

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	TERRESTRIAL TELECOM CABLE PROJECT
Project Number:	20120286
Country:	Mauritania
Project Description:	Construction of inter-urban fibre optic backbone links in the North-East, South and South-East of Mauritania, with international connection point near the borders of Senegal and Mali. The deployment of the network is divided into four main segments which have a total estimated length of 1 577 km. The cables will enable connectivity of the capital Nouakchott and of inland cities such as Atar, Choum, Rosso, Boghé, Kaédi, Sélibaby, Kiffa, Ayoun and Néma. The project will also include a building for installation of a data centre in Nouakchott. This terrestrial network will also interconnect to the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable which recently landed in Mauritania and will be a relevant complement to that project financed by the Bank in 2010.
EIA required:	yes
NTS and EIS or equivalent documents will be published on EIB website as condition for 1 st disbursement.	
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise:	no

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

Environmental and Social studies are part of the project preparation. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) study and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) have been prepared to identify major concerns and will be completed by an Environmental and Social Impact Study (ESIS), associated monitoring plans and individual Resettlement Action Plans (RAP) that will take into account EIB Environmental and Social guidelines. The Bank's services will verify how the recommendations of the ESIS and plans will be applied in the project implementation and its operation contracts.

On environmental issues, most of the impacts are common to projects of this type namely opening trenches for cable laying and will be mitigated by application of best practices in design and installation. Together with some specific mitigation measures, the environmental impact of the project is expected to be minor. If the project were located in the EU, it would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment as telecommunication projects are not specifically mentioned in any annexes of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU.

On social issues, the EIB has required that an independent consultant reviews and completes the existing ESMF to make it compliant with EIB Environmental and Social standards. Further due diligence will be carried out during the monitoring phase, once Environmental and Social documentation will be available. Given the risk profile of Mauritania, special attention will be paid to labour standards and occupational and community health and safety. Besides, taking into consideration that the project will involve the physical and economic displacement of some 400 people (most of which is anticipated to be of temporary nature), the promoter will be required to develop and implement RAPs in compliance with WB and EIB' practices.

Environmental and Social Assessment

In order to guide the environmental and social (E&S) due diligence, inform the project preparation and comply with World Bank's internal requirements at an earlier stage of the project cycle, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) have been prepared by the promoter in compliance with WB's policies.

According to the existing ESMF, sub-projects will be screened in order to determine if further E&S assessment is required. For this purpose, a screening tool has been developed by the promoter.

- In those cases where the sub-project is screened out, the E&S focal point will need to ensure that the mitigation measures listed in the ESMF, the E&S clauses and the IFC EHS guidelines for telecommunications are complied with.
- For sub-projects that have been screened-in and once the precise alignment and locations of the network are determined, the following more detailed studies are to be prepared: (i) an Environmental and Social Impact Study (ESIS), (ii) an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and (iii) a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP).

Environmental Assessment

Based on the project concept and its planned four links the ESMF study has identified many potential environmental impacts to be taken into account, most of which are common in telecom projects and others are specifically local. The major potential impacts will derive from the deployment of underground fibre optic cables, namely from the civil works for opening trenches, building ducts and backfilling it which can be significantly mitigated by the adoption of industry best practices.

It is expected that the planned Environmental and Social Impact Studies (ESIS) will be prepared for each transmission link of the project. The ESIS conclusions and proposed recommendations and mitigation measures, as reviewed by the project promoter's and DFIs, will be applied into the project implementation Terms of Reference and into the contracts with suppliers and installers.

During the project construction it is planned to have E&S surveys e.g. by independent consultants. It has been proposed to reinforce the E&S expertise of the Project Implementation Unit ("UGP du WARCIP") recruiting directly for it one E&S expert or requiring that function to be included in the planned technical assistance contracts that will be funded by the WB.

Social Assessment

Notwithstanding the alignment with WB's operational guidelines, the ESMF does not fully address all EIB social standards and procedures, as specified in the EIB's 2010 Environmental and Social Practices Handbook, particularly regarding labour standards and occupational and community health and safety. Furthermore, the screening tool available does not cover all EIB's E&S standards, thus results of the screening may not necessarily be robust.

