

**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE**

Report No.: PIDA28135

Project Name	Mauritania Sustainable Landscape Management Project under the SAWAP (P144183)
Region	AFRICA
Country	Mauritania
Sector(s)	General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector (100%)
Theme(s)	Water resource management (30%), Land administration and management (30%), Biodiversity (20%), Other environment and natural resources management (20%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P144183
GEF Focal Area	Multi-focal area
Borrower(s)	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Dev.
Implementing Agency	Directorate of Nature Protection of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
Environmental Category	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared/Updated	14-Jul-2015
Date PID Approved/Disclosed	14-Jul-2015
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	23-Jun-2015
Estimated Date of Board Approval	31-Jul-2015
Appraisal Review Decision (from Decision Note)	N/A
Other Decision	N/A

I. Project Context

Country Context

Mauritania is a lower-middle income country with an economic outlook which is affected by demographic transformation characterized by a growing urban population, and climatic challenges. Mauritania is mostly a desert country, with a population of about 3.5 million and a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$1,270 in 2013; Mauritania's average GDP growth rate registered 4.9 percent between 2003 and 2013. Economic growth depends on both renewable and non-renewable natural resources, with mining, fishing and livestock accounting for 38 percent, three percent and 20 percent of GDP, respectively. Recently, the economy has benefited from strong growth in the mining sector, a trend which is anticipated to continue over the next three years. Over the last decade, however, more than two-fifths of the population have lived below the national poverty line, while in 2008 almost half of the population lived on US\$2 a day or less. Both extreme

levels of poverty and highest number of people living in poverty (70 percent) are found in rural areas. Weak agricultural productivity has affected most of the country's rural areas: the Government's Food Security Strategy (2011-12) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP III, 2011) show that 26 percent of the population is affected by food insecurity, with the most vulnerable groups being women and young children. This situation is aggravated by the overall level of poverty, lack of investment in social and other productive sectors, harsh climatic conditions, low and unreliable rainfall, poor agricultural water management systems, and a very low level of irrigation development.

The 2011 PRSP III for 2011-2015 addresses the need to integrate the non-renewable (mineral mining) and renewable natural resources (fishing, livestock, forestry, cropping) production sectors. This new direction dictates promotion of sustainable use of ecosystems production and services functions while enhancing mitigation and adaptability to climate change; development of financing mechanisms to allow such practices and demonstration of the economic performance of those green investments. Consequently, in June 2014, the Government finalized, with the support of the World Bank, a Green Growth Policy Note. The first of three phases, the Policy Note guides the Government's transition toward a more inclusive and green economic growth. An assessment of strategies and policies related to the natural resource base demonstrated that sustainable economic growth would very much depend on development of income-generating activities which rely on renewable resources.

Sectoral and institutional Context

Desertification and Land Degradation: Mauritania is one of the Sahelian countries most severely affected by the periods of drought that have been occurring since 1968. The desert landscape now covers two-thirds of the country's land area. The impact of the droughts has been exacerbated by unsustainable human exploitation practices, resulting in fragmentation of natural habitats and loss of animal and plant species.

Renewable Natural Resources: The value of Mauritania's renewable natural resources (through fishery, agriculture, forestry and livestock holding) is estimated at 30 percent of the total national wealth stock. However, the condition of land, water, forests and biodiversity continues to deteriorate due to the combined effect of harsh climatic conditions and continued exploitation pressure such as deforestation for agriculture, timber and fuel needs and growing concentration of sedentary livestock in vulnerable areas. Added to this is weak environmental governance, i.e., institutional, material, financial and human resources available to the authorities in charge of environmental management. Despite these challenges, the existing natural resource potential can be harnessed to support progress towards achieving the goals of development and poverty reduction in the country.

