### BASIC INFORMATION

#### A. Basic Project Data

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Project ID</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Parent Project ID (if any)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>P171125</td>
<td>Social Safety Net System Project II</td>
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<td>09-Mar-2020</td>
<td>Social Protection &amp; Jobs</td>
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<th>Borrower(s)</th>
<th>Implementing Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Investment Project Financing</td>
<td>Islamic Republic of Mauritania</td>
<td>Taazour General Delegation</td>
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#### Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the nationwide adaptive social safety net system and its coverage of poor and vulnerable households with targeted social transfers, including in refugee and host communities.

#### Components

- Component 1: Updating and enhancing the Social Registry
- Component 2: Enhancing the socio-economic inclusion of poor households
- Component 3: Strengthening the shock response system for households vulnerable to climate-shocks
- Component 4: Project Coordination and Management

### PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

#### SUMMARY

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Total Project Cost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Financing</td>
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<tr>
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#### DETAILS

**World Bank Group Financing**

| International Development Association (IDA) | 45.00 |
B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Mauritania is a vast arid country situated in between North and Sub-Saharan Africa.** The country contains nearly one million square kilometers of land, but only 0.5 percent of this land is arable. Its four million inhabitants, in 2019, are concentrated in Nouakchott (the capital), in the coastal provinces and in the provinces lining the Senegal River.

2. **The country’s impressive natural resource based-economic growth over the past decade has enabled it to graduate into the ranks of lower middle-income countries.** Primary economic activities traditionally centered around the production of rice, vegetables and livestock in the south of the country and they remain the poor’s main livelihood sources. In addition, in recent years, Mauritania has also successfully tapped mineral resources (iron, copper, gold, oil and gas) as well as fishing reserves. The commodity super-cycle allowed for significant Government investments in infrastructure, and enabled Mauritania to register one of the best growth performances in the region. As a result, GDP per capita increased from US$700 to US$1,218 between 2007 and 2018.

3. **While poverty has declined in some regions, the overall poverty rate remains high in Mauritania, with 31 percent of the population living below the national poverty line.** Until the early 2000s, the average annual decline in the poverty rate was slightly below one percentage point. Between 2008 and 2014, poverty reduction accelerated to an average annual rate of almost two percentage points. While the predominantly rural regions of Hodh Chargui, Gorgol, Brakna, Adrar and Tagant registered most progress, the highest poverty rates remain amongst rural households engaged in agriculture and livestock (Guidimakha, Tagant, Brakna, and Assaba). In the mostly urban coastal provinces, poverty rates are generally lower than elsewhere but are decreasing more slowly, and in Nouakchott, poverty rates
remained largely unchanged.

4. **Mauritania has been a bulwark against regional instability, but, in an unstable region, spillovers from transnational conflicts are high.** Mauritania shares a long border with Algeria and Mali and suffered numerous terrorist attacks in 2005–11, which shut down a small, but promising desert tourism industry. The Government has taken a hard line against terrorism and has been able to reduce the incidence of terrorism on its territory and maintain political stability in an otherwise volatile region. Yet, continued conflict in Mali has had many negative spillovers, including large numbers of refugees, trade disruptions, and illegal trafficking.

5. **As of mid-2019, Mauritania hosted around 57,000 Malian refugees in and around Mbera Refugee Camp in the Hodh Chargui region and close to 3,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR 2019)** With the Mbera camp, the Bassikounou moughataa² has seen its population double. Humanitarian actors, led by the UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP), have traditionally provided the bulk of assistance to refugees, and to some extent, host communities in Mauritania. To date, this has mitigated the impact of the demographic shock on service delivery. However, as humanitarian support declines, access to services will become a challenge. Also, economic opportunities are scarce in this region and competition has increased for sources of energy and for water and pastures for livestock, the major economic sector for both refugees and host communities.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

6. **Mauritania ranks poorly in terms of human development outcomes.** It ranked 150 out of 157 countries in the recent 2018 World Bank Human Capital Index (HCI). Mauritania’s score of 0.35 effectively means that a child born today will be an adult 35 percent as productive as somebody who would have benefited from full education and health. Education results are low: even though the average 18-year old is expected to achieve 6.3 years of schooling, this number goes down to 3.4 when adjusted for the quality of education.

7. **The 2013 National Social Protection Strategy (Stratégie Nationale de Protection Sociale, SNPS) lays out the country’s vision on social protection.** This strategy is centered around five core objectives: (a) contributing to the fight against food insecurity; (b) lowering barriers to access health and education services; (c) reinforcing social security and promoting access to employment; (d) improving living standards through the provision of basic social services; and (e) developing social assistance programs, which target vulnerable groups. It also discusses some measures to address climate and disaster risks, including cash transfers during the lean season. A committee, consisting of government representatives, bilateral and multilateral development partners, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), was established in 2014 to supervise progress on the implementation of the NSPS.

