



118/119 Biodiversity and Tropical Forest Assessment for Mauritania

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following 118/119 Biodiversity and Tropical Forest Assessment for Mauritania is the result of short-term desk research based primarily on readily available materials and limited interviews with USAID and implementing partners based in Ghana and working on initiatives for the West African region. To date, no such 118/119 assessment has been conducted for Mauritania.

Mauritania has experienced more than 30 years of persistent drought, with periods of severe drought, and falls within a sub-arid climatological zone south of the Sahara Desert. As such, the country's resources base is threatened by desertification and the expansion of the Sahara by thousands of hectares each year. There is increasing concern that clearing natural vegetation for farming exposes the fragile topsoil to the brunt of desert winds, and that these changes may be permitting the expansion of the region's deserts. Further, during the 20th century, the human factor in the environmental equation changed dramatically, as population growth exploded.

Humans have become a major driver of change in an already dynamic environment.¹ Historically nomadic in nature, the population has experienced increased sedentarization and urbanization since gaining independence from France in the 1960s, as the degraded natural environment has pushed communities to move into the remaining rain-fed, verdant areas which support agricultural production; and to urban centers in search of economic alternatives to subsistence agriculture and raising livestock. By recent estimates, approximately 30 percent of the national population now lives in cities and towns, with approximately 25 percent residing in the capital city of Nouakchott alone. Another significant urban center has developed around the fishing and iron export industries in Noaudhibou to the north.

Today, Mauritania's economy is focused primarily on two large-scale industries — fisheries and iron ore extraction — each comprising approximately 50 percent of the country's export earnings. Due to its location near powerful coastal upwellings of cold, nutrient-rich waters, Mauritania possesses some of the richest fishing grounds worldwide, second only to Morocco in Arab exports to Europe of small fish.² The 2001 discovery of offshore oil reserves has added petroleum to the list of available economic opportunities but presents challenges for the natural environment. Mauritania's crude oil reserves are estimated at around 600 million barrels and the sector is bound to become the major player in the economy. According to 2006 World Bank calculations, oil reserves in the Tiof and Tevet fields could bring the GNI per capita from USD \$420 in 2004 to around USD \$1,000 in 2010.³

Agricultural activity is also prevalent in Mauritania, but the agricultural sector is able to meet only 40 percent of the national demand for agricultural products. Increasing degradation of the natural environment is resulting in marginal returns for agricultural production. Livestock and livestock products, along with sorghum and millet, comprise the staples of local consumption. Dates, irrigated rice, and fish gathered from shallow fishing along the coast are characterized as “niche” products by the USAID FEWS Net project.⁴

¹ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/pan-sahel.htm>

² http://search.panda.org/search?site=panda&client=panda_frontend&proxystylesheet=panda_frontend&output=xml_no_dtd&q=Artisanalfishfactsheeteditee3.doc

³ http://www.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2006/06/19/000160016_20060619102918/Rendered/PDF/36304.pdf

⁴ Mauritania Livelihood Profiles March 2005,” USAID FEWS NET Project, p. 10.

Mauritania's economy has maintained steady growth since 1992, when the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (GIRM) instituted a number of wide-ranging macroeconomic, structural, and social reforms. While incidence of extreme urban and rural poverty declined from 1996-2000 (urban: 30.1 percent to 25.4 percent; rural: 65.5 percent to 61.2 percent),⁵ an estimated 57 percent of the population continues to live below the poverty line. Much of that population depends on agricultural activities in the more fertile south for survival.

Mauritania currently maintains a trade deficit of USD \$140 million, having gone from a trade surplus to a significant debt. The offshore oil discovery was not enough to offset the country's 2000 qualification for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. According to a 2006 AGOA economic background report, the largest refinery in the capital city of Nouadhibou has not exceeded 20 percent capacity.⁶

Mauritania is party to a number of international conventions on biodiversity, conservation, and climate change. The country also has developed a significant body of legislation and strategies to address constraints to sustainable natural resources management and advancement of the rural sector. In demonstration of its commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Mauritania prepared a National Strategy and Action Plan for 2000-2004, along with subsequent reports on the country's progress. In addition, in July 2006, the GIRM established a new ministerial department responsible for the environment, the Direction de la Protection de la Nature. While limited information is presently available on the precise responsibilities of this new department, the elevation of the natural environment as a priority within the GIRM is evident.

In addition to the GIRM's own efforts to address impacts on the natural environment, a number of international NGOs and donor organizations have contributed to the advancement of sustainable natural resources management in Mauritania. The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and Oxfam have long maintained a presence in the country, as have the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and Global Environment Facility (GEF). Although not an exhaustive list of donor organizations and implementers, these organizations represent those most visibly active in issues related to the management and conservation of Mauritania's natural resources.

In general, Mauritania's natural resources are threatened by both environmental and human activities. Persistent drought and encroaching desertification are punctuated with periods of severe drought, flooding, and locust infestations. Pressure from population growth and the corresponding increased agricultural activities are threatening an ever-diminishing environmental base. Land and soil degradation in agro-pastoral areas and oases, shifting sands, soil erosion, and deforestation of remaining vegetative resources due to overgrazing and land clearing for agriculture decrease the natural environment's ability to support native flora and fauna, as well as migratory populations of birds and marine life. Changes in the water table and salinization of areas surrounding irrigated agriculture also contribute to the decline of productivity of agriculture and health of the overall ecosystem. Depleted coastal and marine fish stocks plague

⁵ <http://www.internationalmonetaryfund.com/External/NP/prsp/2002/mrt/01/033102.PDF>

⁶ http://www.agoa.info/?view=country_info&country=mr

Mauritania. Government-provided fisheries subsidies to overseas enterprises have led to over-harvesting of fish stocks.⁷

In response to these challenges, Mauritania has established key protected areas to safeguard its biological resources. Banc d'Arguin and Diawling national parks have both been designated as Ramsar wetlands of international importance, and both have been the recipients of significant international assistance towards the development of management plans and community-based natural resources management initiatives. However, protected areas comprise only two-tenths of 1 percent of the total national territory of the country (102,552,000 hectares). IUCN and WWF have been instrumental in the establishment of coastal and protected areas management plans and marine protected areas, and IUCN has been working on institutional strengthening for protected areas management.⁷

STATUS AND THREATS TO ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mauritania is host to 1,100 plant species, 61 mammal species (10 threatened, 2002), 172 bird species (2 threatened, 2002), 72 reptile species (2 threatened), 3 amphibian species, and 117 fish species. Unfortunately, big game is no longer found in Mauritania. Primary threats to endangered species include heavy exploitation of resources through over-hunting and over-fishing. Increased fragmentation of natural habitats is particularly detrimental for migratory waterfowl and for threatened species found throughout the region.

Despite the operation of international fishing fleets under licensed agreements, over-exploitation of fisheries resources and accidental by-catch cause significant loss of biodiversity. Natural resource subsidies are the most environmentally damaging subsidies, both because they tend to be larger than manufacturing sector subsidies and their environmental effects are much more far-reaching. According a published report focusing on fishing subsidies and overfishing, deepwater rose shrimp stocks were considered “severely overexploited,” and demersal species exploited beyond sustainable levels.⁸ Worth some €108 million each year for 6 years, the 2006 fisheries partnership agreement between the EU and Mauritania is one of the most significant agreements ever in terms of fishing opportunities for the EU. The agreement allows around 200 EU vessels to fish various species in Mauritanian waters — including squid and octopus, despite accounts of 30 percent over-harvesting of these cephalopods.⁹

The negative impacts of extractive industries — especially the potential negative impacts of the new oil, iron ore, and natural gas exploration — also present significant threats of pollution and related impacts from the migration of human populations to the coastline and productive centers. Recently, the World Bank instituted an environmental management system (EMS) component of its Mauritania Mining Sector Capacity project. A component of the EMS is capacity building at the Mauritanian Ministry of Mining and Industry for monitoring and enforcing environmental regulations.¹⁰

⁷ <http://66.102.1.104/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:9v6jA8wM4f0J:www.sdnbd.org/sdi/issues/environment/article/1.pdf>

⁷ <http://app.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/WTL-029.pdf>

⁸ <http://66.102.1.104/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:9v6jA8wM4f0J:www.sdnbd.org/sdi/issues/environment/article/1.pdf>

⁹ http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/marine/help/seafood_lovers/fish_dishes/seafood_paella/issue_paella/index.cfm

¹⁰ [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/oeg.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/ei_report/\\$FILE/Extractive+Industries+and+Sustainable+Development.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/oeg.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/ei_report/$FILE/Extractive+Industries+and+Sustainable+Development.pdf)

STATUS AND THREATS TO FOREST RESOURCES

According to both the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mauritania possesses few remaining forest resources, and these are disappearing at an alarming rate. Forest cover makes up less than 1 percent of Mauritania's national territory. Four percent is made up of other wooded lands, most of this woody vegetation. There is no large-scale forest industry in Mauritania, despite early attempts to establish forest plantations to counter desertification and soil erosion. Little information is available on the status of these plantations. Threats to these forested areas include drought, fires, overgrazing, and clearing for agriculture.

CONSERVATION OUTSIDE OF PROTECTED AREAS

According to the Development Directorate General of the European Commission, soil erosion and degradation are to blame for destabilization of the sand dunes, which have spilled over into the irrigated paddy-fields, market garden plots, watering places, and villages. The publication also notes that since the forests have disappeared for the most part, along with wetland areas (lakes, *wadis*, and ponds), there are limited natural refuges for wildlife and migratory birds. In the Senegal River valley, the extent of the land under cultivation, together with poor drainage practices, are the main causes of soil deterioration. This assessment did not reveal significant efforts to address the issues related to shifting sands and the disappearing *wadis*.

Primary issues related to biodiversity and tropical forest conservation identified as a result of this assessment include:

- Drought and desiccation
- Population growth and urbanization
- Insufficient land and resource tenure
- Loss of pastureland and degradation of soils
- Inconsistent application of existing natural resources legislation, limited capacity for monitoring of natural resource use, and dearth of long-term natural resources management strategies
- Fishing subsidies to industrialized nations that lead to over-fishing

Since 1991, USAID has had minimal involvement in Mauritania, due to allegations of widespread human rights abuses. At the time, USAID withdrew its mission and formally halted operations in the country. Matters worsened in the 1990s, when allegations of slavery resurfaced. Since that time, in anticipation of democratic presidential elections (the first round of which were held on March 11, 2007), USAID has provided humanitarian assistance through the West African Regional Program (WARP). The West Africa Mission currently supports the fishery sector in Mauritania through the West African Trade Hub (WATH) with headquarters in Dakar,

Senegal. Several Mauritanian fish processors are receiving USAID/West Africa assistance, which will likely continue with FY 08 funds.¹¹

With the FY 2008 CBJ, the U.S. government continues its commitment to assist Mauritania in its upcoming transition to democracy and its continued improvement in the areas of clean water, child and maternal health, and economic development. While it does not include programmatic areas that will utilize biodiversity earmark funds, the proposed programmatic areas do present opportunities to contribute to the conservation of Mauritania's natural environment. Three programmatic areas factor heavily into this assistance: Governing Justly and Democratically, Investing in People, and Economic Growth.