Gum Arabic Producing Ecosystems: Geographically positioned at the frontline of the southward-expanding Sahara Desert, a transitional area between the Sahara and Sahel zones, Gum Arabic producing ecosystems span across 16.5 million hectares (1,100 km in length and 150 km in width), north of the Senegal River Valley. They cover the administrative regions of Trarza, Brakna, Assaba, Guidimaka, Gorgol, Hodh Ech Chargui and Hodh El Gharbi. Mauritania was the second largest exporter of Gum Arabic with an average annual production of 5,700 tonnes between 1968 and 1972. Later in the 1970s, gum production dwindled as a result of droughts and over exploitation for gum, wood, food and fodder. At present, Gum Arabic production stands at about 500 tonnes

annually. Gum Arabic is of both local and international use while demand on the global market has been rising.

Gum Arabic is produced from two tree species: Acacia Senegal and Acacia Seyal. Acacia Senegal, which is the more prevalent species in Mauritania, produces higher gum quality. Both species are known to help fight desertification due to their adaptability to arid environments and easy establishment, as well as soil enriching and soil and water retaining qualities. Gum Arabic is usually obtained in open access sylvo-pastoral land, but it has also been successfully planted on small scale agro-sylvo-pastoral land (agroforestry). Two harvesting techniques are commonly used: extensive low impact gathering and more destructive “deep bleeding”. Acacia Senegal is a protected species according to the 1997-007 Forest Act. However, in practice low impact gum gathering is accepted and development programs covering Gum Arabic production have been allowed.

The gum production sector currently faces a number of constraints at both local and national levels: local constraints are related to the production systems and their economic characteristics, as well as weak socio-economic status of communities leading to opportunistic behaviors, cultural practices and ecological constraints; national constraints include disorganized marketing channels, the absence of a suitable marketing financing structure, lack of research and personal capacity to develop locally suitable production technologies, improper data management, and low quality extraction techniques.

Mauritania is divided into 13 administrative regions (wilaya), each headed by a governor. Each region is divided into departments (moughataa, 53 in total), headed by a prefect (hakim). The departments are again divided into 216 local governments, of which 53 are classified as urban and 163 are rural according to common classification. The regions and departments act as both the representatives of the state at the local level and as the local authority. As such, they are provided with responsibilities to oversee and coordinate development activities in their territory, and they are financed by the state. Effective decentralization in Mauritania, and the building of local government capacities, have been constrained by systems weaknesses, ambiguities in functional assignments and fiscal stress at the local government level. The 2010 “Declaration of the Policy of Decentralization and Local Development” (DPLDP) has guided the Government in addressing these constraints, dictating legal, institutional and fiscal reforms. In 2012, the Government initiated the formulation of the National Integrated Program for Decentralization, Local Development and Employment (PNIDDLE) in support of the decentralization process: the first phase of the PNIDDLE, focusing on capacity support to national, regional and local level institutions, has been financially supported by a World Bank-funded Local Government Development Project (LGDP, 2013-2019).

The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD) is the entity in charge of environmental management services. MEDD prepares and implements government policies for environmental protection. At the technical level, MEDD includes a number of technical directorates in charge of nature protection (DNP), protected areas, coastal environmental control, planning coordination and information management, and pollution management. Environmental assessment is overseen by MEDD’s Environmental Control Department, which enforces the Government’s environmental evaluation policy. MEDD has regional representation through Regional Delegations of the Environment; they are recipients of support from the LGDP, which includes a set of capacity supporting activities to strengthen their mandate and capacity for service delivery.

Despite a firm political will to combat desertification and sustain the country's natural resources, past regional and national efforts have been mostly unsuccessful due to climatic events, weak civil capacity and widespread poverty. In 1980, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) designed a drought control and development strategy for its member countries, with the main objective of promoting food self-sufficiency and environmental balance. However, implementation of the strategy did not have the anticipated results because of the complexity of the desertification problem and countries' weak implementation capacities. Consequently, the Government of Mauritania (GOM) decided to incorporate desertification control and sustainable management of its natural resources into an overall sustainable development process: a broad range of planning and management tools were developed, including (i) the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PAN-LCD), (ii) the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD), the National Action Plan for the Environment (NAPE) and various donor-supported projects aimed at ensuring sustainable conservation and development of natural resources. However, most initiatives have failed to meet expectations due to weak implementation, management, and monitoring and evaluation capabilities.

