

Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) context analysis:

Burkina Faso and Mauritania

Project Clima-Social



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Mauritanian Red Crescent social workers interacting with mothers whose children are looked after in a local the nutrition centre in Nere Walo village, in the southern Gorgol region of Mauritania. (Photo: Nathalie Bonvin/IFRC)

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1. Introduction

Countries in the Sahel – such as Burkina Faso and Mauritania – have encountered many developmental challenges throughout their histories, including political changes and conflict, economic shocks, COVID-19 and the adverse impacts of climate change (Selassie & Kramarenko, 2023). These challenges impact groups differently, with vulnerable and marginalized individuals facing higher exposure. In tandem, they have less capacity to cope due to being excluded from decision-making and civic forums as well as having reduced access to services and economic resources. When it comes to climate change, vulnerable groups may face higher exposure to weather and climate events as they are often located in areas with increased weather and climate risks, such as in flood-prone neighbourhoods. While this increases their exposure, they also lack the adaptive capacity to prepare for future adverse events (Romero Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011; WB, 2023). Importantly, they typically also lack access to weather and climate information systems — a critical resource in taking preventive action against disasters. The ‘Clima-Social: Climate resilience through social protection’ project was implemented to improve the climate resilience of populations in Burkina Faso and Mauritania to prepare for and respond to the effects of extreme weather, seasonal events and climate change through the use of weather and climate information services (WCIS) (further information provided in the Annex).

This Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) context analysis aims to identify vulnerable groups and communities in Burkina Faso and Mauritania that may experience marginalization due to their overlapping and intersecting identities. It identified opportunities to implement GESI-responsive and potentially transformative approaches throughout the project to increase meaningful engagement, participation and uptake among identified groups. In addition, this approach recognizes the imperative of not contributing to pre-existing inequalities, but to acknowledge the role of these communities in building community resilience to weather and climate disasters.

The following groups were identified as vulnerable through this analysis:

- Individuals working in agriculture
 - Subsistence farmers
 - Agro-pastoralists
 - Pastoralists
- Victims of conflict
 - Refugees
 - Asylum seekers
 - Internally displaced persons
- Rural and low-income households
- Urban poor
- Women
- Girls and young women
- People living with disabilities
- The elderly
- Ethnic groups

2. Methodology

This GESI context analysis builds on the GESI baseline study conducted in the proposal phase of the project. In the proposal, women, girls and young women, the elderly, individuals working in agriculture and asylum seekers and refugees were identified as the most vulnerable groups within both countries. To supplement and validate these initial findings, additional internet research was conducted. The following search strings were used to identify additional vulnerable groups.

1	Operator	2	Operator	3
"vulnerable group*" OR "vulnerable communit*" OR "inequality*" OR "marginalis*" OR "marginaliz*" OR "exclusion" OR "women" OR "girl*" OR "young girl*" OR "young women" OR "adolescent girl*" OR "people living with disability*" OR "PWD*" OR "disab*" OR "elderly" OR "senior*" OR "agriculture*" AND "farm*" OR "pastoral*" OR "agro*" OR "asylum seeker*" OR "refugee*" OR "poor" OR "poverty" OR "ethnicity" OR "ethnic minorit*" OR "ethnic group"	AND	"Burkina Faso" OR "Mauritania" OR "Sahel" OR "sub-Saharan" OR "Africa"	OR	"weather" OR "climate" OR "weather" OR "climate information services" OR "WCIS" OR "early warning" OR "disaster" OR "emergency"

Both academic and grey literature was gathered during the literature search. The results of these searches were reviewed for relevance and collated for further examination. It was noted that resources containing information on vulnerability and access to WCIS were limited. At this stage, interviews were not conducted.

Limitations: This preliminary analysis captured vulnerable groups in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the wider Sahel region. However, it should be noted that there may be other groups within these countries that are vulnerable to social exclusion and reduced access to climate information services, but may be under-researched or underreported.

