

Terms of Reference for Hiring Independent Social Specialist for Bhutan: Accelerating Trade and Transport in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS) Project

Introduction

The Government of Bhutan is implementing the World Bank-funded ACCESS project in Bhutan and would like to hire an Independent Social Specialist (Consultant) to prepare the following documents and provide technical assistance to the project in compliance with the World Bank requirements.

- a. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- b. Gender Action Plan (GAP) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) Action Plan
- c. Support the environmental specialist in the following tasks:
 - i. Preparing the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) for the low to moderate-risk projects in ACCESS
 - ii. Independent review and update of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Resettlement Action (RAP) of Gelephu – Kanamakura Road
 - iii. Development of Environmental and Social Commitment Plan(s) (ESCPs) for the project.

Objectives of the Assignment

Programs and projects financed by the World Bank need to comply with the Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). Therefore, components and related activities eligible for financing under this Project are required to satisfy the relevant standards and their requirements under the ESF, in addition to conformity with relevant environmental and social legislations of the Government of Bhutan.

The Department of Surface Transport (DOST) of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport (MOIT) will engage an engineering consultant to carry out a Detailed Project Report on the Gelephu – Kanamakura new road alignment. The ESIA and RAP to be developed for the Gelephu – Kanamakura Road by the engineering consultant firm needs to be independently reviewed and updated by independent environmental and social specialists to meet the requirements of the ESF.

Additionally, ESMF, ESCP, SEP, and GAP/SEA/SH Action Plan are project-level documents required by the World Bank. These project-level documents cover all the project activities to be implemented by the MOIT and Government Technology Agency (GovTech). SEP describes the timing and methods of engagement with relevant stakeholders throughout the life cycle of the Project. The SEP should ensure the participation of women and other vulnerable project-affected people (PAPs) in the project preparation and include their feedback in the SEP.

GAP describes underlying constraints that contribute to gender disparities in women's trade and entrepreneurship, including women's lower access to skills training, lack of infrastructure that responds to women's priorities, sexual harassment, safety concerns, limited mobility, and lack of access to professional networks. Besides, the SEA/SH Action Plan will carry out an in-depth assessment of the SEA/SH-related risks, assess the risk level, and incorporate the necessary mitigation measures based on the risk level.

Background and Project Description

Bhutan is a geographically small country situated between India and China. Inland connectivity challenges are substantial for landlocked countries like Bhutan. It lacks the scale of international trade volumes to sustain multiple trade corridors and, therefore, focuses on select strategic routes.

The deepening relationship among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal on regional trade and transport is reflected by the increasing number of regional and bilateral connectivity agreements. However, although trade between them has been increasing over the years, opportunities for growth through regional trade remain largely untapped.

Low regional trade reflects the high cost of connectivity. Several factors account for the high cost, including inadequate transport and trade infrastructure, cumbersome regulations, manual processes, and protective tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The Trade Restrictiveness Index, which captures the trade policy distortions that each country imposes on its import bundle, shows South Asia with the greatest protection compared to any other region.

However, despite the region's large road, rail, and waterway networks, the degree of multimodal freight movement is limited at the national level, and even less for cross-border freight traffic. Each of the modes of transport has largely evolved separately, with only nascent efforts to facilitate multimodal transport operations. An effort will, therefore, be required to strengthen the road, waterway, and railway networks and develop freight markets that allow more efficient coexistence and interfaces between the transport modes. This also entails providing last-mile connectivity by improving congested and less-developed road sections connecting to international borders and other trade gateways.

To overcome some of these impediments to regional trade and connectivity, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGB), with financial support from the World Bank, has conceived a multi-phase project: Accelerating Transport and Trade Connectivity in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS).

The World Bank-funded Accelerating Trade and Transport in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS) Project is a Multi-Phase Programmatic Approach (MPA) consisting of a series of linked transport and trade facilitation projects in Eastern South Asia designed to increase the efficiency and resilience of trade and transport along selected regional corridors. The ACCESS Program was approved on June 28, 2022, with Phase 1 covering Bangladesh and Nepal. ACCESS Phase 2 consists of a \$150m allocation for Bhutan.

