



The World Bank

Morocco Sustainable Oasis Ecosystems Management For Climate Resilience, Inclusion And Green Jobs Project
(P500402)

Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary

Appraisal Stage

(ESRS Appraisal Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 03/01/2024 | Report No: ESRSA03339

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P500402	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Morocco Oasis	2024
Operation Name	Morocco Sustainable Oasis Ecosystems Management for Climate Resilience, Inclusion and Green Jobs Project		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Morocco	Morocco	MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Ministry of Finance	Agence Nationale pour le Développement des Zones Oasiennes et de l'Arganier (ANDZOA)	25-Mar-2024	23-May-2024
Estimated Decision Review Date	Total Project Cost		
14-Feb-2024	17,000,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

The project development objective (PDO) is to strengthen integrated oasis ecosystems management for climate resilience in Morocco.

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

[Description imported from the PAD Data Sheet in the Portal providing information about the key aspects and components/sub-components of the project]



Project Description: The Project has 4 components summarized below: Component 1: Institutional Strengthening and Sharing of Innovative Oasis Knowledge; (2) Component 2: Restoration of Oasis Ecosystems and Livelihoods; (3) Component 3: Project Management; and (4) Component 4: Contingent Emergency Response. Linkages/Synergies with Other World Bank Operations: This PROGREEN Trust Fund IPF in the amount of US\$12 million RETF and US\$350,000 BETF and Morocco Climate Operation / Support to NDC which is a PforR Program (P178763) are intricately linked and complement each other. Specifically, the Recipient Executed Trust will finance activities that will develop and pilot innovative Oasis landscapes protection and restoration activities in the Aoufous and Akka regions that will then be adopted and scaled up in other parts of Morocco. In particular, this proposed project will provide robust capacity building to institutions such as ANDZOA, ANEF and other related institutions that are implementing the PforR program. It will also build the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Systems of Institutions in Morocco to become consistent with international best practices and thus is the cornerstone for the sustainability of the achievements of the PforR Program. Thus, they are both presented as one package to the client, in terms of processing instrument, the PROGREEN financed activities will be processed as an IPF as requested by the client. In addition, this proposed project will pilot and operationalize the innovative Nature- Based Solution and Climate Smart Activities Targeting of Vulnerable Communities and Households. These envisaged successful innovative pilots will be subsequently scaled up and replicated by the Government of Morocco and other Development Partners.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

[Description of key features relevant to the operation’s environmental and social risks and opportunities (e.g., whether the project is nationwide or regional in scope, urban/rural, in an FCV context, presence of Indigenous Peoples or other minorities, involves associated facilities, high-biodiversity settings, etc.) – Max. character limit 10,000]

Environmental Project settings

The Oasis area is located in the South and South-West of Morocco, covering about 115,000 km² with 1.7 million inhabitants. Distributed along the non-perennial rivers (oueds) and on the shallow aquifers, the Moroccan oases are characterized by a strong irregularity of rainfall in time and space with annual rainfall not exceeding 60 mm. Climate change, through the reduction in annual precipitation and the rise in temperature, has increasingly harmed the delicate balance that allows the oasis ecosystem to function and regenerate.

The selected intervention area for the project is (i) the Great Valley of Aoufous consisting of 15 oases with 15 villages spread across two (2) rural communes, Aoufous and R'tebcovering an area of 4,000 hectares, in the province of Errachidia, in the Draa Region and (ii) the Akka oases consisting of 9 oases, spread across two (2) communes, Kasbat Sidi Abdellah M'Barek and Akka, covering an area of 1,127 hectares in the province of Tata, in the Souss-Massa Region.

The great valley of Aoufous area which is known for its high vulnerability and underutilized potential, experiences a cold winter Saharan climate, with an average annual rainfall of about 60mm. Evaporation is exceedingly high, averaging over 3500mm per year. These conditions make rainfed agriculture challenging, necessitating reliance on irrigation. As for the Akka oasis area, its climate is characterized by extremely high temperatures in summer with irregular and low precipitation, and significant evaporation, placing it within the Saharan bioclimatic zone with a moderately cold winter.



The targeted traditional oases face numerous threats from unsustainable land management practices, the expansion of palm groves leading to waterlogging, soil salinization, declining soil fertility, encroaching sand dunes, biodiversity loss, wildfires, illegal land use, overgrazing of the surrounding lands, lack of proper waste management in the Ksours.