- **\$1.3 million in Governing Justly and Democratically**, with a focus on strengthening of legislative processes and the reinforcement of democratic institutions; and anti-corruption initiatives related to ensuring that oil exports are utilized for development.
- **\$4.0 million in Investing in People** to improve services toward preventative and treatment programs for child and maternal health, local capacity to respond to issues related to food security, access to clean water, and funds for income generation activities through targeted micro-enterprise sectors and community works.
- **\$1.0 million in Economic Growth** to support capacity building for micro-credit institutions and the establishment of a micro-credit fund.

GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

Democratic and transparent governance are imperative today in Mauritania, and the country's first democratic presidential elections in 29 years was held on March 11, 2007. With no clear candidate chosen, a second round elections took place 14 days later, with Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi receiving 53 percent of the votes and taking office in April 2007. Given the importance of the transition to civilian democracy in the coming year, the U.S. government will provide assistance to the legislature and democratic institutions, including political parties and a free press; promote human rights; and support anti-corruption programs to ensure that income from oil exports are utilized for development.

In conjunction with the objectives set forth in the FY 2008 CBJ, USAID should work to strengthen the ability of civil society organizations in Mauritania to participate in decision-making regarding natural resources management. Collaboration with initiatives for decentralized natural resources management, such as the work being conducted on the development of local agreements by the World Bank and GTZ, would build the capacity of local actors to advocate for their rights to the sustainable utilization of natural resources and their ability to implement improved practices and techniques. USAID should assist with ensuring that the benefits of Mauritania's natural resources are experienced by its people. Furthermore, the monitoring of current extractive and natural resource use practices and the enforcement of existing legislation and terms of international industrial licenses will help to prevent over-exploitation of the country's natural resources.

¹¹ Robert Clausen, USAID, Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development Research

A review of existing legislation and a clarification of the current land and resource tenure system would not only afford incentives for local actors to invest in improved approaches to sustainable natural resources management, but also lend itself to ameliorating conflicts over the resources themselves. In addition to bolstering transparent processes for the reinvestment of export revenues in long-term sustainable development, USAID might assist the GIRM in establishing a process for the prior environmental screening of new industrial and extractive activities to protect against the further degradation of the country's natural environment. Anti-corruption activities might also include safeguards against corruption in the permitting and licensing process.

Investing in People

During FY 2008, the U.S. government will assist with the improvement of preventative and treatment programs for child and maternal health and local capacity to respond to issues related to food security, including access to clean water. Initiatives will also be geared toward increasing income generation through targeted micro-enterprise sectors and community works. For Mauritania, where a significant percentage of the population relies on agricultural and livestock activities, food security is heavily dependent upon a healthy natural environment. Similarly, access to potable water is predicated upon functional watersheds and effective pollution protections. Sustainable micro-enterprise activities have the potential to bring communities out of poverty, but only inasmuch as these activities also consider the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the natural environment.

In accordance with this objective, USAID should aim to provide local communities with the tools and techniques to increase the productivity of agricultural activities, while at the same time protecting the natural environment. This includes areas of critical importance to biodiversity, such as the Moufflon faunal reserve; the integral reserves of Baie du Levrier, Iles Mauritanienes and Las Cuevecillas; and Banc d'Arguin and Diawling national parks.¹² USAID should work with civil society organizations to prevent encroachment of agricultural activities into ecologically sensitive areas, and should work to build local capacity to foster a sense of ownership on the part of local actors over the natural resources upon which they depend for survival.

Through its Mauritania Anti-Poverty Program, USAID has in past provided significant humanitarian assistance in the area of potable water. USAID should continue to engage in initiatives which focus on increasing the accessibility of potable water and to protect the watersheds that are ultimately responsible for supporting the resource. In terms of the development of new opportunities in micro-enterprise and the identification of new income generation activities, USAID should screen new activities and consider any potential negative environmental impacts. The expected outcomes of proposed activities should be weighed against the particular threats they might pose to the natural resource base.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Support for capacity building for micro-credit institutions, establishment of a micro-credit fund, and promotion of expanded livelihood strategies also comprise primary components the

¹² www.parks.it/world/MR/Eindex.html

proposed USAID program. Broadening the range of viable economic opportunities for the growing population can alleviate the pressure placed on the environment by agricultural, livestock, and fishing activities. Technological know-how has been identified time and time again as a primary constraint to sustainable management of natural resources by local communities. Initiatives aimed at expanding livelihood strategies to local populations should concentrate on best practices in soil conservation, improved agricultural and livestock techniques, and capacity building on the dangers of over-fishing/over-hunting.

In addition, access to credit should be fostered in order to increase the ability of local communities to invest in improved practices. However, prior to implementing initiatives to broaden the available micro-enterprise opportunities, impacts assessments must be conducted to ensure that the new proposed activities do not cause undue harm to the already degraded natural environment.

This report attempts to identify the key threats to biodiversity and forestry conservation and to provide examples of past and current initiatives with aims of ameliorating these threats. While recognizing that Mauritania has for many years been a non-presence country for USAID, the agency has taken significant strides to offer humanitarian assistance and to encourage the burgeoning democratic process developing within the country. While at present little attention seems to be focused on the natural environment, through its proposed portfolio, USAID has the opportunity to ameliorate threats to the environment and promote better natural resource management practices, and ultimately contribute to the livelihoods, health, and democratic opportunities of the Mauritanian people.

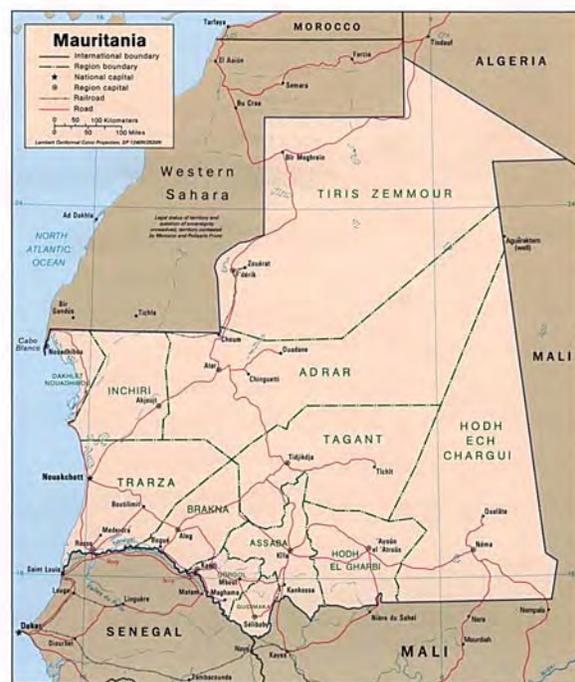
A. INTRODUCTION

Bounded in the north by Western Sahara and Algeria, in the south and east by Senegal and Mali, and in the west by the North Atlantic Ocean, Mauritania extends across 1,030,070 square kilometers, 80 percent of which are barren desert, receiving less than 200mm of rainfall per year. Only the southernmost 20 percent of the territory in the country supports vegetation and livestock rearing, and rain-fed agriculture is only possible in 0.3 percent of the territory.

A1. ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CONTEXT IN MAURITANIA

A sub-arid climatological zone located south of the Sahara Desert, the Sahel encompasses nine countries and 47 million of the poorest people in the world, including the population of Mauritania. The Sahel region is particularly sensitive to climate change, due to farming and livestock grazing activities and its proximity to the Sahara. Combined with periods of drought and a substantial decrease in the level of underground water resources,¹³ human activity in the Sahel has contributed to deforestation and serious soil degradation and erosion. A large percentage of the population (2,906,000, with an annual growth rate of 2.7 percent)¹⁴ struggles in a degraded natural environment and subsists at the brink of food insecurity, presenting a unique set of development challenges.

For a considerable portion of the population, the struggle for survival overshadows concern for the conservation of the natural environment. The pastoral code (2004) and the new forestry law (June 2007) legislation for common property resources will likely increase Mauritians' limited knowledge of and capacity to adopt improved practices. While tenure problems persist in rain-fed and irrigation agriculture in the Senegal River valley, the lack of investment in improved techniques and know-how for sustainable natural resources management is due to a lack of capacity to apply these new codes legislation.



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/mauritania_pol95.jpg

A1a. Economic Environment

Divided into five agro-ecological zones (arid, western Sahelian, eastern Sahelian, river basin, and coastal), Mauritania's economy is supported by two primary industrial sectors: iron ore extraction and fishing. The country has one of the world's richest fishing grounds. Overall, the industrial sector is marked by relatively limited competition, with a small number of families

¹³ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/pan-sahel.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5467.htm>

dominating sectors, main markets, and economic activities. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's "Premier Rapport National de Mauritanie pour la Convention sur la Biodiversité Biologique" states that the country's agricultural sector is only able to meet 40 percent of the national demand with agricultural activities that cover a mere 0.3 percent of the national territory. According to 2000 Economic Indicators, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 1995 US dollars was \$496,¹⁵ and the rural sector contributes up to 20 percent of that amount (1999 statistics). However, according to the World Bank's more recent figures, Mauritania's rural sector serves as the population's main source of income and employs approximately 64 percent of the labor force.

The discovery of offshore oil in the Chinguetti oil field in 2001, the Banda oilfield in 2002, and the Tiof oilfield in 2003 have led to increased exploration by petroleum companies in Mauritania. Many of these companies are Australian and, as of 2005, Woodside Petroleum Ltd. held significant interests in all three oil fields through production-sharing contracts. Production from the Chinguetti oilfield could raise an estimated GDP per capita from USD \$477 in 2003 to USD \$1,500 in 2010. Increases from oil revenue are expected to continue through 2025, when the reserve is projected to run dry, although there is potential for petroleum in on-shore basins. World Bank documents also suggest that hydrocarbon is positioned to become a major contributor to the economy.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 2005 Minerals Yearbook for Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, iron ore dominates Mauritania's mineral sector, having contributed 12 percent of the country's GDP that year and having represented more than half of its earnings from exports. Mauritania is one of 20 countries implementing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). EITI supports improved governance in resource-rich countries through the verification and full publication of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas, and mining. An increasing number of prospecting licenses were issued in 2005 for exploration of diamonds, gold, and petroleum. Phosphate, salt, copper, gypsum, sulfur, and peat have also been found, but insufficient data exists to estimate the actual and potential levels of production of phosphate rock, tungsten ore, and construction materials such as clays, sand, gravel, and stone.