The objective of the proposed project is to increase the efficiency and resilience of trade and transport along selected corridors in Bhutan. The proposed project is expected to reduce trade and transport costs through (i) an increase in throughput at priority border points; (ii) a reduction in average travel time for vehicles along selected regional corridors; (iii) a reduction in annual fatalities on program corridors; and (iv) increase the number of people provided with improved climate resilient road access along regional corridors.

The Project consists of three components: (i) Component 1 – Digital Systems for Trade; (ii) Component 2 – Green and Resilient Infrastructure for Transport and Trade; (iii) Component 3 – Institutional and Policy Strengthening.

Many of the proposed activities are linked to the development of Gelephu and have strong regional relevance. For example, missing road links along the Southern East-West Highway (e.g., from Gelephu to Kanamakura road) are impeding regional development. The other set of project activities is directed at building resilience of digital infrastructure and developing the National Single Window (NSW), which will facilitate regional trade, which is especially important for Bhutan (representing 34% of GDP in 2019; trade with India accounts for 84% of total exports and 82% of imports). Gelephu could serve as a freight

consolidation center on the southern border with links to industrial and manufacturing hubs (via the East-West highway), and a trade gateway with potential for multimodal connections to India and Bangladesh. While road transport dominates the modal mix carrying over 90 percent of international trade, the Government intends to develop less carbon-intensive modes, notably waterway and railway, which are exceptionally competitive for bulk cargo and could allow Bhutan to increase the export of minerals and boulders to its neighbors. As a part of the project, feasibility and masterplan studies for the Gelephu multimodal hub and airport, IWT and rail transport are envisioned.

The box below summarizes the following specific activities proposed by DoST under Component 2 of the project with a focus on road connectivity: (i) Gelephu- Kanamakura Expressway;

i. Gelephu- Kanamakura Road: DoST requested the Bank's support in developing an expressway along the SEWH, connecting Gelephu to Kanamakura (approximately 30 km). This includes construction of four bridges with a total span length of 1.42 km. Currently, a 45-kilometer detour connects Gelephu to an intermediate point, Tareythang with average travel time of nearly 90 minutes. A direct connection between these two locations can bring the travel time down to 20-30 minutes. This will facilitate seamless movement of extracted minerals from the eastern part of the country to Gelephu. Similarly, other EXIM goods (including goods produced or raw materials used at Jigmeling industrial area) can be moved at lower cost through Gelephu. Development of this highway segment can also help bring EXIM goods closer to the Gelephu-Kokrajhar rail link to enable transport of goods via rail to/from India and potentially Bangladesh. The extension of this road link between Tareythang-Panbang will be considered for future phases of the ACCESS program.

Component 1 works, under GovTech, will involve small-scale infrastructural developments necessary for increasing the efficiency and resilience of trade in Bhutan. A summary of these activities is described below.

- i. Construction of Facilities for the NSW and Digital Enablers:** These activities may include building or upgrading existing structures and facilities to house servers, data processing centers, and offices required to operate the NSW and other digital platforms.
- ii. Enhancement of Cybersecurity Infrastructure:** This may require developing or expanding secure facilities dedicated to cybersecurity operations.
- iii. Improvement of Digital Connectivity and Data Infrastructure:** This may include (i) construction of new telecommunications towers, laying fiber optic cables, and installing satellite communication systems to improve internet bandwidth and last-mile connectivity, (ii) upgrading government Data centers, and (iii) enhancing last-mile connectivity through building or upgrading infrastructure to extend high-speed internet access to targeted trade, agricultural, and logistics centers.

