

# Social Monitoring Report

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Final Report  
January 2021

## Bhutan: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Road Connectivity Project

Northern Bypass Road I (NBR I)  
Phuentsholing Thromde

Prepared by the Phuentsholing Thromde for the Government of Bhutan and the Asian Development Bank.

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### **CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS**

(as on 26 January 2021)

Currency unit		Bhutanese Ngultrum
Nu. 1.00	=	\$ 0.0137
\$ 1.00	=	Nu. 72.76

### **NOTE**

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

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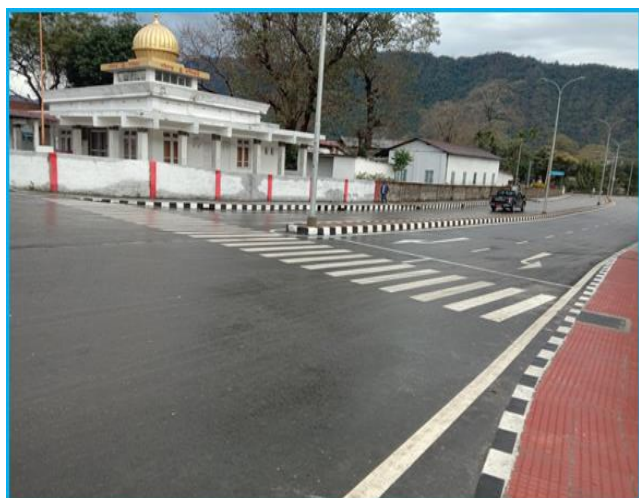
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## A. Background

1. The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Project in July 2014. The Project includes the following activities: the construction of (i) 68km of National Highway between Nganglam and Dewathang; (ii) 1.2km access road from an Indian border constructed at Pasakha area, (iii) a mini dry port (MDP) in Phuentsholing and Allay land custom station (LCS); and (iv) the construction of the 2.7km of bypass road in Phuentsholing city.

## B. Project Description

2. The Northern Bypass Road (NBR) at Phuentsholing is a 2.7 km and 4 lane road starting at the second Indo-Bhutan gate, near the Mini Dry Port and ending at the existing Phuentsholing-Thimphu highway. The NBR project is a part of the ADB-SASEC Road Connectivity Project which was implemented by the Phuentsholing Thromde. This project is expected to help in decongesting the heavy traffic flow within urban core of Phuentsholing town.



*Left: The start of the NBR-I near the Gurudwara Right: View of the underpass (courtesy: Phuentsholing Thromde website).*

3. The NBR was further bifurcated into two components – NBR I and NBR II. The NBR I ends at the crocodile farm. This social report which is compiled for the Asian Development Bank is for Northern Bypass Road I only. Quarterly reports for the ADB-SASEC Road Connectivity Project – NBR I have been submitted to the clients and are also available on the ADB website.

## C. Institutional Arrangements

4. A project management unit (PMU) and project implementation unit (PIU) were set up with personnel drawn from the PT and supported by a team of consultants. The PIU reported to the PMU on all matters relating to the project.

5. The Phuentsholing Thromde took up the lead role for any grievances from the public for this project. If there were any persons or parties affected by the project, the first point of contact

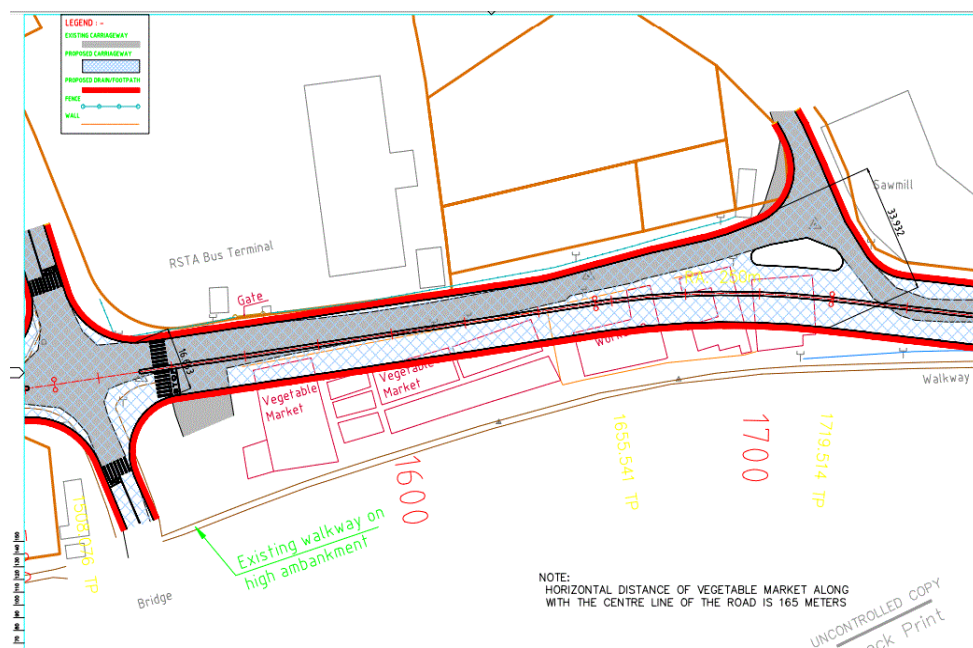
were the site engineers of the PIU and PMU or the CSC. If the issues could not be solved at this level, then the case would be forwarded to the Phuentsholing Thromde Grievance Redressal Committee. The PT took the sole responsibility of holding consultations with affected parties, informing the public and implementation arrangements of the project. For those who were affected by the relocation of the vegetable market, there was an in-charge under the PT who ensured that the affected vendors were informed of the developments of the new market, including its location, design, tentative schedule and the entire relocation process.

