

# Social Monitoring Report

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Semiannual Report (February–July 2021)  
Loan/Grant Number: 3149/0400 BHU  
Project Number: 39225-034  
August 2021

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

Allay Land Custom Station (Pasakha)

Prepared by SMEC International in association with SMEC India and Gyaltsen Consultancy for Royal Government of Bhutan for the Asian Development Bank.

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## **CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS**

(as of August 2021)

| Currency unit |   | Bhutanese Ngultrum |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| Nu. 1.00      | = | \$ 0.0135          |
| \$ 1.00       | = | Nu. 74.28          |

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|          |   |                             |
|----------|---|-----------------------------|
| ADB      | - | Asian Development Bank      |
| COVID-19 | - | Corona Virus Disease        |
| GRC      | - | Grievance Redress Committee |
| LCS      | - | Land Customs Station        |
| PCU      | - | Project Coordination Unit   |
| PIU      | - | Project Implementation Unit |
| QR       | - | Quick Response              |
| SPS      | - | Safeguard Policy Statement  |

## **NOTE**

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

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## **I. Introduction**

1. Bhutan's largest Industrial estate is located at Pasakha, about 15 kilometers (km) from Phuentsholing town. Vehicles, particularly large consignment trucks heading towards the industrial estate have to ply in and out of Phuentsholing, causing traffic congestion in the town area. The main purpose of developing the Alay LCS is to de-congest the traffic in Phuentsholing and dovetailing of the customs services for Pasakha bound traffic. The design and construction of the Land Customs Station (LCS) at Alay, Pasakha will help in providing transit, customs and immigration and cargo handling services for goods and people travelling in and out of Bhutan. The LCS will be connected from India side through the Indian SASEC Road, which is completed.

2. The Alay LCS is a component of the ADB-financed SASEC Road Connectivity Project which was approved in July 2014. The other components of the project include the construction of the 68 km of National Highway between Nganglam and Dewathang; the 1.2km access road from an Indian border constructed at Pasakha area; the construction of a mini-dry port in Phuentsholing and the construction of a 2.7 km of bypass road including a 120 meters curvilinear bridge over the Omchhu.

## **II. Objective of social safeguard monitoring**

3. The specific objectives of the social safeguard compliance monitoring are to monitor the working condition and occupational health and safety of the workers throughout the project period. Address non-compliance issues in the project and provide suggestions if deemed necessary.