Scope of Work

In alignment with the objective of the assignment, the details of the key deliverables and the relevant tasks of the consultant are given below:

- a) **Preparation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).** The SEP will identify and describe the different types of stakeholders and impacted people and businesses and provide details on how stakeholder engagement will be carried out during the different phases of the project. The SEP will ensure the participation of the women and other vulnerable project affected people (PAPs) in the project preparation and include their feedback in SEP.
- b) **Preparation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) with SEA/SH mitigation measures.** The GAP will ensure compliance with the World Bank's support of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2015-23 World Bank Group Gender Strategy. It aims to move the Bank's development work beyond gender mainstreaming to reducing gender gap analysis in transport and trade. GAP will also identify activities affecting women's access to trade opportunities by addressing safety concerns and mobility challenges, reducing the risks, and creating opportunities. The SEA/SH action plan includes the risk assessment that will address concerns and risks of the project activities, including those related to resettlement/livelihood restoration and the labor influx following the Bank's "Good Practice Note (GPN). Both assessments will inform; (a) approaches, methods, and action points for mainstreaming gender in the activities, which will inform the gender tag indicators of the project; b) carry out an in-depth assessment of the SEA/SH related risks, assess the risk level and incorporate the necessary mitigation measures based on the risk level.
- c) **Support the preparation of ESMF, ESIA/ESMPs, RAPs and ESCPs.**

Task 1. Prepare SEP for ACCESS

The Consultant will:

- i. Describe how stakeholder engagement and consultations will be carried out in the various phases of the project.
- ii. Identify and describe stakeholders, both projects affected parties and other interested parties.
- iii. Specify how vulnerable populations such as women, the elderly and the disabled will be included and their concerns taken into consideration during project preparation and implementation.
- iv. Specify what types of information will be produced on the project's impacts and when these will be disclosed with stakeholders.
- v. Provide details to stakeholders of the grievance mechanism for filing complaints pertaining to the projects impacts.
- vi. Provide details on any provisions which will be made to address Sexual Exploitation and Harassment risks or concerns.

The SEP should clearly indicate who is responsible for the consultation and disclosure tasks described in the SEP and should also include a budget for consultation activities throughout the project's lifetime.

ESS10 of ESF and the accompanying guidance note describe in detail the process for preparing and the level of detail required for a SEP for bank-funded projects. Relevant reference material is given in Annex 1, including a SEP template.

Task 2. Prepare GAP and SEA/SH plan for ACCESS

The Consultant will:

- i. Collect and review available literature, laws, and policy guidelines, consult relevant stakeholders, the women and vulnerable groups for analysis of the baseline status, and prepare a GAP to improve the social impacts of the project for women, girls, and persons with special needs related to public transport operation.
- ii. Develop the GAP with specific interventions to shape project activities according to the identified needs of women and propose 2 to 3 potential indicators to measure the Program's impact on women and vulnerable communities, respectively.
- iii. Prepare sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) action plan related to risks in all project activities, including those related to resettlement/livelihood restoration in addition to the labor influx. following the Bank's "Good Practice Note (GPN) on addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) in Investment Project Financing involving Major Civil Works" and incorporating the necessary mitigation measures.
- iv. Undertake stakeholder consultations to cover relevant groups/ communities/ stakeholders, including women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, to elicit their views and suggestions on actions and measures for inclusion in the GAP and SEA/SH action plan.
- v. Cover institutional implementation and monitoring arrangements, including project-specific grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) along with necessary budgetary provisions to effectively manage E&S risks; ascertain whether institutional GRM exists and how it can be adapted for the project and equipped to process labor and SEA/SH related complaints; and map existing Gender Based Violence (GBV) service providers.

Task 3. Support the preparation of ESMF, ESCPs, ESIA/ESMPs, and RAPs

The Consultant will support the independent environmental specialist in the following tasks:

- i. Prepare the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) for the low to moderate-risk projects in ACCESS;
- ii. Review and update of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), including Environmental and Social Management (ESMP) Plan (ESMP), and Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for Gelephu – Kanamakura Road; and
- iii. Prepare the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan(s) for the project.

Overall, the support to be provided to the independent environmental specialist and the E&S consulting firms for the preparation and review of the E&S instruments listed above will be focused on social risk management and social inclusion issues, including but not limited to land acquisition and involuntary resettlement, labour and working conditions, cultural heritage and gender/GBV/SEA/SH aspects.