Both oases heavily rely on irrigation, considering the arid climate and limited rainfall, making it the cornerstone of agricultural activities in these regions. While the Aoufous oasis incorporates a diverse set of crops, including intercropping, olive cultivation, and date palm farming, the Akka oasis primarily centers around date palm cultivation. The soil composition in the area typically comprises mineral soils in their raw state, characterized by silt-clay, silt-sandy, and clay-limestone types, indicating their relatively underdeveloped nature.

Concerning vegetation, the natural landscape is dominated by sparse steppe formations, consisting primarily of thorny plants. In addition to the natural vegetation, there is evidence of anthropogenic influences on the plant life in the area. Despite the significant efforts made by Morocco, including the implementation of various programs and strategies for the protection and development of oases, several deficits persist. Within the oasis's ecosystem of these municipalities, additional challenges such as droughts and extreme weather events are observed. Most critically, the oasis region is particularly exposed to water scarcity with a per capita availability of renewable water resources of 530 m³/year/inhabitant (compared to the national 620 m³/year/inhabitant).

The physical characteristics of the project area include limited water resources, which pose challenges for agricultural activities and sustainably managing the oasis ecosystems. Soil quality is another critical aspect, with concerns about degradation and salinization, which can affect agricultural productivity. The oasis landscapes provide essential ecosystem services, such as provisioning food and fresh water to local populations and protecting against natural hazards, such as desert encroachment.

The oasis economy makes up less than 4 percent of Morocco's GDP and a large share is focused on agriculture (25 percent), when nationally agriculture contributes about 13 percent of GDP.

Social project setting

The pilot sites for this operation, Aouffous and Akka, serve as prime examples of the socio-economic challenges faced by people living in Oases, as revealed by the 2014 Census:

- High poverty rates: Aouffous 11.17% and Akka 17% respectively, compared to 4.8% at the national level,
- High illiteracy rates: 30.25% for Aoufous and 35.65% for Akka,
- unemployment rates: 10.75 % for Aouffous and 23.80 % for Akka
- Low multidimensional local development index: 0.65 for Aouffous and 0.66 for Akka, indicating an average development deficit 34% across various dimensions of development.

The project area is home to oasis communities whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, tourism, local resources, and remittances. Overall both project sites are exposed to a number of challenges including:

- Complexity of water management and implementation of water rights;
- An ageing and increasingly scarce workforce;
- Loss of local know-how;
- Low value-added of craft products;
- High emigration of young men to the big cities;



- The high unemployment rate among young people;
- High prevalence of gender-based violence
- Low rates of female labor participation

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

[Description of Borrower’s capacity (i.e., prior performance under the Safeguard Policies or ESF, experience applying E&S policies of IFIs, Environmental and social unit/staff already in place) and willingness to manage risks and impacts and of provisions planned or required to have capabilities in place, along with the needs for enhanced support to the Borrower – Max. character limit 10,000]

The National Agency for the Development of Oases and Argan Zones (Agence Nationale pour le Développement des Oasis et des Zones d'Arganier - ANDZOA) will be responsible for executing and coordinating all project activities, and for ensuring that the results obtained are in line with the project documents and related agreements. ANDZOA was established in 2010 , to coordinate the public action in the Oasis and Argan region : The mandate of ANDZOA is therefore, to improve the living conditions of the local population by promoting an integrated and sustainable management of the oasis, with a particular focus on water resource management and unlocking the potential and opportunities linked to agriculture (incl. promotion of high value-added organic agriculture) as well as eco-tourism.

The ANDZOA has no prior experience in implementing ESF projects. With that said, the agency has a designated gender focal point along with a comprehensive track record in managing E&S risks for similar past activities. The operation requires an institutional capacity assessment which was conducted and resulted in the elaboration of capacity building action plan which in turn informed the priority needs reflected in Sub-Component 1.1. The assessment included an overview of the E&S management capacity of ANDZOA as well as other agencies/offices involved in the Project implementation(ANEF, ORMVAT, ABHGZR and ABHDON).