Mauritania's soils are divided by three climatic regions: Soil Region A, Soil Region B, and Soil Region C.¹⁶ Region A, in the extreme south of the country, receives the most rainfall at approximately 500 mm per year. This region is the northern limit of the dry savanna and has the best potential for rain-fed crops and pastures. Soil Region B receives between 225 and 500 mm of rainfall. Grazing and agriculture are the main uses of this zone. Soils in Region C are comprised of sand dunes or other wind-deposited sands; rocky land; pediments; or in the desert outcrops, coastal dunes and *sebkhas* (inland areas of salt deposits caused by repeated flooding from the sea). Sand dunes, rocky land, and pediments encompass Soil Region C, a zone that receives less than 225 mm rainfall/year.

Temporally and spatially erratic rainfall is a major environmental problem affecting Mauritania's soil fertility. According to a 2002 study published in the *Land Degradation and Development* journal, the combined impacts of frequent rainfall deficits combined with deforestation, overgrazing, agricultural land, low primary biological productivity soil types, and uncontrolled

¹⁵ earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/eco_cou_478.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.fao.org/ag/AGP/AGPC/doc/Counprof/mauritania/mauritania.htm>

resource-base exploitation by the local population has resulted in a substantial decrease in biomass production for Mauritania. A degradation risk map applied to a soils map showed that all soil types in southern Mauritania are at risk of degradation.

In an attempt to combat the negative effects of desertification on the environment, the resource base, and the people who depend on them, the government (with technical assistance from FAO and financial support from the United Nations Development Programme and the UN Sudano-Sahelian Organization) is in the process of developing the National Plan for Desertification Control on a region-by-region basis. The parties discovered that wind-break construction using *balanites* and palm fronts is extremely efficient in reducing sand movement, and is a good barrier against encroachment by grazing animals. By 1989, more than 80 percent of wind-breaks were being constructed with *balanites*.

Mauritania's renewable surface water resources are estimated at 11.1 km³/year, constituted by the Senegal River, which forms the frontier between Mauritania and Senegal; its tributaries; and the by the dams disseminated in Mauritania's south and central territories. Of this 11.1 km³/an total, only 0.1 km³ is generated in the interior of the country.

Mauritania also possesses an equal amount of underground water sources, throughout the country's diverse geography. Water sources are prevalent in the southwest, the south, and south east (the large Tarza reservoir and Taoudenni sedimentary formations, river valley beds, and deep reservoirs) and less favorable in the rest of the country (arid river beds and sporadically situated water sources). Renewable underground water resources are estimated at 0.3 km³/year.

A1b. Social Climate

Over the course of the past 50 years, Mauritania's society has become increasingly concentrated in urban areas, with more than half of the national population (1.6 million) living in urban centers (The World Bank Country Brief cites 1998 figures). Today, 25 percent of the total population lives in the capital, Nouakchott. Wide-ranging macroeconomic, structure, and social reforms instituted in 1992 created conditions for relative stability and encouraged the transformation of the traditionally nomadic society dependent on a limited economic base to participate in a more market-driven economy. Sustained economic growth and a shift in public spending to social sectors and poverty reduction programs resulted in a decrease in poverty from 56.6 percent in 1990 to 46.7 percent in 2004.

With Mauritania's annual population growth rate of 2.78 percent,¹⁷ the World Bank calls attention to increased primary school enrollment and access to maternal healthcare during that period, but notes that retention in primary school dropped and child and infant mortality remained virtually unchanged. A background paper prepared for a 2003 UNESCO education monitoring report links the low retention rates with students' disappointment with instruction quality, and the prevailing sentiment in rural areas that school is a "pastime" if not a "waste of time," as a child only goes to school if there are no household or farm chores to do at home.¹⁸

¹⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5467.htm>

¹⁸ [http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:xImTqD4yZCoJ:unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146761e.pdf+mauritania+ percent2B+ primary+school+retention&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:xImTqD4yZCoJ:unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146761e.pdf+mauritania+percent2B+primary+school+retention&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us)

In its March 2005 “Mauritania Livelihoods Profiles,” FEWS Net indicates that the rural population in Mauritania is concentrated in the rain-fed agricultural zones and along the north bank of the Senegal River, which supports irrigated rice and sorghum production on the annual flood plain. Agro-pastoralism and pastoralism are found in the north and are mostly focused around oases and a vast expanse of uninhabited desert. Livestock and livestock products, along with sorghum and millet, comprise the staples of local consumption. FEWS Net also identifies “niche” products such as irrigated rice, dates, and fish gathered from shallow fishing along the coast. Livestock are sold informally in Mali and Senegal during periods of seasonal grazing across the borders.

While large-scale environmental events such as drought or flooding along the bank of the Senegal River are comparatively rare, Mauritians facing rural poverty are more susceptible to environmental perturbations due to their increased reliance on finite natural resources found in the country’s limited productive areas. A 2005 report by the United Nations Environment Programme/International Institute for Sustainable Development illustrates how vulnerable poor populations are to natural events: Not only does 57 percent of Mauritania’s population live below the poverty line, but much of that population depends on agricultural activities carried out within a 200-km-wide strip of degraded land receiving limited annual rainfall.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) adds that agricultural productivity is further limited by insufficient transport infrastructure, hindering access to markets and agricultural services, and using a top-down approach to public investment that does not foster community participation. When power and resources are filtered down from a centralized government, the most disenfranchised communities at the bottom are likely to suffer. These “bottom”-based communities have limited access to investment and working capital and are plagued by problems related to insecure land tenure and uneven implementation of the pastoral code.

National unity has long been challenged by conflicts between Arab Moors and Black African Mauritanian groups, centering on economic influence, land tenure, language, and race. Between the 1960s and the onset of desertification in the mid-1980s, Mauritania’s economy was largely agriculturally based, favoring the Black Mauritanian nomadic farmers of the south. But the political balance of power swung away when the country’s mining and fishing industry developed in the north, where Arab Moors are concentrated. Power swung again when the fishing industry leveled off and the burgeoning desertification increased the value of Black-Mauritanian-owned land along the fertile Senegal River.¹⁹ National unity is further aggravated by a lack of shared language among the various ethnicities, and a long history of Arab Moors enslaving their Black compatriots.

In April 2007, President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi asked his fellow countrymen and women exiled in neighboring Senegal and Mali to return. In his inauguration speech, President Abdallahi promised to make repatriation of tens of thousands of Mauritians his “top priority.”²⁰ Two months later, the government made its first official request to the United Nations High Commission of Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to assist in repatriation efforts.

¹⁹ <http://countrystudies.us/mauritania/53.htm>

²⁰ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73158>

A2. BACKGROUND ON USAID ACTIVITIES IN MAURITANIA

USAID has had minimal involvement in Mauritania since the spring of 1991, when allegations of widespread human rights abuses were raised. The United States formally halted direct USAID operations and all military assistance to Mauritania. Allegations of slavery within the country resurfaced in the 1990s, increasing tension between the two countries. However, the U.S. government is currently providing humanitarian assistance through the USAID/West Africa Mission (WA), in the areas of trade, health, conflict, food security, agriculture, and natural resources. Natural resource activities have focused on technical assistance in the areas of land use and land cover, implemented by the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control on the Sahel (CILSS) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Section B and Annex B (U.S. Government Mauritania Country Activity Sheet) provide detailed information on assistance provided to Mauritania.

A3. CURRENT U.S. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMING EFFORTS IN MAURITANIA

Since the military coup on August 3, 2005, U.S. government assistance to Mauritania has focused on humanitarian assistance, democratic strengthening, and furthering the U.S. government's counter-terrorism objectives. The FY 2008 Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) identified Mauritania as a strong supporter of both the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership and the Global War on Terror. To maintain humanitarian assistance, Mauritania will need to continue supporting its new democracy. As a Muslim country holding allegiances in the Arab League and the Africa Union, ensuring democracy is bound to be a challenge.

Assistance to Mauritania during FY 2009 included the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, designed to build capacity instrumental in the transition to a democratic government. In addition, the Food for Peace program maintained activities in Mauritania despite the lack of a USAID mission. Activities related to micro-enterprise development, focusing on access to water and on HIV/AIDS awareness and education, continued to be implemented.

The FY 2008 CBJ includes requests for funds in three areas of the U.S. foreign assistance agenda:

- \$1.3 million in Governing Justly and Democratically, with a focus on strengthening of legislative processes and the reinforcement of democratic institutions, and anti-corruption initiatives related to ensure that oil exports are utilized for development.
- \$4.0 million in Investing in People, to improve services toward preventative and treatment programs for child and maternal health, local capacity to respond to issues related to food security, and access to clean water; and increase funds for income generation activities through targeted micro-enterprise sectors and community works.
- \$1.0 million in Economic Growth, to support of capacity building for micro-credit institutions and the establishment of a micro-credit fund.

A4. RATIONALE FOR A 118/119 ASSESSMENT IN MAURITANIA

ADS 201.3.8.2, Mandatory Technical Analysis for Developing Strategic Plans, Environmental Analysis, contains the formal environmental requirements of USAID operating unit strategic plans. These requirements were derived from the Foreign Assistance Act and 22 CFR 216, which set forth the guidelines for the performance of Section 117 (Environmental Sustainability), Sections 118 and 119 (Tropical Forestry and Biological Diversity, respectively), and 22 CFR 216 (Agency Environmental Procedures). Sections 118 and 119 assessments are required by law for all USAID operating unit strategic plans, and they are conducted or updated prior to the development of new strategic plans by missions.

Sections 118 and 119 specifically require that all country plans include: 1) an analysis of the actions necessary in that country to conserve biological diversity and tropical forests; and 2) the extent to which current or proposed USAID actions meet those needs.

These assessments identify biodiversity and forestry assets in the country, discuss the impact of USAID activities, and identify actions within current and future programs where USAID could promote conservation. More than a legal requirement, a current 118/119 analysis can provide important advice to help guide proposed programs toward a more sustainable use of the country's renewable natural resources. To date, USAID has not conducted or commissioned a 118 or 119 assessment for Mauritania, and this combined 118/119 assessment was developed to fulfill the requirement.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AFFECTING BIODIVERSITY AND FORESTRY

Since the Military Council assumed power, the government has focused on three key areas: 1) the return to democracy within 24 months of the March 11, 2007 presidential elections; 2) the improvement of the judicial system, with a view to establishing a fairer system for individuals and a more attractive investment climate for business; and 3) the deepening of reforms in the public finance sphere.

The Military Council established for the first time in Mauritania a government body solely responsible for the environment, which became a ministry (Ministère Délégué auprès du Premier Ministre chargé de l'Environnement) after the recent presidential elections.