The ESMF aims to (a) establish procedures for the environmental and social screening, review, approval, and implementation of activities; and (b) identify the staffing requirements, as well as the training and capacity building needed to successfully implement the provisions of the ESMF.

The project may require developing two Environmental and Social Commitment Plans (ESCPs) for the two IAs, respectively. The ESCPs will build on the project's environmental and social assessment findings, including ESMF, ESIA, and RAPs, and consider the World Bank's environmental and social due diligence, and the results of engagement with stakeholders. The Consultant will work in collaboration with the independent environmental specialist to develop the ESCPs that will include an accurate summary of the material measures and actions required for the project to meet the ESSs over a specified timeframe. It outlines the systems, resources, and personnel that the borrower will put in place to carry out project activities to meet the various requirements. The World Bank provides a standard ESCP template (see Annex 1).

The Consultant will also work in coordination with the independent environmental specialist to review the ESIA/ESMPs, RAPs, and other related documents listed above to ensure consistency across all E&S instruments.

The specific requirements related to the tasks above are detailed in the ToR for hiring an Independent Environmental Specialist, and the most relevant E&S standards to be considered by the Consultant are listed below:

- ESS1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts
- ESS2: Labor and Working Conditions
- ESS4: Community Health and Safety
- ESS5: Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement
- ESS7: Indigenous Peoples
- ESS8: Cultural Heritage
- ESS10: Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Consultant Qualification Requirements

The minimum qualification and experience requirements of the Consultant are given below.

Academic Qualification. A Minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Sociology/Anthropology or a relevant discipline or a Master's degree in Sociology/Anthropology or relevant discipline will be a preference.

Experience. Ten (10) years of experience in the related field, conducting social and resettlement assessments of infrastructure projects, including aspects related to gender/GBV.

Specific Experience. Work experience as a social specialist in/ with World Bank and other international financial institutions funded activities and knowledge of the World Bank ESF and ESS requirements will be an advantage.

Language. Fluency in written and spoken English.

Deliverables and Timeline

The Consultant services will be engaged for 80 days over a period of one year (intermittent input). A tentative timeline for the deliverables is given in the following table. All these reports will be submitted electronically to the client.

S.No.	Deliverable	Timeline for Draft Submission (Draft incorporating comments from WB task team)	Timeline for the Final Draft for clearance (Draft incorporating comments from WB RSA)
1	SEP	Within 1 months of start of assignment	Within 1 month after receiving the comments
2	GAP and SEA/SH Action Plan	Within 2 months of start of assignment	Within 1 month after receiving the comments
3	Inputs to ESMF and ESCPs	Within 2 months of start of assignment	Within 1 month after receiving the comments
4	Inputs to ESIA/ESMP and RAP of Gelephu – Kanamakura road	Within 2.5 months of start of assignment	Within 1 month after receiving the comments

Payment

The payment will include the remuneration and travel components. The remuneration will be made when the deliverables are submitted to the client, based on the lump sum contract.

S.No.	Deliverable	Percentage on first draft (Draft incorporating comment from WB task team)	Percentage on final draft (Draft incorporating Quality Assurance Team and RSA)
1	SEP	10%	20%
2	GAP and SEA/SH Action Plan	10%	20%
3	Inputs to ESMF and ESCPs	5%	10%
4	Inputs to ESIA/ESMP and RAP of Gelephu – Kanamakura	10%	15%

Annex 1. Relevant Reference Documents

- ToR for hiring Independent Consultants ([link](#))
- The World Bank Environmental and Social Framework ([full pdf file](#))
- The World Bank's Environmental and Social Standards ([Link](#))
- Environmental and Social Management Framework Template ([ESMF link](#))
- Environmental and Social Commitment Plan Template ([ESCP link](#))
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template ([SEP link](#))
- Gender Good Practice Note ([Website Link](#), [Document Link](#))
- Good Practice Note: Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) in Investment Project Financing involving Major Civil Works ([Document Link](#))