8. **One of the core elements of the social protection system is the Social Registry.** Formally launched in 2016 and housed in the Ministry of Economy and Industry, it seeks to support the identification of potential beneficiaries and targeting of social programs. Apart from national funding, it receives World Bank’s technical and financial support.

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² Administrative divisions include the wilaya (region), moughataa (district), department and commune (municipality)
9. **The National Social Transfer Program, Tekavoul, is a flagship SP program for Mauritania.** It is conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, targeting households in extreme poverty. The program five-year cycle consists of quarterly cash transfers conditioned on beneficiaries’ participation in social promotion activities designed to promote knowledge of essential family practices (*Pratiques Familiales Essentielles*, PFE) and investment in early childhood development. The program currently supports 30,000 beneficiary households.

10. **The Mauritanian Government also introduced an explicit objective to establish a shock response system in its National Poverty Reduction Strategy (Stratégie de la Croissance Accélérée et de la Prospérité Partagée, SCAPP) 2016 -2030.** The vision for the permanent shock response system is to provide a common and regular institutionalized Government support in the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the shock response. This initiative is organized under the oversight of the Prime Minister’s Office, but involves the Ministry of Finance, four line ministries, as well as other actors (donors, NGOs, UN agencies). As one element of the shock response, in 2017, Mauritania launched a short-term cash-based shock-responsive cash-based safety net program, *Elmaouna*, with the specific objective to support the most vulnerable households affected by drought during the lean season.

11. **Civil Registry enrollment.** Since passing its 2011 Civil Registration Law, the country has reached one of the highest registration rates in the region, but the last mile challenge is severe. The unregistered are poor and vulnerable groups, which are both physically and socially isolated. The barriers they face include the costs and limited availability of transportation to commune centers, where individuals can enroll at Citizen Service Centers (*Centres d’Accueil des Citoyens* – CACs), and the lack of supporting documents necessary to register, such as birth and marriage certificates. Administrative and judicial processes to obtain birth and marriage certificates are complex and cumbersome. The Government has thus expressed an interest in exploring ways to solve some of these challenges.

**C. Proposed Development Objective(s)**

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

12. **The project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the nationwide adaptive social safety net system and its coverage of poor and vulnerable households with targeted social transfers, including in refugee and host communities.**

Key Results

13. **The achievement of the PDO will be measured through the following indicators:**

   **Outcome 1. Increased effectiveness and efficiency of the nationwide adaptive social safety net system**
   - Programs using the Social Registry to select their beneficiaries (number)
   - Social Safety net program beneficiary households avoiding negative coping strategies

   **Outcome 2. Increased coverage of poor and vulnerable households with targeted social transfers, including in refugee and host communities.**
   - Beneficiaries of social safety net programs (number, female/male, national/refugee)

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3 Mauritania is subject to regular climate shocks such as droughts and floods, which cause spikes of food and nutrition insecurity. Its current response to shocks mainly comprises ad hoc interventions, such as a livestock assistance program in 2018. There is little connection between early warning and response, poor coordination, fragmented and ad hoc interventions, and unclear institutional roles and responsibilities.
D. Project Description

14. The project will support the strengthening and extension of the SSN system in Mauritania to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. It will build on the outcomes of the ongoing Mauritania Social Safety Net System Project (P150430) which began implementation in September 2015 and has put in place: (a) the Social Registry, which provides any government program with an effective and transparent mechanism to target poor and vulnerable households, (b) the National Social Transfer Program, Tekavoul, which is currently supporting 30,000 households in extreme poverty through cash transfers and social promotion activities, and (c) the Shock-Responsive SSN Program, Elmaouna, which is supporting 3,000 food-insecure households annually during the lean season.

15. The proposed project is framed around four components. Component 1 will aim to improve the efficiency of the Government’s social programs by updating the Social Registry and promoting its usage. This component will be implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Industry, 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 their inclusion in the Civil Registry. This component will be implemented by the Taazour General Delegation. Component 3 will strengthen the shock-responsive system by further developing the early warning system (EWS), the Elmaouna program and the shock response financing strategy and providing a Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC). This component will be implemented by the Food Security Office (CSA). Component 4 will support the coordination and management of the project and will be implemented by the Taazour General Delegation.

16. The proposed project will allow for the inclusion of poor and vulnerable households in the refugee and host communities of the Hodh Chargui region within the SSN System. The priority will be to enroll the poor and vulnerable households within the regular governmental SSN system, including the Social Registry, Tekavoul, and Elmaouna programs.

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<td>Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60</td>
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17. ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts. The project will not support any rehabilitation/renovation of infrastructure. There will therefore be no adverse risks and impacts from works on the environment. Since the project does not have activities that will generate any adverse impacts or risks on human population and environment, the project
is classified as Low risk from environmental perspective and as defined under the Bank's ESF. The screening has concluded that the client does not need to prepare an environmental management plan to mitigate potential environmental impacts arising out of proposed project.