Since 1992, the GIRM has been implementing a wide range of reforms, and was among the first countries to develop a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2001. The four pillars set forth in the PRSP are geared toward: 1) fostering economic growth, 2) enhancing economic growth opportunities for the rural poor, 3) capacity building and training of rural communities and ensuring access to basic infrastructure and services, and 4) strengthening institutional capacity and governance.

Particularly under the second point, GIRM recognizes that development and diversification of the rural sector will be necessary for expanding trade, reducing production costs, and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the economy. Mauritania's Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP2), covering 2006-2010 and laying out the government's medium-term economic program and strategic development goals, was disclosed in January 2007.

B1. POLICIES AND TREATIES RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Mauritania is party to a number of international treaties on environmental issues, either by signature or by accession. Of primary importance for the purposes of this report, Mauritania signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on June 12, 1992 and ratified it on August 16, 1996, thereby committing itself to promoting sustainable development and recognizing that biological diversity is composed not only of flora and fauna, but that human actors also play an active role in conserving the environment in which they live. Mauritania has produced a Country Study on Biological Diversity and a National Strategy and Action Plan for 2000-2004.

Mauritania's first and third national reports are also available via the country's CBD clearinghouse website (<http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/mauritania/mr-eng/contributions.htm>).

Mauritania has also ratified several other international treaties related to conservation and natural resource management, including:

- The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), signed on October 14, 1994 and ratified on August 7, 1996.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) signed on December 6, 1992 and ratified on January 20, 1994. Signatories committed to consider approaches to reducing global warming. Mauritania also signed the Kyoto Protocol, the related legally binding requirements of the convention, on July 22, 2005. The Protocol went into effect on

October 20, 2005. In addition, Mauritania ratified the Vienna Convention on Protection of the Ozone Layer by accession on May 26, 1994.

- The Cartagena Protocol, ratified by accession on October 20, 2005. The protocol is an international agreement on biosafety.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), ratified by accession on March 13, 1998 and entered into force on June 11, 1998.
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), ratified in 1983. Mauritania is home to three Ramsar sites.
- Convention on World Cultural and Natural Patrimony, ratified on August 27, 1977. Mauritania has two Natural World Heritage sites.
- African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, signed on September 15, 1968.²¹ This Convention provides a classification of protected areas and guidance on Class A and Class B Wildlife and the regulation of activities related to each.

B2. LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the PRSP, GIRM has put in place a number of policies to address constraints to sustainable management of natural resources and progress in the rural sector. The GEF provides a listing of the relevant legislation, which include:

- Agro-food Strategy (2001)
- Livestock Strategy (2002)
- Pastoral Code (2000/2004)
- Land Tenure Law « Loi fonciere et domaniale » (1997, 2002)
- « Schema National d'Aménagement du Territoire » (1986)
- Forestry Code (2007)
- Game and Nature Protection Bylaw « Code de la Chasse et la Protection de la Nature » (1997);
- National Biodiversity Strategy (1998);
- National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change (NAPA) (2004);
- National Action Plan for Desertification (PAN-LCD) (2006);
- National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) (2006);
- National Strategy of Decentralization and Local Governance (2002).

Mauritania has a very complex legal framework, combining aspects of Islamic law and French civil law, which can lead to conflicting regulations and unclear responsibilities for regulators and resource managers. The recently implemented Pastoral Code and Forestry Code aims to engage pastoralists in community conservation of their grazing lands. It is too soon to determine what, if any, direct impact the codes will have on policies related to biodiversity or natural resource management.

²¹ The African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources can be found at [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Treaties/Text/Convention_Nature percent20& percent20Natural_Resources.pdf](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Treaties/Text/Convention_Nature%20&%20Natural_Resources.pdf)

B3. PRINCIPAL INSTITUTIONS OF MAURITANIA INVOLVED WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

The highest position in the national government is the President of the Republic, who is elected for a term of six years. In addition, responsibilities within the GIRM are delegated to 15 ministries and five secretariats. The Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment is responsible for the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies related to rural development and the management of the natural environment. The central issues (protecting natural settings and landscapes, improving living standards, combating pollution and desertification, development of wood products, protecting flora and fauna, and developing rural areas) are divided into four basic services:

- Environmental Service, with the divisions of Urban Environment, Legislative, and Pollution Control
- Protection of Nature Service, with the divisions of Soil Conservation and Fauna, Flora, and Pastures
- Hydrology Service, with the divisions of Pluviometer and Hydrometer
- Engineering Service, with the divisions of Public Works, Topography, Cadastre, and Technical and Research

In a 2006 paper presented at the Tenth Biannual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), Kirsch-Jung indicates that regulation and management of natural resources in Mauritania is complex and guided by tribal law, French colonial law, and modern state law. The situation of the commons is complicated by environmental pressure that has led to perpetual social change, including “sedentarisation (by pastoralists), population growth, and an increasingly complex legal situation in terms of legal pluralism — the traditional tribal system responsible for management of key commons in the dry land savannah and wetland areas are increasingly becoming ineffective.”²²

B4. INTERNATIONAL NGOS

Threats to biodiversity are closely associated with poverty, which will become increasingly difficult to address in the coming decade. According to GEF, the GIRM has limited administrative capacity, particularly related to economic and sectoral policy implementation and management, strategic management, planning and programming/monitoring of public expenditures, and civil society has not yet developed sufficiently to fill the void. However, a number of international organizations are presently working on issues related to biodiversity conservation and forestry management in Mauritania.

B4a. World Conservation Union (IUCN)

IUCN has been active in conservation and sustainable development since 1980. On its website, IUCN credits the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for having provided the funding for the establishment in 1989 of a regional tropical conservation program that cover the Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. The primary objective of

²² Kirsh-Jung, p. 13.

IUCN's involvement in Mauritania is to strengthen the national institutions responsible for protected tropical zones, which play a critical role in the conservation of regional biodiversity. IUCN's approach is highly participatory, ensuring that pertinent local stakeholders are engaged from the beginning. At the national level, IUCN provides support to national institutions in scientific research, primarily through support to a national network of specialists on the tropics. GREZOH, the Research Group on Wetlands, is a core founder of this network. As such, IUCN has participated in the establishment of a Masters of Water Management program at the University of Nouakchott.²³

As consultant for the French cooperation, IUCN is the primary implementer of the Planification et Aménagement du Littoral Mauritanien (PALM) project, and under this initiative works to facilitate stakeholder discussions on issues relating to coastal resource management. As a result of this initiative, on November 1, 2006, the GIRM adopted a coastal ordinance that formalizes the requirements for sustainable development included in the Plan Directeur d'Aménagement du Littoral Mauritanien (PDALM). The project proposed both the protective measures as well as the penal and fiscal dispositions and represents an integrated approach to coastal resource management. Additional information about IUCN's activities in Mauritania may be found at <http://www.iucn.org/places/mauritania/>.

With French and European Union financing, IUCN has undertaken preparatory studies for the establishment of a protected area (PA) in the Sahara ecosystem around the geologically and archaeologically important site of Guelb er Richât. The envisaged PA should protect endangered species such as addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) and gazelle (*Gazella dama*).

B4b. World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

WWF's primary activity in Mauritania is related to its West African Marine Ecoregion (WAMER) program, which began in 2000 and has its headquarters in Dakar, Senegal. WAMER was developed to respond to issues related to critical marine biodiversity and fisheries in the ecoregion, and the program focuses on supporting and creating marine protected areas (MPAs), sustainable artisanal fisheries, fisheries access agreements, and threatened species. Increased pressure from local and international fishing fleets, as well as artisanal fishers, is endangering the local fisheries in these countries. Through WAMER, WWF is also working for conservation of dolphins and marine turtles along the West African coast, and capacity building for NGOs and fisheries.²⁴

B5. DONOR ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to international NGOs, the international donor community has also contributed to conserving Mauritania's natural resources.

B5a. USAID

In 1991, the United States formally halted direct USAID operations and all military assistance to Mauritania in response to allegations of human rights violations. However, the U.S. government

²³ Additional information can be found on the GREZOH website at <http://dns2.univ-nkc.mr/FST/grezoh/>.

²⁴ WWF's website has additional details about the organization's activities in Mauritania (http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/africa/where/mauritania/index.cfm)

is currently providing humanitarian assistance through the USAID/West Africa Mission (WA), in the areas of trade, health, conflict, and food security, agriculture, and natural resources.

As part of its humanitarian assistance efforts, USAID has been instrumental since 1982 in locust prevention and mitigation efforts. Mauritania had been particularly hard-hit by the locust invasion, and USAID assistance totaled more than \$8 million, including \$1.9 million for locust control efforts in the late 1980s. Since 2001, USAID has conducted desert locust surveys and relief through its West Africa Mission through the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS – Comité Permanent Inter Etats de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel).

USAID assistance to Mauritania in FY 2005 totaled \$13,918,300, primarily for initiatives relating to food security. The FY 2008 CBJ includes \$6.9 million in foreign assistance for Mauritania (See Annex A for the excerpt from the FY 2008 CBJ.)

B5c. UNDP/UNEP

From June 1, 1999 to December 2008, UNEP and UNDP combined GEF-resources on the Biological Diversity Conservation through Participatory Rehabilitation of the Degraded Lands of the Arid and Semi-Arid Transboundary Areas of Mauritania and Senegal project. The project was designed to “address the root causes of biodiversity loss from land degradation in the five critical upland and floodplain ecosystems of a 60,000 km² portion of the trans-border Senegal River Valley in Senegal and Mauritania.”

UNDP, UNEP, GEF, and the governments of Mauritania and Senegal and other donors contributed a total of USD \$12,261,000 to the effort. The aim of the project was to improve techniques for rehabilitating the critical ecosystems in the degraded areas and to develop participatory natural resources management systems, “especially those that generate resource-based income and consequent economic incentives for sustainable management.” Among the other objectives of the project were to strengthen fire prevention and suppression of fire-sensitive ecosystems, undertake measures to decrease pressures on forest and range resources, benefit carbon sinks through ecosystem restoration and improved fire control, and strengthening institutional capacity at all levels from the village to the cross-national. According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), the project is estimated to reach about 80,000 people in 100 villages, utilizing participatory planning approaches to take into account the needs of various stakeholders (especially women and other socially marginal groups).²⁵

According to the project website, lessons learned and best practices include:

- All project participants should consult a common project document to ensure effectiveness and cohesion.
- Cross regional coordination is essential for effectively mitigating border disputes. The project reinforced the relations between Mauritania and Senegal.
- A minimum of one to two decades is necessary to reach tangible and measurable effects (on vegetative cover and the economic advantages of natural resources use).