In order to meet the project requirements during the Project preparation, ANDZOA recruited an E&S consulting firm with qualifications in gender inclusion and E&S risk management to ensure smooth E&S instruments conception. The Environmental and Social institutional arrangement proposed from the central to the local level will be able to ensure environmental and social compliance and monitor the implementation of environmental and social aspects during the project implementation and operation. Indeed, the Project Implementing Unit (PIU) will be placed under the supervision of the Direction du Développement des Zones oasiennes in Errachidia(DDZO). This unit will also be supported by external technical assistance and expertise. The PIU will comprise among other actors, an Environment and Social as well as Gender specialists. Project management and supervision at national, regional and provincial levels will be carried out by two structures: National Steering Committee, and regional technical Committees. The latter will, in turn, include a designated E&S focal point(s) responsible for implementing the ESF instruments, monitoring, reporting as well as overseeing and addressing environmental and social (E&S) considerations and will coordinate with the E&S regional/national focal points. Moreover, the project has ensured that environmental and social challenges (opportunities and safeguards) are properly considered in the design of the various components.

ANDZOA in coordination with the partners, will set a robust institutional foundation for managing environmental and social risks, through the 2 pilot Oasis project. Actions taken include: i) training of PIU staff and other beneficiaries in environmental and social risk management; ii) preparing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating project investments

through a stakeholder engagement mechanism; iii) preparing periodic reporting. A dedicated E&S and gender specialists at the PIU, at the central level, and E&S and gender regional/local experts will be responsible for (i) Preparing ToRs and hiring consultants to prepare the ESIA/ESMPs and relevant plans and procedures as needed; (ii) ensuring that all E&S instruments and other mitigation measures are included in bidding documents ; (iii) monitoring the implementation of the E&S instruments, (iv) periodic reporting on the E&S risk management to the World Bank.

The project will support the PIU at central and regional levels and all other stakeholders with a strong capacity-building program: A consultant will be hired on a full-time basis during the first year of project implementation to train and assist the PIU E&S specialists as well the focal points in order to ensure compliance in the preparation and implementation of the ESMF/ESIAs, and the SEP as follows (i) reviewing the ESIA/ESMP implementation reports; (ii) Assisting the central E&S focal points in reviewing and synthesizing the environmental and social monitoring reports received from the Local/regional E&S focal points; (iii) conducting periodical supervision of subprojects and (iv) preparing progress reports on the implementation of the ESMF/ESIA and (v) prepare and conduct a full training program of E&S and gender aspects.

The ESCP includes relevant capacity-building measures, staff hiring needs and training, to support the PIU among other in tender documents and the periodic E&S reporting.

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

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Substantial

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Substantial

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 4,000]

Based on the PAD and the outputs of the ESMF, the overall rating of the environmental risk is estimated to be Substantial. Most of the proposed activities are aimed at having a global environmental and social positive impact. Given the nature of the activities, the ecosystems involved in the project (areas of sensitivity as these are two traditional oases), and the E&S capacity of the Client, the effects of the Project are expected to be substantial or lower, its E&S risks and impacts are envisaged to be temporary, predictable, and/or reversible, and medium in magnitude and/or in spatial footprint and are expected to be site-specific. Given the nature of the specific activities and due to the civil works activities planned under Component 2 (rehabilitation of existing traditional hydraulic infrastructures, re-purposing or equipping of small community socio-economic infrastructure, upgrading of some rural roads and small irrigation canals, the implementation of small water sanitation for the Ksours), the Project is not highly complex, its E&S risks and impacts are envisaged to be substantial. Potential environmental risks and adverse impacts associated with project activities are mainly linked to water, soil, waste and air pollution. These may include: (i) alteration of air quality by dust flights during rehabilitation works/construction (ii) noise and vibration from moving of construction vehicles and machinery; (iii) contamination of surface water by residues of hydrocarbons, lubricants, oils and suspended solids; (iv) labor and working conditions including traffic safety. There are also risks associated with domestic, nonhazardous and hazardous wastes. Some of these impacts will be site specific and will be managed

through a systematic manner throughout the project cycle with solid mitigation measures proportionate to the nature and scale of the project, the screening list included in the ESMF proposes generic measures for each of these activities. The potential for indirect and cumulative impacts exists (specifically on water resources) but they are less severe and more readily avoidable or mitigated. The OP 7.50 on international waterways is triggered. A draft MEMO for the exception to the riparian notification has been prepared and shared with LEGEN/LEGAM. According to the rapid screening via IBAT tool, the oases of Aoufouss and Akka in Morocco are identified as sensitive area as they are part of the “Southern Moroccan Oases Biosphere Reserve”.

