



Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary

Appraisal Stage

(ESRS Appraisal Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 10/26/2023 | Report No: ESRSA03089



I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P178910	Program-for-Results Financing (PforR)	Morocco Higher Education	2024
Operation Name	Morocco Accelerating the Transformation of Higher Education and Scientific Research Operation		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Morocco	Morocco	MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	Education
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Kingdom of Morocco	Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (MESRSI)	16-Oct-2023	14-Dec-2023
Estimated Decision Review Date	Total Project Cost		
05-Oct-2023	300,000,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

To improve labor market relevance of priority programs at public universities and strengthen the governance of higher education and scientific research.

B. Is the operation being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project Activities

The operation will support key interventions and reforms of the Government’s program to address challenges in the higher education system and research sector. The operation will focus on the following result areas (RA) to accelerate progress on higher education and research: (1) improving labor market relevance of university programs; (2) promoting research based on international standards and national priorities to increase the efficiency and relevance of scientific



research; and (3) improving governance at central and university levels to strengthen the efficiency of higher education and research.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

The project will have national coverage, covering each of the 12 public universities in Morocco. The development objective of the Project is to improve the labor market relevance of priority programs at public higher education institutions and to strengthen specific research and governance capabilities of the higher education system.

The project will consist of the following three components: (i) Setting up a New Generation Doctorate Program for Academic and Research Excellence; (ii) Fostering Research Centers of Excellence in National Priority Areas; and (iii) Promoting Effective and Digital Management Capacity of the Higher Education and Research System.

The IPF component will provide technical assistance (TA) and capacity building activities to support MESRI and universities to deliver on critical reforms of the PACTE-ESRI (US\$4 million, 2 percent of the total Operation). It will finance activities which contribute to improving the efficiency of the HE and research and the sustainability of results achieved; and inform evidence-based policy making, through (i) consulting services, studies and evaluations to inform the various phases of PACTE-ESRI implementation; and (ii) capacity building activities for MESRI, universities and ONOUC.

The capacity strengthening activities will benefit public universities while leveraging the expertise and capacities of private and public private universities, e.g. through benchmarking university performance, participation in international research networks and providing a vehicle for experience sharing among different types of universities and with international universities.

The use of the IPF instrument to finance these TA activities rather than going through the national budget presents several benefits. It allows for the application of WB procurement guidelines and procedures, which offer several selection methods for accessing high level international expertise, not easily accessible under national procurement, but is often needed on specific technical aspects of reform. The WB will provide technical advice on the terms of reference and can help identify expertise within its global network, which add value to the client.

IPF Component Proposed TA Activities (not yet confirmed)

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IPF Component Proposed TA Activities (not yet confirmed)

1. Design of a school, career and university career guidance system/ MESRI (DESDP) / Consulting services
2. Design of a sustainable system for tracking graduate employability/ MESRI (DESDP) / Consulting services
3. Conceptualization of Thematic Research Institutes-Networks / MESRI (DRSI) / Consulting services
4. Supporting the participation of Moroccan universities in international thematic research networks and associated capacity building activities, such as the African Centers of Excellence research network / MESRI (DRSI) / Consulting services, training, travel
5. Capacity building for universities on administrative, financial, accounting and procurement management / MESRI (DBAG) universities/Consulting services
6. Capacity building for universities on auditing tools and development / MESRI (DBAG) universities /Consulting services, training, Software
7. Diagnostic and capacity building for universities on double entry accounting system/ MESRI (DBAG) universities/ Consulting services, training
8. Training of a cohort of managers at central and university level in Higher Education Planning at IIEP-UNESCO/ MESRI (DSSI) / Consulting services, training, travel
9. Development of a jobs and skills repository (REC) and forward-looking management of manpower, jobs and skills (GPEEC) for the HE and scientific research system / MESRI (DRH) / Consulting services
10. Design and implementation of a change management plan for the successful implementation of the PACTE-ESRI and resolve potential coordination challenges./MESRI (DRH) / Consulting services
11. Evaluation of the University-MESRI contractualization process / MESRI (DSSI) / Consulting services
12. Data collection to inform process and impact evaluation of the new system for allocating undergraduate student scholarships / ONOUSC / Consulting services
13. Study on student financing options / MESRI (DSSI) / Consulting services



- 14. International good practices on prevention and response to sexual harassment on university campuses/ MESRI (DRH)/ Consulting services
- 15. Knowledge sharing and exposure to regional and international experiences. Study tours to learn about good practices and technologies used in HE and research and regions to inform PACTE-ESRI implementation and design of certain interventions at ministry and university level. /DC/Travel

D.2 Overview of Borrower’s Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (MESRI), at national level, has the overall project preparation and implementation responsibilities and will carry out the planning, preparation and execution of the various project activities. The Ministry and universities have limited experience with World Bank ESF requirements . To mitigate the limited E&S capacity of the Ministry, the E&S related contents of the operational manual will be supervised by the PforR’s E&S focal points .

II. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Low

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Low

The environmental risks associated with the project is classified as Low as its potential adverse risks and impacts on human populations and/or the environment are likely to be minimal or negligible. The project could generate positive impact as it will develop and implement curricula including on Green/blue economy (e.g. programs related to renewable energy, climate change, electric vehicle manufacturing). The risks associated with research activities under this TA are classified as Low. Indeed, their objective is to align scientific research with international standards and national priorities and these activities are limited to i) inform the development of the conceptualization of thematic research institutes (based on a review of international best practices and existing diagnostics), ii) Supporting the participation of Moroccan universities in international research networks and events.

A.2 Social Risk Rating

Low

The social risks associated with the project are Low, given that the PforR’s IPF TA component. As the physical works will not be financed and no nduced impacts of the TA is foreseen, the main social risks would include the underlying risk of bias against potential training participants who could benefit from the proposed capacity building, on the basis of their identity (gender, youth, people with disabilities/special needs, ethnic minorities, etc.), socioeconomic status or location (poverty, remoteness) which will limit the access of these groups to the training, mentoring and recruitment opportunities that will be induced by the project’s technical assistance IPF component. The risk of

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unattended grievances if project-specific grievance mechanism, GM for workforce and distinct SEA/SH GM do not reach full functionality.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESS) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts Relevant

Overall environmental and social risks could include the risk of exclusion of marginalized individuals from project benefits (both as project staff and students/PhD candidates), Community Health and Safety risks (especially SEA/SH, as detailed above) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) hazards pertaining to carry out training and research.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure Relevant

Key project stakeholders will include: i) the MESRI, ii) CNRST; iii) Universities, iv) the supervisors and co-supervisors; v) university students and PhD candidates as a collective and as individuals, vi) private sector (potential employers) and vii) civil society. Although a stand-alone Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) will not be required prior to Appraisal, stakeholder engagement provisions will be included in the ESCP and reflected also in the project's operational manual (including specific consultations with stakeholders to keep them informed of, at minimum the launch and completion of the TA activities), once more granular information of specific stakeholders to the prioritized TA is available.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions Relevant

Environmental and social risks/impacts related to OHS are expected to be negligible, given that the project does not anticipate any physical works, construction, or labor influx. The foreseen types of labor involved in this IPF TA are contracted Workers, namely individual consultants or firms (approximately 8-30), employed directly by the Ministry of Higher Education's Human Resources department for the implementation of the technical assistance. Civil servants working in connection with the project will remain subject to the terms and conditions of their existing public sector employment agreement or arrangement (unless there has been an effective legal transfer of their employment or engagement to the project). In other words, ESS2 will not apply to such government civil servants, except for the provisions of child, forced labor and OHS. Although it is not required for the Ministry to prepare LMPs for this TA IPF component, the operational manual to be prepared during implementation will set out procedures to ensure that the labor conditions of contracted workers abide by ESS2. The procedures will include requirements for working conditions and terms of employment; nondiscrimination and equal opportunity; worker's organizations; child labor and minimum age; forced labor; grievance mechanisms; maintenance of training records and documentation and reporting of occupational accidents, diseases and incidents, emergency prevention and remedies for injuries, disability and disease, as well as cross-reference to the project code of conduct,. MESRI will incorporate the requirements of ESS2 into contractual agreements with contractors. The operational manual will also include a labor Grievance Mechanism (GM) and specific survivor-centered ethical measures to address SEA/SH for workers and communities.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management Not Currently Relevant

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At this stage, ESS3 is not expected to be relevant to the TA IPF component.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

As detailed above regarding social risks, to manage the risk related to SEA/SH, the project will include measures to prevent and respond to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse between hired consultants and research/training participants and of sexual harassment amongst hired consultants. As part of the project's operational manual, (i) a code of conduct will be prepared with the client, to be signed by all hired consultants; (ii) sensitization sessions will also be carried out to inform all hired consultants about the commitments they are making by signing the code of conduct and the consequences that a violation of the code would entail and (iii) a survivor-centered grievance mechanism will also be developed and communicated. Moreover, any risk of exclusion of research/training participants with disabilities will be mitigated through the choice of venue and access to training materials. These measures will be included in the project's operational manual.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Not Currently Relevant

At this stage, ESS5 is not expected to be relevant to the project as the project will not include any construction activities or any land acquisition of any kind.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Not Currently Relevant

This ESS is not expected to be relevant to this project given the fact that project activities are limited to TA without any future investment. However, if during the project implementation, some research activities related to living natural resources are supported by the project, then, relevant measures consistent with this ESS requirement will be taken.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

Not Currently Relevant

This standard is not considered relevant as there are no Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities currently identified in the Project area.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage

Not Currently Relevant

At this stage, ESS8 is not expected to be relevant to the project because there are no construction activities planned.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries

Not Currently Relevant

At this stage, ESS9 is not expected to be relevant to the project as there are no financial intermediaries involved.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways

No

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas

No

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B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework

No

The Project will not rely on the Borrower’s Framework but will comply with all relevant national environmental and social laws, policies, and regulations.

Use of Common Approach

No

None.

C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by implementation?

During implementation the client will prepare an operational manual that will include mitigation measures to address the low risks posed by the project including the above-mentioned labor management measures, information sessions with stakeholders and preventative measures to prevent and respond to potential cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment of research/training participants and hired consultants.

III. CONTACT POINT

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Public Disclosure



V. APPROVAL

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