²⁵ http://www.projetbiodiversite.net/IMG/pdf/Acquis_et_lecons_090707.pdf

- More time is needed to ensure autonomous management by associations. Cooperation between villagers is not effective in the current phase.²⁶

Additionally, since 1992, the UNDP's GEF-funded Small Grants Program (SGP) has provided USD \$247.2 million from GEF and USD \$242.8 million in cash or in-kind contributions from other partners. Projects under SGP are focused on biodiversity (60 percent), climate change (20 percent), international waters (2 percent), and multi-focal issues (14 percent). Grants are funded to a maximum of USD \$50,000, but most average USD \$20,000. More than 7,000 grants have been issued to date, and 95 counties participating in SGP have ratified the conventions on biodiversity and climate change.

B5d. World Bank

The World Bank/GEF Community Based Watershed Management Project is an ongoing, \$6.0 million initiative. The project builds on a baseline developed by the International Development Association (IDA) project that focuses on village-level investments and natural resource management through sustainable land management (SLM) at the inter-community or landscape level. The project aims "to limit land degradation and safeguard critical ecosystem functions through community-driven SLM activities that improve agro-sylvo-pastoral management and increase vegetation cover while securing livelihoods and global environmental benefits (i.e., reduced sedimentation of waterways, improved interconnectedness and integrity of ecosystems, enhanced carbon storage rates, and increased opportunities for biodiversity conservation)."²⁷

The restoration of degraded lands will be engaged by decreasing erosion and sedimentation of water bodies, increasing incomes in rural communities through improved sustainable land management, and increasing "the capacity of local stakeholders to implement cross-sectoral approaches to land management, including improved outreach and involvement of civil society, private sector, and government institutions to plan and manage national resources."²⁸ The program has three components:

- Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (USD \$2.0 million)
- Providing Incentives for Sustainable Land Management Practices (USD \$3.0 million)
- Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (USD \$1.0 million)

In a combined effort, the World Bank and GTZ are working on an ongoing program to establish local agreements as a tool for "decentralized natural resource management in the extensive dry land savannah and wetland areas in south and southeast Mauritania."²⁹

B5e. GTZ

GTZ has maintained a presence in Mauritania since 1991. Headquartered in Nouakchott, GTZ contributes to democratization and natural resources management in Mauritania through programs and projects. GTZ's primary goals in Mauritania are to mobilize rural communities to form stakeholder groups pertaining to their lifestyles and natural resource use, while advocating

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ GEF, January 12, 2006, p. 3.

²⁸ GEF, January 12, 2006, p. 4.

²⁹ Karl. P. Kirsch-Jung, and Soefestad, Lars T., "Regulating the commons in Mauritania: Local agreements as a tool for sustainable natural resource management," Tenth Biannual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), Bali, Indonesia, 19-23 June 2006, p. 1. http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/bali/papers/Kirsch_Jung_Karl.pdf, Downloaded, February 6, 2007.

on their behalf that national policies be more reflective of local needs. In the future, technical cooperation will focus increasingly on establishing a local policy infrastructure that observes the principles of subsidiarity, transparency and good governance. This process is supported by cooperation between the decentralization and resource management programs. Emphasis is placed on maintaining a close relationship between these projects and the financial cooperation measures of KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW development bank). GTZ uses results-based concepts and instruments to prepare, implement, and evaluate technical cooperation projects in Mauritania.

C. STATUS AND MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Despite the extensive degradation of its landscape, Mauritania possesses a number of important natural resources and a foundation for increased protection of biodiversity and forestry resources.

C1. MAURITANIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

In 1999, the GIRM developed its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The Plan identified 17 areas of intervention, outlined current and proposed activities, and laid out a 5-year plan (2000-2004) for the conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity. The plan itemized the key threats to each of the following areas: protected areas, threatened species, ex-situ conservation, wildlife, marine and coastal waters, forest resources, agriculture, livestock and pastures, energy, minerals, land management, biotechnology, interior waters, environmental emergencies, civil participation, environmental evaluations, awareness and education, incentives, institutions, and traditional practices and knowledge. Within these categories, the GIRM identified 12 sub-areas of high, medium, and low priority, shown in Table 2 below*:

Table 2. GIRM Priorities for National Biodiversity Strategy

HIGH PRIORITY	MEDIUM PRIORITY	LOW PRIORITY
Sustainable development in the Senegal River Valley	Advance of the dunes	Evacuation of used waters and pollution of the food and water for urban zones
Overexploitation of fisheries	Soil erosion, particularly in Guidimaka	Conservation of biodiversity
Management of the supply and demand of fuels and domestic usage	Elimination of solid wastes	Environmental impact of mineral exploitation
Salinization of aquifers supplying water to urban zones	Over-exploitation of the water table in the oases	Coastal pollution

According to the plan, the GIRM's development objectives are informed by four pillars: human development and poverty reduction, private sector growth, managed economic growth and capacity building for public affairs, and improved environmental management.³⁰

C1a. Status and Management of Protected Areas

As a signatory of the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Mauritania has established a number of protected areas in line with the guidance established in the convention. However, of a total land area of 102,552,000 hectares, only two-tenths of 1 percent of Mauritania's land area (205,000 hectares) is designated as a protected area. The box on page 22 provides a list of the protected areas in Mauritania and their national and international designations. Of these, Mauritania has two primary national parks, Banc d'Arguin and Diawling, which have been designated Ramsar sites.

* The note of conservation of biodiversity as a low priority is not an error

³⁰ Mauritania's National Strategic Plan may be found at <http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/mauritania/mr-fra/strategie/strategie.pdf>

BANC D'ARGUIN

Located in northwest Mauritania, this park occupies over 1,200,000 hectares of the Mauritanian coast and “has the largest winter concentration of wading birds in the world.”³¹ It is also the most important breeding area for birds on the Atlantic seaboard and the richest fishery off the West African coast. The park is composed of sand dunes, coastal swamps, small islands, and a wide expanse of shallow coastal waters. The austerity of the desert and the richness of the biodiversity of the marine zone result in a strong contrast between the land and seascape.

Established in 1976 and recognized in 1982 as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, the Banc d'Arguin National Park presents an unusual coastal

PROTECTED AREAS IN MAURITANIA

National Parks

- Banc d'Arguin
- Diawling

Wildlife Reserves

- Reserve de Moufflon

Partial Wildlife Reserves

- El Agher
- Elephant
- Tilemsi

Integral Reserves

- Baie du Levrier (Cap Blanc)
- Iles Mauritanienes
- Las Cuevecillas

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar)

- Banc d'Arguin
- Diawling
- Chat Tboul

World Heritage Convention

- Ancient Ksour of Ouadane, Chinguetti, Tichitt and Oualata
- Banc d'Arguin

Source: <http://www.parks.it/world/MR/Eindex.html>

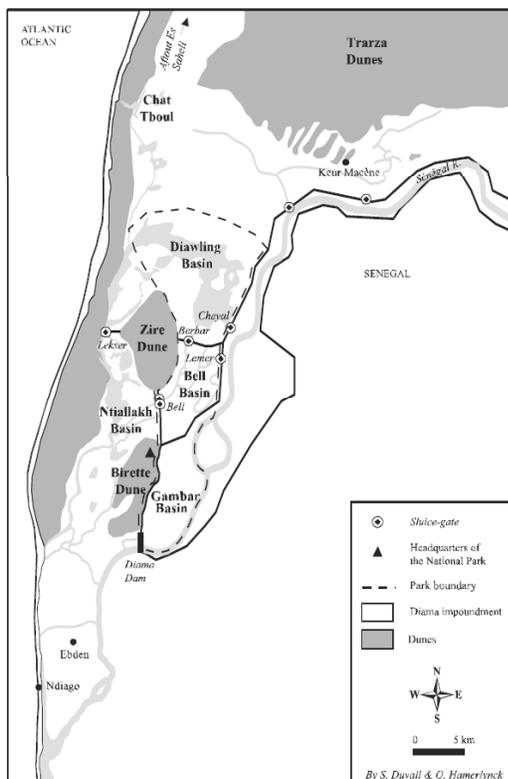


Figure 5: Map of the Mauritanian bank of the lower Senegal River delta showing the main geomorphological features and Diawling National Park with its three basins, from north to south: Diawling, Bell and Gambar.

CARTE DU PARC NATIONAL DU BANC D'ARGUIN



Source: <http://www.effectiveempa.noaa.gov/sites/bancdarguin.html>

ecosystem. As a result of a significant upwelling system and underwater grasses, the park is highly productive, attracting diverse populations of waterfowl, fish, invertebrates, and marine mammals. In addition to the Ramsar designation, the park was declared a Natural World Heritage Site in 1989.

Building on the IUCN's Management Effectiveness Framework, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have been collaborating on the establishment of management plans for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in this park.³² Banc d'Arguin was selected among the pilot sites for this approach. According to the joint website, to date the initiative has enacted a participatory management approach, established a marine surveillance system, and adopted strategies for ecotourism, scientific research, and environmental communication. With combined donor efforts, the PNBA has developed a series of management tools and has undertaken an institutional reform.

DIAWLING

Established in 1991, Diawling National Park is the second Ramsar site in Mauritania, covering 16,000 hectares. Designated as a Ramsar site on August 23, 1994, and comprising 15,600 hectares, the Diawling National Park was significantly impacted by the construction of Diama dam. Two-thirds of the park was effectively cut off from fresh water supplied from the Senegal River. As will be discussed later in this report, mitigating measures taken to rejuvenate the environmental landscape and functioning of the surrounding ecosystem have made strides toward revitalizing the area and providing support to naturally occurring flora and fauna.³³

CHAT TBOUL

In addition, Chat Tboul has been designated as a Ramsar site. Located at the former mouth of the Senegal River, Chat Tboul covers 15,500 hectares and is the only coastal lagoon in Mauritania south of Banc d'Arguin. Designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 2000, Chat Tboul meets the uniqueness and biodiversity criteria of the convention, as well as the criteria for water birds and fish stocks. Chat Tboul receives fresh water under the Diawling Park management plan.³⁴

C1b. Threats to Protected Areas

BANC D'ARGUIN

Primary threats to Banc d'Arguin include illegal fishing by small-scale canoes and semi-industrial boats; activities related to oil exploration and large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Nouadhibou-Nouakchott paved road; population growth; and increasing migration to coastal areas. It should be noted that the Imraguen people are authorized to fish within the park on the condition that they utilize traditional, sustainable methods.

³² A guidebook for the approach can be found at: <http://www.effectivempa.noaa.gov/guidebook/guidebook.html>.

³³ Additional information about Diawling National Park can be found at <http://www.wetlands.org/rsis/>.

