

# Social Monitoring Report

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Semi-Annual (January–July 2020)  
G0400/L3149  
July 2020

## BHU: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Road Connectivity Project Phuentsholing Thromde

Prepared by Egis International in association with Gyaltsen Consultancy for Department of Roads, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, Royal Government of Bhutan and the Asian Development Bank.

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## **CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS**

(as on 12 July, 2020)

<b>Currency unit</b>		<b>Bhutanese Ngultrum</b>
Nu. 1.00	=	\$ 0.0133
\$ 1.00	=	Nu. 75.100

### **NOTE**

In this report, '\$' refers to US Dollars

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## **A. Background**

1. There are four components to the ADB SASEC Road Connectivity Project which includes:
  - construction of the 68km of National Highway between Nganglam and Dewathang;
  - the 1.2km access road from an Indian border constructed at Pasakha area;
  - construction of about 2.7km of bypass road in Phuentsholing city; and
  - a mini-dry port in Phuentsholing and the Alay Land Custom Station
2. This project covers only two components, component 3 and 4 (excluding the construction of the Alay Land Station). The construction and development of the Mini Dry Port was completed and officially handed over to the Phuentsholing Thromde on 11 February 2019.
3. The construction of the 2.7km bypass road was further bifurcated into two packages:
  - Northern Bypass Road I (NBR I), and
  - Northern Bypass Road II (NBR II)
4. The construction of the Northern Bypass Road Package-I has been completed and the site was handed over to the client on the 10 February 2020. The project site has been cleared of all construction materials and debris and labour campsites have been dismantled and area cleared.



*Photos of the campsites along NBR I, dismantled and area cleared*

## **B. Purpose of This Report**

5. This is a semi-annual social compliance monitoring report for the ADB supported SASEC Road Connectivity Project. The purpose of this report is to provide assessment of social safeguards issues, any grievances and any other social concerns during the project implementation. Social monitoring also verifies if the project is in compliance with the ADB's Safeguard Policy Statement (2009) and RGoB rules and regulations.

## **C. Social Monitoring**

6. Compensation was paid for all structures affected by the project. Compensation for land was done by adopting land for land compensation approach. Cash compensation of \$12,908.32

was given for the Tashi Commercial Corporation TCC land and the trees cleared for the river protection works under the NBR subproject. The compensation amount was agreed by the Affected Party as per the Property Assessment and Valuation Agency (PAVA) rate. No vulnerable HH were affected by the project. Although, most of the vendors in the vegetable market area were “vulnerable”, they were not adversely affected by the project. They were duly consulted and informed about the project and their relocation to the new vegetable market.

7. At present, the construction works on the bridge over the Dhoti Khola is on-going. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had to release majority of their Indian construction workers who were stranded in Bhutan since the national lockdown and sealing of the international border between India and Bhutan. As on 12 July 2020, the project had only 13 workers from India. The project has been able to recruit 17 Bhutanese workers, all above 18 years of age. These Bhutanese workers are being housed in the labor camps and are paid between Nu. 800 – Nu. 1000 per day (USD 10.65 – USD 13.32). There are no female laborers or child labour employed in the construction work.

8. The labor camps are located near the project site. Each quarter in the camp houses 4-5 workers. The kitchen and toilets are shared between the workers. Although the surroundings of the campsite were clean, the quality of the labour camps has dilapidated over the project period. The project manager was briefed of the conditions of the camp and was advised to improve its quality to the satisfaction of the Engineer.



9. On the construction site, the workers are provided with personal safety equipment including face mask. It was made mandatory that the labors are equipped with the safety gears at all times. The office has kept a First Aid medical kit with basic medicines and items in case of injury. Awareness programs were conducted in December 2017 at the MDP site and in March 2018 at both the NBR-I and NBR-II sites. The awareness program was carried out for the workers by the officials from the Health and Information Service Center (HISC) in Phuentsoling. Pamphlets translated to different local languages and contraceptives were distributed during the awareness program.

10. Traffic signs and message boards were displayed at different locations at the construction site. The signs were clearly visible, providing safety and security to the workplace, employees

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and the property. In some areas, bright color barricade tapes were used to demarcate hazardous and unstable areas as a caution sign. Although, proper hard barricades were missing to keep moving vehicles from having potential accident due to on-going work.

11. Bhutan's Labour Act does not permit the recruitment of children (below the age of 18 years) in any construction work. Indian male labours working in the construction sites are also not permitted to bring their spouse or family with them.