#### D. Affected people and affected structures

6. The NBR I project has affected structures located from the junction point after the National Housing Colony towards the Road Safety and Transport Authority (East) which included:

##### 1. The Phuentsholing vegetable market

7. The old vegetable market was located near the Road Safety and Transport Authority (RSTA) office. Covering a total of 95m by 55m of Government land, there were over 100 shops with licenses to sell vegetables, meat, dairy, grocery and miscellaneous items. Over 50% of the shops were to be demolished for the bypass construction. This would have affected about 94 people including both shop owners and workers at the market. Approximately 65% of the licenses or shops were either owned by or run by women or have women working for a salary or wage.



*The alignment of the NBR-I (above) would affect over 50% of the vegetable vendors.*

8. During the design phase, Mr. Jamtsho, who is in-charge of the vegetable market, took responsibility in carrying out a consultation with the affected vendors. He explained the purpose of the road project, the impact it would have on them and also the proposed plans for a new market. There were no conflicts as the vendors welcomed the news of better infrastructure and

better opportunities.

9. The Phuentsholing Thromde received support from the Small Development Project Grant, to construct a new Integrated Vegetable Market (IVM). The market is located at the old truck parking, adjacent to Jorden Lam and the new vegetable market is similar in concept to the Thimphu vegetable market. It occupies approximately 1.18 acres or 51,402 square feet. There is ample space allocated for parking too.

10. The new market was completed and handed over to the Phuentsholing Thromde in October 2018. The old vendors have been relocated to the new market and this is now a fully functional market space. The relocation process was carried out only after the completion of the IVM. The Phuentsholing Thromde assisted with the relocation and allotment of spaces to the affected vendors. There was no compensation paid to any of the vendors.

11. However, according to the vendors, the lease rent has tripled and there is a lot more competition from increased number of vendors. In addition, many of the Bhutanese shop for cheaper alternatives in the neighboring Indian town Jaigaon. This has led to a drop in sales and income. In fact, a few of the old vendors (from the old vegetable market) have already surrendered or sold their shops and returned to their villages.



The new integrated vegetable market at Phuentsholing.

## **2. Workshops and warehouse**

12. The workshops and warehouse located adjacent to the vegetable market is also on Government land leased out to private business people. The lease agreement signed was with the condition that the leasees would vacate the land when the Phuentsholing Thromde needed the space for any developmental purpose. Both the workshops and warehouse have been relocated to the Workshop area at Amochhu LAP.

## **3. Crocodile Farm**

13. The crocodile farm is under the management of the Department of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MOAF). The initial plan was to relocate the entire crocodile farm to Gelephu. However, the Phuentsholing Thromde decided to retain a section of crocodile farm for tourist purposes and to generate income. The relocation of the reptiles to Gelephu was carried out by the Department of Forests. Gelephu is about 200 km or 5 hours through the Indian



highway. There was no casualty of any reptiles. The crocodile farm is located at Jigmeling, about 13 km from Gelephu main town. Currently, there are 15 crocodiles in Phuentsholing and 23 in Jigmeling, Gelephu.



*The crocodile farm in Jigmeling, Gelephu.*

14. The only structures affected at the Crocodile farm in Phuentsholing by the NBR I included the entry gate, ticket counter and the boundary wall. The MoAF had decided to rebuild all the structures themselves, so a compensation package was calculated as per the Bhutan Schedule of Rates 2017 and paid to the Department of Forest. The constructions of these structures are complete and the crocodile farm is still operational in Phuentsholing.



