



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 08-Jul-2019 | Report No: PIDC27113

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Project Data**

Country Mauritania	Project ID P171125	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Mauritania Social Safety Net System Project II (P171125)
Region AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date Dec 16, 2019	Estimated Board Date Feb 26, 2020	Practice Area (Lead) Social Protection & Jobs
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Islamic Republic of Mauritania	Implementing Agency Tadamoun Agency	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To strengthen the nationwide adaptive social safety net system and to improve access to targeted social transfers for poor and vulnerable households, including for refugees and host communities

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)**SUMMARY**

Total Project Cost	65.00
Total Financing	60.00
of which IBRD/IDA	45.00
Financing Gap	5.00

DETAILS**World Bank Group Financing**

International Development Association (IDA)	45.00
IDA Grant	45.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Counterpart Funding	15.00
Borrower/Recipient	15.00



Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

- 1. Mauritania is an arid lower middle-income country situated in between North and Sub-Saharan Africa.** The population, as of 2019, has exceeded 4 million inhabitants with the largest population centers in Nouakchott (the capital) and the coastal provinces. Most of the remaining population is located in provinces lining the Senegal River. The country contains nearly one million square kilometers of land, however, the arable areas account for only 0.5 percent of the total land mass.
- 2. The country's impressive economic growth over the past decade has enabled it to graduate into the rank of lower middle-income countries.** The commodity super-cycle spurred solid economic growth, allowed for significant government investments in infrastructure, and enabled Mauritania to register one of the best growth performances in the region. The primary economic activities have traditionally centered around the production of rice, vegetables and animal fodder in the south of the country. However, Mauritania has also managed to successfully tap into mineral resources (iron, copper, gold, oil and gas) as well as fishing reserves in recent years. As a result, GDP per capita increased from US\$700 in 2007 to US\$1138 in 2016.
- 3. Despite decreases driven by this growth, the poverty rate remains high in Mauritania, with 31 percent of the population living below the nationally defined poverty line.** Until the early 2000s, the average annual decline in the poverty rate was slightly below 1 percent. However, between 2008 and 2014, poverty reduction accelerated to an average annual rate of almost 2 percentage points. Most of the progress was registered in the predominantly rural regions of Hodh Chargi, Gorgol, Brakna, Adrar and Tagant. Meanwhile, urban areas registered fewer gains, and in Nouakchott, poverty rates remained largely unchanged. Despite these trends, the highest poverty rates still remain amongst rural households engaged in agriculture and livestock (Guidimagha, Tagant, Brakna, and Assaba). In the coastal provinces where urban populations are concentrated, poverty rates are generally lower than in other parts of the country.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

- 4. The Government of Mauritania introduced a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) in 2013, which laid out the country's vision on social protection.** This strategy is centered around five core objectives: (i) contributing to the fight against food insecurity; (ii) reducing the barriers associated with accessing health and education services; (iii) reinforcing social security and promoting access to employment; (iv) improving living standards through the provision of basic social services; and (v) developing social assistance programs, which target vulnerable groups. It also discusses a range of measures to address climate and disaster risks, including cash transfers during the lean season. A committee was established in 2014 to supervise progress on the implementation of the NSPS, consisting



of Government representatives, bilateral and multilateral development partners, and NGOs.

5. **One of the core elements of the social protection system is the social registry, which was formally institutionalized in 2016 and is housed within the Ministry of Economy and Finance.** The Social registry addresses some of Mauritania's current limitations, particularly in terms of the identification of beneficiaries and targeting. It benefits from the World Bank's technical and financial support but is also partly financed by national resources. At present, the social registry covers 130,000 households and the objective is to cover the entire territory by 2020, including the 200,000 poorest households.
6. **The National Social Transfer Program, Tekavoul, is the flagship social protection program for Mauritania. It is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, in which households are enrolled for a 5-year program cycle.** The program combines regular transfers with social promotion activities designed to promote knowledge of essential family practices (PFE) and investment in early childhood development. It currently supports 30,000 beneficiary households with payments of 1,500 MRU per quarter (approximately the equivalent of USD 167 annually).
7. **The Mauritanian Government also introduced an explicit objective of establishing a shock-response system in its National Poverty Reduction Strategy (SCAPP 2016 – 2030).** In line with the objectives of SCAPP, Mauritania is currently implementing a shock-responsive safety net program, Almaouna. Almaouna, implemented since 2017 by the Food Security Office, with the support of the Sahel ASP Program, is targeting the most vulnerable households during the lean season.
8. **The current civil registration system was established by the 2011 Civil Registration Law.** During the subsequent years, Mauritania has managed to achieve some of the highest enrolment rates in the region. However, 10 percent of the population remains unregistered and they represent the 'last mile' challenge in terms of access to legal identity. Many of those that remain unregistered are from poor and vulnerable groups, which are both physically and socially isolated.
9. **As one of the more stable countries across the Sahel region, Mauritania hosts a large population of refugees from neighboring conflicts.** Conscious of the likely prolonged nature of forced displacement in the country, the Government of Mauritania is strongly committed to ensuring the protection of refugees while promoting their increased self-reliance and the resilience of host communities. Mauritania hosts 58,500 refugees, approximately 95 percent of whom are Malians who have been arriving in the country since 2012. Mauritania is a party to several international conventions related to refugees. These include the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1969 Organization for African Union (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. A draft law providing the basis for a national asylum system was developed in 2014 and validated technically by Government ministries in 2016. Protection and assistance to refugees in Mauritania is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization through the inter-ministerial National Consultative Commission on Refugees (CNCR).