3. Identifying vulnerable and marginalized communities

Levels of vulnerability can change over time making it challenging to identify, measure and prioritize individuals based on the potential exclusion of their vulnerable group(s). In addition, some of these vulnerabilities could have already been actively addressed and overcome through the introduction of legislation, policies and targeted social protection programmes in each country. It was, therefore, important to consult communities and stakeholders in both countries to validate the identified groups. This was achieved during validation workshops that took place in 2024 under the Clima-Social project.

This report identifies major vulnerable groups and vulnerable individuals within all groups (see Table 1) (Simonsson, 2005). This typology also reviews vulnerability according to geography and livelihoods due to intrinsic features such as gender, age and disability.

Table 1: Major vulnerable groups and individuals in Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Table adapted from Simonsson (2005), updated with author's own research

Major vulnerable groups	Vulnerable individuals within all groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals working in agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsistence farmers Agro-pastoralists Pastoralists Victims of conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees Asylum seekers Internally displaced persons Rural poor Urban poor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural-to-urban migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Girls and young women People living with disabilities The elderly Ethnic groups

3.1 Major vulnerable groups

The major vulnerable groups identified include individuals working in agriculture, victims of conflict, rural low-income households, and the urban poor. The following paragraphs explore these groups and the vulnerabilities they face.

3.1.1 Individuals working in agriculture

Burkina Faso and Mauritania are home to farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists. Farmers in this region often have a settled lifestyle, residing near or on their farmland, whereas agro-pastoralists and pastoralists are either semi-settled or nomadic (Scoones, 2022). Agro-pastoralists grow crops and raise livestock whereas pastoralists practice transhumance with movement rooted in seasonality or need (*ibid*). Some agro-pastoralists and pastoralists have symbiotic relationships with farmers as, in the case of agro-pastoralists, they themselves are farmers, or exchange animal products for access to grazing land (*ibid*). **However, competition over often-limited resources such as land, pasture and water is high in both Burkina Faso and Mauritania** (EoS, 2021). This has been compounded by the decision of many governments in the Sahel to provide farmers with legal ownership of grazing land, in turn, disrupting grazing areas along the migration routes of agro-pastoralists and pastoralists (Davis, 2022).

The interactions between farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists are intricate, and these livelihoods are further complicated along lines of marginality such as ethnicity, gender and religion which determine access and entitlement to natural resources (EoS, 2021). Pastoralists in both countries face discrimination as well as agricultural encroachment of their pastoral reserves (EoS, 2021). Individuals taking part in pastoral activities are generally minorities who face poverty as well as marginalization both economically and politically (Minot & Elahi, 2020). It is estimated that, in 2020, approximately 40 per cent of the 20 million livestock herders in the region lived in extreme poverty as they no longer received a decent income from their livestock (WB, 2020).

Droughts and poor water management pose issues for the water needs of pastoralists' livestock (Davis, 2022). For example, during the 2010 drought in Niger, 4.8 million cattle – approximately 25 per cent of the country's herd – died, amounting to an economic loss of 700 million US dollars (*ibid*).

Across the Sahel, climate change poses a threat to farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralism as the region is expected to receive less rainfall and experience less predictable weather overall (WB, 2020). The unpredictability of climate change impacts will prevent communities in the region from using traditional benchmarks, such as seasonal norms, to plan their migration (WB & GFDRR, 2011). This is predicted to lead to conflict between farming communities and pastoralists over access to grazing land and water (Minor & Elahi, 2020). Additionally, the lack of strong land tenure and governance of natural resources is further strained by the scarcity of viable land along with the increased pressure from external sources, such as internally displaced people (MoFA, 2021).

Burkina Faso

Overall, the agricultural sector employs approximately 80 per cent of the total workforce (IFAD, 2020). The majority of farmers grow cotton as their primary cash crop. Cowpea, maize, millet and sorghum are other popular crops (Beal *et al.*, 2015). Though people engage in agriculture across the country, millet is grown primarily in the north whereas maize is favoured in the south (*ibid*). Pastoralists make up 40 per cent of the workforce, with livestock production equating 13.5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and almost 20 per cent of its exports (Bisson *et al.*, 2021). Gold exports, in particular, have increased from the country in the last few years (*ibid*). **Although the economic value of the agricultural sector is high, social cohesion among farmers and pastoralists has been degrading due to land degradation caused by climate change (*ibid*). It has also been reported that pastoralists in the country tend to be excluded from political forums for decision-making at the local and national levels** (Bisson *et al.*, 2021).