³⁴ Additional information about Chat Tboul's Ramsar status may be found at <http://www.wetlands.org/rsis/>

DIAWLING

Primary threats to Diawling national park include the expansion and intensification of agricultural activity; increased salinization of irrigated perimeters; and the construction of dykes, dams, and barrages, which impede water flow throughout the ecosystem. Increased migration to the comparatively verdant south of the country — and in many cases, overuse by new sedentary communities and migration of nomadic communities to the area for grazing of livestock — present significant development challenges for the park and surrounding area.

CHAT TBOUL

Small-scale traditional fishing activities and nomadic grazing practices take place in Chat T Boul. Fishing with finely woven nets drastically reduces populations of young fish. Potential threats include agricultural run-off from neighboring rice fields, and the overexploitation of coastal fish populations. The conversion of marine habitat for use in shrimp and lobster farming also pose potential threats, as does the reactivation of hunting in the area. Uncontrolled tourism increases pressure on the area and results in poaching and pollution from garbage left behind.

C2. STATUS AND PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mauritania is host to 1,100 plant species, 61 mammal species (10 threatened, 2002), 172 bird species (2 threatened, 2002), 72 reptile species (2 threatened), 3 amphibian species, and 117 fish species. The box to the right provides a detailed list of the critically endangered, endangered, and vulnerable species identified on the World Conservation Union Red List.

C3. STATUS AND PROTECTION OF FOREST RESOURCES

According to WRI's "EarthTrends 2003 Mauritania Country Profile for Forests, Grasslands, and Drylands," Mauritania has 317,000 hectares of total forest area (2000), including natural and plantation forests. The

IUCN RED LIST: MAURITANIA

Critically Endangered (8)

- Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*)
- Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)
- Addra Gazelle (*Gazella dama*)
- Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*)
- Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*)
- Smalltooth (*Pristis pectinata*)
- Common Sawfish (*Pristis pristis*)
- Angel Shark (*Squatina squatina*)

Endangered (7)

- Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
- Dusky Grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)
- Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*)
- African Wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus luebberti*)
- Bottlenose Skate (*Rostroraja alba*)
- Monkfish (*Squatina aculeata*)
- Monkfish (*Squatina oculata*)

Vulnerable (24)

- Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
- Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)
- Aoudad (*Ammotragus lervia*)
- Queen Triggerfish (*Balistes vetula*)
- Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)
- Grey Nurse Shark (*Carcharias taurus*)
- Great White Shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*)
- Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*)
- Broad Sea Fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*)
- Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*)
- Liver-oil Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*)
- Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*)
- Red-Fronted Gazelle (*Gazella rufifrons*)
- African Spurred Tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*)
- Common Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)
- Longfin Mako (*Isurus paucus*)
- African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*)
- African Lion (*Panthera leo*)
- Common Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)
- Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*)
- Cape Shark (*Squalus acanthias*)
- Bigeye Tuna (*Thunnus obesus*)
- Lappet-Faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*)
- African Manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*)

Source: IUCN 2006. 2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <www.iucnredlist.org>. Downloaded on 09 March 2007.

FAO of the United Nations paints a somewhat dismal picture of the current status and future of these hectares, indicating an annual loss of approximately 9,800 hectares (2 percent) between 1990 and 2000. According to the FAO (2003 figures), forest cover makes up less than 1 percent of Mauritania's national territory. Mauritania possesses a small amount of other wooded lands, most of which consists of sub-Saharan savannah (made up primarily of *Guiera senegalensis*, *Ziziphus spp.*, and *Acacia spp.*) plus a transitional zone of *Acacia spp.* shrub land found at the country's southern border along the Senegal River.

The FAO indicates that outside the Senegal valley, Mauritania has open forests and tree savannahs, mainly in dune regions and primarily of *Acacia senegal*. There are isolated palm stands (*Phoenix dactylifera*) in the *wadi* valleys and in oases in the sandy plains. According to the FAO, the understories are comprised of fruit trees and bushes, with fodder species and household crops. Mauritania has no large-scale forest industry (by 1998 figures, the value of forest product exports was USD \$733,000 and imports was USD \$2,442,000). The only forest inventory conducted in the country took place in 1983 and focused on the southwestern part of the country. Forestry plantations of *Prosopis juliflora* were introduced in 1930, and an additional 22,951 hectares were established between 1990 and 1997 to counter desertification. Little information is available on the status of these plantations. Threats to these forested areas include drought, fires, overgrazing, and clearing for agriculture.

C4. CONSERVATION OUTSIDE OF PROTECTED AREAS

According to the *Courier ACP-EU*, a publication of the Development Directorate General of the European Commission, soil erosion and degradation are to blame for destabilization of the sand dunes, which have spilled over into the irrigated paddy fields, market garden plots, watering places, and villages. The publication also notes that since the forests and wetlands have disappeared for the most part, wildlife such as migratory birds have limited natural refuges. In the Senegal River valley, the increased land cultivation and bad drainage practices are the main causes of soil deterioration. This investigation has encountered little evidence of development initiatives to address the issues related to shifting sands and the disappearing *wadis*.

D. MAJOR THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY AND TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION

The environmental picture for Mauritania is bleak. The disappearance of big game from the Mauritanian horizon, and the vestiges remaining of forest and vegetative cover, foretell environmental degradation to its fullest extent. While the situation is not unsalvageable, several significant issues present major challenges for the recovery and sustainability of the natural environment. Drought and desertification, population growth and urbanization, insufficient land and resource tenure, degradation of soils, and natural resources management strategy and policies are current discrete threats.

Essentially, Mauritania is trapped in a vicious cycle. The loss of arable land and pastures generates conditions of food insecurity that engender poverty. Poverty leads to increased environmental degradation due to increasingly limited resources and non-existent alternatives, which lend themselves to increased poverty. Add encroaching desertification and inexorable drought, periods of more severe drought, flooding, and locust infestations, and both the human population and natural environment move closer to being irreparably compromised.

D1. DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

As a Sahelian country with the Sahara Desert as its neighbor to the north, Mauritania is at constant risk from drought and desertification. Its natural environment suffers from these maladies as do its human and animal populations, whose reliance on dwindling sources of fresh water increases pressure on the entire system. Limited rainfall in recent years has exacerbated the already overextended water system and hastened the decline of the water table. Furthermore, the over-exploitation and introduction of motorized pumps in the oases has led to localized drought at important former water sources.

D2. POPULATION GROWTH AND URBANIZATION

With an estimated population of 3,177,388³⁵ and an estimated growth rate of 2.88 percent, Mauritania is expected to reach 5.35 million people by 2025. At present, an estimated 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line,³⁶ and an estimated 25 percent of the population lives in the capital of Nouakchott alone. Nouadhibou, an urban center in the north that developed around the iron industry, is also home to a growing proportion of the population.

There is nothing to suggest that the trend toward urbanization will decline with the increase in population. If current trends continue, Mauritania's few urban centers, and the narrow swath of still productive land along the Senegal River bank, will be called upon to sustain larger and larger numbers of people. Population growth and migration to the coast and around industrial centers increases pressure on coastal resources and the ability of local ecosystems and infrastructure to provide for the growing communities. Along the bank of the Senegal River, increased population has the potential to increase conflicts between newly sedentary communities and nomadic populations, increasing the strain on natural resources in a country where only a small percentage of the land is arable.

³⁵ <http://www.africom.museum/museums/mauritania1.html>

³⁶ <http://globaledege.msu.edu/countryInsights/memo.asp?countryID=196>

Increased human activity in already degraded areas puts pressure on the strained watershed systems, on the remaining flora and fauna, and on the viability of human activities themselves. Increased population growth along the coast and the concomitant increase in coastal urbanization causes increased physical disruption and pollution, resulting in degradation, habitat loss, and interference of ecosystem services. According to the UNEP/IISD report, “Connecting Poverty & Ecosystem Services: A series of seven country scoping studies, Focus on Mauritania,” Mauritania’s dry lands, which comprise the country’s agriculturally productive area, are already threatened with looming desertification. In addition to land degradation (caused by the clearing of land for the expansion of agriculture into less productive areas, and excessive grazing of livestock) other human disturbances such as infrastructure development contribute to loss of habitats for wildlife and vegetative cover. In particular, the Senegal River valley, to which a large percentage of the population has migrated, has experienced dramatic population growth and the accompanying expansion of agriculture and urban and industrial development.

Unchecked human activity also creates a significant threat to biodiversity, and over-fishing or accidental mortality of marine species through bycatch are primary causes of loss of marine biodiversity. A particularly graphic report of the death of more than 200 dolphins and sea turtles in 2003 highlighted the importance of vigilance in the protection of marine life. For example, threats to the endangered monk seal include deliberate killing by fishermen, who perceive the species as a competitor for fish; fishing bycatch; and disturbance and habitat loss through development and tourism.

D3. INSUFFICIENT LAND AND RESOURCE TENURE

As Mauritania’s population has grown and become increasingly concentrated around the remaining natural resources, competition for these resources has also increased. The current legal framework is insufficient to regulate competing demands, particularly those of newly sedentary communities and traditional nomadic groups who find they are vying for the same resource base. Tradition-based rules and regulations are inadequate, and those that do exist are not applied uniformly. Citizens have little forum for community participation due to limited capacity to apply the laws.

Loss of arable land due to land clearing for small-scale agriculture, as well as overgrazing and the resulting disappearance of vegetative cover, have led to the severe degradation of Mauritania’s soils. Unsustainable use of existing range and forest resources has resulted from insufficient land and resource tenure. For agriculturalists, unclear tenure inhibits willingness to invest in improved techniques. With limited financial resources and access to information, local communities often have limited understanding of the long-term impacts of production activities.

D4. INSUFFICIENT NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND POLICIES

In Mauritania, natural resources management approaches are required to take into consideration the complex national legal framework related to the use of natural resources, with which local communities are often unfamiliar, and the application of which is often irregular.

While there is evidence of civil society activity related to biodiversity conservation and natural resources management, the predominance of international NGOs, donor organizations, and project implementers suggests that participatory methodologies and capacity building of local organizations and communities will be of primary importance in the near term.

The appearance and expansion of extractive industries, tourism, and infrastructure projects will require increased vigilance and strategizing to ensure the long-term viability of the natural environment. Furthermore, unchecked and unmanaged land use due to a lack of sufficient monitoring, supervision, or service provision to local communities results in excessive land clearing for agriculture, over-grazing, over-hunting, over-fishing, and virtually complete deforestation.

Shortcomings in the legal and regulatory framework include a lack of tradition-based regulations, insufficient mechanisms for participatory decision-making, and the short horizon of planning for natural resources management. Due to the newly adopted pastoral code and forestry law, the legal and regulatory framework for common property resource management is adapted. However, there is a lack of application and implementation due to low capacity of the state administration and respective donor projects.