*Workers using hard hat, mask and reflective jacket, although gloves and safety boot are lacking*



*Signages on the project site*

12. There has been no awareness programs conducted for HIV/AIDS in 2020. This is keeping in line with the COVID-19 guidelines of maintaining social distance and not encouraging large gatherings.

#### **D. Monitoring of COVID-19 in the Project Site**

13. Bhutan sealed its international borders on the 23 March 2020, and all foreigners residing in the country were allowed to exit and those Bhutanese entering the country were subject to medical screening and mandatory quarantine for 3 weeks. All these were done to mitigate the risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. On the 27 May 2020, a meeting was held between the Social and Environment Specialist, the Project Manager (contractor), Site Engineer (contractor) and the Resident Engineer (consultant). They were advised on the protocols for prevention from COVID-19 contamination and instructed to follow the guidelines that were outlined by the Royal Government of Bhutan. A COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness and Protocol was prepared by the contractor and submitted to the client in May 2020.

15. The following are some of the worksite prevention practices that were outlined in the Standard Operating Procedure for managing COVID-19 risks in the project, which was duly followed:

- The contractor shall carry out contactless temperature checks for all workers prior to site entrance, during working hours and after site works to identify persons showing sign of being unwell with symptoms of COVID-19.

- Large gatherings of workers shall be avoided and contractors should encourage social distancing even during work. Activities that require many workers (such as heavy lifting) should be limited.
- Do not encourage outsiders into the project site or any such unnecessary visitors in the work site.
- Install the Druk Trace App and make sure all workers are registered with this App. It is mandatory for all visitors to scan the QR code using the Druk Trace App. This will help in contact tracing of all people in contact with COVID infected person.
- Make it mandatory for all workers to wear masks at all times and advise them to maintain personal hygiene such as regular washing or sanitizing of hands.
- Workers should have access to clean toilets and hand washing facility. Water and soap shall be provided and timely replenished.
- Garbage bins will be placed around the project site to maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of the site with regular waste disposal from the bins. All workers to help maintain the cleanliness in the project area.
- Make sure that one person is dedicated for maintaining cleanliness and ensuring proper COVID-19 sanitation process. This person shall use proper masks and gloves and advised to clean and disinfect the project areas including the office, vehicles and equipment at regular intervals.
- At the worker camps, ensure that each quarter houses only two persons. Allow adequate natural ventilation in each quarter and make sure that each worker maintains a physical distance of at least 1m while having meals.
- The contractor/project manager should have the contact details of medical services in case any such emergencies arise at the workplace.

16. Contractors or project managers have been advised to encourage social distancing amongst their workers and they have also been advised to take charge of the health of their workers, including close monitoring and timely counselling.

#### **E. Compliance with COVID- 19 Guidelines**

17. A large majority of the Indian labourers including the international experts left the country owing to COVID -19 situation. Currently, only 13 Indian workers and 17 national workers are at site and the project has not been able to recruit new Indian workers since the border has been sealed. All the 13 Indian workers are registered with the Ministry of Health and Department of Immigration and they have been given COVID-19 Card. This COVID-19 Card now supersedes the work permit that was initially given to the workers.

18. The project has put up signs around the project site sharing important health and safety information. The project has also started using the Druk trace app which was developed by the Ministry of Health for 'contact tracing'. This app helps the Government with the identification of people who may have come in direct contact with a COVID-19 infected person while visiting public places or while using public transportation.



19. A drum of clean water and soap is placed at work site to remind workers to wash their hands regularly. Masks have been provided to workers and made mandatory to use at all times.

20. For any shopping for grocery and vegetables, the company collects the shopping list from the workers and only two persons are sent to do the entire shopping. This is to discourage the workers from going to the marketplace in large groups.



*Signages and water for hand washing in the project area, but needs improvement in quality*

21. The Ministry of Health has conducted a series of awareness programs for COVID-19 in the construction projects in Phuentsholing. The project manager of the construction company also attended in one of such awareness program.

#### **F. Socio-economic Impact from Project**

22. The project road stretches along existing housing colonies, schools and businesses. Currently with construction still going on. Hence, it is early to conclude on socio-economic changes due to the project. However, improved access and overall environment due to implementation of the project will certainly add further impetus in overall commercial development activities and increase in the land price in the area.