Mauritania

Here, the agriculture sector makes up 27.8 per cent of the country's GDP, with pastoralism contributing 10 per cent of GDP (ELD, 2023; TRF, 2018). Approximately 50 per cent of the population rely on farming and livestock husbandry as their main sources of income (ELD, 2023). Individuals participating in the agricultural sector in Mauritania mainly grow barley, beans, maize, millet, sorghum and wheat (IRM, 2004). These activities are mostly contained in the country's east and south-east regions as well as along the Senegal River (*ibid*). **The combination of land degradation and extreme weather and climate events, such as floods and droughts, have led to economic losses in the sector, leaving agriculturalists vulnerable to climate risks.**

3.1.2 Victims of conflict

Victims of violence include groups of asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons. Refugees are individuals who leave their country of origin due to conflict or persecution whereas asylum seekers are individuals who have left their country of origin and have made a formal application for asylum in a host country (TheirWorld, 2018). Internally displaced persons are individuals who flee their homes but stay within the borders of their country (*ibid*). **Both Burkina Faso and Mauritania have experienced an influx of internally displaced persons as well as asylum seekers and refugees from neighbouring countries, especially Mali** (UNHCR, 2021). It is assumed that repatriation of the refugees will not be possible in the short- to medium-term due to the ongoing crisis (*ibid*).

These communities are considered vulnerable due to their experience with displacement, loss of community and support systems, precarious legal status, economic challenges and dependence on aid, and potential stigma. Additionally, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees residing in refugee camps do not have equal access to local and national safety nets and basic health services (UNHCR, 2021).

Burkina Faso

In October 2023, there were approximately 38,026 refugees and asylum seekers plus an additional 2,062,534 internally displaced persons, amounting to 0.16–8.87 per cent of the total population respectively (UNHCR, 2023). The increase of internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso is largely due to poverty and the increase of non-state armed groups in the country (IDMC, 2022). This has led to conflict over resources such as land and water (*ibid*). Additionally, disaster-related displacement is a factor as floods in 2022 led to the internal displacement of 2,400 individuals (*ibid*).

Mauritania

In October 2022, due to political instability in the Sahel region, Mauritania received an influx of over 100,000 refugees from Mali. In parallel, more than 10,000 Mauritanian nationals returned to Mauritania with a combined herd of more than 91,000 animals (UNFP, 2023). These incomers – in particular the presence of refugees from Mali – combined with low rainfall for the year, placed a huge strain on access to pasture and water as well as on relationships between farmers and pastoralists (GCI, 2021a).

In Mauritania, less than 50 per cent of refugees in the Mbera Camp have access to social protection services (UNHCR, 2021). New refugee arrivals and out-of-camp refugees are often excluded from these social services altogether, and are required to pay out-of-pocket for health services driving them further into financially precarious situations (*ibid*).

3.1.3 Rural poor

Rural and low-income households face vulnerabilities due to their reduced capacity to adapt and respond to shocks, whether economic or climate related. In the region, rural households often resort to selling their productive assets, including livestock and seeds, to cushion income shocks (ADBG, 2020). This poses adverse impacts on household resiliency to future shocks (*ibid*).

Both countries face high rates of rural poverty. In Burkina Faso, more than 41 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line (WB, 2021). Additionally, almost 90 per cent of poor households live in rural areas where the poverty incidence is much higher (51.15 per cent rural compared to 13 per cent urban) (*ibid*). In comparison, in Mauritania, 56.9 per cent of the population lives in multidimensional poverty (MPPN, 2023) with 77.1 per cent of this group living in rural areas (*ibid*). A person who is poor can suffer multiple disadvantages at the same time – for example, they may have poor health or malnutrition, a lack of clean water or electricity, poor quality of work or little schooling.