Additionally, insufficient resource tenure results in the degradation of agricultural lands, as agriculturalists have little incentive to invest in sustainable techniques on lands over which they are not guaranteed tenure. Similarly, unclear tenure yields conflicts between recently settled agricultural communities and nomadic populations. According to the UNDP/UNEP, there is a dearth of sufficient monitoring of the natural and human activities which have caused “significant, though not well quantified, reduction in biodiversity, loss of wildlife habitats, deterioration in soil productivity over wide areas, and great pressure on the remaining natural resources.”

D5. INCREASED INDUSTRIALIZATION

Extractive industries also play an increasingly significant role in the degradation of the natural environment. With respect to fishing, according to UNEP’s “Africa Environment Outlook 2” report, foreign fishing fleets operating under licensed agreements with the Mauritanian government are growing operations that pose serious threats to local fish stocks. Increased activity, in any industry, is dangerous. Iron ore, which accounts for about 40 percent of the country’s export earnings, is a leading cause of deforestation in Mauritania.³⁷ The country has also experienced a rapid expansion of seabed and marine engineering for oil and gas exploration. Mineral and gas extraction not only disrupts ecosystems but increases air pollution, heightens the risk of large-scale oil spills, and exacerbates the erosion of coastal sands. For a poor country with a resource-dependent economy, Mauritania’s natural environment is in a precarious state.

D6. LIMITED ACCESS TO FINANCE AND EDUCATION

In addition to the lack of sufficient resource tenure, agriculturalists and pastoralists often have a limited awareness of environmental impacts of their practices, resulting over-grazing, and exhaustive use of available resources. Furthermore, they have limited access to financial instruments which would enable investment in education, training, and infrastructure to promote improved practices and behavior change. Limited alternatives for domestic fuels results in continued degradation of forest and vegetative resources. Lack of access to improved agricultural and grazing methods and limited monitoring and technical supervision result in unchecked exploitation of wildlife, fisheries, and forestry resources.

³⁷ www.mongabay.com/20mauritania.htm

E. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR USAID PROGRAMS

According to the FY 2008 Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) and the FY 2009 Mission Strategic Plan, the U.S. government continues its commitment to assist Mauritania in its upcoming transition to democracy and its continued improvement in the areas of clean water, child and maternal health, promotion of democracy and human rights, and United States-Mauritanian Trade and Investment. Three programmatic areas factor into this assistance: Governing Justly and Democratically, Investing in People, and Economic Growth.

E1. GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

Democratic and transparent governance is of the essence today in Mauritania, with the country's first democratic presidential elections in 29 years having been held on March 11, 2007. As such, the U.S. government's support for the transition to civilian democracy will be of primary importance during the coming year. The U.S. government will provide assistance to the legislature and democratic institutions, including political parties and a free press; promote human rights; and support anti-corruption programs to ensure that income from oil exports are utilized for development. The FY 2008 CBJ includes \$1.3 million in foreign assistance funding for these types of activities.

Through its support of effective and transparent democracy and governance in Mauritania, the U.S. government has the opportunity to strengthen civil society organizations that participate in natural resources management. Similarly, the GIRM has taken steps to decrease corruption in resource management with its 2005 commitment to the EITI. Through initiatives geared toward combating corruption and increasing compliance with and enforcement of existing legislation and international agreements related to extractive industrial activities, the U.S. government might secure the sustainable use of the country's natural resources and assist Mauritania in ensuring that revenues from extractive industries are reinvested for the benefit of the country's population.

E1a. Governing Justly and Democratically Recommendations

In conjunction with the objectives set forth in the FY 2008 CBJ, USAID should work to strengthen the ability of civil society organizations in Mauritania to participate in decision-making regarding natural resources management. Collaboration with initiatives for decentralized natural resources management, such as the work being conducted on the development of local agreements by the World Bank and GTZ, would build the capacity of local actors to advocate for their rights to the sustainable utilization of natural resources and their ability to implement improved practices and techniques.

For Mauritania, where 40 percent of the population still lives below the poverty line and large-scale international industry claims ownership over primary fishing and mining resources, efforts toward eradicating corruption would help to bring about the transparent management and reinvestment of export revenues in development and sustainable natural resource management.

Furthermore, the monitoring of current extractive and natural resource use via the EITI and the enforcement of existing legislation and terms of international industrial licenses will prevent over-exploitation of the country's natural resources. Support to the application of the pastoral and forestry legislation and a clarification of the current land and resource tenure system would

not only afford incentives for local actors to invest in improved approaches to sustainable natural resources management, but also lend itself to ameliorating conflicts over the resources themselves.

In addition to bolstering transparent processes for the reinvestment of export revenues in long-term sustainable development, USAID might assist the GIRM in establishing a process for the government's environmental screening of new industrial and extractive activities, in order to protect against further degradation of the country's natural environment. Anti-corruption activities might also include safeguards against corruption in the permitting and licensing process itself.

E2. INVESTING IN PEOPLE

The FY2008 CBJ includes \$4.0 million to improve services toward preventative and treatment programs for child and maternal health and local capacity to respond to issues related to food security, including access to clean water. Initiatives will also be geared toward increasing income generation through targeted micro-enterprise sectors and community works.

Environmental degradation and poverty go hand in hand, and clean water sits at the confluence of environmental and human health issues. For Mauritania, where a significant percentage of the population relies on agricultural and livestock activities, food security is heavily dependent upon a healthy natural environment. Similarly, access to potable water is predicated upon functional watersheds and effective pollution protections. Sustainable micro-enterprise activities have the potential to bring communities out of poverty, but only insofar as these activities also consider the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the natural environment.

E2a. Investing in People Recommendations

Mauritania's population lives under the constant threat of food insecurity. USAID should build on the information gathered and synthesized under its FEWS Net program to provide local communities with the tools and techniques to increase the productivity of agricultural activities, while at the same time protecting the natural environment. In areas of critical importance to biodiversity, USAID should work with civil society organizations to prevent encroachment of agricultural activities, and work to build capacity among local actors to foster a sense of ownership regarding the natural resources upon which they depend for survival.

Shortage of water is a chronic problem in Mauritania. UNEP and IISD estimate that 92 percent of Mauritania's water supply is used by agriculture, 6 percent for domestic purposes, and 2 percent for industry. Sixty-three percent of Mauritania's population does not have sustainable access to an improved water source, and limited availability of water is a problem throughout the country. Through its Mauritania Anti-Poverty Program, USAID has provided significant humanitarian assistance in the area of potable water. USAID should continue to engage in initiatives that focus on increasing the accessibility of potable water, protect the integrity of watersheds, and keep local water points clear and free from industrial and agricultural pollution.

E3. ECONOMIC GROWTH

The foreign assistance budget for FY 2008 includes \$1.0 million in support of capacity building for micro-credit institutions, the establishment of a micro-credit fund, and the promotion of expanded livelihood strategies.

Mauritania's economy has shown positive signs over the last several years, and the creation of micro-financing mechanisms will enable the diversification of income generation activities, which in turn will lead to the stabilization of food security. USAID is not alone in recognizing the potential for diversification of the economic base. The International Monetary Fund recently approved a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility of \$24.2 million to encourage growth of the private sector and economic diversification for poverty reduction. Broadening the range of viable economic opportunities for the growing population can alleviate the pressure placed on the environment by agricultural, livestock, and fishing activities.

E3a. Economic Growth Recommendations

Numerous donor initiatives have identified a lack of technological know-how as a primary constraint to sustainable management of natural resources by local communities. Therefore, initiatives aimed at expanding livelihood strategies to local populations should concentrate on best practices in soil conservation, improved agricultural and livestock techniques, and capacity building on the dangers of over fishing/hunting. In addition, access to credit should be fostered to increase local communities' ability to invest in improved practices.

A key issue related to biodiversity conservation and natural resources management is that of local communities who lack knowledge about the state of the natural environment, the potential threats and opportunities which lie therein, and the skills necessary to participate fully in a discourse regarding the fate of their natural environment. Through its microfinance activities, USAID may enable local communities to educate themselves and access improved agricultural, agro-pastoral, and resources conservation practices that are critical to raising the capacity of local communities to fend for themselves in the degraded natural environment.

However, access to capital can also open the potential for an increased exploitation of resources, use of potentially toxic agricultural inputs, and the construction of projects in environmentally sensitive areas. Prior to implementing initiatives to broaden the available micro-enterprise opportunities, environmental impact assessments must be conducted to ensure that the new proposed activities do not cause undue harm to the already degraded natural environment.

There is high potential for combining environmental protection with poverty alleviation. Cash or food compensation for public work activities or maintenance of firebreaks, sand dune stabilization, and reforestation are incentives for adopting conservation activities. Additionally, the organization could focus on the collection, transformation, marketing, and even export of non-timber products (i.e.; Arabic gum, medical plants) and wild fruits. This action would help to valorize the country's assets and the government's commitment to environmental conservation.

F. CONCLUSIONS

With high concentrations of wading birds, status as a world-renowned coastal fishery, and recent establishment of community-managed national parks, the case for conservation in Mauritania is compelling. That said, Mauritania faces serious climatic challenges that are compounded by a resource-dependent economy and a lack of financing for conservation activities.

In its plan for advancing transformational diplomacy in Mauritania, U.S. foreign assistance is aimed at the functional objectives of peace and security, investing in people, and economic growth. Although “environment” programs fall under the Economic Growth Program, funds projected in economic growth are targeted principally towards agriculture and economic opportunities. Although the threats identified in this report are not specifically addressed by current U.S. Foreign Assistance programming, with a consideration of the environmental threats and opportunities in Mauritania, USAID can find synergistic activities to aid conservation and mitigate the impacts of activities with the potential for unintended negative consequences.

Therefore, the following general recommendations are offered as specific programming is considered and planned:

- Activities with the potential to affect rural populations should target areas of high conservation value, especially those surrounding protected areas. To this end, project implementers should collaborate with conservation organizations in the country (IUCN, GIRM, or GTZ for example) to continue to target programs and integrate environmental concerns into their planning. Some principal areas for intervention would include the resource-rich coast of Banc d’Arguin; grazing areas surrounding Diawling National Park; and the wooded land, open forests, and tree savannahs along the Senegal River. The majority of Mauritania’s remaining natural forests are in the river banks and valley.
- Activities involving extraction (such as oil, gas, and iron ore) should promote sustainable techniques, including agroforestry, and look to mitigate the potential negative impact of ecosystem disruption by using sustainable and risk-adverse drilling practices. Continued support for continued implementation of the EITI is recommended.
- Programs should recognize the cross-cutting nature of environmental issues, and look for opportunities to conduct activities that can meet explicit goals and have positive secondary effects on the environment. Examples are WWF’s WAMER program, which seeks to incorporate the needs of marginalized individuals in natural resource management; and IUCN’s anti-desertification planting activities with rural pastoralists. Specifically, these activities could be linked with USAID-supported CILSS programming, which has sought to mitigate locust invasion through desert locust surveys and consistent early-warning reports of potential famine.
- The environmental review process required by Regulation 216 for specific activities should be used as an opportunity to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity and forests are routinely included in programming decisions, and screening tools/mitigation efforts for environmental impact should be required for the specific interventions of implementing entities under USAID programs.