Relationship to CPF

10. **The proposed project is closely aligned with the recently approved Mauritania Country Partnership Framework (FY18 – FY23).** The CPF second pillar focuses on building human capital for inclusive growth and Objective 2.1 of the CPF is to increase coverage of the social safety net system. The proposed project will both increase the total number of beneficiaries, incorporating additional vulnerable groups (such as refugees), and expand the



geographic coverage of existing social protection programs (in terms of the number of *Moughataas* covered). The cash transfers and accompanying measures supported through the proposed project will also enable beneficiary households to invest in their own education (objective 2.2) and health (objective 2.4) and to improve their employability in the labor market (objective 2.3).

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

To strengthen the national adaptive social safety net system and to improve access to targeted social transfers for poor and vulnerable households

Key Results (From PCN)

The main suggested Results Indicators are:

- Households with complete and updated information (less than 4 years) in Social Registry (national/refugee disaggregation);
- Programs using the Social Registry to select their beneficiaries (number);
- Beneficiaries of Tekavoul social transfers program (female/male, national/refugee); and
- Beneficiaries of Almaouna - Shock-responsive safety net program (female/male, national/refugee)

D. Concept Description

11. The proposed project will support the strengthening and extension of the social safety net system in Mauritania in order to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The proposed project is framed around four components. Component 1 will aim to improve the efficiency of the Government's social programs (including, but not limited to Tekavoul and Almouana) by updating the social registry and promoting its usage. This component will be implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which currently oversees the Social Registry. Component 2 will focus on enhancing the socio-economic inclusion of poor households by strengthening and extending the Social Transfer Program, Tekavoul, supporting an adequate re-certification and exit strategy for former Tekavoul beneficiaries and facilitating the inclusion in the Civil Registry. This component will be implemented by the Tadamoun Agency. Component 3 will strengthen the shock-responsive system by further developing the early warning system, the Almaouna program and the shock-responsive financing strategy. This component will be implemented by the Food Security office (CSA). Component 4 will support the coordination and management of the project.

Component 1: Updating and enhancing the Social Registry

12. This component will be implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It will focus on a full update of the Social Registry and refugee inclusion (sub-component 1.1) and will support its usage for operational and strategic purposes (sub-component 1.2).

Sub-component 1.1: Updating the Social Registry

13. The objective of this sub-component is to update the Social Registry throughout Mauritania, including the end-to-end process (methodology for determining quotas, community targeting mechanism, data collection, and verification stage). An ongoing update of the Social Registry is critical because the programs which rely on it need



up-to-date information, both on the status of households (migration, births, deaths, divorce) and on the evolution of their socioeconomic status (education, profession, assets, access to services, etc.). Another element of this sub-component will be the inclusion of refugees in the social registry. Households from Hodh Chargui, including those in the Mbera Refugee Camp, that are considered poor will be included in the Social Registry. Their integration into the Social Registry is a positive step towards better coordination between humanitarian actors and the government and from emergency to development support so that they become more economically self-reliant.

Sub-component 1.2: Promoting usage of the Social Registry

14. The objective of this sub-component is to enhance usage of the social registry both at operational level (targeting for social programs) and strategic level (forward planning). To this end, three activities are being proposed: (i) the introduction of a household identification card for the Social Registry; (ii) the strengthening of communication and outreach; and (iii) the promotion of Social Registry usage for coordination and strategic planning.

Component 2: Enhancing the inclusion of Poor and Vulnerable Households

15. This component will be implemented under the responsibility of the Tadamoun Agency and aims to tackle several constraints that hamper the socio-economic inclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable. More specifically, its objective is: (i) to support the expansion of the Tekavoul program to reach a total of 45,000 households in extreme poverty (Subcomponent 2.1); (ii) to develop an economic inclusion scheme for households exiting the Tekavoul program (Subcomponent 2.2); and (iii) to support households in enrolling in the Civil Registry (Subcomponent 2.3).

Sub-component 2.1: Strengthening and extending the Tekavoul Program

16. The core objective of this sub-component will be to expand the number of beneficiaries of the Tekavoul program from 30,000 to 45,000 households. The transfers will be paid to the household member with primary responsibility for the children's health, nutrition and education. (In most cases, the recipient will be the mother of the household's children). 41.30. The Tekavoul program will expand into the Hodh Chargui Wilaya with resources from the RSW to support the integration of eligible Malian refugees from Bassikonou.