3.1.4 Urban poor

Urban areas, if well-planned, can present individuals with opportunities for employment as well as places to live, and offer increased access to public services (Baker *et al.*, 2023). The influx of rural-to-urban migrants or displaced persons to urban areas amplifies the pre-existing strains on underdeveloped and underfunded services (*ibid*). It also increases the likelihood of people settling on land that is unsuitable for housing (*ibid*).

Burkina Faso

Urban poverty in Burkina Faso is rising slowly but inexorably due to the growth of the urban population without parallel changes in the urban economy (Quinn, 2017). As such, less than 10 per cent of the country's urban population is part of the formal sector (*ibid*). In the capital, Ouagadougou, the poor spend almost 80 per cent of household income on food which leaves very few financial resources to allocate to electricity, water, school fees and meeting other basic needs (TBH, 2008).

Mauritania

The urban poor in Mauritania are at high risk of floods due to poor urban planning, the increase of slum dwellings and reduced land capacity to absorb rainfall (WB, 2023). Additionally, poor drainage in these areas prevents floodwater from draining (*ibid*). Mauritania has seen an increase in its urban population, from 1 million urban dwellers in 2000 to 3 million in 2023 (*ibid*). By 2050, it is estimated that the urban population will reach 6.5 million individuals (*ibid*). In Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania, expansion of the city is taking place in low-lying floodplains (*ibid*).

3.2 Vulnerable individuals within all groups

Women, girls and young women, people living with disabilities, the elderly, and ethnic groups were identified as vulnerable individuals within all groups. Vulnerabilities faced by these groups may be exacerbated by cultural norms and often enshrined in policies and legislations. For example, legislation may recognize the husband as the de facto head of household which may impact his wife's ability to access or engage in climate adaptation and mitigation interventions (GGGC, 2019).

3.2.1 Women

There is considerable evidence of gender-based disparities impacting women in Burkina Faso and Mauritania, especially in regard to education, access to health services, participation in decision-making processes, and access to natural resources – the combination of which limit their rights, freedom and mobility (MoFA, 2021; WFP, 2018; EUTF for Africa, 2020; World Bank, 2022a). Multiple studies have demonstrated that these factors lead to disproportional impacts on women during disastrous weather and climate events, as well as under a changing climate more generally (Dibakoane *et al.*, 2022).

Table 2 reviews the major indicators of women's rights in both Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

Table 2: Indicators of women's rights (GCI, 2021a; GCI, 2021b; UN Women, 2021a; UN Women, 2021b).

Indicators	Burkina Faso	Mauritania
Gender Inequality Index	0.612 (2019)	0.62 (2019)
% of women between ages of 20–24 who were married or in union before the age of 18	51.6 (2021)	37 (2021)
Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women	132.2 (2016)	84 (2014)
% of women between ages of 15–49 subjected to violence in the last 12 months	11.2 (2018)	Not available
% of indicators available to monitor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender-lens	45.1 (2020)	34.4 (2020)
Areas with major gaps for SDG monitoring and general gender data gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unpaid domestic and care labour ▪ Information and communication technology skills ▪ Gender and poverty ▪ Physical/sexual harassment ▪ Access to assets ▪ Gender and the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Violence against women ▪ Unpaid domestic and care labour ▪ Labour market indicators such as gender gaps in pay ▪ Gender and poverty ▪ Physical/sexual harassment ▪ Access to assets ▪ Gender and the environment
Employed women (above 15 years old) below the international poverty line	35.2%; compared to 29.8% men	4.3%; compared to 3.8% men
Literacy rate	41.2%; compared to 32.7% men	53.5%; compared to 43.4% men

Women working in agriculture: Women from both countries rely heavily on agricultural work. Women farmers are more vulnerable to climate change than their male counterparts as they have reduced access to assets as well as the resources to tackle climate shocks. Women participating in subsistence agriculture take on reproductive roles (for example, providing food, taking care of sick members of the household, etc.) alongside productive roles in the household (for example, gathering natural resources, growing and tending crops, selling crops at the market, etc.) (Romero Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011). In comparison, men hold mainly productive roles both inside and outside of the household such as growing crops, purchasing and/or selling livestock and other paid work (*ibid*). Due to climate change, women's productive roles are expected to increase, with no changes to encourage a fairer distribution of responsibilities or of assets and land between women and men (*ibid*). Women farmers face more difficulties in recovering from climate-related hazards as they rarely have savings/liquid assets and physical assets, whereas men are more likely to own land and livestock (Romero Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021).