## **III. Institutional arrangements**

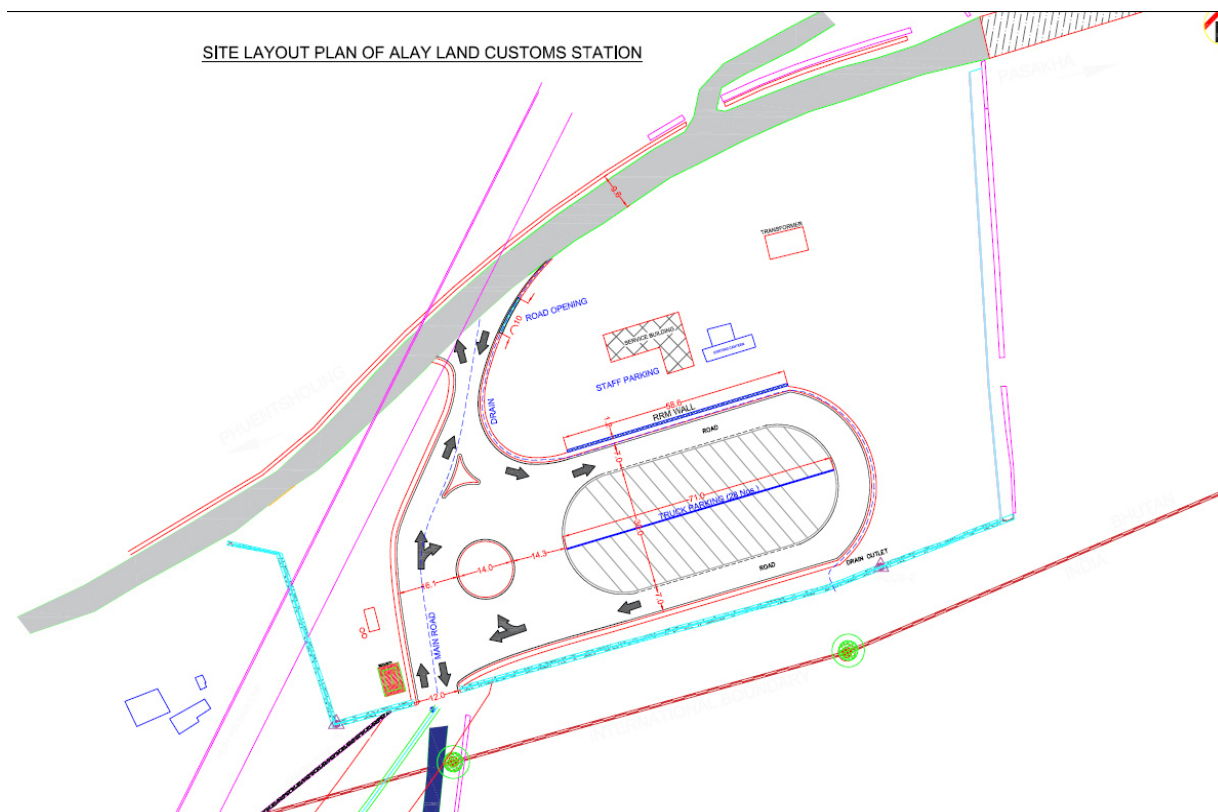
4. The Phuentsholing Thromde (PT) will be the implementing agency and the development of Alay LCS will be carried out through a PCU (Project Coordination Unit) that has been established as part of the project management. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) under PCU will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the sub-projects. The project managers of PIUs will be responsible for ensuring the compliance of both environmental conditions and social safeguard of their respective subprojects. The Grievance redress mechanism (GRM) with the PMU still needs to be maintained to receive, evaluate and facilitate grievances, if any.

## **IV. Project Description**

5. Land which is located near Alay, on the western side of the Bhawanihora stream was reclaimed and developed for the construction of the Alay LCS. The reclamation included 2.4ha of land in the Bhawanihora stream bed with the necessary flood calming and protection work upstream, and with the development of LCS within 2.0 Ha of the reclaimed land.

6. Civil works included the construction of pre-fabricated structures for service building and security house as per the layout plans and embracing traditional Bhutanese features. Works also include the construction of a retaining/gabion wall around the area to provide protection to the LCS. Other works include drainage works, steel gates, truck parking and footpath, a pavement from international boundary, internal pavement works, water supply and sanitation works, high mast lighting system and a 250 kVa sub-station.

7. Entry and exit points are at strategic places to allow easy flow of vehicles (see layout attached below).



*Layout of the Land Customs Holding at Alay, Pasakha.*

8. The project did not have any impact on any private land owners or structures and it not displace any person.

## V. Contract Works

9. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2021 the Phuentsholing thromde awarded the construction of the Alay Land Customs Station (LCS) to Chhimi RD Construction Pvt. Ltd. under contract number: PT/Contracts/2020/ALCS/0. The contract price was Nu. 40,409.013.57 (Ngultrum Forty Million Four Hundred Nine Thousand Thirteen and Chetrum Fifty-Seven) and the contract period is 6 months from the date of signing the contract.

## VI. Scope of Social Safeguards

10. Works are required to comply with ADB's SPS 2009 and the clauses under the contract bid document such as (i) Hiring/Recruitment of more National workforce; (ii) Provide gender responsive, HIV/AIDS and human trafficking awareness; (iii) Provide proper sanitation and safe drinking water; (iv) Ensure implementation of core labor standards to Bhutanese especially the provision on equal wages for both men and women; (v) Hiring of child labor should be avoided, be it national or of Indian origin and (vi) ensure usage of safety equipment and gears at the worksite.

