

Environmental Monitoring Report

Semiannual Report (January–June 2021)
July 2021

Nepal: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Mugling–Pokhara Highway Improvement Phase 1 Project

Mungling-Abukhaireni-Pokhara (MAP) Road

Prepared by the Department of Roads, Project Directorate (ADB), for Ministry of Physical Infrastructure & Transport and the Asian Development Bank.

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1. Introduction

1. The Government of Nepal has requested the financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to finance the upgrading of the Mugling - Pokhara Highway Improvement Project. The road improvement will consist of upgrading and widening the existing road into a four-lane highway. The Mugling - Pokhara road starts at Mugling Bazaar in Ichhakamana Rural Municipality of Chitwan district in province no. 3, passing through various settlements in Tanahun district, and ends at Prithivi Chok, Pokhara of Pokhara Metropolitan City of Kaski district in capital of the Gandaki province (*Pradesh*). The total length of the road section is 89 km but under the present scope, it is proposed to implement the road section from Abukhaireni, Milan Chowk (Ch.8+250) to Seti Bridge of the Pokhara city. The section from Mugling at Ch. 00+000 to Ch.8+250 km near to the Abukhaireni municipality due to the rocky terrain, is found unsuitable for expansion of additional double lane road. In addition, due to the existence of powerhouse of Madhyamarshyangdi Hydroelectric Project and settlements along this section of the road, construction of the four lane is highly challenging. For this section, alternative analysis and assessment is being undertaken by the government.

2. Contract agreement for construction of both packages was signed and completed. Implementation period for the project is three year (15 April, 2021 to 14 April, 2024). Defect Liability period (DLP) will be one year followed by five years performance-based maintenance period. Similarly, award of contract agreement of the construction supervision consultant (CSC) for Muglin-Abukhaireni-Pokhara (MAP) including both contract packages is in process and expected to complete soon. Contract package wise details for both the packages are provided in table 1.

3. No significant and irreversible environmental impacts are expected from the implementation of the project components as the MAP neither lies in critical habitat nor in legally protected areas. Therefore, it is considered as a category B project as of ADB Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS) 2009. Accordingly, Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) including an environmental management plan (EMP) and environmental monitoring plan (EMOP) was essential for the proposal before its implementation which was prepared for ADB as well as Government of Nepal (GoN).

2. Status of Project Implementation

4. Procurement of civil works contract was completed in 27 January 2021 for package-I. Contractor has already been mobilized at site and started verifications including survey works. Contractor was instructed to submit their special operation procedure (SOP) in COVID-19 for creating safe working environment and control its transmission. For package-II, the contract was awarded on 17th May, 2021 however, contractor has not mobilized due to inevitable CoVID pandemic situation. Procurement of Construction Supervision Consultant (CSC) is also in process. There will be an Environment Expert who will be mobilized for planning to implement the EMP as well as to monitor the environmental compliances in both contract packages under CSC. Similarly, there will be an environment focal person (EFP) for each contract package on the behalf of contractor. The EFP will be responsible for implementing the environmental mitigations as well as health and safety measures in each contract package. The EFPs will also be liable to assist the CSC environment specialist for providing the required information in field and filling the provided checklists for reporting purpose.

Table 1: Contract Package wise description of project features

Package	Contractor Name	Contract Agreement Date	Contractor Mobilization Date	Implementation Period
MAP 01	China Communications Construction Company Ltd.	27 January 2021	15 April 2021	15 April 2021 to 14 April 2024
MAP 02	Anhui Kaiyuan Highway and Bridge Co. Ltd., China	17 May, 2021	Yet to be decided	-

3. Environment Safeguard Activities

5. Environment safeguard related activities especially in the pre-construction stage were performed during the reporting period.

4. Activities during pre-construction stage are as follows;

- (a) **Preparation and Approval of Environment Safeguard Documents:** IEE report was prepared to fulfil the requirement of Environment Protection Act as of GON requirements and safeguard policy statement (SPS) of ADB. IEE report in ADB format was approved and disclosed on the ADB website in June 2019. Similarly, IEE report was prepared for

GON based on Environment Protection Rule 1997, which was approved from Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MOPIT).

(b) Inclusion of Environment clauses Bidding document: The approved IEE report as well as Environment Management Plan (EMP) and environment monitoring plan (EMOP) were attached in the bidding document.

(c) Status of tree cutting: Even though tree cutting permit has not been granted for the project, the key fundamental steps for taking permit from the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation (DoFSC) to clear roadside trees has been completed. Till the end of June 2021, tree counting has been completed in both contract packages. Similarly, the meeting with both Division Forest Office was completed and forwarded to Forest Directorate. Both the files were forwarded to DoFSC through Forest Directorate of Gandaki Province (As recent federal practice) on 21 June, 2021. Contract package wise details about the tree cutting work for MAP has presented in table 2;

Table 2: Activity for tree clearance with their status as of 31st June 2021

SN	Activity	Status	
		Package I (8+250-44+49+700)	Package II (49+700-88+600)
1	Counting of trees for extension of the road	Tree counting was completed and confirmed to be 4745	Tree counting was completed and confirmed to be 3300
2.	Meeting with DFO for recommendation of tree clearance.	Completed	Completed
3	Recommendation from Forest Directorate, Gandaki Province to DoFSC	Completed	Completed
4	Letter of acceptance from DoFSC	Ongoing	Completed

(d) Implementation of mitigation measures: The project has completed selection of contractor in MAP where the contractor is performing the preparatory works. There was no environmental impact during reporting period as construction works are not commenced yet.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

6. None of the environment safeguard related impacts exists in MAP during reporting period as contractor has not fully mobilized. Further, restriction on vehicular movement (1st may, 2021 to 24th June, 2021) by the government, isolation of project manager due to COVID 19 infection as well as arrival of monsoon season has hindered the construction work. Key environment safeguard actions to be taken for improving EMP implementation as well as smoothing the civil works in next reporting are as follows;

- Approve updated EMP form MoPIT including increased tree number;
- Complete agreement with DoFSC for approval of tree cutting permit;
- Make arrangement to have Memorandum of Understanding/contract with respective DFO for tree cutting;
- Prepare site specific contractors EMP for each package;
- Collect baseline environment data;