In Burkina Faso, 70 per cent of women are farmers but only 2 per cent are recorded as having property ownership documents (WFP, 2018). In addition to their lack of financial capital, women are often left out of conservations and management plans around natural resources (Romero Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021). Within Burkina Faso, climate change adaptation programmes are predominantly aimed at men since they are responsible for growing important cash crops such as cereal (*ibid*). The majority (67 per cent) of the projects in Burkina Faso's National Programme for Adaptation (NAPA) benefit men, with the remaining percentage benefiting both women and men (*ibid*).

Women as victims of conflict: Women face increased risks of gender-based violence during times of instability and movement (OCHA, 2022). They are exposed to risks such as forced marriage, sexual assault and kidnapping (*ibid*). In the Sahel region, displaced women are at an even higher risk of gender-based violence (*ibid*). In 2021, 68 per cent of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons sought specialized assistance for gender-based violence (*ibid*).

Women in rural and low-income households: In the Sahel, women are at a heightened risk of poverty due to barriers to education, land, financial resources and credit, alongside cultural norms (Alliance Sahel, 2022). Women, especially in rural areas, play an essential role in unpaid domestic care duties that are often not visible or taken into account in programmes and policy implementation (Saulere, 2011).

Burkina Faso

In recognizing the role of women in society, Burkina Faso has implemented many policies to enhance women's rights; however, progress has been slow. In the country, the following legislative frameworks are available in favour of women's rights (GGGC, 2019):

- Burkina Faso's Constitution outlines that women and men are equal.
- Gendered groups were created in 2012 within each ministry to practice gender mainstreaming.
- The National Gender Policy in 2009 strives for national gender equality.
- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Marriage (2016–2025) and an accompanying Action Plan (2016–2018) bans child marriage, the first in West Africa.
- The National Economic and Social Development Plan (2016–2020) targets women and young people for the provision of decent work. An updated Plan has not been made available online.

Mauritania

Mauritania has ratified many national, regional and international conventions on women's rights and gender equality. However, discriminatory cultural norms persist, with many women facing the risks of discrimination and gender-based violence (UNPF, 2023). Access to credit and ownership of land is weak across the country (ADBG, 2019). Additionally, a lack of gender-specific statistics makes it difficult to include gender-based needs in the implementation of development programmes (*ibid*).

- The Mauritanian Constitution forbids discrimination based on sex.
- Act No. 2018–023 promotes women's rights and prohibits discrimination based on gender.
- The National Strategy for Gender Institutionalization (2015–2025) aims to mainstream gender considerations across ministries.
- The National Observatory on the Rights of Women and Girls by Decree No. 2020/140 seeks to enhance women's and girls' rights through active participation from government and civil society actors.

In parallel to this progress, Mauritania has laws that define the framework of marriage and are guided by traditional gender roles and their expectations (GGGC, 2019).

3.2.2 Girls and young women

Girls and young women are identified as a socially excluded group in both countries. **During crises, girls and young women are at risk of becoming the victims of negative household coping strategies** which may require them to miss school days or leave school altogether to take on more domestic duties, such as collecting water and food or caring for family members (Plan International, 2023). Additionally, they may be victims of child marriage, sexual exploitation and forced labour (*ibid*). The heightened risk faced by girls and young women as victims of conflict operates in parallel to their reduced access to education, health services and employment (*ibid*).

In pastoral communities, households may be forced to exchange their daughter(s) for livestock during economic and climactic turmoil (Birch-Jeffrey, 2019). During crises and stressors, the risk of gender-based violence – such as rape and sexual exploitation – increases (*ibid*). Gender-based violence in the Sahel region is commonly unreported as law enforcement is weak (*ibid*).