Sub-component 2.2: Re-certification and development of a graduation strategy for Tekavoul

17. This sub-component will support the design of a re-certification strategy, as well as graduation strategy for Tekavoul. The households that meet the program selection criteria will be re-enrolled for a new 5-year cycle of support, and those that are found to be no longer eligible should be taken out of the program. The number of households that will exit the program is difficult to anticipate. It could be substantial for various reasons, partly due to recertification that finds them no longer eligible as the Tekavoul program may have supported them to escape extreme poverty. In the early months of the proposed project, a comprehensive graduation strategy will also be developed that clarifies how these various processes will be operationalized.

Sub-component 2.3: Facilitating civil registration

18. The sub-component will explore ways to facilitate enrolment in the Civil Registry. The most relevant approach from an operational perspective would be a collaborative agreement between ANRPTS (the national agency in



charge of the Civil Registry) and the Tadamoun agency. The possible upcoming Identification for Development (ID4D) diagnostic will provide a strong basis to define ways to design this activity.

Component 3: Strengthening the shock-responsive system for households vulnerable to climate-shocks

19. This component will be implemented by the Food Security Office (FSO – *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire*). It aims to strengthen the design and implementation of a shock responsive system to support vulnerable households to cope with shocks causing food and nutritional insecurity. More specifically, the objective of this component is to: (i) support an early warning system and a response coordination framework (sub-component 3.1); (ii) to implement the *Almaouna* program for vulnerable households (Subcomponent 3.2); (iii) and to design and implement a financing strategy for food insecurity associated to climate-related shocks (Subcomponent 3.3).

Sub-component 3.1: Early Warning System and framework for coordinating a shock-response

20. The sub-component will aim to strengthen the capacity of the Food Security Observatory (OSA - one of the FSO Directions) in its mandate to build the early warning system (EWS) for climate-related hazards associated to food and nutritional insecurity. To this end, the proposed project will support the following three activities: (i) development and integration of the food insecurity prediction model; (ii) support for primary data collection and information dissemination; and (iii) strengthening of the OSA's technical capacities. In addition, this sub-component will also support the establishment of a shock-response coordination framework.

Sub-component 3.2: Implementation of the shock-responsive safety net program *Almaouna*

21. The proposed project will also support the implementation of the shock-responsive safety net program *Almaouna*. The number of vulnerable households that will be supported by *Almaouna* each year will depend on the severity of food insecurity and will be determined based on the outcomes of the Early Warning System being developed. The geographical focus will also depend on the areas affected, as well as the coordination with the other humanitarian actors (mainly WFP and NGO's). The proposed project will explore options for the integration of refugees into the *Almaouna* program. The objective would be to integrate refugees in the same way as the host populations if the department of Bassikonou is affected.

Sub-component 3.3: Designing and implementing a financing strategy for food and nutrition insecurity associated to climate-related shocks

22. This sub-component will support both a financing strategy and the development of a contingency fund. The former will entail the development of a Policy Note, which will support current dialogue with the GoM on setting up a strategic financing framework. In addition, this sub-component will assess the potential interest and feasibility of creating a contingency fund managed by the Government to finance the humanitarian and emergency response efforts to reduce the potential impact of extreme climate-related events. The development of the Fund will leverage lessons learned and experiences already in place in other countries in the region. This activity will be closely aligned with other efforts led by donors (African Risk Capacity, African Development Bank, WFP among others).

Component 4: Project Coordination and Management



23. This component will support activities related to the management of the Project. To this end, it will support a Project fiduciary coordination team. This team will be located within the Tadamoun Agency and will support the project to ensure it is fully operational and efficiently implemented and conforms with the Financing Agreement, project document and the implementation manuals (Administrative, Procurement and Accounting Manual, Social Registry Manual, Tekavoul and Almaouna Programs Manuals).

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Employment: Refugees in Mauritania do not enjoy full rights to formal work especially in the absence of national documentation. This creates specific challenges for the non-Malian refugees who tend to live in urban areas, and to whom informal work remains the main source of income. This puts refugees at risk of exploitation and abuses. However, a lack of national asylum legislation creates ad hoc systems for access to work and other basic services. Malian refugees enjoy freedom of movement and have access to natural resources such as land, pasture and water. They can also work and trade. Some refugees have been able to continue their regular livelihood activities such as pastoralism and artisanal production. The issuance of national refugee ID cards for Malians will further improve their access to work.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV): UNHCR’s participatory assessments conducted in 2017 indicate a high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence within the refugee communities, particularly during the displacement phase. High numbers of underage/forced marriages for cultural or financial reasons were recorded. In urban settings, SGBV and human trafficking are risks for single women. Survival sex is also one of the main negative coping mechanisms for single women and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) population.

Note To view the Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts, please refer to the Concept Stage ESRS Document.

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