II. Proposed Development Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to strengthen sustainable landscape management in targeted productive ecosystems in Mauritania.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Sustainable Landscape Management Knowledge, Governance and Partnerships

Comments (optional)

Knowledge, governance and partnerships among stakeholders (national and local government agencies, local communities, non-profit organizations and the private sector) involved in SLM in general, and in the Gum Arabic value chain in particular, will be enhanced via the sub-components.

Component Name

Sustainable Landscape Management Practice

Comments (optional)

This component supports investments in SLM practices in degraded Gum Arabic producing ecosystems and their integration into local development planning, for mutual reinforcement. The objective is to promote and evaluate various SLM practices which aim to recover degraded Gum Arabic ecosystems. By increasing the productivity of Gum Arabic through regeneration and conservation, and exploitation control activities as well as enrichment of other dwindling and sought after woody and herbaceous species that produce non-timber forest products and fodder, the component is expected to result in enhanced biodiversity, soil and water conservation, and vegetation and soil carbon storage.

Component Name

Project Management

Comments (optional)

This component provides project management support to the MEDD by financing: (i) a project management and administration training workshop, including procurement; (ii) a project launch workshop; (iii) the hiring of an M&E consultant and a technical advisor for a limited period of time for capacity enhancement within the MEDD; (iv) hiring of an external auditing firm to carry

out annual external audits; (v) hiring of a full-time agro-forestry specialist and three full time local administrative assistants; and (vi) operating costs associated with project management at the central and local levels.

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	4.81	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
Borrower			0.00
Global Environment Facility (GEF)			4.81
Total			4.81

V. Implementation

The project will be implemented by the MEDD, through the DNP. Project coordination and monitoring tasks will be carried out by a Project Coordination Unit (PCU) anchored in the MEDD. The PCU will comprise a core team of DNP staff, and staff from other MEDD units. The PCU will be led by the DNP Director who will act as Project Coordinator, and comprise at minimum: (i) a natural resource management (NRM) and biodiversity specialist to also act as Deputy Coordinator; (ii) a communication and gender specialist; (iii) an environmental and social safeguard specialist; (iv) a procurement specialist; and (v) a financial management (FM) specialist. The procurement and FM specialists will be from MEDD's administrative and financial department, and work under the direct supervision of the Chief Financial Officer. An agro-forestry specialist will be hired on a full-time basis to provide technical support the PCU and Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) for tasks related to monitoring of ecosystem services under Component 1 and SLM investments under component 2, as well as part time M&E specialist and technical advisor/environmental specialist.

At the local level, project coordination will be carried out by three RCUs – one in each of the three intervention regions of Trarza, Brakna and Gorgol. The RCUs will comprise decentralized MEDD staff who will report to the PCU, hakims and mayors of communes located within the project intervention areas. Each RCU will be headed by a local MEDD Delegate and assisted by a hired Administrative Assistant. Regional technical Facilitators will be identified and approached by the RCUs if needed. The RCUs will support and supervise the development of community and municipal plans, support and coordination local investments with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector, and collect data for the project M&E system.

The project will be overseen by a broad, multi-stakeholder National Steering Committee (NSC). The NSC will be in charge of policy guidance, review and approval of annual work plans and budgets, financial and program performance assurance, and ensuring a uniform understanding of project activities by all stakeholders. The PCU will act as the Secretariat of the NSC, which will meet every six months.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	x	

Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	x	
Forests OP/BP 4.36	x	
Pest Management OP 4.09	x	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	x	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10		x
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	x	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x

Comments (optional)

VII. Contact point

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