3.2.3 People living with disabilities

People living with disabilities are often vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, discrimination, social exclusion, stigma and exclusion from public services and decision-making platforms (UNAIDS, 2014; UNFPA, 2020). Though the level and type of disability varies widely among individuals, people living with disabilities globally tend to experience poorer economic and social outcomes in comparison to individuals without disabilities (*ibid*). Around the world, rates of disability tend to be higher in rural areas where access to services such as healthcare may require travel, which requires time and money. Additionally, people living with disabilities may not be accommodated at school; hence have lower levels of academic achievement (WB, n.d.). When it comes to the labour market, barriers to participation may be high, leading to insufficient monetary resources (*ibid*). This can then increase the reliance of people with disabilities on family members increasing their vulnerability even further.

During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, people living with disabilities were not adequately considered in response interventions and were more prone to be isolated and to experience gender-based violence (UNFPA, 2020).

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities along with its Optional Protocol in 2010. However, an investigation by the International Disability Alliance indicated that there needs to be better legislation to enhance the treatment of children with disabilities in the country as well as actions to prevent violence against children (IDA, 2011).

In the country, people living with disabilities are some of the most poor and marginalized groups, especially in rural areas (LAFI, 2012). Here, discrimination is significantly higher against women with disabilities as they are less likely to have a formal education and have fewer opportunities to work.

Mauritania

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3.2.4 The elderly

The major challenges facing older people in Burkina Faso and Mauritania are not well documented. Care for the elderly is usually provided by family members – a practice seen across sub-Saharan Africa (Byaruhanga & Debesay, 2021). However, the provision of such informal care has been declining (*ibid*). Despite this, in Burkina Faso it is still assumed that the majority of the elderly are supported through familial structures, since less than 5 per cent of individuals above the age of 60 live alone (HelpAge, 2010). Comparative data was not available for Mauritania.

The elderly are disproportionately impacted by climate change and have less capacity to respond (OHCHR, 2021). At the same time, stigma around age and ability may increase the risk of neglect and exploitation. It is important to note that the inclusion of the elderly in programmes and policies does not only benefit them, but also supports the programme as their wisdom and knowledge can play a role in building resilience in households and in the wider community (OHCHR, 2021).

3.2.5 Ethnic groups

Some ethnic groups, especially ethnic minorities in Burkina Faso and Mauritania and other countries in the region, face heightened discrimination and marginalization. This can impact their access to education, health services, employment, social participation, adaptive capacity activities and WCIS.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso hosts over 60 ethnic groups with the Mossi comprising almost half of the population, often residing in the central, urban regions of the country (Helmfrid, 2004). The northern regions are predominantly inhabited by the Fulani who are semi-nomadic pastoralists (*ibid*). The western region is characterized as a cultural mosaic including communities such as the Dagaras, Lobi, Peulh and Tuaregs (Helmfrid, 2004; MUFJRC, 2013)

Within each ethnic group, the social dynamic between women and men varies according to customs and culture (MUFJRC, 2013). Although women are generally not afforded the same rights and access to resources as men in the country, in ethnic groups such as the Peulh women are less 'subordinate' compared to Mossi women (*ibid*). Additionally, in some ethnic groups in the western and south-west regions, such as the Lobi and Dagaras, communities are matrilineal or apply dual descent to succession, whereas the Mossi is a patrilineal group (*ibid*). Today, Mossi chiefs play a significant role in national and local politics (Helmfrid, 2004).

Outside Ouagadougou, against a backdrop of a weak state presence and distrust of state institutions, there is a high level of non-state armed groups which has led to deadly ethnic and communal conflicts (Dieng, 2022). In February 2021–2022, there were more than 2,000 recorded civilian fatalities in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, with people attacked based on their ethnic or religious identities.

Mauritania

Mauritania's population is predominantly made up of three ethnic groups, each with notable nuances and complexities (McGeehan, 2018; CIA, 2024). The Beidans, also known as the White Moors, originate from a mixing of Arab and Berber conquerors and make up 30 per cent of the population (McGeehan, 2018; CIA, 2024). The Haratines, or Black Moors, are comprised of individuals who are descendants of former slaves and constitute 40 per cent of the population (*ibid*). Both ethnic groups speak a local Arabic dialect called Hassaniya (McGeehan, 2018). The third ethnic group is considered Afro-Mauritanians with various ethnic subsets who speak indigenous languages of African origin rather than Arabic. This subset includes the Bambara, Fulani, Halpulaar, Soninke and Wolof ethnic groups (McGeehan, 2018; CIA, 2024). All three groups and their subsets adhere to caste systems (CIA, 2024).