A.2 Social Risk Rating Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 4,000]

The project's social risk rating is Moderate, with most risks emanating from the second component, focused on the revitalization of oasis ecosystems and the enhancement of local livelihoods. Specifically, the rehabilitation of climate-resilient traditional water infrastructure and the improvement of rural roads have the potential to spark social tensions due to issues like temporary limitations on land and water access and usage, occupational health and safety concerns, as well as minor, land acquisition. Nevertheless, these risks are regarded as manageable, particularly in light of the comprehensive stakeholder consultations that have been conducted. The ongoing meaningful consultations and a well-established grievance redress mechanism are expected to further mitigate these concerns. Additionally, careful attention is being paid to the eligibility and selection criteria for bidding processes and sub-projects to prevent the exclusion of groups with higher vulnerabilities and lower incomes, including people with disabilities, the elderly, and women in NEET, and to avoid elite capture—a risk that was identified during field visits—to ensure the distribution of projects benefits and to promote inclusivity, with a focus on the enhancement of women's roles within the oases. The institutional capacity building outlined in the first component will equip responsible authorities with the necessary training and tools for informed decision-making regarding the selection of subprojects. Effective communication of project activities and plans to affected stakeholders is crucial, as is the creation of a robust feedback mechanism to ensure prompt access to necessary resources and services. Lastly, with the ANDZOA's plan to augment its workforce by recruiting civil servants, consultants, contracted personnel, and potentially community and primary supply workers, labor-related risks are foreseen but are expected to be minimal across components one through three.

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating. This attribute is only for the internal version of the download document and not a part of the disclosable version – Max. character limit 8,000]

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

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS1 is relevant. The infrastructure works in the proposed project will undoubtedly bring many positive benefits to communities such as improved livelihoods, improved accessibility to infrastructure and enhanced social inclusion.



However, the implementation of activities (rehabilitation, upgrading, re-purposing or equipping of small community socioeconomic infrastructure) and operation of facilities may have negative environmental impacts and nuisances and risk for populations living near the intervention area. The risks associated with these activities during the construction phase are mainly linked to occupational health and safety (OHS), community health and safety, and water, soil, and air pollution. Implementation of the related sub-components, may also result in negative indirect and cumulative effects on the delicate oasis ecosystem, which will be covered in the specific ESIA. The construction or rehabilitation of physical infrastructure in or near the oases can contribute to waste generation and land speculation. Furthermore, the development of ecotourism may lead to increased human activities, posing risks of disturbance to the local fauna, flora, and accidental fires. Ecosystem services and the sustainable use of natural resources are also at risk. Oases play a vital role in providing food and fresh water to local populations, protecting the area from natural hazards like desertification, and serving as recreational and aesthetically valuable spaces. Careful assessment and mitigation measures have been conducted and elaborated to ensure that these potential risks and impacts are properly addressed during project implementation. In terms of social risks, the second component of the project harbors most of them, notably the possibility of elite capture and the exclusion of groups with higher vulnerabilities and lower incomes, including people with disabilities, the elderly, and women in NEET, who were potentially not included in the consultation processes due to their intersectional vulnerabilities. Additionally, there may be temporary limitations on the use of land and water, as well as restricted access to ecosystem services, particularly related to sub-component 2-1. SEA/SH could occur both at the ANDZOA and oases levels, and intimate partner violence (IPV) could emerge as a consequence of the shift in power dynamics and decision-making authority, particularly given the project's focus on the empowerment of women and the social norms ruling the program area. Thus to avoid or mitigate these risks related to the project, the Borrower under the coordination of ANDZOA has prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) that sets out the principles, rules, EHS guidelines, good practices and procedures to assess the environmental and social risks and impacts. It proposes measures and plans to reduce, mitigate and/or offset adverse risks and impacts, provisions for estimating and budgeting the cost of such measures, and information on ANDZOA for addressing project risks and impacts, including on its capacity to manage environmental and social risks and impacts. The ESMF will be disclosed prior the completion of the Appraisal stage. Relevant E&S requirements will be part of the Project Implementation Manual (POM). The CHMP, LMP, and SEA/SH prevention and response action plan will eventually be integrated in the ESMF. The SEA/SH prevention and response action plan, in turn, will cover exclusion risks and risks of SEA/SH amongst project workers and from project workers towards community members. As to the RF and due to the limited land acquisition impacts anticipated under this project, the necessary actions will rather be included in the ESCP. For supplies and equipment procurement activities, the E&S team will work closely with the procurement team to ensure that procurement procedures for supplies and equipment take into account the environmental and social requirements of the ESF.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

