

Conflict-sensitive Approach in the Second Greater Mekong Subregion Highway Modernization Project

Project Number: 50381-006
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MYA: Second Greater Mekong Subregion Highway Modernization Project

1. **Background.** The Government of Myanmar (GOM) has an overall strategy for improving transport infrastructure as a means of generating economic growth. An important part of this has been a commitment to improve the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) corridors in which connectivity between GMS countries is to be greatly enhanced. Based on this, GOM has requested further assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in developing the country's main road corridors—particularly the GMS East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and improve their management. As the first response, in 2018 ADB approved the GMS Highway Modernization Project to address traffic demand up to 2025.¹ That included the preparation and rehabilitation of the Yangon-Pathain and Bago-Thilawa sections of the GMS EWEC, which were in poor condition.

2. The proposed project will (i) develop a new four lane arterial expressway between Bago (Bago Region) and Kyaikto (Mon State) (Bago-Kyaikto expressway) of about 62 kilometers (km), along the GMS EWEC; (ii) build the Government's capacity to develop and manage expressways, meeting international standards; and (iii) ensure road safety in the Bago-Kyaikto corridor. The expressway alignment will traverse through four townships: Bago, Thanatpin, Waw, and Kyaikto. Of these four townships, only Kyaikto may be considered conflict-affected.²

3. The proposed project preparation has focused on outlining actions that are considered necessary during project implementation to minimize risks related to potential conflict situations.

4. Also, during project preparation a draft resettlement plan has been completed by the Ministry of Construction (MOC), the Executing Agency of the proposed project. It will be updated during the detailed design prior to civil works commencement. However, the changes during the detailed design may be minimal. The communities residing in the project area and they may experience some minor negative impacts during the road construction stage such as environmental issues, road safety issues, and potential negative social impacts. The proposed project is currently categorized B for Indigenous Peoples according to the ADB's Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS, 2009).

5. **Project Risks.** In general, southeastern Myanmar, where the project area is located, has been relatively peaceful, with occasional armed conflicts between different groups. Before 2010, the area was home to decades long subnational armed conflicts that resulted in the displacement of a considerable number of people.

6. While the project areas are not currently considered conflict-affected, the project implementation takes place in areas with communities where some of the underlying risk factors associated with the previous conflicts remain. These include (i) the persistent vulnerability and poverty of the people in project areas; (ii) significant service and infrastructure gaps that exacerbate underdevelopment and deepen poverty; and (iii) sizeable presence of ethnic communities who share a common identity and language that is different from the national language.

7. **ADB's Approach to Conflict Affected Situations.** To address country or area specific situations, ADB formulates its engagement based on an understanding of the local context, and after sound assessments of the various factors surrounding the conflict. Following this approach, ADB-supported projects are designed to be adaptable in its interventions and incorporates

¹ ADB. 2018. *Report and Recommendations of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the Greater Mekong Subregion Highway Modernization Project*. Manila.

² A. Burke et al. 2017. *The Contested Areas of Myanmar: Subnational Conflict, Aid and Development*. Yangon. The Asia Foundation.

participatory tools for analysis of the factors affecting vulnerabilities in the communities and the dynamics in local decision-making and resource allocation. Flexibility is built into the project design, and project activities are adjusted to match community capacity in implementing the project.

8. **Conflict-Sensitive Design Features.** The proposed project adopts a conflict sensitive approach that promotes a good understanding of the local context, builds in flexibility in design and implementation, and establishes strong local ownership. This project specific conflict analysis will help the project ensure: (i) robust social preparation and awareness raising activities that reach out to all residents, especially the vulnerable, women and ethnic groups and secure their participation; (ii) informed decision making on community infrastructure and livelihood investments based on a good understanding of local needs; and (iii) promotion of local ownership by building communities' capacities to participate in local labor-based construction activities to implement the project and then sustain. Table below summarizes the conflict-sensitive design features of the project.

Conflict Sensitive Design Features

Risk	Conflict-Sensitive Design Feature
Ethnic and cultural differences in post-conflict environment	Training on conflict sensitivity , history of the conflict, monitoring and management of fluid situations will be provided to Project Management Unit (PMU) staff, implementation support consultants and civil works contractors.
Historical disparity in access to social services and economic opportunities	<p>Opportunities for local communities: Civil works will promote construction and maintenance work opportunities for local communities.</p> <p>The Labor and Gender Action Plan (LGAP) identifies activities that support improved participation of women, including (where appropriate) separate meetings and training for women and consultation on project activities and outcomes among women.</p> <p>Information on work opportunities will be provided to all communities through the consultation and participation plans.</p> <p>Training on labor rights will be provided for all labors including the ethnic people and women, before they are offered any job. To ensure fair opportunities for all, information on participation in project work will be monitored and information will be disaggregated by ethnicity and gender.</p>
Physical and economic displacement	<p>Losses of land, housing, and productive resources will be addressed through the Resettlement Plan, including compensation at replacement cost and transitional assistance. A livelihood development program will be provided to those whose income sources are affected by land acquisition. Resettlement assistance will be provided to those who lose housing.</p> <p>The project will not engage in any large-scale or commercial activities that tend to exploit or utilize natural resources at scale. All usage of natural resources in road construction will be vetted in community consultations. Through meaningful consultations, the project will</p>

Risk	Conflict-Sensitive Design Feature
	ascertain the consent (“broad community support”) of affected communities to all usage of natural resources in road construction.
Inadequate participation, consultation and information sharing	<p>A Consultation and Participation Plan will be implemented to ensure meaningful consultation of ethnic groups in the project areas in an understandable and accessible way.</p> <p>Consultation meetings and project documentation will be translated in to local languages. The project will employ facilitators from local communities.</p> <p>Representatives of all groups will be included in the grievance redress committees, at least one male and one female representatives in each village.</p> <p>Local community elders, civil society organizations, and faith-based groups will be consulted on project objectives, activities, grievance redress mechanisms, and outcomes.</p> <p>Special meetings for vulnerable groups including women and ethnic communities in difficult-to-reach locations will be a part of the consultation process.</p>

9. **Project Implementation.** During project implementation, ADB loan review missions will incorporate monitoring of the actions listed in the table. PMU will implement these actions through the Construction Supervision and Implementation Support Consultants. ADB will support the PMU in implementation of the actions.