18. **From a social perspective, the Project is expected to have a positive social impacts on the poorest households project-wide and refugee communities.** However, the specific challenge of protecting and empowering refugees and improving the resilience of host populations could trigger social risks during implementation such as the exclusion and discrimination of certain categories of people, like vulnerable refugees, weak communication, low integration of certain actors (civil society, local authorities, press), labor conditions, GBV/SEA. Host populations are also affected by difficult living conditions due to the pressure of refugees and their livestock on the natural resources of the host area (water, grazing, wood), causing conflicts. As the major project activities will concern cash transfers, social inclusion will be well defined.

19. **ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure.** The Project will support citizen engagement through the development and implementation of an inclusive and participatory communications strategy supported through the Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure Plan (SEIDP). This document is part of the Borrower's Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) with a focus on measures addressing governance risks linked to national implementing agencies' integration of the refugees, especially for vulnerable peoples, working conditions, health, gender based violence, and security of persons involved in the implementation of the project activities in the project area. Citizen engagement indicators have been included in the results matrix. Citizen engagement is being facilitated by the clear identification of beneficiaries (children, men and women, communities, NGOs, local and central administration) during preparation and implementation. Throughout the project, women and men will be consulted, and opportunities will be provided to collaborate with the project and participate in the sustainability of the investments.

20. **ESS2 Labor and working conditions:** The project could involve direct workers (some 10 technical consultants) and civil servants. For the direct workers, the LMP will provide measures to address the terms and conditions of employment, nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for employment, worker’s organizations, restrictions on child and forced labor, and occupational health and safety requirements. The civil servants would be governed by the civil service code, which forbids child and forced labor; the LMP may include OHS measures in case they are not in the civil servants’ existing contracts. The LMP will also include measures to ensure GBV/SEA risks are addressed. The country already has its national laws and regulations related to labor. Complaints received and resolved will be reviewed during the implementation support missions.

21. **ESS5 Land acquisition, Restrictions on Land use and Involuntary Resettlement.** The project will screen out any possible need of land acquisition or potential restriction of access. If, for any reason, land acquisition is required then the relevance of this Standard will be reviewed accordingly.

22. **To address these risk issues, the projet prepared:** (a) a draft ESCP with measures for addressing the environmental, social and labor risks identified in the project; (b) a draft Social Management Plan, which will address all the identified social risks and impacts, including contextual risks, conflict, refugees, GBV/SEA and vulnerable groups; (c) a draft SEIDP; and (d) Labor Management Procedures (LMP).
E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

23. The overall implementation arrangement for the proposed Project will build on the structure put in place for the ongoing Mauritania Social Safety Nets System project:

   a. The National Social Protection Strategy Steering Committee (Comité de Pilotage de la Stratégie Nationale de Protection Sociale CP-SNPS) is co-chaired by the Principal Secretaries (Secrétaires Généraux) of the MASEF and MEI. The committee is multi-sectoral and includes, among others, representatives from other ministries involved in SP as well as the Food Security Office (CSA), the Taazour General Delegation, civil society representatives; and donors provides strategic guidance for the SNPS, and is also responsible for the overall guidance and supervision of the Project

   b. The National Social Protection Strategy Technical Committee (Comité Technique de la Stratégie Nationale de Protection Sociale CT-SNPS) provides technical support to the CP-SNPS and validates the Project’s instruments and mechanisms.

   c. The PASyFiS Project steering and monitoring Committee: established under the presidency of MEI’s General Secretary, it includes one representative of all the implementing agencies and two civil society representatives. It will hold quarterly meetings during the five years of the proposed project, to validate the project manuals, annual work plans and budget, and closely monitor the implementation of the Project.

24. The main implementing Agency will remain the Tadamoun Agency. The Taazour General Delegation has overall responsibility for the proposed project’s implementation. The General Delegation was created in December 2019 directly under the Presidency based on the structure of the Tadamoun Agency, which was the implementing agency for the on-going PASyFis. The Taazour General Delegation will be responsible for the overall implementation and fiduciary management of the proposed project. The Taazour General Delegation will host a dedicated project Operational Coordinator and fiduciary specialists (procurement, accounting and audit) to support all project activities. The Taazour General Delegation will manage the project’s bank accounts and all related fiduciary aspects. Technically, the activities of Component 1 will be led by the MEI and its Social Registry Directorate; the activities of Component 2 will be led by the Taazour General Delegation; and those of Component 3 will be mainly led by the CSA. Taazour will update implementing agreements with the MEI and the CSA to define the objectives and the rules of the collaboration

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**APPROVAL**

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Matthieu Boris Lefebvre |
|----------------------|-------------------------|

**Approved By**

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<tr>
<td>Practice Manager/Manager:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Director:</td>
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