United Nations Development Programme

Country/Region/Global: UNDP-IRN

Initiation Plan

Project Title	:	To finalise a Project Document (ProDoc) for project "Enhancing the Restoration Activity through Effective Use of Agricultural Water and Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Urmia"
Expected UNSDCF/CPD Outcome(s)	:	Outcome 3: By 2027, environmental conservation and integrated natural resource management are enhanced and the capacity to address climate change challenges is strengthened.
Expected CPD Output(s)	:	Output 3.2: Biodiversity conservation is reflected in therelevant sectoral directives and action plans of the Government.
Initiation Plan Start/End Dates	:	16 June 2025 to 31 May 2026
Implementing Partner	:	UNDP

Brief Description

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) was launched in 2005 Funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF). From 2014 onward the Government of Japan has generously contributed to the CIWP in order to further expand the project's goal "improve the management of Wetland Protected Areas in Iran and to systematically remove or significantly reduce threats to these globally significant ecosystems and their biodiversity and Promoting Environmental Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Urmia and other Wetlands" till the first quarter of 2024.

To continue the efforts and sustain the achievements, UNDP in collaboration with Government of Iran has continued the project with internal resources till end of December 2024.

In December 2024, the Government of Japan has renewed its participation in the Wetlands conservation with a generous contribution to further refine and enhance the conservation initiatives for Iran's wetlands undertaken by UNDP and FAO. To achieve this, The GOJ has granted the total amount of 690,000,000 Yen to the Government of Iran through UNDP. As agreed by the donor, UNDP will give the responsibility of implementation of some activities to FAO as the Responsible Party. To start full implementation of project activities, a Project Document must be developed by UNDP. Formulation of the Project Document requires extensive consultations with diverse stakeholders and therefore Initiation Plan is put in place to gather critical insights to inform the project design for more effective implementation and to finalize the ProDoc. Among other key components, the Project Document will also clarify the partnership arrangements with FAO to ensure collaborative planning and evidence informed design process.

Total resources required	USD238,185
Total allocated resources:	
• Regular- UNDP TRAC	USD5,000
• Other:	USD233,185
o Donor	
o Government	
Unfunded budget:	
In-kind Contributions	_____

Programme Period:	1 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2027
Quantum Project Number:	01003577

Agreed by UNDP:

Ms. Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe
UNDP RR a.i.

I. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTPUT

Iran's wetlands, once teeming with life and biodiversity, face significant challenges threatening their existence. Climate change and unsustainable management of natural resources have led to water scarcity issues, impacting wetlands profoundly. Prolonged droughts exacerbate this scarcity, drying up wetlands and disrupting their delicate ecosystems. According to existing studies[1], the severity of drying up is not uniform across the country, being more severe in the central, southern, and eastern provinces.

Human activities, such as unsustainable agricultural practices and poor irrigation, as well as urban development all contribute to the loss and degradation of wetland habitats in Iran. Agricultural practice is predominantly water intensive, thousands of illegal wells are constructed, or existing wells are over-exploited, and illegal water[2] withdrawn from surface water resources for irrigation, all at the cost of less water supply to the wetlands. The wetlands, particularly those located at the downstream end of the river basins (majority of larger wetlands of Iran), have been the main ecosystems suffering from the climate change and development-related challenges. Additionally, as land is converted for agriculture or infrastructure, wetlands are fragmented, and habitat connectivity is disrupted. This fragmentation diminishes the ability of wetland ecosystems to support diverse species and maintain ecological balance. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to promote sustainable agriculture including climate informed agriculture, develop sustainable livelihood and raise awareness about the importance of wetland conservation. Collaborative action involving governmental entities, local communities, and international partners is crucial to safeguarding Iran's precious wetland ecosystems for future generations.

The proposed initiative will build on the past achievements initiated in 2004 focusing on wetlands conservation and funded initially by GEF and later on by the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran, the Government of Japan and UNDP. With the receipt of the 690,000,000 Yen from the Government of Japan to UNDP and FAO, the initiatives for efforts on the wetlands were renewed. To achieve this, UNDP and FAO will formulate a Project Document to utilize the allocated budget for Lake Urmia conservation efforts. Among other key components, the Project Document will also clarify the partnership arrangements with FAO to ensure collaborative planning and evidence informed design process.