*The complete wall, entry gate and the ticket counter of the crocodile farm in Phuentsholing.*

#### **4. Walls of the School and the housing colony**

15. The housing colony has been fenced along the road by GI chain link in order to secure the safety of the campus. As for the school, the acrylic solid sheets were used for the school boundary which will act as a noise barrier. The walls of both the housing colony and the schools have been completed (pictures attached below)



Completed walls of the NPPF Housing colony (left) and the school (right)

#### 5. Wall of the Rabten Engineering Workshop and Dantak

16. Sections of the Rabten Engineering Workshop and DANTAK boundary fencing were affected by the widening of the project road. The workshop which is located just opposite the entrance of the second Indo-Bhutan gate is on leased land from the Government. The boundary wall along DANTAK area as well as on Rabten Engineering workshop has been reinstated with brick masonry wall. The workshop owner had no issues with the wall being broken down as long as it is rebuilt with no added costs to him.



*Rabten Engineering Workshop walls (above left) and DANTAK walls after completion (right)*

#### E. Monitoring and supervision of the construction site



17. The contract for the 2.7 km bypass was awarded to M/s Marushin Shitaka–M/s Rigsar Construction Company JV in September 2017 under contract agreement number PT/Contract/2016/NBR/01.

18. All of the labourers working on the road construction were from India. Labourers have been recruited by labour contractors who supervise and monitor them. The labourers were provided with accommodation by the contractor along the project site. The accommodation included a temporary structure constructed out materials such as bamboo sheets or CGI sheets. The average size of a room was about 100 sqft. (10 x 10) and each room accommodated 4-6 workers. The rooms had poor ventilation and most of the rooms had a kitchen included too. Others basic facilities provided were toilets, water and electricity.

19. The contractors and labour contractors were notified many times about the conditions of the accommodation and the camps. However, there were no improvements from their side during the entire project period. In addition, the bidding document had no clauses that would allow the Phuentsholing Thromde to impose any penalties to the contractors on non-compliance of ADB's social safeguard rules.

20. In order to improve the condition of labour camps in future projects, it is recommended that safeguard requirements such as accommodation and other basic amenities for labourers be quantified and included in the Bill of Quantities and the required quality of these facilities clearly specified in the Technical Specifications. Alternatively, penalty clauses for non-compliance to the expected safeguard standards can be introduced in the Particular Conditions of Contract which will enable the Implementing Agencies to administer the contract more effectively.



*Inside a camp room (left) and a toilet for the workers (right).*

21. Daily wages ranged from Nu. 350 (USD 4.8) per day for unskilled to Nu.550 (USD 7.56) per day for skilled workers. Labour payment was made at the end of each month. However, labourers would take a certain amount (as advance) every week to buy grocery items for the

week.

22. All labourers employed at the construction site including site engineers and contractors were required to take reasonable care of their health and safety and they were provided with safety equipment and gears by the contractor.



*Workers on site.*

23. Dust along the project road were minimized with water tankers trucks spraying water along the entire stretch on a daily basis. This also helped in preventing dust issues, cooling down these areas and also helped with soil compaction (in the case of open roads). Such initiatives from the contractor's side made it a better environment for both labourers and the public who used these roads on a regular basis. Waste materials during excavation were also disposed of to avoid any hindrances to the construction site and to the public.



*The roads (NBR-Package I) just watered.*



24. Proper traffic and facility signs and message boards were displayed at appropriate locations at the project sites. All the sign posts were bright in color (mostly black and yellow colors) and clearly visible, providing safety and security to the workplace, employees and the property. At the junction point (underpass route) the posts signaled new road markings, new road layouts, changes in the road surface, workers and message boards. Barricade tapes were also used in most areas to warn pedestrians of any hazards. Barricade tapes which are brighter in color also cover a wider margin of workplace area and it is an inexpensive alternative to signposts.



*Road sign posts along the NBR-Package I and Barricade tapes around a construction opening.*

## **F. Awareness programs**

25. A number of awareness programs were conducted along the project site<sup>1</sup>. This was done to combat complacency about HIV/AIDS and also educate the labourers at construction sites with regards to their sexual activities, the risks associated with multiple sex partners, preventing STD/HIV and social marketing of condoms. These programs went on for over an hour and covered topics on practicing safe sex and included demonstrations on the usage of condoms, distribution of condoms and pamphlets that had been translated into Hindi and Bengali – languages that are familiar with the labourers.



*Workers gathering for the awareness program.*

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<sup>1</sup> Awareness programs were conducted by Ms. Karma from the Health and Information Services Center (HISC), Phuentsholing along with Ms. Dorji Zangmo and Ms. Karma Dema.

**G. Completion and Handing over of the Project Site**

26. According to the contract, works are expected to be completed by August 2019. However, interruptions caused by hindrances/force majeure delayed the project by a few months and the road was completed and officially handed over to the Phuentsholing Thromde only on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. The Project site was cleared of all construction material and debris. The construction camps were dismantled and the garbage properly disposed. This was closely monitored by the site engineers of both PT and the Construction Supervision Consultants (CSC).