The stakeholder engagement plan is a key instrument to mitigate any possible risk of exclusion from benefits mentioned under ESS1. It includes both other interested parties (OIPs), various beneficiaries and directly impacted project affected persons (PAPs), including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Primary stakeholders include among others: ANDZOA and other relevant institutions, farmers at oases and oasis farmers' associations, female community

members, Craft people, small and medium entrepreneurs. Additional stakeholders include but are not limited to: the inhabitants of the oasis; farm produce traders; labor representation and unions. A stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) proportionate to the nature and scale of the project and its potential risks and impacts has been prepared prior to appraisal. The SEP describes the timing and methods of engagement with stakeholders throughout the life cycle of the project as agreed between the Bank and the Borrower, distinguishing between project-affected parties and other interested parties.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

The project is anticipated to have low to moderate risks and impacts concerning occupational health and safety (OHS), primarily due to the nature of civil works involved. The proposed project is expected to use direct workers (number not yet determined) in the PIU as civil servants and consultants as well as contracted workers and potentially community workers and Primary supply workers. Building on the experience of ANDZOA, measures will be implemented to identify and address potential OHS hazards, provision of preventive and protective measures, provide necessary training, maintain records, and establish protocols for accident reporting and emergency response. The PIU and contractors will develop comprehensive labor management plans in compliance with national laws and ESS2 requirements, covering aspects such as working conditions, equal opportunity, child labor, grievance mechanisms, and occupational health and safety. The client has prepared an SEA/SH Prevention and Response Action Plan to set out measures and actions to assess and manage the risks relating to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of community members by project workers as well as sexual harassment (SH) amongst project workers (including primary suppliers and subcontractors), such as requiring trainers and workers to adopt and implement measures against SEA/SH including the application of a Code of Conduct for all project workers. ANDZOA will incorporate the requirements of ESS2 into contractual agreements with contractors together with appropriate legal remedies to be applied in the case of noncompliance. A first version of the Labor Management Procedure has been prepared and will be integrated, once reviewed and approved, in the final version of the ESMF and disclosed before the start of project activities. The LMP including the code of conduct, along with the SEA/SH prevention and response action plan, will have to be included in bidding documents. In other words, the ANDZOA will be in charge of implementing the LMP as well as cascading its requirements to contractors and primary suppliers.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

Resource efficiency is being enhanced through various measures such as the use of renewable energy sources, such as Solar PV for rural road lightening, the adoption of improved water and soil management techniques, as well as the endorsement of innovative methodologies such as the use of non-traditional saline water for irrigation and the establishment of green belts. Moreover, this includes the implementation of an Oasis model for liquid sanitation in Ksours and tailored sanitation projects in the locality, contributing to both water conservation and pollution prevention. Furthermore, the introduction of efficient household waste management systems serves the dual purpose of minimizing pollution and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship. Additionally, the project foreseen the development of eco-tourism areas adhering to sustainable usage practices, that will further contribute to the optimization of resource utilization.. Furthermore, the landscaping and school upgrades are designed to



promote water conservation practices and raise awareness about the importance of preserving water resources and prevent soil pollution.). With that said, it is important to consider potential risks and impacts on water resources that may arise from activities like derivation hydraulic infrastructure and developing ecotourism and establishing new value chains. The ESMF proposes relevant screening process for subprojects with potential significant risks or impacts on oasis water resources. The solar PV procurement process will fully be in compliance with the WBG requirements on solar PV. Additionally, during the construction phase, proper management of waste generation, hazardous materials, air emissions, and noise will be ensured through the preparation and implementation of site-specific E&S documents.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

Construction activities pose typical risks and impacts to community health and safety, including vehicle traffic, dust, noise, vibrations, hazardous materials, structural and site access issues and those related to labor influx. It is not expected that the project will directly employ or contract workers for security purposes. The ESMF comprehensively assesses these risks and impacts, proposing solutions to avoid or mitigate them through site-specific ESMPs. Furthermore, the project prioritizes funding of ecosystem services provided by the oases. These services include fundamental provisions like the supply of food and fresh water to the local communities, meeting their basic needs, and sustenance. Moreover, the oases play a critical role in shielding the region from the encroachment of the desert, acting as a protective barrier against adverse environmental impacts and maintaining the ecological balance of the area. Such provisioning actions will also be combined with water erosion control actions and combating silt to enhance the water quality to local populations and protect the natural landscape area.