It is reported that slavery in the country, though illegal since 2007, remains a prevalent issue with the Beidans enslaving Haratines as well as Afro-Mauritanians (Quallen, 2023). Beidans also play a prominent role in politics – occupying approximately 80 per cent of the country's leadership positions despite amounting to less than one-third of the total population (*ibid*).

Further information on these ethnicities is limited.

This GESI Context Analysis was used in Clima-Social to design interventions tailored to the most vulnerable groups while prioritizing resources for critical needs, such as weather and climate information. By leveraging these insights, Clima-Social ensured that projects were effectively implemented and reached the populations most at risk. The analysis may also work to guide practitioners in designing programs, targeting resources efficiently, and developing inclusive strategies that address the needs of marginalized communities in Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

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Kindly get in touch with sivanu@climatecentre.org to receive additional reference material or details about the project/activities.

Annex

Further information about the Clima-Social project (2023-2025)

The Clima-Social project, funded by the UK Met Office's Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER) programme, aims to establish coordination and data-sharing mechanisms that enable social protection and climate actors in Burkina Faso and Mauritania to make better use of WCIS. The project focuses on strengthening systems and building capacities to use climate information in a manner that protects vulnerable groups through climate-smart social protection interventions.

This GESI context analysis has informed the following Clima-Social activities:

Activity 1: Strengthen collaboration between climate and social protection stakeholders and improve integration among systems and interventions	1.1. Map all climate and social protection stakeholders, including past engagements, interventions and coordination mechanisms
	1.2. Analyse opportunities and barriers to collaboration between the two sectors
	1.3. Organize a regional-level workshop to bring together relevant actors from Mauritania and Burkina Faso to identify opportunities and challenges of collaboration
	1.4. Utilize stakeholder capacity assessment tools to understand the current capacities among climate and social protection actors in the 1.3 workshop
	1.5. Establish and support a national/regional Social Protection–Climate Working Group with the objective of training/capacitating actors to facilitate it themselves beyond the project timeframe
Activity 2: Improve knowledge and awareness, and strengthen capacity among climate and social protection stakeholders	2.1. Identify key priorities for technical assistance to use and leverage climate information and services
	2.2. Facilitate mutual training between the meteorological services and social protection actors, including capacity-building training on the identified priorities as well as on existing WISER WCIS, shock-responsive social protection interventions and the co-production of Impact-based Forecasting data
Activity 3: Increase understanding and identification of climate impacts, at-risk livelihoods and alternative income-generation options	3.1. Review and compile existing knowledge on climate hazards and livelihood-related impacts affecting the Sahel, with particular attention on Burkina Faso and Mauritania and the needs of vulnerable sub-populations
	3.2. Identify at-risk livelihoods in one representative location in Mauritania and Burkina Faso, review existing early warning systems and explore alternative livelihood options
	3.3. Map current social protection schemes to matchmake schemes that can be adopted to support different alternative livelihoods
	3.4. Analyse the barriers to the understanding and use of forecasts provided by the meteorological services
Activity 4: Develop risk indicators and Impact-based Forecasting systems for shock responsive and adaptive social protection systems	4.1. Use the analyses from activity 3 to identify or develop risk indicators that are relevant for key livelihoods which can serve as a basis for action in the most vulnerable communities
	4.2. Organize a ten-day 'writeshop' to develop the routine prediction of the indicators in 4.1
	4.3. Facilitate dialogue and data-sharing between the community early warning systems (community sentinel sites) to develop joint Climate Information for Social Protection (CISP) bulletins
	4.4. Develop triggers for social protection anticipatory or early response actions for those hazards that are most impactful on livelihoods
	4.5. Arrange a desk-based simulation exercise to practice real-time activation of a trigger and drill on reflection activities