Against this backdrop, available E&S documentation will need to be reviewed and outstanding gaps completed. The EIB has required that an independent consultant supports the promoter in this exercise and undertakes the necessary activities. These will result in an addendum to the ESMF and the definition of a more descriptive Stakeholder Engagement Plan. In view of the amendments, the screening tool and the E&S clauses for the works contracts will be revised. The ESMF and its addendum will be part of the tendering documentation for the selection of the contractor/s with the aim to facilitate due understanding and costing of the required E&S management plans (ESMP) and systems (ESMS).

Involuntary Resettlement: The promoter with the assistance of consultants has prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) in accordance with the requirements of World Bank OP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement and Mauritanian law. The RPF has been endorsed by the promoter.

The project is expected to entail physical and economic displacement, but the significance in terms of number of people affected and permanence of the impacts needs to be further assessed and will depend on the final alignment of the cables. According to the available draft of the RPF it is estimated that some 400 people will need to be resettled (both permanent and temporary). Detailed analysis will be carried out for the subsections and individual RAPs prepared and implemented to ensure all project affected people will improve or, at least, have restored their pre-project level livelihood.

Labour and working conditions: Given the absence of dedicated operational guidelines from the World Bank (entity leading the preparation of the project), the current ESMF does not define the labour standards that should govern the project and accordingly does not assess risks and impacts nor identifies mitigation measures. Despite the country having ratified the ILO Core Labour Standards, there are some concerns about the national policies and application of the conventions in practice.

Taking into consideration the risk profile of Mauritania in this area, the promoter has been required to amend/update the E&S documentation to incorporate EIB standards regarding labour. The EIB will endeavour to include the amended E&S documentation as part of the tendering documents and to introduce the relevant clauses in the construction contracts.

The promoter will be required to develop a Human Resources Policy defining the working conditions, hiring practices, terms of employment and eventual training programmes that will apply to the project. Management systems should be in place to monitor and enforce compliance of the aforementioned Human Resources Policy and ensure full respect of the principles of the ILO Core Conventions and all other ILO Conventions ratified by Mauritania.

Health and Safety: Detailed health and safety (H&S) procedures to be followed by the construction work force will need to be developed. The focal point for E&S at the PIU will ensure that the contractors implement safe working practices at the construction site and demonstrate compliance with policies and procedures through a monitoring programme that will record and routinely report performance to the promoter. Regarding community H&S, the current ESMF does not fully analysis impacts and risks. Specific measures should be developed by an independent consultant and adopted by the promoter and the contractors. A more detailed construction ESMP will have to be prepared.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The Bank requires that a stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) be drafted and applicable until completion of construction, identifying all direct and indirect stakeholders and the level of consultation for each of these. The setting up of a grievance mechanism will also be required.

National procedures foresee that for projects requiring an environmental impact study (EIS), a public enquiry must be carried out in order to allow governmental bodies, experts and the civil society in general to make comments. A notice is published in newspapers and the NTS is made available at the City Hall of the municipality concerned by the project. Upon request to the Hakem, the full EIS can be accessed. The consultation lasts 30 days, following which a 7-day supplementary period is opened for the enquirers to do further analysis. Their final report is to be released within 15 days and sent to the Ministry of the Environment for decision.

Targeted stakeholder engagement with project affected people will need to be carried out during the development of the detailed E&S documentation for the sub-projects and the respective RAPs. At present, a limited workshop has taken place in Nouakchott for the presentation of the ESMF and the RPF to comply with WB's procedures. Up to date the issues raised by the stakeholders consulted are the following:

- Negative impacts of the project should be minimised. Special mentioned were made about impacts on biodiversity (e.g. presence of wetlands and rivers, existence of forests in certain areas, destruction of rare plant covers mainly in the desert) and disruptions of archaeological sites and sacred places, such as cemeteries.
- On the physical and economic displacement, concerns were expressed regarding the compensation and the eligibility of project affected people, including those related to customary land rights.

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- The population expects that the project will contribute to the temporary creation of employment, and urged the promoter to prioritise the hiring of local labour.
- Some people voiced their fears about the cultural impacts of the access to internet, especially on youngsters.