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

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

Minor civil works and modified or new land management schemes may induce Land acquisition and restrictions on land use, which in turn could lead to other social impacts including conflict hence the importance of meaningful stakeholder engagement. Acquisition of land is, however, expected to be very limited. It is very unlikely, that project activities will induce major land changes. Physical displacement is not expected, but economic displacement cannot be entirely excluded. The quantity of land to be potentially affected amounts to 12 Ha. Based on a rough estimation informed by the population density (Hab/Ha), the number of economically displaced and people affected by minor loss of land is likely to be limited to 80. With that said, exact potential losses of land and potential number of Project Affected People (PAPs) in general, will be further reviewed and quantified and included in the RF before the start of the relevant project activities. Due to the limited resettlement impacts anticipated under this project, the ESCP includes actions addressing the related risks.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

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A range of activities and efforts will be implemented by the project that are dedicated to biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources. The project places significant emphasis on disseminating local practices and advocating for the adoption of innovative techniques to support sustainable development. This involves initiatives such as the procurement and distribution of local seeds, the valorization of aromatic and medicinal plants (PAM), , all contributing to the preservation of local biodiversity. Complementary measures are being taken to cultivate an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports the growth of regional desert value chains, alongside institutional support for associations, and professional organizations in targeted communities. Simultaneously, initiatives aimed at fostering oasis ecotourism, providing an opportunity to explore the rich Saharan fauna, will be actively promoted. With that said the proposed project activities in the oasis landscapes may pose risks and impacts on the fragile ecosystem, including the gradual disappearance of key vegetation layers that support biodiversity of flora and fauna. These activities, such as physical infrastructure development, innovative cultivation methods, renewable energy utilization, ecotourism, and value chain creation, may also contribute to soil quality degradation, particularly in areas already threatened by salinization. The ESMF prioritizes the screening and mitigation of activities with moderate or substantial impacts on biodiversity, ensuring necessary measures are implemented to avoid or mitigate residual impacts. Additionally, a Biodiversity Impact Assessment will be conducted before the start of the relevant activities and integrated within the Specific Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) that will thoroughly assess these risks and impacts, particularly those with potential effects on biodiversity as required by the ESCP. Given the limited spatial extent of the Project and the Client's understanding and experience in the region, it is expected that the Impact Assessment on Biodiversity (IAB) will also be finalized before the commencement of relevant project activities. The client is actively committed to completing this evaluation as part of the final draft of the ESMF. As to the scope, the IPF will focus on the Aoufouss Oasis (4000 HA) and Akka Oasis (1,127 HA) where the ANDZOA is actively working with multiple actors in the program area. The Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) provides further clarification on the timelines for each activity. The client will consider the combined effects of the project along with other existing and planned activities in the area. The ESCP, in alignment with the ESS1 and ESS6, lays out E&S Avoidance actions and mitigation to be designed prior to the start of Project activities for safeguarding biodiversity, promoting sustainable practices, but also engaging with local communities and stakeholders. The outcomes of this assessment will be utilized to inform and integrate into the project design for improved environmental management.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities **Not Currently Relevant**

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

There are no communities in the identified project areas that fulfill the Bank's definition of indigenous people, although popular culture may associate oasis with indigenous people. This ESS is not considered relevant to the Project. Indeed, there were no communities or groups of Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities who, during the lifetime of members of the community or group, have lost collective attachment to distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area, because of forced severance, conflict, government resettlement programs, dispossession of their land, natural disasters, or incorporation of such territories into an urban area.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage **Relevant**

