

Public

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: MOBILE BROADBAND ROLLOUT (EGYPT)
Project Number: 2019-0595
Country: Egypt
Project Description: The project concerns the coverage and capacity expansion of the promoter's 4G broadband network, consisting of the deployment of around 2 000 new sites to improve coverage in selected regions, the installation of an additional capacity layer in around 1 800 existing and new sites located in high traffic areas as well as investments to upgrade the mobile core network.

EIA required: no

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project consists of three main components:

- 1) Upgrade of the equipment of the promoter's 4G core network;
- 2) Deployment of additional mobile equipment to increase capacity of existing 4G mobile sites; and
- 3) Construction of new mobile towers and the installation of the corresponding 4G radio access network equipment.

Activities included in components 1 and 2 mainly involve installation of equipment in existing infrastructures (towers, rooftop sites and other radio access and core network buildings) that will not change their scope due to the project. These installations will be mostly located in urban areas and might only require minor refurbishment or adaptation works, which are not expected to have a significant negative environmental impact. Component 3 relates to the construction of new mobile sites in urban (about 75% of the sites) and rural areas (about 25% of the sites). Mobile site construction may have minor environmental impacts limited to dust and noise disturbances in the project site and with short duration that are expected to be mitigated with well-established industry-standard practices.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Luxembourg, 22 April 2021

If the project were located in the EU, none of these activities would fall under any of the Annexes of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. Regarding the Egyptian EIA law (Law for the Protection of the Environment - Law 4/1994, as amended by Law 9/2009), mobile network site projects are explicitly mentioned as having minimum impact on the environment, therefore requiring a simplified environmental assessment. The promoter will present the required simplified assessments to the relevant authority for approval before the construction of any new site. As a condition for disbursement of the EIB loan, the promoter will provide a list of all the sites built in the relevant period, as well as the simplified environmental assessments approved by the authorities for a sample of sites selected by the EIB.

During the operations phase, the main potential environmental impact would be related to exposure to EMF (Electro Magnetic Field) emissions by RAN equipment. Studies continue to be conducted to further assess the potential long-term effects of exposure to EMF emissions on human health. So far, mitigation measures adopted are limits to the radiation of the mobile base stations and restrictions to their locations. Egypt has adopted exposure limits aligned with the ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) 1998 guidelines. The Egyptian National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) is responsible for ensuring the compliance of operators with the mentioned standards.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The annual emissions of the project in a standard year of operation are estimated at 25 kt CO₂e/year based on the number of new mobile sites, the number of sites including capacity upgrades and the estimated emissions generated by the core network upgrade. The project only foresees the installation of new equipment based on state of the art technology at existing and additional new sites, but no replacement of outdated components, which would generate some energy savings. Therefore, the relative emissions have been assessed to be zero.

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost.

Social Assessment

The project is not expected to have any relevant negative social impact. On the other hand, the project will have significant positive social impact thanks to the improvement in the affordability and quality of mobile broadband services in the covered areas. The access to the digital economy for the broader population has emerged as a critical point for the private sector development and the closing of economic inclusion & inequality gaps.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The promoter has developed an integrated management system that is currently in the process of certification according to ISO 14001 and ISO 9001. Before disbursement of the EIB loan, the promoter will provide a copy of the documentation to the EIB as a condition for disbursement of the loan.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

The largest project component consists of the construction of close to 2 000 new mobile sites across selected regions of Egypt. The potential environmental impact during construction is expected to be limited and mitigated by sector-standard practices. The promoter will have to present a simplified environmental assessment for the approval of site construction. Before disbursements of the EIB loan the promoter will provide to the EIB the list of newly built sites and the EIB will select a sample for which the promoter will provide copies of the simplified environmental assessments approved by the authorities. The environmental impact of mobile networks during operations is mainly related to electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions that are mitigated by operation under the exposure limits determined by the regulation and based on the best science currently available.

Therefore, the project has been classified as acceptable in environmental and social terms for the Bank's financing.