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ANNEX A.

FY2008 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

MAURITANIA Developing

Obstacles and Opportunities for Advancing Transformational Diplomacy

Ruled by a military junta that came to power in August 2005, Mauritania stands at a historic crossroad with credible legislative elections held in November and December 2006 and the potentially first free and fair presidential election in Mauritania's history scheduled for March 2007. Supporting a democratic transition in this Islamic nation with one foot in the Arab League and the other in the African Union will be one of the most immediate challenges for U.S. assistance. Mauritania is now an oil exporting nation, and good governance and anti-corruption programs will be vital to ensure that the revenues generated by oil exports are used for the sustainable economic development of the nation. Mauritania is a key regional ally in the war on terror and a core participant in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. Mauritania is also a low-income nation with very low indicators in health and education (particularly for women), requiring significant investment to prevent recurring humanitarian crises and to promote development.

This government will need to develop democratic institutions rapidly and undertake micro- and macroeconomic reforms to develop a country with little arable land, a fast-growing population, significant levels of chronic malnutrition, and unresolved ethnic tensions and grievances between governing White Moors (30%), Black Moors (40%), and Afro-Mauritanians (30%). Mauritania is also threatened by Islamic radicalism and, in particular, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat terrorist organization.

Resources to Help Advance Transformational Diplomacy

Request by Objective

(\$ in thousands)	2006 Actual	2007 Estimate	2008 Request
Peace & Security	0	*	630
Governing Justly & Democratically	0	*	1,320
Investing in People	3,555	*	4,000
Economic Growth	2,510	*	1,000
Total	6,065	*	6,950

Request by Account

(\$ in thousands)	2006 Actual	2007 Estimate	2008 Request
Development Assistance	0	*	1,520
International Military Education & Training	0	*	130
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	0	*	300
Public Law 480 (Food Aid)	6,065**	*	5,000
Total	6,065	*	6,950
Peace Corps	2895	*	3408

**FY 2006 includes \$4.373 million of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food aid. Emergency food aid has not been allocated to countries in FY 2008

Peace and Security (\$0.6 million): Assistance will be used to improve the government's capability to combat terrorism and provide training to Mauritanian security forces. Funds will also help combat trafficking in persons.

Governing Justly and Democratically (\$1.3 million): The U.S. will provide assistance to the legislature, and reinforce democratic institutions such as political parties and a free press. Funding will promote human rights with programs designed to address a troubling history of slavery, and to redress discrimination against Afro-Mauritanians. Finally, anti-corruption programs, which will be coordinated with other international financial institutions and donors, will be designed to ensure that new oil exports are used for investment and rapid development.

Investing in People (\$4.0 million): Funding in this area is focused on improving Mauritania's basic health indicators to help lay the foundation for further development. Child and maternal health will be addressed through both preventative and treatment programs. Local capacity will be built to identify and respond to food insecurity problems including access to clean water in carefully identified populations. Multiple interventions are employed including increased household income of targeted micro entrepreneurs and community works to build up assets required to improve production conditions.

Economic Growth (\$1.0 million): This funding will be used to build the capacity of micro-credit institutions through training and a micro-credit fund, resulting in new and expanded livelihood strategies to earn income for needed food.

Request by Element

(\$ in Thousands)	2006 Actual	2007 Estimate	2008 Request
TOTAL	6,065	*	6,950
Peace & Security	0	*	630
Counter-Terrorism	0	*	300
Governments' Capabilities	0	*	300
Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform	0	*	130
Defense, Military, and Border Restructuring, Reform and Operations	0	*	130
Transnational Crime	0	*	200
Trafficking-in-Persons and Migrant Smuggling	0	*	200
Governing Justly & Democratically	0	*	1,320
Good Governance	0	*	770
Legislative Function and Processes	0	*	200
Anti-Corruption Reforms	0	*	250
Governance of the Security Sector	0	*	320
Political Competition and Consensus-Building	0	*	300
Consensus-Building Processes	0	*	100
Political Parties	0	*	200
Civil Society	0	*	250
Media Freedom and Freedom of Information	0	*	250
Investing in People	3,555	*	4,000
Health	3,555	*	4,000
Maternal and Child Health	850	*	4,000
Water Supply and Sanitation	2,705	*	0
Economic Growth	2,510	*	1,000
Agriculture	2,010	*	0
Agricultural Sector Productivity	2,010	*	0
Economic Opportunity	500	*	1,000
Strengthen Microenterprise Productivity	500	*	1,000

ANNEX B

U.S. GOVERNMENT/MAURITANIA COUNTRY ACTIVITY SHEET

USAID/WA PROGRAM AREAS	PROGRAM ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	APPROX. BUDGET	START/END DATE	IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION
TRADE	<p>West Africa Trade Hub</p>	Carana, Abt	\$300,000	2002-2007	Dakar; Accra; country-wide in Mauritania
	<p>West Africa Trade Hub clients in Mauritania primarily include fish and seafood companies, who receive comprehensive training from the Dakar-based Trade Hub staff to prepare them for exporting to the US and other exacting markets. Regional workshops and trainings for these firms cover a range of topics (export finance, sourcing and supply chain management, production and quality management, standards and certifications such as HACCP, export logistics, marketing, trade show participation, etc.) and have prepared export-ready and export-hopeful companies for the exacting standards of the US market.</p>				
	<p>In December 2005, the Trade Hub/Dakar's EBD Director Lazarre Potier organized the visit of Mr. William Spinali, an expert on US sanitation standards (HACCP). Together, they visited about 15 seafood processors in Senegal and Mauritania in order to identify many of the constraints faced by operators in the seafood sector and to encourage discussions on programs and projects that would assist sector development. They met with seafood processing companies in both Nouakchott and Nouadhibou including Somascir, MIP Frigo and MEIPP; both Somascir and MIP Frigo were invited to participate in the 2005 International Boston Seafood Show (IBSS), in Boston, MA. The two also met with US embassy staff, Mauritanian Business Associations, trade associations and local staff of the AGOA Resource Center in Nouakchott (Centre d'Information Mauritanien pour le Developpement Economique et Technique); all of the above institutions offered to support efforts to increase seafood exports from Mauritania.</p>				
<p>The Trade Hub in Dakar conducted a training workshop in Dakar, February 6-7, 2006, for seafood operators from five countries in the region, including Mauritania. The objective of the workshop was to prepare fish and seafood companies in the sub-region (Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mauritania and Gambia) to successfully participate in the International Boston Seafood Show. Topics addressed at the workshop included: export procedures from Dakar, rules for successful trade participation, travel arrangements for West African exporters, US business culture and visa requirements.</p>					

USAID/WA PROGRAM AREAS	PROGRAM ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	APPROX. BUDGET	START/ END DATE	IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION
	<p>Follow-up workshops were also held in Dakar, Senegal and Nouadhibou, Mauritania, to review participation in the Int'l Boston Seafood Show and associated "private showings." They attracted senior government officials and new business clients (five from Mauritania), and enabled feedback from US buyers – level of interest for select products, questions about certain products, recommendations for packaging and product presentation, and outlines for plans.</p> <p>Trade Hub/Dakar staff have arranged for training sessions for seafood exporters and quality control firms in Nouadhibou, Mauritania to occur in late 2006/early 2007. These sessions will focus on building local capacity to administer HACCP certifications, as well as private sector capacity to meet those standards in an effort to increase exports to the US and Europe.</p>				
HEALTH	<p>HIV/AIDS Promising & Best Practices</p> <p>PNLS - Program National de Lutte Contre le SIDA - PMTCT.</p> <p>HIV/AIDS West African Ambassador's Fund (WAAF)</p> <p>Stop SIDA HIV/AIDS prevention activities carried out by sub-partners.</p> <p>HIV/AIDS Policy and Advocacy</p> <p>Capacity building and support for policy and advocacy for the following: 1) National Network of Parliamentarians for Population and Development; 2) Writers Network; 3) Religious Network for Fight Against HIV/AIDS; 4) Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa (SWAA); 5) Youth Network, and; 6) NACP - National Aids Control Program.</p>	AWARE - HIV/AIDS	\$464,366	July 2005 - July 2008	country-wide
	<p>Reproductive Health Policy & Advocacy</p> <p>AWARE-RH organized a workshop with Mauritania's National Program for Reproductive Health to develop an advocacy plan for improving the policy environment for maternal and child health. This workshop was a follow-up to the 2002 REDUCE workshop. REDUCE is an advocacy tool used to stimulate policy dialogue and strategic planning on maternal health and safe motherhood.</p>	AWARE - Reproductive Health		July 2005 - July 2008	country-wide

USAID/WA PROGRAM AREAS	PROGRAM ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	APPROX. BUDGET	START/ END DATE	IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION
	<p>Table 1. U.S. Government Mauritania Country Activity Sheet Focused Antenatal Care Including Malaria In Pregnancy</p> <p>AWARE-RH, in collaboration with WHO/AFRO and RAOPAG, organized a regional workshop to improve participants' skills in advocacy for policies to prevent and treat malaria during pregnancy. During this workshop, the team from Mauritania developed an advocacy plan for the adoption of a new treatment protocol (Sulfadoxine Pyrimethamine) for the prevention of malaria in pregnant women. Following the training, the team conducted specific advocacy activities to ensure adoption of the new protocol.</p>				
CONFLICT	Electoral Assistance	UN Development Program (UNDP)	\$200,000	July 2006 - June 2007	country-wide
	Part of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). 1) Funding to reopen the voter list in advance of the 2006 November Municipal Elections to allow additional Mauritians to be added; 2) Funding to provide information outreach and get-out-the-vote efforts in advance of the Presidential elections scheduled for May 2007.				
FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES	Agriculture	West Africa Rice Development Association; International Crops Research Institute; International Institute for Tropical Agriculture	\$95,000	Sept. 2006 - Sept. 2007	country-wide
	Beneficiary of the Sorghum and Rice Commodity Networks. Receiving new technologies and training of national scientists and technicians.				
	Food Security	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control on the Sahel (CILSS)	\$230,000	Sept. 2006 - Sept. 2007	country-wide
	Receives assistance on implementation of Vulnerability Assessment Mechanism. Receives equipment, training and expertise on locust monitoring and control. Mauritania is a Food Security Monitoring System member.				
	Natural Resources	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control on the Sahel; USGS	\$20,000	Sept. 2006 - Sept. 2007	country-wide
Receive technical assistance on the Land Use/land Cover activity					