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

This standard is relevant as the operation promotes historic oases as national cultural and natural heritage sites. The PIU of ANDZOA, will determine the potential risks and impacts of the proposed activities linked to the commercialization of cultural heritage. The PIU of ANDZOA will also prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan as part of the ESMF. As part of the culture heritage assessment, the ANDZOA will carry out meaningful consultations by identifying, in accordance with ESS10, stakeholders that are relevant for the cultural heritage that is known to exist or is likely to be encountered during the project life cycle. Stakeholders will include, as relevant: (a) project affected parties, including individuals and communities within the country who use or have used the cultural heritage within living memory; and (b) other interested parties, which may include national or local regulatory authorities that are entrusted with the protection of cultural heritage and nongovernmental organizations and cultural heritage experts, including national and international cultural heritage organizations. All related actions will be integrated in the final version of the ESMF and the timeline for their implementation detailed in the ESCP.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries

Not Currently Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

This ESS is not relevant to this project. The project will not employ the services of financial intermediaries.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways

Yes

The OP 7.50 on International Waterways is expected to be triggered by the Program given the nature and location of the activities as these will involve the use of water resources in the Draa valley rivers and transboundary aquifers.

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas

No

The Project activities will not be located in Disputed Area as per OP7.60 requirements.

B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework

No

[Explanation including areas where "Use of Borrower Framework" is being considered - Max. character limit 10,000]

The Project will not rely on the Borrower's Framework but will comply with all relevant national environmental and social laws, policies, and regulations since there are not conflicting with ESF provisions.

Use of Common Approach

No

[Explanation including list of possible financing partners – Max. character limit 4,000]

NA

B.4 Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts



[Description provided will not be disclosed but will flow as a one time flow to the Appraisal Stage PID and PAD – Max. character limit 10,000]

The project has a Substantial environmental risk rating. Given the nature of the activities and ecosystems involved in the project which is not overly complex, the E&S risks and impacts are deemed substantial and the effects of the project on areas of high biodiversity value or sensitivity, as the traditional oases, are expected to be lower than High Risk Projects. The activities aim to have a positive impact but carry risks of temporary pollution and impact on biodiversity. The project is not highly complex and will manage risks through mitigation measures. Indirect and cumulative impacts exist but are less severe and manageable. The oases of Aoufouss and Akka in Morocco are identified as a sensitive area. More specifically, the project is expected to have some limited adverse impacts during the civil work activities that may present Risks/Impacts linked to the generation of wastes including hazardous wastes, emission to air and noise. Environmental risks are expected to be site-specific, and temporary and can be readily addressed through standard mitigation measures and compliance with national laws. The project's environmental measures and mitigation measures will be specifically tailored to address the sensitivity of this area and ensure the conservation of species and their habitats.

The project has a Moderate social risk rating. Social risks and impacts related to the project may include, but are not limited to: 1)risks related to occupational and community health and safety; 2) elite capture and exclusion of vulnerable groups (Ex: people with disabilities, elderly, women in NEET); 3) social tensions linked to minor land acquisition as well as temporary restriction on land and water usage and access to ecosystems services -mostly linked to the restoring of the oasis ecosystem functions and;4) risks related to labor and working conditions. Project activities will be confined within the boundaries of the oases. The project faces a moderate risk of sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment (SEA/SH) in Morocco, considering the nature of project activities combined with constraints faced by oasis women such as illiteracy, poverty, and violence within social and family structures.

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?

[Description of expectations in terms of documents to be prepared to assess and manage the project’s environmental and social risks and by when (i.e., prior to Effectiveness, or during implementation), highlighted features of ESA documents, other project documents where environmental and social measures are to be included, and the related due diligence process planned to be carried out by the World Bank, including sources of information for the due diligence - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESMF: The E&S team has received two drafts. The current version is circulated for review and the final one will integrate the teams comments and will be consulted upon and disclosed by the completion of appraisal if the document is satisfactory to the bank by then or at the latest, during the start of project implementation.

CHMPESIA/ESMPs (including the CHMP and the BMP): The instruments were deferred to the implementation stage as per the judgment of the E&S team and the flexibility offered by the new ESF Simplification process. These will be prepared by the client and disclosed as part, prior to the commencement of project activities.

III. CONTACT POINT



The World Bank

Morocco Sustainable Oasis Ecosystems Management For Climate Resilience, Inclusion And Green Jobs Project (P500402)

World Bank

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IV. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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V. APPROVAL

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