The expected outputs of the present Initiation Plan can be summarised as below:

- **Sustainable agriculture practices and solutions are continued and implemented:** During preparation and development of the ProDoc, FAO will also undertake some activities that provide insights for designing effective intervention measures of the future as well as secure the continuity of initiatives and programmes. These efforts inform and refine formulation of the Project Document aligned with national priorities. FAO's role in the ProDoc will be centered on implementation of activities focusing on precision agriculture, agrometeorology services, water productivity and water saving options and other activities as outlined in the funding proposal.
- **Finalized Project Document (ProDoc):** The initiated discussions will be continued between FAO, UNDP and the Government of Iran to inform the design of a full pledged Project Document, to be implemented by FAO.

II. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This Initiation Plan will be implemented under a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). The intervention will be managed by UNDP Resident Representative with support from a designated Programme Analyst and s/he will ensure sound implementation of this initiation plan towards achieving its goals and objectives. UNDP will also work with other stakeholders to ensure achievement of intended results of this Initiation Plan.

Oversight and quality assurance of the outputs will be led by the UNDP Programme Support Unit.

The Programme Officer will take the responsibility of all activities to provide required information to draft final Full-Size Project Document according to UNDP procedure and standard.
FAO will serve as the Responsible Party (RO) which implements the output 2 of this initiation plan. Attached to this IP is a UN-to-UN Transfer Agreement which formalize the cooperation between UNDP and FAO

[1] Rahimi, E., Jahandideh, M., Dong, P. et al. Potential anthropogenic and climatic factors affecting Iran's international wetlands. J Environ Stud Sci 13, 557–574 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-023-00846-5

[2] Observations from the past initiatives show that 90% of the activity is linked to agriculture, specifically in orchard farming.

III. MONITORING

The following monitoring mechanisms will be in place for the implementation of this Initiation Plan:

- UNDP and FAO will convene meetings – in the form of a Technical Coordination Committee - to review the progress made and adjust the implementation where necessary.
- The Steering Committee which oversees implementation of the CIWP Phase III will serve as the highest oversight level in this IP where a representative from FAO will be invited to the meetings as a "Development Partner"

In accordance with UNDP's programming policies and procedures, the initiation plan activities will be monitored through the following monitoring plans:

Monitoring Activity	Purpose	Frequency	Expected Action	Partners (if joint)	Cost (if any)
Track results progress	Progress data against the results indicators in the RRF will be collected and analysed to assess the progress of the initiative in achieving the agreed outputs. Progress against the CPD and SP of UNDP should be recorded.	Every 2 month	Slower than expected progress will be addressed by coordinator.	FAO	5000
Monitor and Manage Risk	Identify specific risks that may threaten achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management actions using a risk log.	Every 2 month	Risks are identified by coordinator and actions are taken to manage risk. The risk log is actively maintained to keep track of identified risks and actions taken.	FAO	5000

IV. WORK PLAN

Period: 16 June 2025 to 31 May 2026

EXPECTED OUTPUTS *And baseline, indicators including annual targets*	**PLANNED ACTIVITIES** *List activity results and associated actions*	**TIMEFRAME**				**Responsible Party**	**Funding**	**PLANNED BUDGET**	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount- USD
Output 1: Sustainable agriculture practices and solutions are continued and implemented. Indicators: # Hectares of farmlands covered on Lake Urmia basin for water usage reduction Baselines: 0 ha of coverage on Lake Urmia basin Targets: Coverage of 40 ha on Lake Urmia basin	1.1 Precision agriculture tools and agrometeorology services applied and tailored by local farmers, their effects assessed with water accounting in order to inform institutionalization					FAO	Government of Japan	- Consultancy services - Workshops and meetings - Equipment - Travel	226,185
	1.2 Agriculture water solutions combined in water productivity and saving action plans developed through a participatory approach using GAIN methodology					FAO	Government of Japan	- Consultancy services - Workshops and meetings - Equipment - Travel	
	1.3 Real Agriculture water saving piloted and assessed with REWAS tool at irrigation system and catchment level					FAO	Government of Japan	- Consultancy services - Workshops and meetings - Travel	
Output 2: Finalization of Project Document Indicator: ProDoc in place Baseline: no Target: yes	2.1 Finalization of Project Document					UNDP	UNDP TRAC	- Consultancy services Meetings	5,000
Sub Total-USD									231,185
Direct Project Costs- USD									7,000
TOTAL- USD									**238,185**