11. Workers should also be provided with a safe and healthy working environment, taking into account the risks inherent to the particular project. There should be measures taken to prevent accidents, injury or diseases arising from associated with or occurring during the course of the work. Ensure that contractors have provided the workers with appropriate training and the incentives to use and comply with the health and safety procedures and protective gears. The workplace should also have an emergency prevention, preparedness and response arrangements in place.

## VII. Monitoring of Social Safeguards Compliance at the project site

12. Works started in February 2021 with around 25-30 construction workers. The workers are all sourced from localities around Phuentsholing, like Tading geog and Pasakha. Skilled Bhutanese workers were paid more than Nu. 1,000 per day and the other workers were paid between Nu. 750 per day. The workers are provided with accommodation within the project site. The accommodations are basic temporary structures and fits 3-4 workers in each room.

13. Phuentsholing went into a complete lockdown on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 after number of positive cases started increasing daily. All businesses were closed and all construction works were halted. The Bhutanese workers at the construction site all returned home. Phuentsholing went under lockdown for nearly 4 months and came out of it only on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. The situation in Phuentsholing started to relax only after the second vaccination drive.

14. During this reporting period, no communication activities have been carried. Although plans were made to conduct awareness program at the project site, restrictions on the number of people allowed during the pandemic has kept this program on hold. A meeting was held between the PT, contractors and the PIC on the social safeguard measures on site. The topics covered included the following:

15. Currently the project site has only 7 construction workers (table below is the list of personnel on site). A majority of the construction workers have not returned to the project after Phuentsholing went under a long lockdown. The existing workers are all very young with limited or no skills and experience.

| No. | Name                 | Sex | Designation        | Nationality | Nos | Mobilisation date |
|-----|----------------------|-----|--------------------|-------------|-----|-------------------|
| 1   | Chador Jamtsho       | M   | Project Manager    | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 2   | Karma Rabten         | M   | Project Engineer   | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 3   | Tshering Tashi       | M   | Surveyor           | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 4   | Kinga Wangdi         | M   | Site supervisor    | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 5   | Yonten Jamtsho       | M   | Lab Technician     | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 6   | Bimal Gurung & Sonam | M   | Excavator Operator | Bhutanese   | 2   | February 2021     |
| 7   | Kamal                | M   | Roller Operator    | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 8   | Rai                  | M   | Grader Operator    | Bhutanese   | 1   | February 2021     |
| 9   | Drivers              | M   | Dumper Drivers     | Bhutanese   | 5   | February 2021     |
| 10  | Laborers             | M   |                    | Bhutanese   | 7   | February 2021     |

### VIII. COVID-19 SOP For Workplaces

16. All workplaces including construction sites are being strictly monitored to adhere to COVID Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). This was initially advocated by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR). All non-national workers were requested to register with the Department of Immigration and after registering, each worker was given a COVID card with details of the worker. This card superseded the work permit that was initially given to the worker.

17. For this project, guidelines for the COVID 19 Standard operating Procedures have been outlined in the Social Monitoring Report July 2020. In order to reduce risk of exposure to the corona virus, the construction company was notified to strictly adhere to the following COVID 19 protocols:

- Physical distancing to be maintained between co-workers/contractors and visitors
- Mandatory use of face masks – this should be provided by the contractor at no cost to the workers
- Ensure proper hygiene in the workplace and at the campsite including regular hand washing, regular use of hand sanitizers and maintaining clean surroundings.
- Maintain hand washing stations at strategic locations within the project site. Ensure that there is sufficient water supply and soap for hand washing.
- Educate and train all the workers on COVID 19 protocols in a language they understand
- Ensure that labourers report any safety or health concerns. Instruct any sick workers to stay at home (campsite) and avoid contacts other workers
- Maintain log book of all visitors
- Maintain a Druk trace app quick response (QR) code and make it mandatory for all workers and visitors to scan the QR code whenever they enter and leave the worksite.
- Workers to get tested for COVID periodically
- Put up sign boards at both the entrance and exit areas so that the public do not enter the construction premises.