in building strong institutional relationships and in developing an in-depth understanding of the local context**.

More broadly, lengthy implementation timelines should not be regarded as anomalies, but rather as structural constraints and, at the same time, as learning opportunities: **operating in complex environments requires patience, experience and adaptability**. In this regard, another important lesson concerns the central role of continuous dialogue with local stakeholders, which is essential to overcoming challenges related to understanding local needs and designing interventions genuinely rooted in the local context.

Regular engagement with institutions and local communities helps strengthen ownership of initiatives and improves both sustainability and impact, while reducing the risk of misalignment with national priorities. This highlights a clear lesson learned: **investing in participatory processes and structured technical dialogue facilitates the integration of interventions into existing policies and strengthens the governance capacities of partner institutions.**

Institutional collaboration has also demonstrated that the exchange of knowledge and good practices is crucial for overcoming operational fragmentation and generating effective synergies. In this area, the **promotion of Italian expertise** in the field of cultural heritage has represented not only a technical opportunity, but also a strategic instrument for strengthening bilateral dialogue and enhancing the visibility of Italy's cooperation efforts.

Before the establishment of the Agency, hese projects, which were not designed using a Results-Based Management (RBM) approach, are more difficult to monitor and evaluate because they lack the same methodological framework as current systems. Their design, often focused on activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impact, limits the ability to measure change and identify challenges promptly. **This experience demonstrates that the absence of a results-oriented approach reduces the overall effectiveness of interventions.**

Conversely, the systematic adoption of RBM has proven to be a critical success factor. The use of results chains, measurable indicators and structured data collection systems contributes to improving the quality, coherence and accountability of initiatives. An evidence-based monitoring system also enables continuous adaptation of interventions, strengthens institutional learning, and enhances long-term impact and sustainability.

At the same time, experience has highlighted another major challenge: the lack of formal coordination mechanisms among donors, which limits the full realization of collaborative potential. The absence of institutionalized consultation mechanisms, combined with fragmentation among actors, increases the risk of overlap and inefficient allocation of resources. This points to another key lesson learned: **coordination cannot rely solely on informal dynamics, but must be structured, continuous and institutionally supported**.

In this regard, the Mattei Plan for Africa plays a strategic role, offering a concrete response to these challenges. Its approach, based on equal partnerships and a structured governance framework, provides an important lesson: only through a systemic approach can one fully leverage t**he contributions of different actors and strengthen the coherence of interventions.**

Within this framework, the experience of the AICS Tunis Office confirms that strengthening multi-level coordination — through dialogue, integration and joint management of initiatives — is essential to overcoming fragmentation, improving the quality of coordination and increasing the overall impact of cooperation actions.

In this context, the **systematic involvement of stakeholders** plays a central role, both in ensuring that interventions are aligned with the strategic priorities of partner countries and in facilitating the definition of appropriate operational conditions for implementation.

In Libya, for example, Italian Cooperation has progressively developed a structured coordination system with national institutions, accompanied by regular and continuous dialogue with the competent authorities. This process has contributed to progressively **aligning interventions with shared strategic and sectoral priorities** and to jointly defining the operational conditions necessary to ensure effective, timely and high-quality implementation.

Difficulties in ensuring continuity and sustainability beyond the funding phase have highlighted the importance of integrating structured post-intervention transition planning from the initiative's final stages. Defining a clear framework for responsibilities, operational processes, management costs and potential funding sources not only facilitates continuity after the end of external support, but also constitutes a key component of the technical assistance provided to local partners.

This approach strengthens institutional, technical, and managerial capacities, improving partners' ability to maintain, coordinate, and govern activities over the long term. Moreover, the systematic integration of the different dimensions of sustainability — institutional, economic and financial, technical, environmental, social and gender-related — helps consolidate the results achieved and promotes the operational autonomy of the institutions involved over the medium and long term.

Finally, the decades-long experience of the AICS Tunis Office with financial instruments has highlighted another important challenge: **the use of financial tools that are not adequately tailored to the characteristics of the sectors concerned** — particularly agriculture — and to the level of maturity of economic operators can significantly limit their effectiveness.

This challenge underscores a fundamental lesson: **the need to develop differentiated financial engineering models based on targeted, flexible instruments.**

From this perspective, initiatives such as PRASOC have demonstrated the effectiveness of innovative solutions, including combining credit and grants, in promoting financial inclusion. In particular, leasing has proven an effective tool for overcoming barriers posed by traditional collateral requirements, thereby facilitating access to credit for small-scale operators, including smallholder farmers.

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